Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

0611957

MAR 1 3 19/9

RECEIVED

MAY | 4 1979

INVENTORY -	- NOMINATION	FORM 🖺	IATE ENTERED	1 - 1010
SEE INS	STRUCTIONS IN HOW T TYPE ALL ENTRIES (TIONAL REGISTER FORM	S
1 NAME	THE PARE CIVILITIES OF	JOHN LETE ATTER		
HISTORIC				
	ett Plantation House	and Store		
AND/OR COMMON				
same				
LOCATION	E of Rel	ciandra	on U.S. 71	
STREET & NUMBER	U			
	heneyville and Bunki	Le	NOT FOR PUBLICATION	
CITY, TOWN	bua mic	VICINITY OF	CONGRESSIONAL DIST	
STATE	<i>y</i> 0 0 ,	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Louisiana		022	Rapides	679
CLASSIFICA	TION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	SENT USE
	PUBLIC-	X_OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
XBUILDING(S)	X_PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	вотн	_WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENC
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	XYES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
	,	NO	MILITARY	_OTHER:
OWNER OF I	PROPERTY			
NAME			•	
	. Johnson, Sr. (ager			
STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box	57	Aralle Pope,	Irene Pope, Randall	V. Johnson, Jr
CITY, TOWN	37	·····	STATE	
Bunkie		VICINITY OF	Louisiana 71322	
LOCATION (OF LEGAL DESCR	IPTION		
COURTHOUSE,	•			
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC	Rapides Parish C	Courthouse		
STREET & NUMBER				
CITY, TOWN			STATE	
3111, 131111	Alexandria		Louisiana	
6 REPRESENT	ATION IN EXIST	ING SURVEY		
TITLE .				
•	ı Historic Sites Sur	vev		
DATE			V	
DEBOOLTONY 500		FEDERAI	XSTATECOUNTYLOCAL	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	State Historic Pres	ervation Office		
CITY, TOWN	Trace mineral tres	CIVACION OTITICE	STATE	
	Baton Rouge		Louisiana 70804	



CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

__EXCELLENT __GOOD

X_FAIR

_DETERIORATED __RUINS

__UNEXPOSED

_UNALTERED XALTERED

X ORIGINAL SITE

__MOVED DATE_

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bennett house and store are set on opposite sides of Louisiana Route 71 near Bayou Boeuf. Although they are all that remains of the old Bennett plantation, they are the two most important buildings in the plantation's history. The setting is characterized by open flat farmland, with several banks of trees, and a small area of forest between the store and the bayou. Although the setting is still appropriately rural, the two buildings are separated from Bayou Boeuf by the forest, and from each other by Louisiana Route 71. As a result, their associations with each other, and their common association with Bayou Boeuf are no longer obvious.

المعارض أحاط المناج كالمناج والمناط فالموجود مان معوودون الأبار فرواي المهارة

The House

Although documentary evidence strongly suggests that the Bennett house was built sometime around 1854, it was substantially redecorated in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The one-and-a-half story, five-bay form of the house, and its central hall, double parlor plan date from the 1854 period. It is not clear when the present rear wing was begun. It is certain, however, that it was built in two sections at two different times. The first part, a two-room "L" extension behind the left side parlors, could date as far back as the 1854 period. It exhibits the same late nineteenth century details as the main block of the house. The second part, which "fills in" the "L", was probably built in the early twentieth century. This is evident because at one time there was a small recessed rear gallery behind the central hall. In the late nineteenth century, it acquired some scroll-saw ornamentation, indicating that at that time it was still an exterior feature. The second addition made the gallery an interior feature, and a superfluous one. It is clear from this that the second addition was built after the time the scroll-saw ornamentation was added. This clearly dates the addition after the late nineteenth century. Also in the early twentieth century, a small side porch was added.

The house is faced in clapboard with stud walls resting upon sills and summer beams which are about one foot square. Joists are about 18 inches on The fact that some of the timbers are very old, while others are not, indicates considerable "cannibalism" in the construction.

The details and ornamentation date principally from the later nineteenth century. The only known exceptions are the square-headed sash windows in the main block of the house, which date from the 1854 period.

. Islanding dr. . Pagaderanibu da indo

Virtually all the noteworthy exterior details were inspired by the Renaissance Revival style. Though elaborate, they are somewhat awkwardly applied. They include the front doorway and the large single dormer, which are articulated with four part arch motifs, and the bracketed cornice. At one time there was a diminuitive four column porch and a scroll-saw ornamented ridge pole.

The Renaissance Revival influence is evident in the interior as well. sliding doors have round arch panels, repeating something of the pattern in the front door and dormer. Most of the mantels have a basically Adamesque shape, with heavily notched ornamentation, and panels flanked by elaborately turned balusters.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE -

The staircase has a heavily turned newel post and turned balusters, features which could be either mid- or late nineteenth century. In one of the rear wing rooms is a three-sided bay window with colored glass. The room also features narrow gauge wainscotting and a window seat.

The Store

The plantation store is constructed in a similar manner to the house. It has a "T" shaped plan with a small rear wing of more recent origin, which is in poor repair. Like the house, the store shows evidence of two periods of construction.

The initial, mid-nineteenth century structure was a three-bay Greek Revival style building with two rear wings. The windows and doors had shoulder molded frames. The original shutters remain. In the late nineteenth century the present three-bay portico was added, a most unusual feature for a plantation store. The elegantly proportioned pediment rests upon three scroll-saw ogee pointed arches, and inscribes a round head arch window. The pediment and the cornice line of the building is trimmed in scroll-saw ornamentation.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

SPECIFIC DAT	ES 1854	BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT Fame Bonn	ett (builder)
		INVENTION	 	
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	_OTHER (SPECIFY)
X_1800-1899	X_COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1600-1699	X_ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	HECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bennett store is clearly of state significance in the area of architecture. It is unlikely that any extant plantation store buildings can equal it in terms of size, pretention, or architectural refinement. Plantation stores were seldom ornamented at all. The Bennett store's combination of a handsome pediment, pointed arches, a central round head window, and scroll-saw trim, make it quite probably unique in the state.

The Bennett house, with its five bays, central hall plan, and relatively opulent late nineteenth century detailing, is one of the grandest examples of a plantation house in the Bunkie area. It is particularly noteworthy for its interior woodwork. Though a crude reflection of the Renaissance Revival, it represents an unusually high degree of elaboration of ornamentation for that style and in that vicinity.

The commercial significance of the Bennett place lies in the fact that it was part of the important Bayou Boeuf navigation trade with New Orleans. The owner, Ezra Bennett, acted as local agent for New Orleans cotton factors, making the store an important commercial focal point for local planters.

Ezra Bennett came to Eldred's Bend on Bayou Boeuf from New York in 1830. He came to teach school, either as a private tutor in a village or as a resident at some plantation. The rich land of the area had been settled comparatively recently and Bayou Boeuf provided access to the outside world for the planter's produce. The first store at Eldred's Bend had been built by Joseph B. Robert. Soon after Bennett's arrival in the area, he gave up his career as an educator and worked as a clerk in the store. Somewhat later, he was able to buy the store from Robert, making six yearly payments. Ezra Bennett, who was known for his thrift, expanded the business and became an agent for factors in New Orleans. Bennett kept careful records and copies of all his business letters. Most of his business was done with New Orleans factors, though he also had dealings with lawyers and people from his native New York.

Apparently, Bennett prospered and became an important businessman in the area. In 1860, J. W. Dorr, a <u>Picayune</u> reporter traveling through the state, reported that Ezra Bennett was one of the outstanding citizens of the parish.

Ezra Bennett's wife Sarah wrote in 1854 that her husband was still in the process of building the house, and she wondered if she would die in the old house since Ezra was so long in completing the new one.⁷ Architectural evidence

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cashbooks, Bennett's Store, on deposit at LSU-A Library.

Dorr, J. W., "A Tourist's Description of Louisiana in 1860," <u>Louisiana Historical Quarterly</u>, Vol. 21 (Oct. 1838), p. 1110.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY UTM REFERENCES A 1,5 57,3 0,4,0 3,42,93,0,0 B ZONE EASTING NORTHING C D VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION A six acre rectangle encompasses the h for the two. Two acres of the site ruthe north side of Highway 71 and are coremaining four acres lie south of the state of the side of th	approximately 417 tered on the store ghway and centered APPING STATE OR COUN	it. along the e, while the don the house. ITY BOUNDARIES CODE CODE
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION A six acre rectangle encompasses the h for the two. Two acres of the site ruthe north side of Highway 71 and are or remaining four acres lie south of the state of the site ruthe north side. LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVE STATE CODE COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVE STATE Ms. Sue Eakin ORGANIZATION History Dept., LSU at Alexandria STREET & NUMBER CITY OR TOWN Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTIES OVE NATIONAL STATE STATE STATE CITY OR TOWN Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTIES OVE THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTIES OVE THE designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Preservation of the National Register of the National Reg	se, the store and approximately 417 tered on the store ghway and centered APPING STATE OR COUNTY	the setting ft. along a, while the don the house. ITY BOUNDARIES CODE CODE
A 1, 5 5 7, 3 0, 4, 0 3, 4 2, 9 3, 0, 0 B ZONE EASTING NORTHING C	se, the store and approximately 417 tered on the store ghway and centered APPING STATE OR COUNTY	the setting ft. along e, while the d on the house. TTY BOUNDARIES CODE CODE
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION A six acre rectangle encompasses the hard for the two. Two acres of the site runthe north side of Highway 71 and are caremaining four acres lie south of the state of the side of Highway 71 and are caremaining four acres lie south of the state of the south of the	se, the store and approximately 417 tered on the store ghway and centered APPING STATE OR COUNTY	the setting ft. along a, while the don the house. ITY BOUNDARIES CODE CODE
for the two. Two acres of the site runthe north side of Highway 71 and are contending four acres lie south of the state of the south of	approximately 417 tered on the store ghway and centered APPING STATE OR COUN	it. along the e, while the don the house. ITY BOUNDARIES CODE CODE
STATE CODE COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVE STATE MANUAL AND CODE COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVE STATE MS. Sue Eakin DRGANIZATION History Dept., LSU at Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF INTERPRETATION OF	DATE	CODE CODE CODE
STATE CODE COUNTY FORM PREPARED BY MAME / TITLE Ms. Sue Eakin DRGANIZATION History Dept., LSU at Alexandria STREET & NUMBER CITY OR TOWN Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF I THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PR NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Register at the property for inclusion in the National Register at the state of the National Register at	DATE	CODE CODE
FORM PREPARED BY IAME / TITLE Ms. Sue Eakin ORGANIZATION History Dept., LSU at Alexandria ITREET & NUMBER EITY OR TOWN Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PR NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Register as	DATE	, 1979 ONE
FORM PREPARED BY IAME / TITLE Ms. Sue Eakin ORGANIZATION History Dept., LSU at Alexandria STREET & NUMBER CITY OR TOWN Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF I THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PR NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Register as	DATE	, 1979 ONE
Ms. Sue Eakin PRGANIZATION History Dept., LSU at Alexandria TREET & NUMBER Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF I THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PR NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Register a		ONE
Alexandria STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PR NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Peby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register as	TELEPH	. / (135T8
THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY OF THE STATE NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Preservation in the National Register and State Historic Prese	STATE	
THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PR NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Register and th	Louisiana	िक्ट ७ प
NATIONAL STATE the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Register a	•	ATION
the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National February Inclusion in the National Register a		
eby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register	LOCAL	<u>A</u>
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE		
State Historic Preservation Officer	DATE	3/5/79
IPS USE ONLY HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE	DATE	
maria correct	TIONAL REGISTER	600141011 5.14-7=
ST Bill beloovely		5.14.79

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

2

suggests that he was also rebuilding the store at this time.

After the Civil War, George Bennett, Ezra's youngest son, took over the store, renovated the house that had belonged to his father (probably around 1880), and maintained race horses at the place. He was a prominent Redeemer and Bourbon, successful in his planting operations and politically powerful. The house and store have remained in the hands of descendants of the Bennett family down to the present day.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

3

NOTES

¹George Mason Graham Stafford, <u>Three Pioneer Families</u> (Alexandria, La., 1968).

²"Memoirs," Esther Wright Fleming, Walter Fleming Collection, LSU Archives, Baton Rouge, La.

³Unpublished manuscript by Sue Eakin, "Historic Washington" (scheduled for publication, 1979).

⁴Cashbooks, Bennett's Store, 1817; Letters in Letterbook, Ezra Bennett, 1835-1854.

⁵Letters of Ezra Bennett located in LSU-A Archives, LSU Archives, and in possession of Sue Eakin.

⁶J. W. Dorr, "A Tourist's Description of Louisiana in 1860," <u>Louisiana</u> Historical Quarterly, Volume 21, (Oct. 1938), p. 1110.

 7 Letter from Sarah Providence Bennett to "My Dear Child" (Francis Marion in New York), January 25, 1852.

⁸George W. Bennett Collection, LSU Archives, Baton Rouge.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

2

Eakin, Sue, "Historic Washington," unpublished manuscript scheduled to be published in 1979.

Fleming, Esther Wright, 'Memoirs," Walter Fleming Collection, LSU Archives.

James, D. Clayton, "The Tribulations of a Bayou Boeuf Store Owner, 1836-1857," Louisiana History (1963), pp. 243-256.

Letter from Sarah Providence Bennett to 'My Dear Child" (Francis Marion in New York), January 25, 1852.

Letters of Ezra Bennett located in LSU-A Archives, LSU Archives, and in possession of Sue Eakin.

Stafford, George Mason Graham, Three Pioneer Families (Alexandria, Louisiana, 1968).

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: PROPOSED MOVE						
PROPERTY Bennett Plantation House and Store NAME:						
MULTIPLE NAME:						
STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, Rapides						
DATE RECEIVED: 01/23/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST:02/03/06 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 02/18/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 03/08/06 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:						
REFERENCE NUMBER: 79001083						
NOMINATOR: STATE						
REASONS FOR REVIEW:						
APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N						
COMMENT WAIVER:N						
ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE						
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:						
The proposed move of the Bennett House is hereby approved. The documentation demonstrates that the move is necessary to ensure the preservation of the house, which is in poor condition and in danger of demolition by neglect. The house is an early example of Italianate domestic architecture in Louisiana. The proposed location is compatible with the original site. It is in the same parish and features a similarly rural setting. The documentation demonstrates that the house will convey its architectural significance (Criterion C) once it has been relocated.						
RECOM./CRITERIA Aprive proposed more REVIEWER Discipline Historian						
TELEPHONE (202) 354 - 2252 DATE 0 3 07 06						
DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N						

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

BENNETT HOUSE, PRE-APPROVAL FOR MOVE RAPIDES PARISH, LOUISIANA

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Pre-approval for Move

Bennett House Rapides Parish, Louisiana

State Certification

RECEIVED 2280

JAN 2 3

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this request for pre-approval for a move 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 the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant locally.

Jonathan Fricker

Louisiana Deputy SHPO

Date

Part 7

This is a request for pre-approval of the proposed move of the Bennett House in Rapides Parish. The house was listed on the National Register in 1980 as part of a Bennett House and Store nomination. The two wood frame buildings have been vacant for years and are prime candidates for demolition by neglect. Preservationists have long worried about their fate. In 2003 the Louisiana Preservation Alliance listed them among its Ten Most Endangered sites. In July 2005 the Historical Association of Central Louisiana (HACL) leveraged a donation of the house and store to that organization providing they be removed from the property. HACL's goal was to find an owner or owners for the buildings. Scott and Kathryn Anderson have acquired the two buildings from HACL. The Andersons are taking this large project a step at a time. At the present time they wish to apply for a pre-approval of the relocation of the house to rural property they own elsewhere in Rapides Parish – specifically, a small portion of Inglewood Plantation (NR). (The Andersons are members of a family corporation which owns the remainder of Ingelwood.)

The House:

The following summary of the house's construction history and alterations supersedes that in the original nomination. It is based on a recent inspection of the house by a senior architectural historian in the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation. While the documentary evidence is clear that Ezra Bennett built a house in 1854, it is very hard to believe that the house we see today is that early. The first known reference to the Italianate in New Orleans is 1850 (see below), and styles generally arrive later in the country. (Admittedly, Ezra Bennett was originally from the state of New York, having moved to the Boeuf country circa 1830.) The staff of the Division of Historic Preservation is dating the present house, for purposes of this submission, to circa 1870. Most likely, the 1854 house was remodeled (rather than a new house being built).

The Bennett House has a conventional central hall plan with two rooms on each side. One suspects that the rear wing on the south side, with a polygonal bay, dates from later than c.1870, perhaps 10 or 15 years later. (Its detailing is more elaborate, more robust than the main block.) The deteriorated, rather ramshackle rear wing on the north side of the house will not be retained in the new location. While it incorporates some early construction, it was remodeled in the early twentieth century and has received various later additions. In no way does it contribute to the house's architectural character.

In addition to the rear wing on the north side, the following notable alterations have occurred (some since the 1980 National Register listing): An early photo shows the house with a three-bay bracketed entrance porch topped by a

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

BENNETT HOUSE, PRE-APPROVAL FOR MOVE RAPIDES PARISH, LOUISIANA

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

balustrade (see attached xerox). The present owners plan to replicate this long-gone feature as part of a proposed tax credit project. Since the 1980 nomination, the mantels have been removed from the house (perhaps by vandals). Photos are in the original National Register submission.

The Proposed Move:

At present the house is set back from Highway 71 in a rural setting (with the store across the road). Please refer to attached photos showing the house in its original setting.

The proposed new setting is very rural, despite being on the outskirts of the city of Alexandria. Please refer to attached maps (2) for the proposed new location. The house will be located between a sharecropper's cabin known as "Matt's Cabin" and a small church on adjacent property. A small bayou is located to the rear.

The move will be accomplished in as sensitive a manner as possible. Unfortunately, the roof will have to be removed to clear traffic lights and power lines. As noted previously, the rear wing on the north side will not be retained.

Assessment of Integrity:

The house in its new setting will meet the special requirements of Criteria Consideration B (moved properties) because the new setting is sympathetic and the house will remain within the parish which is the context for its architectural significance. (The original nomination made only brief mention of the house's architectural significance. The context used was the Bunkie area, Bunkie being a nearby small town. The staff of the Division of Historic Preservation believes the house is significant within Rapides Parish as a rare surviving example of the domestic Italianate taste – see new statement of significance below.) The loss of the porch and mantels (at least one of the latter was in the Italianate taste) is an integrity issue but not an insurmountable one. Even with these losses, the house clearly conveys the Italianate taste, as explained further in the Part 8 below.

Part 8: Statement of Significance

The Bennett House is of local architectural significance as a very rare surviving example of the domestic Italianate (in this case builder Italianate) within the large parish of Rapides.

Italianate residences are quite common in certain sections of New Orleans, but are very seldom seen elsewhere in Louisiana. Secondly, the style as seen in Louisiana, deviated significantly from the national norm. The first known specific reference to the Italianate taste in New Orleans is from September 19, 1850, with a local paper describing a new house built for Duncan Hennen as an "Italian villa." In the succeeding years a limited number of stately symmetrical palazzi were built in the city. But the palazzo mode was never very popular, nor was the asymmetrical Italian villa. Unlike typical examples of the style found in other parts of the country, characterized by picturesque asymmetry, Louisiana examples are by far rigidly symmetrical. More often than not, they resemble an earlier generation of Greek Revival houses (usually a one-and-a-half story house with an inset gallery or a two story house with an attached double gallery). The difference is in the more lavish details (for example, boldly formed moldings) and sometimes the grafting on of perhaps one or two textbook Italianate features (brackets and round arches). In other words, they are Italianate in detail and feel but not in form (in comparison to the national norm).

While the Bennett House's small porch is not typical for Louisiana, the house's interpretation of the Italianate taste is. It is Italianate in detail rather than form. After the southern rear addition of the 1880s, the house had the following features that contributed to its Italianate character: the porch (brackets and the balustrade, one can't be certain about the columns); a bracketed cornice on the façade; a prominent dormer with a triple round arch treatment with a paneled design above; double arch windows in the front door; double arch windows in the rear door with matching side lights; an abundance of heavily molded window and door surrounds in the rear 1880s room; at least one of the mantels; and heavily molded panels accenting the staircase of the central hall. (The door and window frames in the main block are simpler than those in the 1880s addition. They are not quite lavish enough to be viewed within the Italianate taste.) Today the house retains all of the above except for the porch (admittedly a notable loss) and the mantel.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

BENNETT HOUSE, PRE-APPROVAL FOR MOVE RAPIDES PARISH, LOUISIANA

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Rapides Parish is quite typical for Louisiana in that Italianate residences are exceedingly rare. Created in 1807, Rapides is one of the state's largest parishes, covering 1,341 square miles. The only town of any size is Alexandria, with a population of roughly 55,000. And despite the early settlement patterns, Rapides has very few buildings from before the twentieth century. A historic structures survey done for the Division of Historic Preservation in the 1980s recorded 4, 932 buildings fifty or more years of age. The vast majority of these, probably 70 to 80 percent, are early twentieth century folk bungalows, unstyled cottages, and unstyled shotguns. There is very little Queen Anne or Eastlake in Rapides, and what can be found is modest. The domestic Italianate is practically non-existent. The two exceptions are the Bennett House and Loyd Hall, a Greek Revival plantation house with some Italianate interior features (elaborate, pierced plasterwork). (For the record, there is also very little commercial Italianate, and examples are very simple, generally with only segmental arches.)

Bibliography

Caldwell, Joan. "Italianate Domestic Architecture in New Orleans." Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1975.

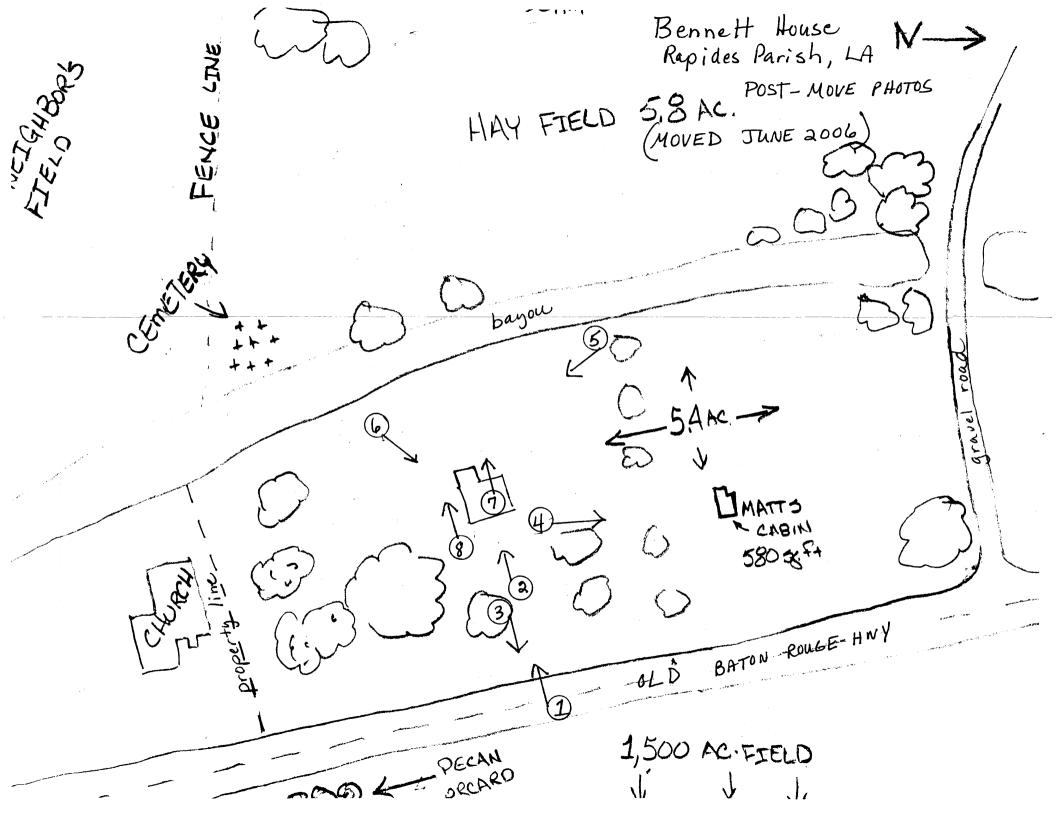
Fricker, Jonathan. "The Italianate Style," in Fricker, Jonathan, et. al., Louisiana Architecture: A Handbook on Styles. Lafayette, Louisiana, 1998.

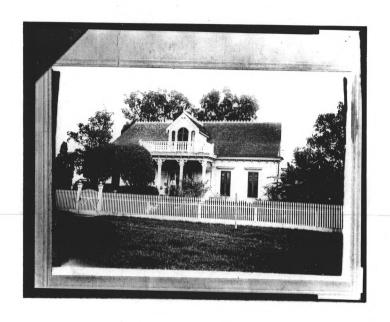
Historic Structures Survey, Rapides Parish.

PHOTO INFORMATION COMMON TO ALL

Photographer: Donna Fricker Date Taken: November 2005 Location of Negatives: LA SHPO

Pre-approval Bennett House Move FIELOWORS Rapides Parish, LA HAY FIELD 5.8 AC. N FENCE Cent tour bayou proposed house location MATTS CABIN 580 × F+ 1,500 AC. FIELD DECAN





Bennett House Rapides Parish, Louisiana