National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Natchitoches, Louisiana

Cane River Creole National Historical Park

Historic Resource Study



Cultural Resources Division
Southeast Regional Office

AUTHENTICATED U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION GPO

Cane River Creole National Historical Park

Natchitoches, Louisiana

Historic Resource Study

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About the front cover: *View of the gate leading to the Oakland Plantation Big House. Photographer: Anabel Jones. National Park Service.*

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Cane River Creole National Historical Park

Natchitoches, Louisiana

Historic Resource Study

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Cane River Creole National Historical Park comprises 62.91 acres in two units located on Cane River Lake (Figure 1-1). The Oakland Plantation unit is about 10 miles south of Natchitoches (Figure 1-2). The Magnolia Plantation unit is around 10 miles south of Oakland (Figure 1-3). Altogether, the park contains close to seventy historic structures, including dwellings, workshops, barns, plantation stores, cisterns, and *pigeonniers*; a rich and varied cultural landscape; and almost 500,000 museum objects and archival documents that, together, provide the context for a deep understanding of the evolution of plantation life from the eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth century in the Cane River region.[1]

Oakland Plantation was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. In 2000, it became a national historic landmark, significant as one of a very few remaining large plantation complexes in the American South and because it possesses some of the best examples of rural French Creole building techniques. Oakland's



FIGURE 1-1. Map of Cane River Creole NHP set within the Cane River National Heritage Area. NPS.

1. National Park Service, *Cane River Creole National Historical Park Foundation Document*, 3.

period of significance in architecture extends from 1818, when the original main house was constructed, to the mid-nineteenth century. Its period of significance in agriculture extends from 1818 to 1950, although Oakland continued to operate as a plantation past this date.

Magnolia Plantation was also listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. In 2001, Magnolia Plantation became a national historic landmark, significant as one of the few remaining large plantation complexes in the American South, because it possesses a rare collection of eight surviving cabins built for enslaved workers in the 1840s, and because of the survival of its rare, late-nineteenth-century system gin and antebellum screw press, which are used to interpret the production of cotton in the South.[2] Magnolia's period of significance begins in 1835 and extends to 1939, when the plantation owners ceased cotton ginning, although Magnolia continued to operate as a plantation past this date.

While the periods of significance stated in the national historic landmark documentation for Oakland (to 1950) and Magnolia (to 1939) end in the early to mid-twentieth century, the park manages and interprets both plantations to represent their histories through the late 1960s, when mechanization displaced most workers on both plantations.

Establishment of Cane River Creole National Historical Park

Cane River Creole National Historical Park was established in 1994, along with the surrounding Cane River National Heritage Area. By that time, local groups had already been active in the preservation of historic buildings, sites,



FIGURE 1-2. Map of Oakland Plantation. NPS.

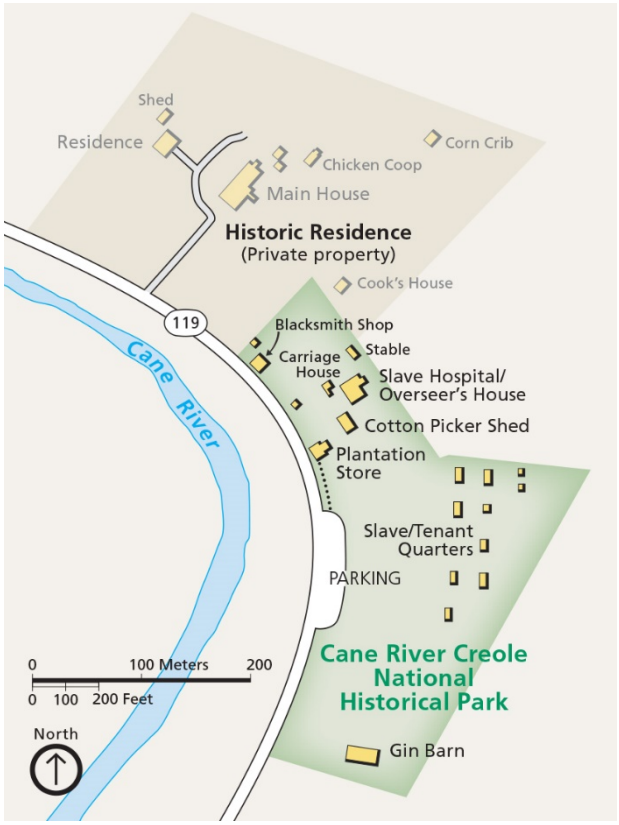


FIGURE 1-3. Map of Magnolia Plantation. NPS.

2. System ginning was developed in the early 1880s by Robert S. Munger, who developed a fan-driven, pneumatic system of moving, ginning, and baling cotton that operated much faster than previous methods.

landscapes, objects, and diverse cultures of Natchitoches and the Cane River area for over fifty years.

The first known local preservation organization was the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches, which was formed in 1941 to save and restore the historic Lemée House in downtown Natchitoches. The group now owns that property and has gone on to complete other historic preservation projects, such as protecting the historic brick paving of Front Street from demolition, and protecting and restoring the decorative ironwork on downtown Cane River Lake bridges. In 1971, a benefactor donated 6.55 acres of the historic Melrose Plantation, located 15 miles south of Natchitoches on Cane River Lake, to the organization, which then undertook restoration of several of its historic structures. The same year, the group shortened its name to the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches (APHN) to become more inclusive. The group also owns the site of the Bayou Folk Museum, or the Kate Chopin House, which was donated to APHN in 1987 (the museum/house burned in 2008), and continues to hold the lease on the Lemée House. APHN continues to be an active advocate of historic preservation in the Cane River region.[3]

In 1979, on the heels of national bicentennial celebrations, the St. Augustine Historical Society (SAHS) formed, initially, to purchase and restore the historic Badin-Roque House in Isle Brevelle, a Creole community located about 15 miles south of Natchitoches and just west of Cane River Lake. The building was constructed by a French colonial settler in an early Creole building style known as *poteaux-en-terre* (posts-in-ground). It was later purchased by Nicolas Augustin Metoyer, who founded the St. Augustine Catholic Church of Isle Brevelle in 1803. The SAHS continues to be active in the region and hosts the annual Cane River Creole Heritage Day and other events that celebrate and preserve Creole history and heritage in the surrounding area.[4]

The preservation activities of these two groups, along with other hard-working organizations and individuals, led to an increasing regional awareness of local history and a growing commitment to historic preservation and tourism in Natchitoches and the Cane River region, and, ultimately, the 1994 creation of the park and heritage area.

The park was authorized on November 2, 1994 (Public Law 103-449), through the Cane River Creole National Historical Park and National Heritage Area Act (16 USC 410ccc). Congress found that

- the Natchitoches area along Cane River Lake, established in 1714, is the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase territory;
- the Cane River area is the locale of the development of Creole culture, from French-Spanish interactions of the early eighteenth century to today's living communities;
- Cane River Lake, historically a segment of the Red River, provided the focal point for early settlement, serving as a transportation route upon which commerce and communication reached all parts of the colony;
- although a number of Creole structures, sites, and landscapes exist in Louisiana and elsewhere, unlike the Cane River area, most are isolated examples, and lack original outbuilding complexes or integrity;
- the Cane River area includes a great variety of historic features with original elements in both rural and urban settings, and a cultural landscape that represents various aspects of Creole culture, providing the base for a holistic approach to understanding the broad continuum of history within the region;
- the Cane River region includes the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District, composed of approximately 300

3. "Melrose Plantation."

4. "St. Augustine Historical Society."

publicly and privately owned properties, four other national historic landmarks, and other structures and sites that may meet criteria for landmark significance following further study;

- historic preservation within the Cane River area has greatly benefitted from individuals and organizations that have strived to protect their heritage and educate others about their rich history; and

- because of the complexity and magnitude of preservation needs in the Cane River area, and the vital need for a culturally sensitive approach, a partnership approach is desirable for addressing the many preservation and educational needs.[5]

Based on those findings, the purpose of the act was to

1. recognize the importance of the Cane River Creole culture as a nationally significant element of the cultural heritage of the United States;

2. establish a Cane River Creole National Historical Park to serve as the focus of interpretive and educational programs on the history of the Cane River area and to assist in the preservation of certain historic sites along the river; and

3. establish a Cane River National Heritage Area and Commission to be undertaken in partnership with the State of Louisiana, the City of Natchitoches, local communities and settlements of the Cane River area, preservation organizations, and private landowners, with full recognition that programs must fully involve the local communities and landowners.[6]

Establishment of the Cane River National Heritage Area around the park was essential in preserving the park's physical and cultural setting (see Figure 1-1). The heritage area would

1. complement the national historical park;

2. provide a culturally sensitive approach to preserving the region's heritage;

3. assist in the preservation and enhancement of the cultural landscape and traditions of the region; and

4. provide a framework for residents within the area to assist in preservation and education; and minimize the need for federal land acquisition.[7]

The heritage area is operated as a nonprofit, with a seven-member board of directors. The nonprofit manages heritage area activities, including updating the management plan, developing cooperative agreements, administering grant programs, and developing loan programs.[8] While the larger Cane River National Heritage Area is not the subject of this study, it provides the physical and cultural context that supports its conclusions.

Scope and Purpose of the HRS

The goal of this historic resource study (HRS) is to provide a historical overview of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, and to identify and evaluate its cultural resources within established historic contexts. The study presents a synthesis of the information gleaned from primary and secondary documentation in a narrative that will be used as a reference for the history of the region and the historic resources within the park by managers, planners, interpreters, cultural

5. United States Congress, Cane River Creole National Historical Park and National Heritage Area Act.
6. United States Congress, Cane River Creole National Historical Park and National Heritage Area Act.
7. United States Congress, Cane River Creole National Historical Park and National Heritage Area Act.
8. Cane River National Heritage Area, "Board of Directors & Staff."

resource specialists, and the public. This report also describes the existing conditions of park resources, based on field investigations.

The HRS provides information that will enhance existing National Register of Historic Places documentation and serve as the historical context for any additional nominations. It includes recommendations of qualifying resources over fifty years old, or that are of exceptional importance, for which National Register nominations should be prepared, and identifies needs for further research through special history studies, cultural landscape reports, historic structure reports, archeological investigations, or other detailed studies.

Physical Environment of the Park

Cane River Lake is the former, now-impounded channel of what was the Red River as it flowed past Natchitoches; other former channels of the Red include Old River and several named bayous, such as Bayou Brevelle (Figure 1-4). Impounded in 1949, the linear lake, informally called "Cane River," serves as a recreational water body for boaters, swimmers, fishermen, kayakers, and rowing crews.[9] The Red River, which changed course in 1836 (see Chapter 4), now flows on the eastern edge of the Cane River region, connecting the area to the Atchafalaya and Mississippi rivers, and to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico to the south, Shreveport to the north, and Texas and Oklahoma at its headwaters. The present use of the Red River is primarily for barge traffic, as the

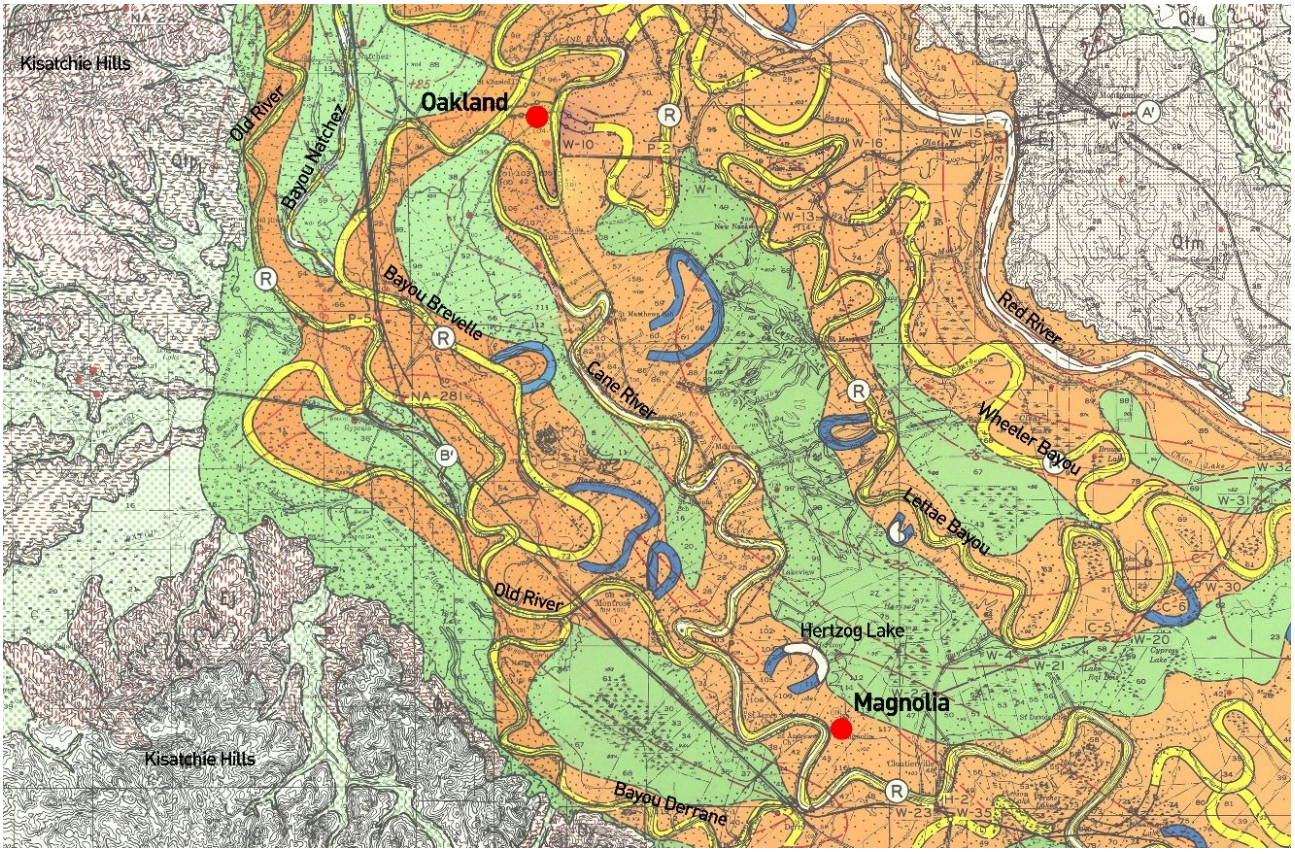


FIGURE 1-4. Geological map of the Cane River region showing the locations of Red River, Cane River Lake, Old River, and associated bayous within their related geological zones. USGS, annotated by Commonwealth.

9. Yeldell, "Cane River Lake: Lake History & Management Issues," 5.

river is not deep enough to handle ocean-going, deep-draft vessels.

The history of the Cane River region is inextricably linked to the region's relationship to the Red River and the channels it left behind as it shifted course to the east over time. The original settlements along the Red River were established based on the arpent, a unit of land area equivalent to about one acre, which was the standard measure of land used in the French colonies. The arpent was typically a long, thin parcel laid out with its end fronting on a body of water and its length extending inland through a variety of ecological zones. This system allowed every owner along the body of water to have equal access to river frontage and resources further inland, from backswamps to upland forests (see Chapter 3 for more information).

The Red River, as with most rivers in alluvial soils with braided or meander loop channels that change course over time, first altered its course in recorded history in the 1760s, when it flowed through what is now called Old River (see Figure 1-4). When the Red River shifted course in 1836 to what was called the *Rigolet de Bon Dieu* (Rigolet of the Good God), it left behind a shallower, seasonally flooded meander belt or lake, which then began to immediately accumulate silt at the northern end of the loop. The loop still flowed freely during high water and flooding events, until it was permanently closed off in the early 1900s. Once the Red River completed its switch to the new channel, what remained was a lake that was then named Cane River Lake. The siltation and lower channel flows limited navigation, but the shift did provide a more stable agricultural setting, as repeated flooding events began to lessen, and the planting season lengthened due to drier soil conditions in the proximity of the old channel, and its distributary rivers and bayous (Figure 1-5).[10]

The Red River carried alluvial deposits high in minerals and calcium, resulting in fertile clay and loam soils for crop growth. Wildlife flourished on its floodplain, taking advantage of the fecundity of native plants for food and cover. Just to the northeast of the Natchitoches area was an area of saline springs, where animals congregated at salt licks.[11]

The alluvial bottomlands of the area were dominated by willow (*Salix nigra*), Eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoids*), sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), American sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and a mixed deciduous hardwood canopy of oaks (*Quercus* sp.), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), elm (*Ulmus* sp.), and pecan (*Carya illinoinensis*). These woods were interspersed with Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) and other evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. In the eighteenth century, the native river cane (*Arundinaria gigantea)* formed dense stands that

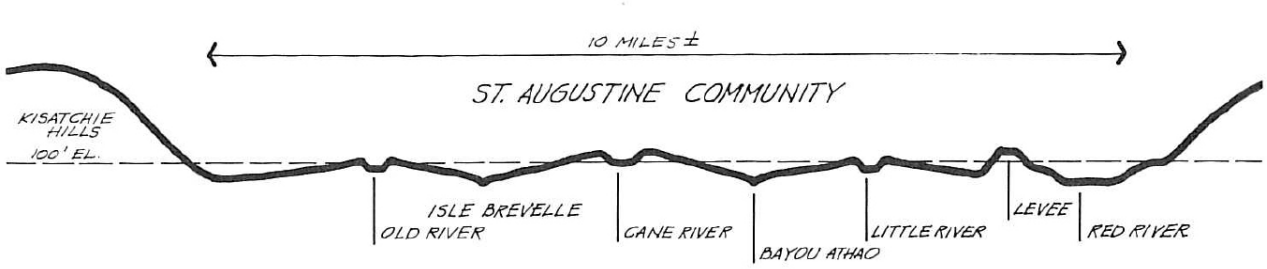


FIGURE 1-5. This transect across the Cane River landscape represents the typical landscape relationships of the Red River and its old channels with other landscape features, particularly the old natural levees that provide high ground for settlements. Chaffin.

10. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 16.

11. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 16.

lined the riverbanks and low-lying areas in this region, lending its name to Cane River Lake.[12]

The mast producing trees of the bottomlands provide winter forage for a wide range of animals and their predators.[13] The area was once home to American bison, bear, panther, and wolf, and still serves as home to white-tailed deer, opossum, skunk, rabbits, and gray and fox squirrels, and is in the flyway for many migrating bird species. The fur-bearing animals, mink, fox, coyote, beaver, otter, and raccoon, were once plentiful in the area and served as early trading material between American Indians and Europeans. Otter are commonly observed along Bayou Brevelle on the western perimeter of the Oakland Plantation unit of the park.[14] Swamps, rivers, and bayous provided habitat for the American alligator and several types of snakes, turtles, and game fish; most of these are still found in the area.

To the west of the Cane River is the Kisatchie Wold, or Hills, an area of ridges and high land that was once mostly covered in open woodlands of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*). Today, the Kisatchie Wold/Hills is included within the Kistachie Ranger District of the Kistachie National Forest. Modern sportspersons harvest game and fish from this area.[15]

The climate of the Cane River region is humid-subtropical with short winters and long, humid summers. Rainfall is fairly consistent throughout the year, with some deluges during thunderstorm activity or when the remains of a tropical system cross the area, particularly in the summer. Windstorms are usually associated with frontal activity and occasional tornadoes. The region is far enough inland to escape the strongest winds of a hurricane if one comes ashore in Louisiana or east Texas. From 1865 to the present, the strongest winds from a hurricane, tropical storm, or tropical depression occurred in 1957 with Hurricane Audrey. Winds in Natchitoches Parish were measured at category one strength. All of the other thirty-one recorded storms crossed the area with tropical storm or tropical depression strength winds.[16]

Historical Context and Themes

Chapters Two through Nine of this historic resource study are organized around a series of historic contexts, or basic historic themes identified in the National Park Service's Revised Thematic Framework (1994), which aid understanding of the forces that have shaped the cultural landscape of the study area. The historic contexts represent broad areas of human interaction with this landscape that are part of wider patterns of regional and national development throughout history:

- Chapter Two, Prehistory to European Settlement (ca. 1713), provides an overview of American Indian habitation in the Cane River region from prehistory until the period of European contact, and early movements towards colonization of the area by the Spanish and the French. This overview reflects several themes for history and prehistory from the Revised Thematic Framework: Peopling Places, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, and Transforming the Environment.

- Chapter Three, Colonization (ca. 1714–1811), focuses on the colonization of the Cane River region by the Spanish and French, the establishment of the French fort around which the town of Natchitoches developed, the arrival and settlement of the first generations

12. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 16. The park has tried to reestablish river cane along the river banks near Oakland Plantation with little success (Dustin Fuqua, comments on draft, 2017).
13. "Mast" is a general term for the fruit of forest trees like acorns and other nuts.
14. Dustin Fuqua, 2017, based on observations made at the park.
15. Dustin Fuqua, 2017, based on local knowledge.
16. "Historical Hurricane Tracks."

of the Prud'homme and LeComte families, and the enslavement of both African and American Indian workers. This overview reflects the following NPS themes: Peopling Places, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, and Transforming the Environment.

- Chapter Four, Statehood/Antebellum Period (1812–1860), provides an overview of Louisiana's entrance into statehood, the challenges to the security of the region's agriculture-based economy, the distinctiveness of the Creole culture during that period, and the effect of the arrival of "Americans" into the region. This chapter reflects the following NPS themes: Peopling Places, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, Developing the American Economy, Transforming the Environment, and the Changing Role of the United States in the World Community.

- Chapter Five, Civil War (1861–1865), provides an overview of the events of the American Civil War and its effects on the Cane River region and its people. It discusses the Red River Campaign in particular, the merging of the Creole and American cultures during this period, the changing roles of the enslaved populations of the two plantations after the Emancipation Proclamation, and the war's effects on the cotton trade. This chapter reflects the following themes: Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, Developing the American Economy, Transforming the Environment, and the Changing Role of the United States in the World Community.

- Chapter Six, Reconstruction and Recovery (1866–ca. 1899), provides an overview of the region's post-war economic recovery, including the effects of Reconstruction legislation, such as new labor laws affecting freedmen, and the Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana. It also reviews the entrance of African Americans into state politics through the activities of the Republican Party, and early efforts towards educating African Americans and supporting their civil rights. This chapter reflects the following themes: Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, Developing the American Economy, Transforming the Environment, and the Changing Role of the United States in the World Community.

- Chapter Seven, Early Twentieth Century (WWI & WWII) (ca. 1900–1945), provides an overview of the downfall of "King Cotton," the entrenchment of "Jim Crow" laws, the introduction of mechanization into agricultural practices, and, locally, the effects of the creation of Cane River Lake. The chapter reflects the following themes: Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, Developing the American Economy, Expanding Science and Technology, Transforming the Environment, and the Changing Role of the United States in the World Community.

- Chapter Eight, End of the Plantation Era (1946–1994), provides an overview of the changes brought to the region as a result of World War II, including increased mechanization of the region's farms, dramatic improvements in communications and transportation, increased homogenization of American culture, and the rise of the civil rights movement. The latter half of this era also saw the abandonment of farming by both the Prud'homme and LeComte families at Oakland and Magnolia, the introduction of corporate farming, and the related rise of local interest in historic preservation. The chapter reflects the following themes: Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, Developing the American Economy, Expanding Science and Technology, Transforming the Environment, and the Changing Role of the United States in the World Community.

- Chapter Nine, Cane River Creole National Historical Park (1995–present), provides an overview of the development of the national historical park, from concept to implementation. The chapter reflects the following themes: Expressing Cultural Values and Transforming the Environment.

This study closes with Chapter Ten, Management Recommendations, which identifies subjects for further research, and documentation and treatment planning projects needed for preservation of the cultural resources of the park.

Chapter 2: Prehistory to European Settlement (ca. 1713)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the period from known prehistoric occupation of the Red River, later the Cane River, region to 1713, the year that the post and warehouse that became Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in 1716 was established in the location of what would become the town of Natchitoches. During the prehistoric period, the Red River region was occupied by the Natchitoches confederacy of the Caddo tribe of American Indians. The Natchitoches Caddo settlement spread from the area of the town of Natchitoches, southward along the river to the area of Oakland Plantation.

The chapter also discusses the struggle between the Spanish and French to colonize the Red River region, with the French ultimately becoming politically and culturally dominant. Additional information is also provided regarding settlements and settlement patterns, transportation, and lifestyles of these various cultural groups.

People

American Indians

Pre-Caddo People

Humans have lived in the Red River region for over 13,500 years. The earliest humans to occupy the area of the Red River were hunters and gatherers who moved through the landscape, staying in one place or another for only a short time. This era, called the Paleoindian period, lasted from around 13,500 BCE to 10,000 BCE.[1] Evidence of humans passing through northwestern Louisiana during this period has been found in the form of stone tools used for hunting, stone scrapers and knives used for processing meat, and stone gravers used to score bone, antler, shell, and leather, and to punch holes.[2]

From 10,000 BCE until around 2,500 BCE, the hunters and gatherers of northwestern Louisiana moved around less frequently and began to establish well-defined territories. Evidence of the people of this era, called the Archaic period, shows an increasing specialization of stone tools for specific tasks, and the appearance of ornamental and ritual items. Artifacts suggest that these people established long-term settlements with constructed shelters and ritual burial sites. They organized themselves into complex family groups based on either patrilineal or matrilineal descent. These family groups joined others to form larger communities that eventually evolved into recognized tribes.

Communities during the Archaic period also began to construct mounds for burials and

1. "BCE" stands for "before common era" or "before current era," and is preferred by the NPS as an alternative to the Dionysian era system, which is tied to Christianity by the distinction of "B.C.," indicating the years before the birth of Christ, vs. "A.D.," or "anno Domini," indicating the period after the birth of Christ. HFC Editorial Style Guide.
2. Girard, *The Caddos and Their Ancestors*, Chapter 2.

ceremonial purposes, a practice that emerged as people began to form permanent settlements focused more on agriculture than hunting and gathering.[3] Agriculture and a settled life allowed for the development of a more complex social structure, including the rise of a class of religious and political leaders. Mounds were built for the burial of these leaders.

Mound-building continued into the next distinct era of human occupation of northwestern Louisiana, called the Woodland period, which lasted from around 2,500 BCE to around 1,100 BCE. Archaeological remains from around mound sites indicate that people relied primarily on deer and fish for their protein source, and that the bow-and-arrow was the primary hunting weapon. In what had been the Red River basin, a mound site near Little River contains three mussel shell middens that indicate the location of a plaza used often for food processing. Two others, near Old River, contains dense pottery scatters and postholes indicating structures; one of these also has a possible mound. All of this evidence points to a more settled group of people.[4]

The Woodland period is also distinguished by the development of specialized pottery for cooking and storage. Although the Archaic people fired clay for various purposes, the evolution of specialized pottery for cooking and storage point to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle. Pottery was useful for storing small seeds and other garden produce, for example, and for cooking by boiling over a fire. This pottery was often decorated by incising, and in patterns that indicated the rank and status of the owner.[5]

The Caddo

The Woodland culture began to be replaced by the Caddo culture during the period between 1,100 and 700 BCE. Although they continued many Woodland practices, the early Caddo were distinguishable by the apparent origin of their ceramic techniques and burial practices in the Mexican Highlands, the Yucatan peninsula, and Guatemala. Some believe that this change started along the Red River in northwestern Louisiana, but others believe that the traits moved into the area from the Mexican highlands through east Texas.[6]

Early Caddo ceramics exhibit decoration and techniques of firing that have more in common with Middle American practices than those of the Woodland people. This includes a slow firing technique combined with exterior polishing to create a shiny dark brown or black surface, often engraved after firing and colored with red pigment. Curved-line motifs were more common than those with straight lines, and included spirals and scrolls, concentric circles, and stylized serpents.[7]

The early Caddo also began to bury their high-ranking dead, including chiefs, priests, and members of the ruling class, in shaft-shaped tombs sunk into mounds like those found in the Mayan areas of the Mexican Highlands, the Yucatan, and Guatemala. Some of these early Caddo tombs were as long as 15–20 feet and as deep as 8–16 feet, were often paved with colored sands or pigments, and contained elaborate burial offerings. Burial goods associated with the early Caddo tombs include items such as copper masks, stone pipes, and conch shells carved with images of a long-nosed god and a feathered serpent. Similar images are found in Mexico and Guatemala.[8]

By about 500 BCE, the Caddo had become part of the enormous Mississippian cultural complex that extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes, and from east Texas to the Atlantic. The Mississippian culture was characterized by mound-building, shell-tempered pottery, wide-spread trade networks, centralized chiefdoms, institutionalized social inequality, and

3. Girard, *The Caddos and Their Ancestors*, Chapter 2.
4. Girard, "Archaeology in the Cane River National Heritage Area," 8.
5. Girard, *The Caddos and Their Ancestors*, 32-34.
6. Webb, *The Caddo Indians of Louisiana*.
7. Webb, *The Caddo Indians of Louisiana*.
8. Webb, *The Caddo Indians of Louisiana*.

development of ceremonial-political centers.[9] The Mississippian people embraced the successful production of corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, watermelons, and sunflowers, enabling them to establish a more sedentary culture.[10]

The Caddo developed permanent villages along the river valleys, and established political and social structures that enabled elaborate exchange networks. They were known for their trade goods, including their pottery, which was considered among the finest and most ornately decorated produced by an aboriginal culture in the United States (Figure 2-1).[11] Additionally, the Caddo exchanged other goods, such as salt, food products, and bows, with other groups, including the Cahokia to the north and people living as far away as the Pueblo villages of New Mexico.[12] The Caddo population reached 200,000 by the end of the 1400s and the Red River valley was among the most densely populated of the Caddo-occupied areas.[13]

By the mid-1500s, the Spanish had reached North America, and the Caddo were exposed for the first time to European diseases. Disease, combined with the pressures of a years-long drought, dramatically reduced the Caddo population. Archeological evidence suggests that between 1500 and the 1680s, the Caddo population fell by approximately 95 percent, to about 10,000 individuals.

By the time the Spanish and French began to establish settlements in the region around the turn of the eighteenth century, those who were left of the Caddo people had organized themselves into three confederacies: the Kadohadacho, the Natchitoches, and the Hasinai. A group of four tribes called the Kadohadacho settled within the bend of the Red River, close to the intersection of the modern-day states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. The Hasinai, located in east Texas, was the largest confederacy and comprised nine tribes (Figure 2-2). The Natchitoches, the least populous of the confederacies, comprised three tribes and settled in northwest Louisiana. Two independent Caddo tribes, the Ais and the Adaes, lived in the area between the Hasinai and the Natchitoches.[14] The Doustioni tribe, which had lived on the Red River, eventually joined the Natchitoches confederation and resettled near the site of the modern city of Natchitoches. The Natchitoches



FIGURE 2-1. Caddo Pottery, modern example by Gereldine (Jeri) Redcorn, a Caddo native. NPS, El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail.

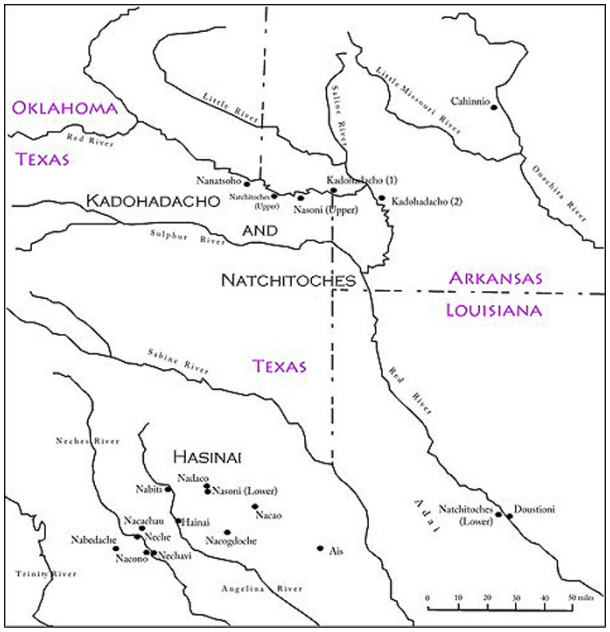


FIGURE 2-2. Locations of the Caddoan tribes and showing Natchitoches at the bottom right corner. *The Caddo Indians of Louisiana*.

9. "Mississippian culture."
10. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 5, 7.
11. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 7.
12. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 2.
13. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 7.
14. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 2.

tribe settled around what would become the Cane River and was later joined by what was left of the Kadohadocho confederacy after their wars with the Chickasaw.[15]

The Natchitoches Caddo were also plagued by warfare with other tribes. Being sedentary agriculturalists, the Caddo were not particularly motivated to warfare and sought only to protect themselves. Their traditional enemies were the Osages, who lived in present-day Missouri, and the Choctaws and Chickasaws, both Muskhogean tribes from east of the Mississippi River. The arming of the South Carolina Chickasaw by the English in the 1690s had a devastating impact on the Natchitoches confederacy; with the advantage of guns and ammunition, the Chickasaw killed or enslaved captured Caddo.[16]

Although archeological evidence of the Natchitoches is sparse, the confederacy is known to have lived in small villages set atop older, natural river terraces and levees in the alluvial valley of what is now the Cane River between Oakland Plantation and Natchitoches. Each village was known to have its own cemetery and corn fields, and one had its own temple.[17] Caddo burials from the early 1700s found in the Cane River area include twenty-eight excavated north of Natchitoches that possessed historic Caddo pottery and glass trade beads; the glass trade beads have also been found in other sites locally. One of the last earthen mounds constructed by the Caddo is thought to be near Campti and dates to the late 1600s or early 1700s. Other Caddo-associated sites include a hearth with pottery dating to between 1,100 and 700 BCE; a second containing later pottery and remains of deer, small mammals, fish, and turtles thought to represent a small village of several households; and a third that is likely a dispersed floodplain village occupied during the 1400s. This is based on its many artifacts, including pottery, as well as faunal and plant remains, such as maize, a very late addition to native diets.[18]

Europeans

The first Europeans to journey into Louisiana were the Spanish, who were seeking gold and "Indian kingdoms." Hernando de Soto and his successor, Luis de Moscoso, explored Louisiana in the mid-sixteenth century.[19] First arriving in what is today Florida, the Spanish traveled through neighboring states and into Louisiana, eventually controlling both sides of the Mississippi River, Texas, and parts of current-day Mexico.[20]

Not to be outdone by the Spanish, the French set out in the 1680s to colonize the Mississippi River valley, both menacing the Spanish to the west and impeding English occupation of the area. The first French explorer to set sail for the region was René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, who left France in the summer of 1684. His ship, however, accidently sailed past the mouth of the Mississippi, landing instead on the east coast of what is today Texas. Although the settlement established there lasted less than five years, the French developed friendly relations with the Caddo who occupied the area. In trade, the French provided the metal goods and weapons that the Caddo used to defend themselves from unfriendly tribes, such as the Apache.[21]

By 1686, the Spanish had learned of the French settlement and fearing their encroachment into New Spain, began a series of expeditions to find and remove the colony. It took three years to discover what were, by then, only the remains of the abandoned French colony. Once it was located, however, the Spanish decided to erect their own mission in the area. Unlike the French, the Spanish did not limit their interactions with the natives to trade; instead, they installed Franciscan missionaries and made plans to convert

15. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 8.
16. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 37.
17. "Caddoan Tribal Locations and Archaeology in Louisiana, The Natchitoches."
18. Girard, "Archaeology in the Cane River National Heritage Area," 9-11.
19. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 3.
20. Leutenegger, Habig, and de Jesus Puelles, "Puelles' Report of 1827," 133.
21. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 1, 3.

the natives, who would congregate around the mission, to Christianity. The Spanish provided

> items useful for a settled and civilized way of life, with the explicit exception of guns or other tools of war…to promote the Historic lifestyle in which natives would become productive subjects of the Spanish Crown and would serve as a loyal population against foreign invasion.[22]

The Spanish policy against providing weapons to the Caddo, however, made the native tribe less open to the establishment of new missions. Caddo resistance was further exacerbated by their suffering through an epidemic of European disease, combined with the ridicule of the Caddo religion by some of the overly zealous Franciscans. Finally, in 1693, the native tribes expelled the Spanish from their villages; however, the Spanish continued to try and establish settlements within Caddo territory in the interest of diplomatic and religious pursuits.[23]

In 1699, fifteen years after their first attempt at exploring Louisiana, the French sent another expedition to the region, including at least three different groups of French-speaking individuals. The largest comprised French Canadians, who were led by future Louisiana governor Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville. Also in the party were the French crews manning the naval vessel and at least fifteen buccaneers from Saint-Domingue, or present-day Haiti. The diversity of this group set the course for the complex cultural development of Louisiana, particularly the differentiation between today's Cajuns, descended from the French Canadians, and Creoles, descended from the Continental French. This group established the first French colony in Louisiana.[24]

The French and Spanish became cautious allies when, in 1700, Phillip V, the Bourbon grandson of Louis XIV, King of France, ascended the throne in Spain. The impact of this was felt across the Atlantic Ocean, where the French and Spanish explorers ceased military action against each other; however, they continued efforts to establish settlements in the area. French settlements in Louisiana, in particular, stood as a buffer between the Spanish, in what was still Mexico, and the British to the east.[25]

In March 1700, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, traveled from a French settlement near Mobile, Alabama, up the Red River to renew French ties with the Caddo. On this trip, he met with representatives from three Caddo tribes, and both the Kadohadacho and Hainai confederacies. Le Moyne's group, which included then twenty-six-year-old Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, established peaceful relations with these tribes.[26]

Over the next few years, Louis St. Denis returned to the area several times, working to reinforce the friendly relationship with the Caddo, providing the tribes with weapons and metal goods in exchange for horses and furs. Nonetheless, the Caddo had increasingly become the target of better-armed Chickasaws, who kidnapped women and children to sell to the British traders in South Carolina. Eventually, following the advice of St. Denis, the Natchitoches tribes move southward to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain to live with another French ally, the Acolapissas.[27]

In 1713, additional French officers, including the Marquis de la Jonquiere and Lamotte Cadillac, arrived in Louisiana.[28] Cadillac was disappointed in the trading relationship with the Spanish along the Gulf Coast and sent St. Denis there to establish a trading post to strengthen the French presence. Among his first tasks was to reach out to the members of the relocated Natchitoches with an offer that if they returned to their former home and assisted with the construction of a French fort, he would ensure they had a steady supply of French goods and weapons.[29]

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22. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 3.
23. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 3.
24. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 3-4.
25. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 4.
26. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 4.
27. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 4-5.
28. Mills, *Biographical and Historical*, 295.
29. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 6.

When the party of twenty-four Frenchmen and five boatloads of merchandise arrived at the planned site, they found the former Natchitoches village occupied by members of the Doustioni tribe. St. Denis convinced the members of the two tribes to settle together before proceeding to construct living quarters for the French and two warehouses for merchandise on an island in the middle of the Red River (now Cane River); several years later, the Yatasis tribe joined them. This settlement and the fort, known as Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches, formed the beginnings of what is today the town of Natchitoches (Figure 2-3).[30]

Lifeways

Health

According to research into the lifeways of the Caddo, it is understood that they believed that sickness was brought on by evil spells cast by their enemies and were curable by medicine men, or *connas*, using spells and incantations. The *connas* also treated wounds and other injuries based on their extensive knowledge of medicinal herbs gathered in the local landscape.[31]

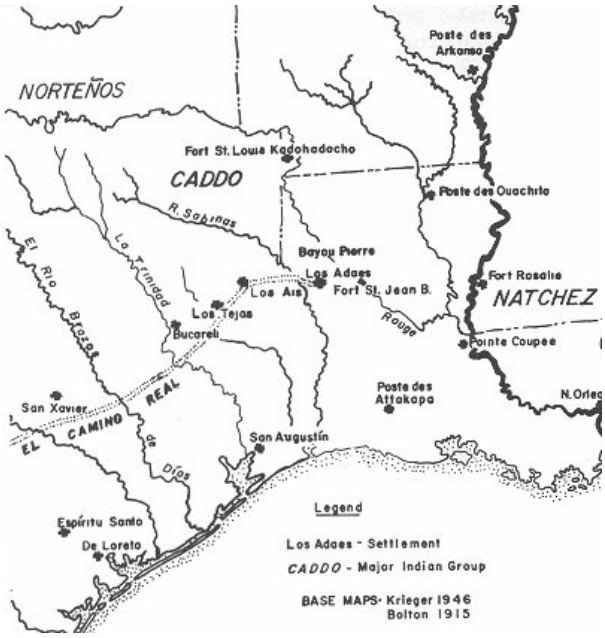


FIGURE 2-3. Locations of European settlement in Louisiana in the early eighteenth century. *The Caddo Indians of Louisiana.*

The French, on the other hand, knew little of living off the land in the fort area. Unfamiliar with local foods and cultivation methods, the French living at the fort did not try to grow their own food. Instead, they supplemented the supplies they received from France—only sporadically—with food supplied by the Caddo. Even with Caddo assistance, settlers fed primarily on a diet of corn and salt meat, increasing their susceptibility to malnutrition and disease. The settlers were also unused to the moist hot climate of the Gulf Coast, which, combined with lack of sanitary water sources, meant that typhoid fever and dysentery were a constant concern.[32]

Religion

The Caddo religion was well defined, with a supreme deity called Ahahayo, which meant "Father above." The basic tenet of the religion was that Ahahayo created everything, rewarded good, and punished evil. The *xinesi*, a religious figure that provided blessings for the planting of crops, construction of houses, and presided over feasts and ceremonies, served as the communicator between Ahahayo and the people, and was the keeper of the perpetual fire in a temple near his home where two divine children, or *coninisi* ("the little ones") resided.[33]

Below the *xinesi* in the Caddo religious hierarchy were the *connas*, who, in addition to healing, also presided over burials. The Caddo believed that a dead person's soul went up to the sky where it entered the "House of Death" presided over by Ahahayo. It was within the House of Death that all Caddo gathered before they entered as an entire tribe into "another world to live anew." All Caddo peoples were entitled to enter the House of Death, "where everyone is happy and there is no hunger, sickness, or suffering." It was only enemies of the

30. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 6.
31. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 10.
32. Brasseaux, "La Delasissee," 16-17.
33. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 9-10.

tribe who went to the House of *Texino,* the devil, to be punished.[34]

The early Spanish explorers, settlers, and missionaries were mostly of the Roman Catholic faith. Their early exploration in the region aimed to both expand the influence of Christianity in North America and enhance Spanish political and economic growth. To achieve this, they established missions and worked to convert native tribes to Christianity.[35] This began as early as 1686, when officials in New Spain sent out five maritime and five overland searches to find and destroy earlier French holdings. To block further French expansion, they established two Franciscan missions within Hainais tribal villages in the new province known as Texas. The missions had moderate success, but when the tribes suffered from an epidemic brought on by European diseases and several Franciscan priests ridiculed the native religion, the priests and soldiers were expelled from the native villages. This forced the priests to turn their attention further afield, to the Caddo nation.[36] In many cases, the price of European support was conversion to Catholicism, leading to the development among American Indians of new, syncretistic religions that were blends of native and European practices.[37]

Early Europeans living outside the missions in the region were hindered in their spiritual practices by the limited number of priests. This was the case in the Natchitoches area, where it was reported that prior to the early 1800s, the Catholics there were rarely visited by a priest; nonetheless, the faith persevered.[38] For those priests who did locate in the territory, most served as missionaries who lived among the Indian villages and used "gentle persuasion" to spread the practice of Catholicism. In addition to their work with the native tribes, priests were also responsible for visiting traders and occasionally making brief visits to other allies in pursuit of goods or military alliances.[39]

Education and Recreation

Knowledge among the Caddo was passed on from elder, priest, or political leader to child. There was no formal classroom or "school teacher," as was known by European standards. Teachings would have included life-sustaining skills like planting and harvest, hunting methods, pottery, and the making of clothing and body ornaments.[40]

Caddo recreation was sometimes centered around festivals and ceremonies. For example, a major rite occurred each September, after the harvest. Six days before the rite, hunters were blessed and sent out to hunt for game to be used in the coming feast. Beginning the evening of the feast, *xinesis*, *connas*, and officials gathered in the temple for prayers. Here, they also made smoke offerings and shared a narcotic drink. About midnight, families would make food offerings to the priests and leaders. Then, participants would sing and dance with gourd rattles and make speeches. At dawn, a foot race took place to encourage the sun in its rising. After the race, there was more singing and drumming, with rattles providing the background music for everyone to dance until noon.[41] Other sports included wrestling and a version of hockey played with four split canes. Games included a guessing game, which was much like the shell game, only played with two teams. Strategy games and hoop and pole games were also popular among tribal members.[42]

Recreation for the French and Spanish explorers and early settlers would have been similar to what they were accustomed to in their home countries. In remote areas, this would include playing cards, dice, and other games of chance; gathering to share food and drink; playing music, likely with more portable instruments, such as fiddles, guitars, and woodwinds; singing; and dancing. Larger

34. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 10.
35. Wright, "Spanish Missions."
36. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 4.
37. Enochs, "Native Americans on the Path."
38. Callan, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*.
39. Hill and Lippy, *Encyclopedia of Religion,* 327.
40. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 9-13.
41. Miller, "Changing Moons," 249.
42. Swanton, *Source Material and Ethnology*, 175.

settlements might feature more refined attractions, such as organized sports, along with plays and musical performances.[43]

Occupations

The Caddo were primarily farmers, focused on extensive production of corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, watermelons, and sunflowers. To supplement their agricultural produce, they hunted for meat, always returning to their home village. This settled lifestyle allowed them to develop complex political and social structures and elaborate exchange networks.[44] During periods of warfare or unrest between the tribes, skilled warriors were highly valued.

Most Europeans during this period were involved in the military, trade, or religion. French and Spanish explorers and early settler groups would have members who were proficient at one or more of these tasks, along with support work, such as food preparation and blacksmithing. In 1715, for example, the total population numbered 215, 74 percent of whom were members of the French garrison. The other 26 percent would have comprised family members, merchants, religious workers, and support workers.[45]

Politics and Government

The highest political position within the Caddo tribe was that of *caddi*, which was hereditary. The *caddi* presided over all aspects of tribal government; his orders were carried out by a well-defined chain of command and implemented with "peace and harmony and absolute lack of quarrels."[46]

Below the *caddi* were four to eight aides known as *canahas*, who in turn each had a number of assistants, called *chayas*. Policy meetings were held in large public assembly houses located near the house of the *caddi*, with *tammas*, or town criers, policing the tribe to keep people in order. This was often done by whipping idlers with sticks.[47]

A hierarchy was clearly identifiable among the Caddo, especially in assembly houses, where the elite class occupied raised seats. Common tribal members could, however, gain prestige by distinguishing themselves in battle and being awarded the status of *amayxoya*, or war hero. A community spirit prevailed, as demonstrated in the crop-planting process, which was accomplished communally by the entire tribe, including the *caddi*. Although everyone participated in the planting, crops were planted from "the highest to the humblest," beginning with the *xinesi*, then the *caddi*, and so on until everyone had their crops planted.[48]

On the other hand, the Europeans still operated under the rule of the monarchy in France and Spain. Although France was the first country to claim the territory, the French state offered little in the way of support of those who were among the first to colonize the region. The War of the League of Augsburg consumed much of the Crown's attention and money until it ended in 1698. Even La Salle, who was charged with leading several expeditions to the New World, could barely gain financial support of the French Crown. He would have to promote the territory's potential for great riches as a way to gain any assistance at all.[49]

Between 1698 and 1700, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville tried twice to establish a French foothold in the region but failed both times.[50]

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43. "Daily Life."
44. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 7.
45. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 107.
46. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 10.
47. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 10.
48. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 10-11.
49. Brasseaux, "La Delasissee," 13.
50. Due to inadequate funding by the French government, d'Iberville first selected a settlement site near present day Biloxi, but without suitable anchorage, lacking a sanitary source of fresh water, plagued by mosquitoes, and surrounded by sterile soil, the settlement could not survive without assistance from France. Seeking this assistance, d'Iberville returned to France, but upon his return still did not have adequate supplies, forcing the end to exploration of the region.

Despite the misadventures of his French crew, however, their efforts demonstrated that the French Crown needed to be willing to dedicate greater funding to the process. Although calls to stop funding the expeditions came from the French citizens, the Crown wanted to maintain a limited presence along the Gulf Coast, particularly with news that the British were also attempting to colonize part of the lower Mississippi River.[51]

Recognizing that if the British were successful in their colonization attempt, they could control the entire interior of the continent, the French, beginning in 1702, attempted to establish permanent colonies on the Gulf Coast. The grand scheme suggested by d'Iberville called for the development of two or more communities comprised of "sedentary yeomen to be drawn from the impoverished masses of France's capital and rural provinces and transported to the Gulf Coast at royal expense." There was little popular support for the plan, forcing the Crown to assume all the costs. The king, who was himself in a dire financial position, permitted only the transport of families of soldiers already bound for Louisiana, and rejected the plan to import black laborers purchased from the West African coast. He also determined that land grants or *concessions*, would be made only after the land was developed.[52]

In France, the treasury faced collapse and the navy was at a loss to maintain regular connections with outposts, including Louisiana. The French ministry considered Louisiana "an unproductive outpost of only tertiary importance." Supply ships, which were supposed to carry six months' worth of goods, arrived just once in 1703 and 1704, with even more infrequent support in 1706, 1708, and 1711.[53] Because the military operating the ships had often not been paid, officers also replaced goods with merchandise they hoped to sell for their own profit. Those foodstuffs that did make it to Louisiana were typically lower quality goods that were rancid upon arrival.

Theoretically, to protect the interests of France, the Crown imposed a provincial governmental regime that divided responsibilities between a military governor and civil commissioner. Unfortunately for those given leadership roles in the colony, the anticipated oversight from the Continent was missing as France dealt with the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714). Neither the king nor his ministers were willing to give sufficient authority to the governmental representatives in the colony. This meant that leadership was unsure of its respective responsibilities, and a crisis of authority soon resulted. So difficult was the situation that a series of factions developed around Bienville and La Salle, dividing the colony and penetrating so deeply that even the trappers, soldiers, and clergy were affected. In 1708, the Crown finally relieved both Bienville and La Salle of their duties to end the fractious situation. For the next seven years, the colonies suffered under various leaderships, all of which failed to realize financial success, leaving settlers to do the best they could to survive. The colonists became dependent on assistance from the local Indian tribes for protection, food, and in some cases, clothing.[54]

Transportation

American Indians frequently used trails and paths created by bison, deer, and other game to move through the landscape. The main bison trail used by the natives led from Oklahoma and east Texas, across the Red River at Natchitoches, and then across Louisiana to Natchez, where it crossed at St. Catherine's Creek and led up through Mississippi on what became the Natchez Trace. The trail as it headed west from Natchitoches was also used by the natives for trade and later became the route of *El Camino Real*.

In addition to following the trails of American bison and other game, the Caddo would have also traveled the Red River and other waterways in canoes fashioned from large trees, or "dugouts."[55]

51. Brasseaux, "La Delasissee," 14.
52. Brasseaux, "La Delasissee," 14-15.
53. Brasseaux, "La Delasissee," 17.
54. Brasseaux, "La Delasissee," 18-19.
55. "Pre-Caddoan Development."

Europeans would have followed the same trails used by the Caddo and likely also adapted dugouts and other vessels for use for transport in local rivers.

Cultural Landscape and Buildings

The Caddo people formed villages of loosely clustered dwellings amid their agricultural fields and close to a central village where their leaders lived. Each family group had sufficient land for their dwellings and space for their crops, and was located close to water for household use and for bathing. Because the area was heavily wooded, building clusters could be quite distant from each other, giving the appearance that the village was much larger than the true population.[56]

Traditional dwellings of the Caddo were beehive-shaped cabins constructed of a frame of reeds placed vertically and covered with grass (Figure 2-4). The cabins varied in size, depending on the social rank of the occupants. The domed roofs of these cabins rose approximately 40 to 50 feet and their bases were about 60 feet in diameter. The interior walls of the cabins were lined with beds and the cabins were characterized by their cleanliness and the well-maintained mats and rugs that covered their floors. A fire was kept burning in the center of the dwelling. Up to three or four families would occupy each house.[57]



FIGURE 2-4. Reproduction of typical Caddo grass house. Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, Texas Parks and Wildlife.

It is presumed that prior to the establishment of the first permanent outpost in the Natchitoches area, Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches, most Europeans lived with the native people in their traditional dwellings. When the fort was first settled, St. Denis constructed crude wood huts for shelter, but these were replaced later with stronger wood buildings and fortifications.[58]

There are no buildings surviving from this period within either plantation, or within the larger park or region.

Archeology

An archeological investigation was conducted at Magnolia Plantation in 1999 by the Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC), but reported only twenty artifacts—lithics and ceramics—that could be tied to its prehistoric period.[59] These included two shell-tempered pottery sherds that indicate Caddo affiliation. Six dark, sand-tempered sherds were also found that suggest a Choctaw presence at the site during the historic period. There was no evidence that indicated any intensive settlement in that area, but the archeologists urged future investigators to consider the potential for additional prehistoric data in the park.

It is not known where these artifacts are stored. If they are stored at the park, then they would be a part of the collection that is a contributing resource of the park. Although an archeological investigation was conducted by SEAC at Oakland Plantation in 2000, no finds from this period were reported.[60] It appears that the focus of the investigation was on locating historic structures related to the plantations.

56. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 11.
57. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 12.
58. "Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site."
59. Miller, "Slavery and its aftermath."
60. Miller and Wood, *A Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation*.

Collections

American Indians visited the Creole plantations and settlements along the Red River throughout the nineteenth century to sell and trade goods. One example of such goods held by CARI's curation facility are a collection of seven split river cane baskets that came out of the Prud'homme family's "museum" of objects that they kept in the basement of the Oakland Big House.

One of the most interesting of this collection is CARI 27521, a double-woven, trunk-shaped, lidded, river cane basket that is similar in style and color to those of the Chitimacha of St. Mary's Parish, but its color-to-area ratio and the width of its splints have been found to be different (Figure 2-5). It is thought that it might have been made by someone in one of the locally settled tribes, which includes the Choctaw, Alabama, Apalachee, Biloxi, Koasati, and Pascagoula.

As a group, the river cane baskets have been tentatively attributed to an American Indian band known as the Clifton Choctaw. This group has its home around Sieper Creek in the Flatwoods community, located less than 20 miles south of CARI. Additional research is needed on the provenance of these baskets.[61]



FIGURE 2-5. Double-woven lidded trunk basket of river cane, CARI 27521, from the Oakland Plantation Collection.

61. The majority of American Indian tribes that live in the Cane River region today are immigrants from other regions that moved into the area during the historic period. For more information, refer to Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana*.

Chapter 3: Colonization (ca. 1714–1811)

Introduction

Colonization of the Cane River region by Europeans began in 1714, the year after Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches was established, and lasted until 1811, just before the Louisiana Territory became a state. Politically, the territory changed hands from France to Spain in 1762, then back to France in 1800, before, in 1803, it became one of the largest purchases the United States ever made before or since. During the colonial period, initial growth of European settlements in the territory was slow, with distance, disease, and laborious travel hindering the colonists.

Enslaved workers, both African and American Indian, were brought to the region for the first time during this period. The first group, enslaved Chitimacha Indians, arrived in Natchitoches in 1716 with Louis Juchereau de St. Denis and another Frenchman.[1] During this period, *le Code Noir,* or the Black Code, was adopted from French law and presented as a tool to both protect and control enslaved individuals.[2]

People

After Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches was established, the population around the settlement grew quickly. In 1785, the population of what became Natchitoches Parish was 756; by 1810, the population had grown to a total of 2,870, including 1,213 Caucasians, 181 free "colored," and 1,476 slaves.[3] Additional divisions within the different census groups were based on ethnicity and community standing. For example, "Caucasians" could be European and/or, depending on the year being discussed, white "Americans." The Americans, coming from the settled areas of the east that were populated by people of primarily English, Scots, Irish, and German descent, were newcomers in a region quite different, culturally, from their homes in the east. American Indians were not identified in the census.[4]

This period saw the early use in Louisiana of the term "Creole" to describe a group of people that crosses color, geographical origin, and language lines. When capitalized, the word refers to a group of people, but when in lowercase, it refers to, for example, styles of food or architecture. "Creole" is the French version of the original Spanish *criollo*, meaning "native to the colonies," that is, born in the new world.[5]

When the Louisiana Purchase was complete, and the former French and Spanish territory became part of the United States, Creole identification united the French residents who had already been in the region:

> [A]ll Louisianans who had prior claim to the place and to the way of life shaped by the French language and colonial French culture, [were Creole] regardless of ancestry.[6]

1. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 55.
2. For a more extensive explanation of *Code Noir*, refer to the Slavery section of this chapter (page 3-15).
3. Mills, *Biographical and Historical*, 294. Ethnicity of the slaves was not provided in the source.
4. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 43.
5. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 39-41.
6. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 43.

At that point, "Creole" took on a meaning beyond skin color, place of birth, or residence in colonial Louisiana. In fact, the term set up a regional dichotomy of "us versus them." Among the Creoles of Louisiana, networks based on family, marriage, and money developed and strengthened Creole claims to distinctiveness.[7]

The irony of this new application of the term is that historically, "Creole" was often used by newly arrived European colonists, who considered themselves superior to those born in the Americas. One author speculates that the term gained a derogatory connotation because some believed that the brains of the native-born were "addled by the tropical sun."[8] Over time, "Creole" came to be considered synonymous with "aristocrat." Brasseaux explains that "today, when white Louisianans of French ancestry call themselves Creole, what they really mean is that they are not Cajuns."[9]

"Creole" was also a term applied to native-born slaves, who were more valuable on the market than slaves newly arrived from Africa for a variety of reasons, including that they were considered "more docile, seasoned to the climate, trained for field work or domestic tasks, and, most importantly, French-speaking."[10]

As time passed, "Creole" has come to indicate a speaker of a Creole language. A Creole language develops when two languages come into contact and may have begun as a *pidgin* or simplified version of the more elite of the two. The pidgin language is not the pure mother language, but includes words or phrases from the subordinate language. It is at the point when the pidgin version of the language is completely abandoned for the new language that a Creole dialect is established.[11]

Often, the term "Creoles of color" is the term utilized to describe people of combined heritage, typically French and or Spanish mixed with Negro descent born in the Americas, and who speak Creole French.[12]

American Indians

The arming of the Chickasaw in South Carolina in the 1690s (see Chapter 2) had a devastating impact on the tribes of the Caddo Natchitoches confederacy in Northwest Louisiana. The Chickasaw and Caddo were long-standing enemies, and with the advantage of guns and ammunition, the Chickasaw killed or enslaved many of their adversaries. By 1719, the Natchitoches confederacy's population had fallen from about 2,000 to only 500, likely exacerbated by outbreaks of European diseases. Both the Natchitoches and Doustionis tribes were forced to abandon their traditional village sites and relocate several times before 1731, when they finally settled down with the Yatasis tribe of the Caddo people.[13]

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7. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 43.
8. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 89.
9. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 90; "Cajun" refers to those of French descent who made their way to Louisiana by way of Acadia in Canada. The Acadian settlers had left France in the late 1550s and 1560s, seeking a place for religious freedom in the new world. The group moved around the Americas seeking a safe place to live, from Brazil to the Bay of Fundy in what are today known as the Canadian maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In 1755, once again they were removed from their homes and began what they called the Grand Dérangement, which lasted until the mid-1780s, before ending up in Louisiana. The group settled along Bayou Teche and began raising a "New Acadia." Trépanier, "The Cajunization of French Louisiana," 161, and Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 62.
10. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 90.
11. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 91. Today, the term, "Louisiana French," refers to the collective dialects spoken in Cajun, Creole, and America Indian communities. In 2012, CARI staff member, Dustin Fuqua, developed *La Table Française Aux Natchitoches* (The French Table At The Natchitoches) to help preserve, retain, and advance use of the Louisiana French language locally. National Park Service, "*N'oubliez Pas*."
12. Schweninger, "Antebellum Free Persons," 345.
13. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 37.

Many of the surviving Caddo people were forced into slavery. For example, in 1716, records show that five Chitimacha Indians were brought to the fort at Natchitoches by St. Denis and his men.[14]

A series of wars between the French and the Natchez also reached the Cane River area. The three wars, occurring in 1716, 1722, and 1729, were progressively more devastating to the Natchez tribe. By 1729, the French governor, Chopart, had tried to establish a plantation on the site of the principal Natchez village.[15] The resulting conflict made its way to the fort at Natchitoches by fall of 1731. At the time, the fort was in such poor condition that Saint-Denis, in preparation for attack by the Natchez, had to improvise protective cover.[16] Nevertheless, when the Natchez, who had settled on the banks of a bayou several miles from the post, carried out the anticipated attack in 1731, they were defeated, leaving only their name to linger in connection to the waterway named Bayou Natchez.[17]

Other tribes near Natchitoches underwent major changes with the arrival of Europeans and the settlement pressures they represented. The Choctaw displaced a few of the native tribes near Natchitoches, including the Adai who lived to the west of the Red River. Members of other tribes, including the Lipan Apache, or Connechi, who had been brought to the area by the French or Spanish, moved close to Natchitoches and were living among the Free People of Color near the Cane River.[18]

Europeans

Among the first Europeans who stayed in the Natchitoches area for an extended period was Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, who had established the settlement of Natchitoches and soon thereafter led construction of Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches on the bank of the Red River (Figure 3-1). To accomplish this, St. Denis brought a crew consisting of thirty Canadians and several enslaved Chitimacha Indians. In 1715, he selected a man named Du Pisne to build the fort within the settlement.[19] Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches served as the center for French trading activities and represented the western edge of the French holdings, perhaps as a challenge to the Spanish who had already established a religious mission among the Adaes tribe approximately 15 miles to the west.[20]

Prud'homme Family

Shortly after St. Denis was dispatched to Natchitoches, Jean Pierre Philippe Prud'homme, whose descendants would later establish Bermuda Plantation, now Oakland Plantation, emigrated from France to New Orleans as a soldier in the French Army.[21] Prud'homme arrived in New Orleans about 1718; around 1725, he married Catherine Picard, who had been born in Paris, France.[22] The couple had moved north to

14. The Chitimacha were historically located in the Atchafalaya Basin, on lands westward toward Lafayette and southward to the Gulf of Mexico. In 1706, in response to French aggressions and slave raids, the Chitimacha killed St. Cosme, a priest and slave owner, and several members of his party who were missionaries to the Natchez Tribe. In retaliation, the French made war on the tribe until 1718, when a peace agreement was signed in New Orleans. "Chitimacha Tribal History"; Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 136.
15. Leeper, *Louisiana Place Names*, 172.
16. Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana*, 386.
17. Leeper, *Louisiana Place Names*, 172.
18. Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana*.
19. Mills, *Biographical and Historical*, 295. The full name of Du Pisne is not known.
20. "Historical Background of the Cane River Area."
21. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland Plantation*, 7. Bermuda was divided by family members in 1867 at which time the Oakland parcel received its name. Chapters 3-5 will generally refer to the property as "Bermuda" when citing facts.
22. Jean Pierre Philippe and Catherine represent the first generation of their families to live in America.

Natchitoches by the time their first child arrived in 1726.[23] Prud'homme worked at the fort in Natchitoches as a trader and merchant, and his family remained there for the rest of their lives.[24] During their marriage, Jean Pierre Phillippe and Catherine had at least seven children, including their sixth son, Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme, who went on to train as a doctor in France before returning to Natchitoches as *Docteur de Roi* (royal doctor) and establishing a hospital at the southwest corner of Jefferson and Touline streets.[25]

In 1756, Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme, who was born at Natchitoches Post, married Marie Francoise Chevert, of New Orleans.[26] Marie Francoise died in childbirth the following year, and in 1758, Jean-Baptiste married again. His second wife, Marie Josephine Charlotte Henriette Colantin, gave birth to at least eight children over the next twenty years.[27]

Even though the colony changed hands in 1763, going from France to Spain, both countries conducted a census in 1766. The 1766 French census does not appear to include the Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme household, although others



FIGURE 3-1. St. Jean Baptiste's 1764 map, "Suite du cours du fleuve St. Louis depuis la rivière d'Iberville jusq'à celle des Yasous," translated as "following the course of the Mississippi River from the river Iberville until end of the Yasous." Library of Congress. Annotated by Commonwealth to show approximate location of Oakland and Magnolia plantations, circled in red.

23. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 13.
24. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland Plantation*, 8.
25. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 13.
26. Jean-Baptiste and Marie Francoise represent the second generation of their families in America. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 13.
27. Prud'homme, "The Prud'homme Family," 1-2; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland Plantation*, 5-9.

with the surname of Prud'homme were recorded. The 1766 Spanish census, however, lists the household of "Jnǫ Baptǫ Prudhomme, Captain of Militia," counting one "man bearing arms," one woman, two boys, one girl, and two enslaved workers.[28]

Following his father's death in 1786, one of Jean-Baptiste's sons, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme, established his own plantation, Bermuda, which occupied more than 1,200 acres on both sides of the Red River, about 13 miles south of Natchitoches. The enormous property included the site of what would become Oakland Plantation in 1867.[29]

Three marriages in the Prud'homme family, beginning in 1782, linked the children of Jean Baptist and Marie Francoise Prud'homme to those of Jacque and Marie Poissot Lambre. The first marriage, in 1782, was between Jean Pierre Emmanuel and Catherine Lambre.[30] Then, in 1789, daughter Prud'homme's daughter Susanne married Remy Lambre. Finally, in 1791, Antoine Prud'homme married Marie Lambre. These connections between the two families and subsequent establishment of neighboring plantations along the Red River created ties that would last well into the twentieth century.[31]

Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme died in Natchitoches on October 21, 1786. His wife, Marie Françoise, survived two years after her husband passed away. That year, in 1788, their children, including sons, Jean Pierre Emmanuel, Antoine, Dominque, and Francois, and daughters Marie Louise, Nanette, and Susanne, inherited the family estate.[32]

The 1810 census provides the first written documentation of Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme's residence at Bermuda, on Section 104, Township 8 North, Range 6 (Figure 3-2). The two adjoining plantations belonged to Prud'homme's brother Antoine and brother-in-law, Remy Lambre. The 1810 census also listed "Emman'l Prud'homme" as residing on the property with "a wife and three children."[33] One of these children was Pierre Phanor Prud'homme I, who was born on June 24, 1807.[34]

In addition to his responsibilities as a planter, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme became an active leader in Natchitoches Parish, serving as parish representative at the first constitutional convention following the United States purchase of the Louisiana Territory. The convention was held in New Orleans in 1811.[35]

LeComte Family

Jean Baptiste LeComte was born in Paris, France. Around 1753, he obtained a land grant from the French government consisting of two parcels of land, one on each side of the Red River, today known as Cane River Lake.[36] LeComte, who married his fifteen-year-old bride, Marguerite LeRoy, at "Rivière aux Cannes," or Cane River, in

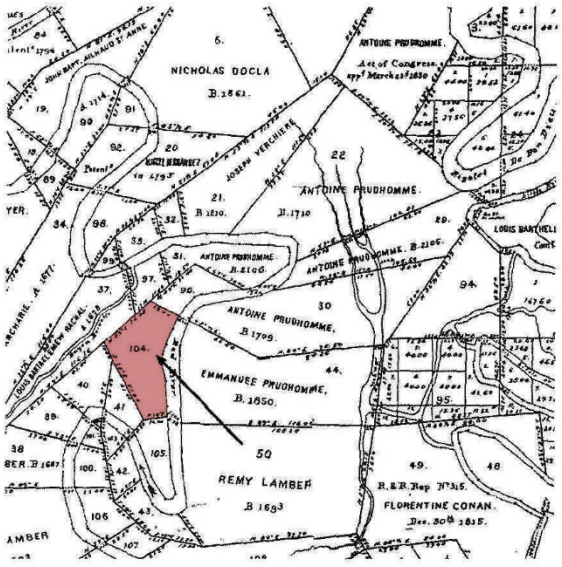


FIGURE 3-2. Walmsley's 1818 plat of Bermuda (now Oakland) Plantation. CARI. Annotated by Commonwealth to show location of Section 104.

28. Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*, 16.
29. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 14.
30. Third generation in America; first generation at Oakland Plantation.
31. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 14.
32. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 15.
33. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 15.
34. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 15.
35. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 15.
36. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 9.

1756, would become the patriarch of the family that would establish Magnolia Plantation.[37] Marguerite was born and baptized in the parish of Natchitoches. With Jean Baptiste, she had three children: two daughters, Marie Louise Marguerite and Marie Francoise, and a son, Ambrose (sometimes "Ambroise"), who was born on December 24, 1760.[38]

LeComte and his family are enumerated on both the French and Spanish censuses of 1766 but recorded differently in each. The Spanish census listed LeComte, spelled "Juan Batista Leconte," as the owner of eleven cattle, two hogs, one gun, and eight arpents of land. The French census, however, recorded that he had eight "horned cattle," four horses and mares, eight pigs, and 2,000 pounds of tobacco. The only other early record of the family was when Ambrose was listed in the 1780 Militia Roll as a "cavalryman."[39]

In mid-December 1783, Ambrose LeComte married Heléne Cloutier.[40] Heléne was the daughter of Alexis Cloutier and Maria Rachal, who owned a plantation near the modern community of Cloutierville, named for the family.[41] On May 29, 1784, Jean Baptiste LeComte died, and was buried in an unknown location. Two years later, on June 13, 1786, Jean Baptiste's grandson, Jean Baptiste II, was born to Ambrose and Heléne.[42]

Enslaved American Indians and African Americans

As mentioned above, the first group of enslaved individuals, Chitimacha Indians, arrived in Natchitoches in 1716 with St. Denis and another Frenchman. By the early 1720s, they were joined by twenty enslaved Africans. The first of two ships from West Africa with a cargo of slaves, or *bozales*, arrived in French settlements along the Gulf Coast in 1719. It was approximately three years later that Natchitoches farmers brought the first enslaved Africans to the area.[43] Within a decade of the founding of Natchitoches, the number of enslaved Africans, at thirty-two, far exceeded the number of enslaved American Indians, which was reported to be between one and three.[44]

In 1731, the French government, which considered Louisiana a hopeless backwater, stopped bringing enslaved Africans to the colony. By then, the number of slaves descended from American Indians and Africans outnumbered the number of French settlers in Natchitoches. By 1763, more than half of the free households in Natchitoches included at least one enslaved person; by the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were almost 1,000 enslaved people on Natchitoches plantations, the largest number in any Louisiana community outside the Mississippi River Delta.[45] The import of slaves directly from Africa became illegal in the United States after 1808 but did not completely stop for many years. Planters, however, could also increase their slaveholdings through succession sales and foreclosures.[46]

The status of enslaved American Indians was very different from that of enslaved Africans. There were substantially fewer slaves of American Indian descent; most were females without children and

37. Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 1.
38. Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 1. The CARI museum collection includes the archeologically recovered wrought iron grave marker for Marie Louise Marguerite LeComte Porter (CARI-183) from the Shallow Lake Cemetery.
39. Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 1-2.
40. The CARI museum collection includes the grave marker for Hélène Cloutier LeComte (CARI 28324), which was removed from its original location in the Shallow Lake Cemetery.
41. Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 2. The house would later be associated with Kate Chopin and housed, for a time, the Bayou Folk Museum.
42. Blackwell, "Jean Baptiste Lecomte I Family Tree"; Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 2.
43. Burton and Smith, "Slavery in the Colonial Louisiana Backcountry," 136.
44. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 56, 62; Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 48.
45. Burton and Smith, "Slavery in the Colonial Louisiana Backcountry," 136-137.
46. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 21-22.

were often incorporated into the owner's family.[47] In contrast, more African men than women were sold in Natchitoches in the first two years of slave trade, although sufficient women were sold to enable a natural increase in their number.[48]

When the Spanish regained control of the colony in 1766, the Spanish Bourbons resumed the African slave trade to Louisiana, leading to a dramatic increase in the number of enslaved Africans near New Orleans.[49] This was not the case, however, in the Natchitoches area, where the enslavement of American Indians was more common, and the number of enslaved Africans increased by natural means rather than through importation.[50] As a result, the enslaved population at the end of the eighteenth century in Natchitoches was characterized by "stable, creole families, and despite its isolation on the distant frontier, the post was clean and orderly and unthreatened by the spectre [*sic*] of slave revolt" that haunted the gulf area.[51]

It is difficult to know just how many enslaved persons were owned by either the Prud'homme or LeComte families, but Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme was known to own slaves by the 1770s.[52] Similarly, his son, Emmanuel, also started acquiring enslaved workers in the 1770s. It is likely that after his death in 1795, Jean Baptiste's sons inherited his slaves. Emmanuel's slave count doubled from nineteen to thirty-eight in 1795. Antoine, Emmanuel's brother, increased his holding from three slaves in 1790 to twenty-six five years later.[53]

The number of the enslaved also increased naturally. In one such case, a slave, Hilario, who was described as a "Guinea Negro" due to his recent arrival in Louisiana, was owned by a planter name Langlois who lived near Cloutierville. It is not clear how Hilario met Jeanne, an enslaved woman owned by Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme, but in 1809 Hilario and Jeanne became the parents of a son, Hilaire, who was named in honor of his father. Hilaire was baptized on December 7, 1809, along with twenty-two other slaves on the Prud'homme plantation. Because Hilaire was born when Jeanne was a slave, the law made him a slave there as well.[54]

Free Persons of Color

Few *gens de couleur libres*, or free person of color, resided in Louisiana during the French period (1699–1763), but this changed during the Spanish era (1763–1800). The French law, *Code Noir,* governing the treatment of slaves was strongly enforced, and to obtain freedom was almost impossible (see "*Code Noir*," in "Politics and Government," below). The transformation was largely due to the different laws imposed by the Spanish, which allowed for easier manumission.

Unlike with *Code Noir*, under Spanish slave laws, freed people or African Americans born free could not be reduced to slavery (see *Las Siete Partidas*, in "Politics and Government," below).[55] Thus, Louisiana's *libre* population grew significantly from 1763–1800. Even in Natchitoches, the *libre* population expanded, although not as dramatically as in coastal settlements like New Orleans.[56]

In Natchitoches between 1774 and 1803, there were a total of eighty-four manumitted slaves, including forty-nine females and thirty-five males. Statistics indicate that 82.1 percent of manumissions were *graciosas* (emancipation with conditions), 8.3 percent were third-party purchases, and 8.3 percent were self-purchases. A tribunal procedure, organized to establish a

47. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 55.
48. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 56, 62; Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 48.
49. Burton and Smith, "Slavery in the Colonial Louisiana Backcountry," 138.
50. Burton and Smith, "Slavery in the Colonial Louisiana Backcountry," 138-139.
51. Burton and Smith, "Slavery in the Colonial Louisiana Backcountry," 139. Please see pages 3-1 and 3-2 for a discussion of term "Creole."
52. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 14.
53. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 14.
54. National Park Service, *The Helaire Family of Oakland Plantation*.
55. Refer to the section, "Code Noir," below.
56. Burton, "Free People of Color," 173-197.

purchase price when a slave owner is reluctant to manumit, was utilized only once.[57] It is also estimated that after 1803, three-fourths of all manumissions in Louisiana were completed for slaves with a large amount of white blood.[58]

Emancipated slaves, as free persons of color, were theoretically equal under the law with other free people; however, social prejudices continued against anyone of color, often making it impossible to develop a sense of communal identity until the beginning of the American period in 1803.[59] In larger cities, like New Orleans, *libres* could more easily distance themselves from their past, and more closely identify with the surrounding white community. However, in the sparsely populated area in and around Natchitoches, *libres* struggled to exist within the bounds of social prejudice. It was not until the beginning of the American period, in 1803, that *libres* were able to begin to distance themselves from the slave society, enabled, in part, by the change of government away from the French or Spanish rule.[60]

One of the most interesting demonstrations of the manumission process and its results was the experience of Marie Thérèse Coincoin. In 1767, Coincoin, a native-born enslaved woman, was leased by her owner, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, to an unknown French soldier at Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches. Within a year, however, Coincoin had become the common-law wife of another man, a French planter named Pierre Thomas Metoyer; between 1768 and 1787, she bore his ten children. Because their mother was still enslaved, the Metoyer children born before 1780 were also considered the property of St. Denis. In 1776, Pierre Metoyer purchased the first four of his children, and in 1778, he purchased the fifth child and Marie Thérèse. Then, in 1780, he purchased the remaining children born before their mother's purchase.[61]

A newly arrived priest, not pleased with the Metoyer's living arrangement, forced them to sever the relationship. Pierre went on to marry and have children with another woman, Marie Thérèse Buard, although he continued to support Coincoin and their children. Metoyer helped her file her first application for a land grant from the French government, from which she obtained 800 arpents (677 acres). In 1794, Coincoin obtained two additional tracts, the largest of which consisted of another 800 arpents. Eventually, she owned almost the entire area 17 miles south of Natchitoches. In 1796, one of Coincoin's sons, Louis Metoyer, bought 911 acres of land on which he would eventually build Melrose Plantation.[62]

Lifeways

Health

Disease was a constant source of suffering and death during the colonial period. A virulent outbreak of either smallpox or the bubonic plague struck Natchitoches between October 15, 1777, and January 12, 1778.[63] The epidemic was considered one of the worst during the period and resulted in the death of seventy people in three months, twice the number of dead from another epidemic two years earlier, when twenty-nine people died. All told, there were ninety-one deaths from disease during the colonial period, largely among the older children and young to middle-aged adults.[64]

The American Indian population was particularly susceptible to the diseases brought to the region by the European settlers. An unspecified epidemic in the winter of 1777–1778 resulted in many deaths among tribal members living in the Natchitoches vicinity. A smallpox outbreak at the beginning of the nineteenth century further devastated the native population that lived near the post at Natchitoches. By 1805, the Natchitoches had been

57. Burton, "Free People of Color," 189-190.
58. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 162.
59. Burton, "Free People of Color," 175.
60. Burton, "Free People of Color," 175; Hanger, *Bounded Lives*, 57.
61. Greenlee, *Melrose Plantation*, 8-1.
62. Greenlee, *Melrose Plantation*, 8-2.
63. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 45, 179.
64. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 179.

reduced to just twelve men and eighteen women, and the Yatasis to eight men and twenty-five women.[65] Overall, between the 1780s and 1803, it is estimated that, from a high of approximately 5,000 people total, the members of the Natchitoches, Yatasis, and Adaes tribes, which lived within a day's travel from the post, were reduced to as few as 100. Of the Kadohadachos and Hasinais, only 2,000 remained living within 75 miles of the post.[66]

Europeans fared much better, having greater immunity to these diseases than the natives. There is little information on the physicians, midwives, or other healers who served the settlers or enslaved people during the colonial period in Natchitoches. However, it is known that Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme, born in 1735 as the sixth son of Jean Pierre Philippe and Catherine Picard Prud'homme, was trained as a doctor in France. He returned to Natchitoches to practice and established a hospital at the southwest corner of Jefferson and Touline, which he kept in operation until switching his attention to planting and farming full-time in the 1750s.[67]

Religion

Roman Catholicism prevailed among the European settlers of Natchitoches during the colonial period. It was considered the state religion and dictated everything from how to raise children to how to treat the enslaved. Capuchin priests baptized enslaved workers during the early years of the colony; in the case of those living on plantations, the men and women of "high estate" would often serve as godparents. In contrast, the Jesuits typically focused their efforts on American Indians and had little interest in the enslaved population.[68]

Roman Catholic slave owners believed strongly that the African slaves should be baptized into Christianity. As they were forced to speak French or English, enslaved Africans were also forced to adopt their masters' faith.[69] Some traces of the African religion rites and beliefs survived but were the strongest when the bondsmen were only two or three generations away from Africa.

The many practices collectively called *voodoo*, which came from the West African word for "spirit," arose as groups of Africans from many different regions and religious practices tried to make sense of their new world.

Acts that may have been part of *voodoo* rites were sometimes documented, including a note in the 1825 diary of Henry Marston:

> I was obliged to give Basil a severe flogging to day for lying about a phial which was found in his possession containing two ground puppies [salamanders] as they were called – the negroes were under some apprehensions that he intended to do mischief.[70]

An Afro-Caribbean phenomenon, *voodoo* is an amalgam of African, Roman Catholic, and American Indian traditions.

Priests and other religious teachers in Louisiana felt that their efforts towards saving the souls of the enslaved were being thwarted by slave owners. One priest complained that "masters. . .were solely bent on getting profit from work of their slaves but cared not a whit about the salvation of the poor wretches." Although they were "eager to be instructed," he was concerned that many Negroes died without baptism because of the resistance of their owners.[71]

Overall, Roman Catholic priests and laymen were considered to have provided good religious care in the more populated centers during the colonial period. Rural areas, though, including outlying plantations, had little religious support, so the government of Spain stepped in to help. In 1789, Charles IV of Spain issued a royal decree requiring

65. Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 86.
66. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 45.
67. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 14.
68. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 133.
69. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 133.
70. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 134.
71. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 135.

that chaplains be installed on remote plantations. The decree also required the segregation of quarters for unmarried enslaved men and women, and encouraged slave marriages. Historian Joe Gray Taylor noted that "like other royal decrees pertaining to the welfare of Negroes and Indians in the Spanish colonies, this one was observed only when it was convenient."[72]

Although accessible by water from the Mississippi and Red rivers, Natchitoches was considered one of the remote outposts in the territory. Prior to 1729, Spanish priests from the mission at Los Adayes periodically made their way to Natchitoches to care for the residents, and eventually constructed a log church within Fort St. John Baptist des Natchitoches.[73] A few years later a second Roman Catholic church was erected, believed to have been at the corner of Front and Church Streets.[74] A third, St. Francis, was constructed in stone around 1771–1773, but it was eventually destroyed by fire. Records indicate that from 1806 to 1812, there was no priest at St. Francis other than one who visited from elsewhere twice a year.[75]

The Roman Catholic church requires that burials occur only in consecrated ground, or in a place that has been liturgically blessed. The first recorded cemetery in Natchitoches, later known as "Catholic Cemetery," was located within the walls of Fort St. Jean Baptiste. A second cemetery, later known as the "American Cemetery," was established off the island within the town of Natchitoches proper."[76]

Shallow Lake Cemetery, associated with LeComte's original land grant, was established between Derry and Cloutierville on the opposite side of Cane River Lake from the present Magnolia Plantation.[77] The first burials in Shallow Lake Cemetery were made between November 15 and 25, 1794, before Magnolia was established.[78]

While the primary religion in Louisiana was Roman Catholicism, there were some Protestant assemblies, although early records of them are scarce. Protestant ministers and preachers rarely established permanent congregations, but tended to travel from place to place. Baptist minister and free mulatto from South Carolina, Joseph Willis, for example, made several trips into the state to preach, traveling as far north as Opelousas around 1810.[79]

Education

The first public school in the Louisiana territory under French rule opened in New Orleans around 1725, over twenty-five years after the French began to settle the area; before then, there were not enough families yet to warrant the expense. The small school was run by a Capuchin superior, had two teachers, and was open to all boys of the colony, including American Indians. There, children learned reading and writing, and even Latin. After a few years of operation, however, the school became unable to pay for the building or even buy books, because, though the church had a contract with the Company of the Indies to supply all things religious, including facilities and books, the company refused to make good on its promises.[80] The school finally closed, and the building fell into ruins. Plans to rebuild the "school for the poor" were considered in 1740, but never executed, possibly because of ongoing

72. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 135.
73. The Association of Natchitoches Women, *Natchitoches*, 20.
74. D'Antoni, "Church Records," 59, 63; Association of Natchitoches Women, *Natchitoches*, 20.
75. D'Antoni, "Church Records," 66.
76. The Joyous Coast Foundation, *Images of America: Natchitoches*, 71; Mills, *The Forgotten People,* 302.
77. National Park Service, Archaeological Site Record Form, Shallow Lake Cemetery; Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 3.
78. Mills, "The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color."
79. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 136.
80. The Company of the Indies, also known as the Company of the West and the Mississippi Company, was a corporation that held a business monopoly in the French colonies of North America and the West Indies.

tensions between the Capuchin and Jesuits in the colony. By the time Spain assumed control of the Territory in the 1760s, there was no known government-supported school for boys.[81]

A school for girls was established by Ursuline nuns, who were brought to the territory by the Jesuits. By 1728, the girls' school had twenty-three boarding students and twenty-five day students. The day students were poor children from the local community and were taught separately from the boarding students. The school was open to girls of any race, including American Indians, the French, and Creoles, whether free or enslaved. The Ursulines were so successful in this and subsequent schools that they continue to run schools in New Orleans today.[82]

Public education was not available in the rest of the territory. Those who could afford it hired private tutors or organized private schools for their children as early as the 1730s. The wealthiest of the territory sent their male children to school in France. Among those who did so were the Metoyers of Isle Brevelle. The family, descendants of Marie Thérèse Coincoin, were Creole of color and faced prejudices by other planters because of their Negro blood. The same prejudices were less prevalent in France, and all but one of the boys in the second generation of the family were schooled there.[83]

Those who could not afford tutors, private schools, or a Continental education sent their children, usually boys, out to apprentice at a skill or craft; apprenticeships often included instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Apprenticeships were open to boys of any race, free or enslaved. During the Spanish period, the law required that all apprentices be taught to read and write. Girls, who were not allowed to apprentice, were usually sent to the Ursulines for an education.[84]

In 1771, the Spanish government, which had taken over the colony in 1762, called for the establishment of schools in the Louisiana territory. At the time, it was estimated that only half of the population of Louisiana was literate; most signed their allegiance to Spain using a mark rather than a signature. Unfortunately for the residents of Natchitoches Parish, the Spanish government had only one school, and it was in New Orleans. This may have been partially due to the Francophone colonists' lack of desire to participate in any institutes established by Spain, and most importantly, to not attend classes taught in Spanish.[85]

In 1803, after the territory was returned first to France, and then sold to the United States, the state of education in Louisiana had changed little since Spain had first assumed control of the area forty years earlier. The first steps to establish a functioning educational system in Louisiana fell to the newly appointed governor, William C. C. Claiborne.[86]

Claiborne recognized that education could be a way to Americanize the largely foreign population of the Louisiana Territory. The system Claiborne proposed in 1804 included establishing a "university," or system of schools, including the College of New Orleans, that would teach Latin, Greek, English, French, and Spanish; sciences; philosophy; and literature. Academies for boys and girls, as well as a library, would be established in each district. The plan proposed semi-annual lotteries to raise up to $50,000 a year. The legislature supported the plan, but the lottery plan failed, and no progress was made.[87]

In 1806, Claiborne attempted to establish parish schools, this time proposing a tax to finance their operation. The legislature did not feel a tax would be accepted by the public and instead, proposed a tuition-based system in the version of the bill they passed. In 1809, however, they proposed an

81. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 3.
82. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 3-4.
83. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 207.
84. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 5.
85. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 6.
86. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 7.
87. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 7.

education tax, but made it voluntary. At the start of the 1809 school year, only Pointe Coupée Parish had established public schools.[88]

In 1811, Claiborne finally succeeded in establishing public schools in Louisiana. After giving up on local taxation for school support, Claiborne appealed to the US government, which, although in support of the idea, did not have the funds available. It was not until a discrepancy in the territorial treasury was discovered that the legislature was able to allot $39,000 to the College of New Orleans and twelve academies in the parishes, including Natchitoches.[89]

Occupations

Planters

Between 1718 and 1731, the Company of the Indies, under Spanish influence, attempted to set up a plantation-based agricultural system in Louisiana. During that period, settlers around Natchitoches experimented with various cash crops, including rice, fruit, and wheat, and found that tobacco performed well in the region. After the French assumed control of the colony in 1731, the Crown neglected the colony and tobacco production languished. During the subsequent Spanish period, leaders set out to reinvigorate the colony and large-scale tobacco production, but then withdrew their support in the early 1790s. By 1803, when the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory, Natchitoches settlers had successfully made the transformation to a cotton-based economy, which led to the formation of a wealthy, slave-owning planter class.[90]

During this time, Natchitoches evolved relatively quickly from a fort and outpost on the edge of the French and Spanish empires to a settled area of large farms. Emmanuel Prud'homme, who was in the third generation of his family born in Natchitoches, established his 51-acre farm by the end of the eighteenth century and had expanded it substantially by 1810. Records indicate that Emmanuel Prud'homme enslaved only a few people initially, but by 1795 owned thirty-eight people. Similarly, Emmanuel's brother, Antoine, started his farm with just three slaves in 1790, but grew that number to twenty-six in 1795.[91] As slave owners of some substance, the Prud'homme brothers had entered the planter class.[92]

Enslaved Persons

During the colonial era, enslaved farm workers cleared the fields for planting, and produced crops and foodstuffs, while enslaved artisans assisted with the construction of homes and outbuildings.[93] Slaves were often responsible for constructing the public levee, which protected their owners' lands from floodwaters.[94] Even enslaved children were kept busy with tasks such as "beating continually on a frying pan or kettle" to keep the birds away from rice fields. In some cases

88. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 8.
89. Blokker, *Education in Louisiana*, 9.
90. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, Chapter 6.
91. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 14. CARI has recently accessioned a gift of Antoine Prud'homme's ca. 1851 Act of Donation and Sharing, a document by which he planned to transfer ownership of 89 enslaved workers and thousands of acres among heirs upon his death (CARI Facebook Page post April 16, 2018).
92. One source defines the planter class as "[t]he wealthiest and most powerful agricultural class in the antebellum South, planters held twenty slaves or more. With means and resources beyond those of their plain-folk and yeoman neighbors, typical planters hired overseers to manage the day-today duties of their laborers and enjoyed prestige and reputation beyond the reach of those beneath them socially." Sherrod, "Plain Folk," 1.
93. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 24. CARI has an extensive collection of tools and other goods made and used by enslaved workers to construct structures and site features (National Park Service, *CARI Foundation Document*, 8).
94. The exact location of this public levee is unknown.

enslaved workers were hired out by their masters for just a day or for a longer period.[95]

Farmers/Ranchers

The people of the Natchitoches area grew food to feed themselves, including Indian corn, beans, melons, potatoes, and other vegetables. They would have also grown tobacco for personal use, and herbs for medicines and teas. The colonists were frequently so successful at growing food crops that they could sell their produce, or trade for other goods. By the time the Spanish gained control of the Louisiana territory, almost two-thirds of households in Natchitoches, that is, fifty out of seventy-seven, had produced a total of 2,359 barrels of corn and 258 barrels of beans.[96]

Initially, French colonists in Louisiana typically kept a few horses, cows, pigs, sheep, and goats for personal use, but shied away from large-scale livestock raising. Because early trade with St. Denis provided the American Indians with horses, the Natchitoches settlers were able to acquire forty-two horses from the Hasinai tribes by 1722. By 1776, settlers in Natchitoches owned over 1,200 horses, a number that dropped to just over 1,000 in 1787. Similarly, the settlers were able to increase their numbers of cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats throughout the 1700s.[97]

The concept of the livestock ranch, or *vacherie*, did not reach the area until Spain assumed full control of Louisiana in 1769.[98] Most *vacheries* were owned by planters and were investments to guard against potential economic downturns from other investments. Planters did not usually operate the *vacheries*, but left them to the management of *vachères*, or cowboys, a diverse group that typically came from poor families. Many *vachères* were enslaved Africans belonging to the planter, but some were American Indians, white Americans, or mixed-race people of American Indian and Euro-American ancestry, called *métis*. Most *vacherie* operators were male and unmarried, minding the ranches for the absentee planters. The few owners who actually lived on their *vacherie*s were generally poor people of mixed race, American Indians who had joined with Creoles that had been excluded from tobacco trade, English-speaking settlers, and Spanish immigrants who could not access the plantation system.[99]

The first *vacheries* were established on islands in the rivers and swamps, where the surrounding water inhibited the movement of animals. Later *vacheries* were typically established fronting about 16 arpents along a waterway, usually downstream branches of the Red River, and extending into swampy scrublands beyond it for about 40 arpents.[100] The areas chosen for these ranches would not have been considered arable land and was best used as pasture.

Between 1786 and 1795, there were eleven Natchitoches residents with *vacheries*. After the Bourbon government pulled its support for locally grown tobacco, however, the number of *vacheries* grew and had more than tripled by 1803.[101]

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95. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 14-15. CARI's museum collection includes tools made and used by enslaved workers to build structures and site features that are now NHL resources.
96. The difference is that the planter focuses on producing a single cash crop, while a farmer grows a variety of crops to sell.
97. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 147.
98. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 146. *Vache* is French for "cow."
99. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 146-160.
100. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 160.
101. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 160. The House of Bourbon, which ran the French government, off and on, from 1589 to 1848, was the last royal family of France. Descendants of the House of Bourbon have served as kings or queens of Spain from 1700 to 1808, 1814 to 1868, 1874 to 1931, and since 1975. There are also Bourbons associated with royalty in Italy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Royde-Smith, "House of Bourbon."

Merchants

While Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches was nominally a military outpost, the reason it existed at all was to facilitate trade of European goods with the local American Indians. This required merchants, who would be responsible for obtaining goods and negotiating the trade. Among those who came to Natchitoches as merchants was Jean Pierre Phillippe Prud'homme, the patriarch of the Prud'homme family, who went on to establish Bermuda Plantation. Prud'homme and his young wife, Catherine Picard, had arrived in Natchitoches by 1726, where they remained the rest of their lives.[102]

Some of the colonists also provided banking services. Records also indicate that several free black planters, including the Metoyers in Natchitoches Parish, served as private bankers to their white neighbors.[103]

Politics and Government

From 1682 to 1763, Louisiana was part of the colonial holdings of France. Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches was intended to provide a presence in the area to halt Spanish movement east and the British push south and west, as well as to facilitate the much-needed trade with the local American Indians.[104]

After its defeat in the Seven Years' War, France lost the Louisiana territory to Spain by way of the 1763 Treaty of Paris. During Spain's rule, however, French immigration continued into the colony, including the first French-Canadian groups, who had been expelled by the British. Spanish-speaking immigrants also arrived between 1778 and 1783 from the Canary Islands and Andalusia, and settled just outside of New Orleans and westward to Texas. The population grew both naturally and via large numbers of slaves imported directly from Africa to work on their tobacco and cotton plantations.

In 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte, the new ruler of France, retook Louisiana from Spain via the Treaty of San Ildefonso and retained the colony until the United States purchased it in 1803. On April 30, 1812, Louisiana was admitted as a state.

Slavery Laws

Code Noir

The French Crown meddled little in issues around colonial agriculture but was more involved when it came to race relations and slavery. The *Code Noir*, or Black Code, in Louisiana was based on an earlier decree that King Louis XIV had issued in 1685 to cover the French islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Domingue.[105] The Code was highly influenced by Roman laws regarding slavery, but with significant differences that were most often detrimental to the enslaved person.[106] By 1724, the *Code Noir*, which also established the Roman Catholic Church in Louisiana, had ordered the expulsion of Jews, and added requirements that all slaves be instructed in the Catholic faith and married under its laws.[107]

The *Code Noir* was put forth as a means to provide protection for the enslaved people. To this end, it specified the minimum amount of food and clothing allowances, and granted the enslaved the right to complain to the public prosecutor should their maintenance be substandard. Furthermore, the code forbade the sale of young children separately from their mothers, stated that bondsmen were not to labor on Sunday, and specified that if they had been baptized, the enslaved could be granted burial in consecrated ground.[108] For the enslaved who were married and held by the same master, the Code also stated that they could not be sold separately and that their children could not be separated from their parents when under fourteen years of age. If a child was

102. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 13.
103. Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 107.
104. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 127.
105. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 63.
106. Schafer, *Slavery*, 2.
107. Schafer, *Slavery*, 1.
108. Schafer, *Slavery*, 1.

sold, the sale would be deemed null and void.[109] This provision was nullified under legislation passed by the first territorial legislature after the beginning of the American administration.[110]

The code also forbade the enslaved from owning property, obtained either through their own labor or inheritance. Nor could they hold office or be parties in a contract or litigants in court. In no case could slaves testify for or against whites, nor could they testify for or against any free person of color. Protections for the slave from cruel masters or mistresses, which were present in the Roman law, were eliminated.[111]

The *Code Noir* specified that if a slave were to be freed, it could only be done if their master or mistress was over twenty-five years old and gained permission from the *Counseil Supérior*, or governing body of the colony. Even with this permission, manumission (or act of the slave owner freeing his or her slaves) required a legitimate reason, such as the slave having saved the life of the owner, and was not to be done out of simple generosity. *Code Noir* prohibited self-purchase due to the belief that slaves would steal from their masters to gain their purchase price.[112]

The *Code Noir* also prescribed specific punishments for escaped slaves: if a slave escaped and was missing for at least a month, that person should have their

> ears cropped and be branded on one shoulder. For a second offence, he was to be hamstrung and branded on the other shoulder. Should he somehow manage to drag himself away a third time, he was to suffer death.[113]

The only exceptions were for the greater punishments of hamstringing and death, for which the offender was allowed an appeal to the superior court of the province before the punishment was completed.[114]

Las Siete Partidas

After Spain acquired Louisiana in 1763, *Code Noir* was replaced by Spanish slave law, *Las Siete Partidas*, which was much more beneficial to the enslaved. Under the Spanish system, a judge could enforce the sale of slaves who could prove that they were cruelly treated by their owners. In addition, slaveholders could free their slaves without permission from the government or proof of "meritorious acts." An enslaved person could also be manumitted under Spanish law by *graciosa,* purchase by a third party, through a tribunal, or by self-purchase, called *coartación.*[115]

Graciosa was a simple notarized act that included either outright emancipation, or manumission with conditions, usually requiring that the freed person continue to serve the owner until the owner's death. An interested third party, such as a relative or family friend, could also purchase the enslaved individual specifically for emancipation. If a slaveholder rejected other types of manumission, then a tribunal could be convened to establish a purchase price for the slave. Once the payment had been made, the tribunal would assure that the former owner would not interfere with the former bondsperson. Most importantly, the enslaved person could undergo *coartación*, which forced recalcitrant owners to honor previous emancipation pledges or agreements.[116] Using this process, the enslaved would petition to have themselves appraised and then purchase themselves from even unwilling masters or mistresses at their judicially appraised market value. This gave enslaved persons working for their freedom an interest in the system, making them unlikely to participate in insurrectionary plots, and motivating them to be industrious laborers.[117]

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109. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 12.
110. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 22.
111. Schafer, *Slavery*, 1-2.
112. Schafer, *Slavery*, 1-3; Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 63.
113. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 168.
114. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 168.
115. Schafer, *Slavery*, 2.
116. Burton, "Free People of Color," 182-183.
117. Schafer, *Slavery*, 2.

United States

In the new state of Louisiana, Spanish land grants continued to be honored, church properties remained with the church, and the practice of Catholicism was not curtailed. In addition, the limited rights of free people of color, including the ability to work for wages, obtain an education, own property, inherit or bequeath holdings, seek redress of grievances in court, and travel abroad, were retained. However, an enslaved person could still not vote, hold public office, or marry a white person. Emancipation was made more difficult as enslaved individuals no longer had the right to petition to buy their freedom from an unwilling owner.[118]

The United States also required that laws passed by the state legislature be made available in "the language of the Constitution of the United States." In other words, the legal document had to be in English; however, the same provision did allow that French could serve as the ordinary language of public affairs.[119]

The new state of Louisiana established its own laws regarding slavery, which required that:

- Owners of runaways inform a magistrate, who made an official record of the fact, and inform the magistrate when the fugitive returned. If the owner failed to inform the magistrate of a runaway, he was responsible for any property damage done by the Negro before this formality was observed.
- Whoever captured an absconding slave be entitled to $10 for the capture. Captors were also to receive fifty cents per league [about three miles] for the distance the prisoner was transported to jail.
- When an absconding slave was lodged in jail, his master was responsible for the cost of his maintenance and for the cost of advertising his detention. If the imprisoned slave was not claimed within two years, he was to be sold to the highest bidder, and the costs of his capture and captivity paid from the sum received for him. The remainder of the sale monies were to be held for a year and a day and if still not claimed by the former owner, the monies were to be devoted to public use.
- Any slave found on horseback without written permission receive twenty-five lashes and be sent back home at the cost of his master of ten cents a mile.
- Any armed slave and any slave who refused to surrender on demand could be fired upon. If killed, the Negro was to be appraised, and his master was to receive compensation up to, but not exceeding, $300.
- A search for a runaway could be carried out anywhere on any plantation without prior notice, except that the searchers might not enter a dwelling of the owner or "other places under lock and key."
- No slave was to be sent off a plantation without written permission from his master or overseer. If a slave was found abroad without such permission, he was to receive twenty lashes and be sent back to his master at a cost of one dollar. Any person who gave a pass to another person's slave without authority was liable to a fine of $50 or thirty days imprisonment.
- Any slave found away from his master's plantation be seized by force, though he might not be killed unless he resisted arrest.
- Any free person injured in the pursuit of a runaway be rewarded by the territory, and if a slave engaged in pursuit of a fugitive was wounded, his master was to be compensated.[120]

Natchitoches would have been subject to these laws, but with the town located less than 50 miles

118. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 43.
119. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 43.
120. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 168-169.

from Texas, there was great concern that the slaves that did escape from local plantations would simply run to Spanish territory, never to be seen again. These fears were realized as early as 1804, when records indicate that many slaves did seek freedom past the territory's western border. In response, the territorial government passed legislation in 1809, ensuring that, as an incentive to Spanish authorities, if slaves fled into Louisiana from Spanish territory, they would be returned to their owners without the assessment of usual fees.[121]

Another likely hiding place for escaped slaves was in the home of free African Americans, so a fine of thirty *livres* for each day the runaway had been harbored in someone's home was established. Additionally, the owners of escaped slaves were empowered to seek out their missing property, or have someone else seek them out, in any way they considered proper.[122]

United States laws also addressed when and how a slave could be freed:

> No slave could be freed unless he was at least thirty years of age and had not been guilty of bad conduct for the preceding four years. An exception to these restrictions could be made if the person in question had saved the life of his master, his mistress, or one of their children. The master who desired to free one or more of his Negroes was required to appear before a judge and make an affidavit of his intentions. The judge then posted a notice of the applicant's intention to emancipate his slave or slaves and allowed forty days for objections to be registered. If no objections were made, the judge issued documents which made the slave a free man. The former master was required to make sure that the freedman should not become a charge (or burden) on the state, whether through insanity, sickness, old age, or otherwise. The executor of an estate who was under instructions to emancipate slaves belonging to the estate followed the same procedure as the owner of a slave.

This law was amended in 1813 to allow parish judges to free their own slaves before a justice of the peace instead of requiring them to go before the superior court.[123]

Land Divisions

Land in the French colony of Louisiana was divided into linear parcels, or "long lots," using a French land division called an arpent, which equals 0.84625 acres (Figure 3-3).[124] A typical long lot is arranged with its short end aligned along a navigable stream or river and extending inland into the riverine forests and pastures beyond. This democratic system allowed each landowner to have water access, land for farming and pasture, and woodland for harvesting. The system was continued by the Spanish and the United States even after it acquired the Louisiana Purchase. A typical French long lot would have been about 2 to 4 arpents wide and 40 to 60 arpents deep.[125]

As part of its attempt to attract new settlers to the colony, the French Crown granted land in arpents to every new immigrant for a home site and



FIGURE 3-3. Detail from the 1937 USGS map of the Cloutierville quad, showing the pattern of French long lots. USGS.

121. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 171.
122. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 169.
123. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 154.
124. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 22.
125. "Arpent." Similar land grants were utilized, and continue to be evident, on the landscape in Canada along the St. Lawrence River as well as in several Michigan communities, including Detroit.

fields.[126] Granted parcels had to be cleared within two years or revert to the Crown, and two-thirds of the land had to be cleared before the original grantee could sell the property to a new owner.[127] Most new settlers in the colony received lands adjacent to rivers and streams, typically one arpent (approximately 192 feet) wide and 40 arpents (or nearly 8,000 feet) deep (see Figure 3-3).[128]

After the Spanish obtained the colony from France in 1863, they continued the French land survey system; however, under the Spanish system, settlers received one arpent for each adult in the family, including slaves. The additional property, unless it was on the Mississippi River, could be expanded up to 800 arpents, provided it could be cultivated. Because of demand, the amount of land available on the Mississippi was less than elsewhere in the Territory.[129]

When the United States obtained Louisiana, it wanted to implement the township and range land survey method, which was already being utilized across most of the country, in the new territory.[130] Typically with this survey method, a "township" of 36 square miles is established, then further divided into thirty-six one-square-mile sections. In Louisiana, it was determined that much of the state would not benefit from this type of division, given the amount of unsalable swamp. As a result, in 1811, Congress passed an act that

> allowed surveyors to survey lands adjacent to rivers, lakes, bayous, and other water bodies into tracts fifty-eight poles in front by four hundred sixty-five poles in depth. This is three feet short of five arpents frontage and eight feet less than forty arpents in depth. [131,132]

The act was a good compromise that generally followed the French pattern, but using American surveying units.

The United States also made jurisdictional land divisions for the purpose of governing. In 1805, the legislature divided Louisiana Territory into twelve parishes, including Natchitoches (Figure 3-4). The original parish included the entire ecclesiastical parish of St. Francis, an area that measured 120 miles long by 70 miles wide. Subsequently, Caddo, Claiborne, Webster, Bossier, part of Lincoln, Sabine, De Soto, Bienville, part of Winn, Red River, and part of Grant parishes were organized out of the original Natchitoches parish.[133]

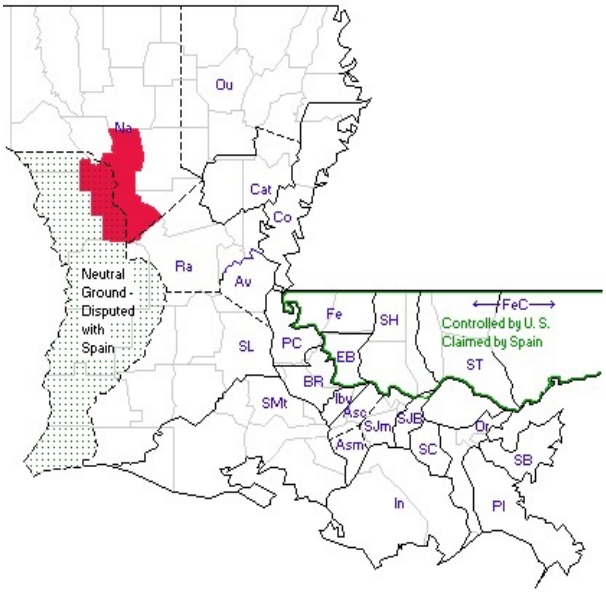


FIGURE 3-4. Map of modern Louisiana parish boundaries overlaid with the boundaries established by 1810. Natchitoches Parish is indicated in red. Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness.

126. Taylor, "Louisiana Land Survey Systems," 275-282.
127. National Park Service, "Historical Background."
128. Taylor, "Louisiana Land Survey Systems," 276-277.
129. Taylor, "Louisiana Land Survey Systems," 278.
130. Taylor, "Louisiana Land Survey Systems," 280.
131. A surveyor's pole is a unit of length that is equal to 5.5 yards or 16.5 feet.
132. Taylor, "Louisiana Land Survey Systems," 280.
133. Mills, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 256.

Transportation

Transportation in the Cane River area expanded in scope and scale at a gradual, consistent pace throughout the colonial period. There were two principal modes of transport during this time: by water on its rivers, bayous, and lakes, or by land, mostly associated with the establishment of *El Camino Real* by the Spanish in the early eighteenth century (Figure 3-5).

Water transport increased in volume as the number of settlers in the area grew. The ongoing fur trade and burgeoning production of agricultural commodities raised the number of small vessels moving through the area. In this period, merchants still relied on the smaller *pirogues* and flatboats that could navigate from Natchitoches southward on the Red River to meet the Atchafalaya River, and then to the Mississippi River.[134] Local goods and produce, including tobacco, indigo, furs, and other commodities bound for New Orleans and further transshipment to Europe—usually France or Spain—were sent by these smaller boats to the port of New Orleans,



FIGURE 3-5. Route of *El Camino Real* as it heads west from Natchitoches. NPS.

where they were loaded onto ocean-going vessels for the trip across the Atlantic.[135]

Early overland trade between the Spanish and American Indians west of the French colony followed established native trails. With official Spanish recognition of *El Camino Real* as an official government route around the turn of the eighteenth century, what had been a small, mostly underground trade with the Spanish *presidio* at Los Adaes was augmented by much larger transfers of goods and services into western Louisiana, and further on to Texas and San Antonio. Wider availability of horses and mules allowed for wagon transport of goods to other missions and *presidios* of New Spain. There is little evidence that trading or transport from Natchitoches extended as far as Mexico City, the center of government for the Spanish colony, which was too far away for economical transport of goods.[136]

Colonial Plantations

During the early colonial period, little attempt was made, initially, to develop agricultural resources in the Mississippi Valley. Instead, most of the early Europeans in the region sought their fortune in gold mines and other treasures. Former Governor D' Iberville's brother, Bienville, was the first to recognize the potential for the agricultural output of the region. In 1716, he prevailed upon *Compangie d'Occident*, a French corporation that represented the Crown, to establish a settlement on the Mississippi to serve as the capital. This site would become New Orleans. The first levees and construction ditches needed to protect farmlands around the new capital were under construction by 1719.[137]

134. A *pirogue* is an Indian-style dugout, common to south Louisiana, described as being large enough to carry 10- or 12-ton weight (up to 50 feet). They are propelled by short oars or paddles, about six feet long, with broad points that are not fastened to the vessel but used by the rowers like shovels. Adequately crewed *pirogues* can move between 9 and 12 miles per day upstream and more than double that downstream; Edwards and du Ballay de Verton, *A Creole Lexicon*, 158.
135. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation CLR*, 22-26.
136. "*El Camino Real de los Tejas* National Historic Trail."
137. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 7-10.

Five things were required for a plantation economy to develop: cheap fertile land; adequate supply of cheap, docile labor; efficient management, usually from outside the region; capital to establish the plantation; and a cash crop—something that is in demand in the densely populated parts of the world.[138] Cash crops in Louisiana were initially indigo or tobacco; these were later replaced by sugar and cotton. The plantation economy gained its labor through enslavement, and its management and capital from France.[139]

Labor

Colonizers of Louisiana, including Emmanuel Prud'homme and Jean Baptiste LeComte I, relied heavily on enslaved workers to clear land and till soil.[140] The enslaved African population steadily increased colony-wide from its establishment in 1714; by 1728 there were 2,600 people enslaved in Louisiana, and by 1731, there were 7,000.[141]

The demand for slave labor greatly increased with the introduction of tobacco as a cash crop. By the end of the 1760s, most Natchitoches households were engaged in tobacco production and twenty-eight of the forty-nine settlers owned slaves. Most of the planters who grew small amounts of tobacco (1,000 pounds or less) did not own slaves, while those who grew 2,500 pounds or more typically did. In the 1780s, Spain proposed to increase tobacco production in Natchitoches by supplying planters with enslaved workers on a two-year installment plan. Although there is no record of the plan being implemented, the enslaved population in Natchitoches increased from 521 in 1781 to 734 in 1787.[142]

When the United States acquired Louisiana in 1803, the country's ban on importing slaves caused Louisiana planters to fear an economic collapse. The ban was not well-enforced, however, and slaves were regularly smuggled into the state. Baptismal records indicate that the Prud'hommes continued to import slaves after the ban, and by the time of the 1810 census, Emmanuel Prud'homme owned fifty-three people.[143] Similarly, while in 1774, LeComte owned approximately five slaves, by the time of the 1787 census the LeComtes (then widowed Marguerite and son Ambrose I) owned twenty-three slaves, and by the close of the century, the combined holdings of the LeComtes included thirty-two slaves. By the time of the first US census in 1810, the family's slave-holdings had increased to fifty-four.[144]

Livestock and Crops

Livestock

In the pioneering years of the Louisiana colony, livestock was obtained by trade with the American Indians and Spanish, but the development of a large-scale livestock industry was hindered by French governmental restrictions. While large herds of cattle were being raised by the Spanish in east Texas, Natchitoches residents had little access to cattle at first. Records indicate that in 1722, only one resident had a twelve-head herd. St. Denis and François Derbanne owned nearly all of the cattle in town a few years later and began establishing *vacheries* raising horses, cattle, and swine to increase the livestock population. The French had no experience managing large herds of animals, so the *vacheries* were initially placed on islands in the Red River (what is today known as Cane River Lake) to prevent livestock from trampling crops.[145]

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138. Dicken, *A Regional Economic Geography*, 272.
139. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 20.
140. Bencel, "The Barataria and LaFourche Canal Company," 68.
141. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 20.
142. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 130-134.
143. Miller and Wood, *A Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation*, 17.
144. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 22-23.
145. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 146-149; Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 21. François Derbanne, a French-Canadian trader, accompanied St. Denis to Mexico in 1717, where he met and married a Chitimacha

Louisiana imported cattle from a variety of places to increase its herds. The number of cattle in the state rose from 1,400 in 1724 to nearly 10,000 in 1746.[146] In Natchitoches, the numbers fluctuated due to disease epidemics, but the cattle supply grew steadily from 460 in 1737 to 914 in 1765. By 1765, Natchitoches area farmers had established enough large horse and cattle herds to supply the rest of Louisiana.[147]

Cattle are mentioned in one of the earliest records associated with the agricultural efforts of the Prud'hommes and LeComtes. The French census of 1765/1766 reported Jean Baptiste Prud'homme's landholdings as "9 arpents of river frontage with its 'usual depth', as well as 6 horses, no cattle and 10 hogs."[148] The same census recorded Jean Baptiste LeComte as the owner of eight cattle, four horses and eight pigs. By 1787, the family's livestock holdings had grown to ninety cattle and twenty-nine horses.[149] In 1778, as did many planters of his time, Emmanuel Prud'homme established a ranch. He acquired one league of land (4,428.40 acres) at an Adaes Indian village where he "kept a man. . . a large stock of cattle, had a house, pens erected there on, necessary for a *vacherie*."[150]

A commercial livestock industry did not fully develop in Louisiana until after Spain took control of the territory after 1763. The Spanish government encouraged Natchitoches settlers to establish ranches by offering land grant concessions and opening livestock trade with Texas. Stock raisers began to establish *vacheries* in the forested hills and unproductive floodplain of the Red River and its tributaries. Colonial Governor Alejandro O'Reilley granted tracts of 42 square arpents to petitioners who had 100 head of cattle, some horses, sheep, and at least two hands. He also issued orders to dispose of stray cattle, and to build fences and brand cattle on Louisiana ranches. In 1779, livestock trade between Louisiana and Texas became legal, and the number of *vacheries* increased.[151]

Despite the increasing number of cattle, as late as the 1780s and 1790s, dairying as a practice was almost unheard of in Louisiana's interior. Bear oil was the chief substitute for butter.[152] This could be in part because so many cattle were kept far from home sites on *vacheries*, or elsewhere.

Hogs and sheep were more common in colonial Louisiana than cattle. One colonial period writer noted that "pork is very common; everybody rears it, even the slaves."[153] In 1737, there were 250 pigs counted in Natchitoches; the number had grown to 581 by 1765. Sheep were not nearly as common, but still present; in 1765 there were 157 sheep counted in Natchitoches.[154]

Horses and oxen were also found on farms and plantations in colonial Natchitoches. As of 1722, there were forty-two horses in Natchitoches, all but one of which belonged to St. Denis and Derbanne. However, through natural reproduction and trade, Natchitoches residents grew the horse herd to 225 in 1737 and to 581 in 1765.[155]

Every household kept poultry, including chickens and turkeys for food. It was also common in the eighteenth century for settlers to keep domestic pigeons among their livestock. This was less for a taste for squab than as a status symbol brought

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Indian woman before returning to Natchitoches. Their children blended in the French society without discrimination. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 30.

146. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 22-23.
147. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 23 and 14.
148. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 24.
149. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 22.
150. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 153-154.
151. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 146-154.
152. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 24.
153. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 23.
154. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 14, 149-147.
155. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 23.

with them from France, where only landowners had the right to keep pigeons.[156]

Crops

A variety of crops was cultivated during the colonial period, some with more success than others. The French government discouraged wine making, and flax and hemp production, because they would compete with established industries in the home country.[157] Grapes, hemp, and flax were grown only in small amounts, sufficient to fulfill personal needs, but not to become income-producing crops.

As mentioned above, Natchitoches colonists grew Indian corn, beans, potatoes, melons, and other fruits and vegetables in their gardens. Others tried establishing orchards of peaches, plums, and nuts, although those never grew beyond personal use. The American Indians grew root plants for dyes and the colonists attempted to grow them as well, but were not able to market them commercially. Wheat was also attempted, but did poorly in the hot and wet climate. Rice was unsuccessful as well, as "the ground [was] not damp enough."[158]

Among the first of the notable commercial crops from the Natchitoches area was tobacco. Overall, Natchitoches planters and farmers had good success with the crop; the area is credited with being the first place west of the Mississippi to establish a tobacco industry.[159] Natchitoches tobacco was considered especially high in quality and an important form of currency in the local economy, where it was used as a diplomatic, cultural, and business tool.[160] Demand for tobacco was so great that it required local planters to increase their numbers of slaves.[161] Because of the hands-off attitude of the French government, however, and the Crown's failure to promote the crop, its importance lagged behind that of Indian trade. In fact, the French Crown discouraged the production partly because of a Natchez Indian uprising, which occurred in opposition to tobacco production on their lands. Tobacco raising continued in Natchitoches on a small scale with a few planters sending their crop to market in New Orleans. In the mid-eighteenth century, only about thirty planters in Natchitoches were reportedly engaged in tobacco farming.[162]

The number of farmers engaged in tobacco production changed dramatically, however, when in 1762, the price of tobacco jumped to an unprecedented high, resulting in Natchitoches farmers increasing their output. The rise in price resulted in a mad land grab along the Red River and in 1765, Natchitoches raised over 80,000 pounds of tobacco, compared to just 5,000–6,000 pounds twenty years earlier.[163]

Tobacco production was enhanced by changes to economic policy when Spain took control of Louisiana in 1766, with reformers actively supporting the economy of their new colony. In 1770, Spain facilitated tobacco trade with Mexico and ordered that all Louisiana tobacco be sent there for use in New Spain. Because of the quality and quantity of tobacco produced in Louisiana in the second half of the 1770s, including Natchitoches, tobacco raising was banned in parts of Mexico to further promote cultivation in Louisiana. In 1786, Spanish officials decided to allow Louisiana to sell its tobacco directly to Spain. This required a huge increase in production, going from 1.5 million pounds of Louisiana tobacco produced in 1787 to over three million pounds in 1790. Natchitoches planters accounted for one-quarter of the output, a total 713,900 pounds. More than four-fifths of the tobacco raised in the Natchitoches area in 1790–

156. Poesch and Bacot, *Louisiana Buildings*, 142.
157. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 17.
158. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 127-128.
159. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 15.
160. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 128.
161. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 20.
162. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 127-129.
163. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 129-130.

1791 was grown on large plantations along the Red River, downstream from the town.[164]

The tobacco boom, however, busted not long after its peak. In 1790, storehouses in Spain reported a surplus of more than 3.7 million pounds. To curb the extreme surplus, Spain shocked the market and only purchased 40,000 pounds the following year. This heavily impacted Natchitoches planters, who were in debt from having recently acquired much land and slaves. In the following years, Natchitoches farmers continued to produce a small amount of tobacco, while other areas of the colony abandoned the crop altogether. The Spanish Crown stopped supporting tobacco altogether in the 1790s.[165] Although a productive crop statewide, it was eventually replaced by other cash crops. Natchitoches continued to grow a small amount after other parts of the state had abandoned the practice.[166]

Indigo was the second-most important crop produced in Natchitoches and across Louisiana during much of the colonial era. Indigo dye was needed to produce the blue textiles that were in vogue in France. As early as 1722, Louisiana planters began growing indigo and by 1725, they were exporting the crop. In 1754, there were forty-seven planters statewide that were exporting an estimated 82,000 pounds of indigo. The development of indigo as a cash crop was dependent on slave labor; handling the plants resulted in discoloring skin, which white workers loathed.[167]

Production of indigo as a cash crop ceased in the 1770s with the rise in tobacco profitability, but when tobacco prices fell in the 1790s, some Natchitoches planters returned to growing indigo. Between 1792 and 1798, six Natchitoches planters were noted for their success with the crop; all of them owned many slaves to make the time-consuming crop profitable. Indigo raising in Natchitoches, however, was short lived and by the early nineteenth century, accounts written by travelers to Natchitoches made no mention of the crop.[168]

The Prud'hommes were engaged in the early cash crop economy, growing both tobacco and indigo. Emmanuel Prud'homme was credited as being one of the earliest to grow tobacco as a cash crop. His tobacco was described as being "noted for its superior quality."[169] By the tobacco boom of the 1780s and 1790s, Prud'homme was one of the area's largest slave owners and tobacco producers, with thirty-eight slaves raising 47,000 pounds of tobacco. After the tobacco bust, like many of his contemporaries, Prud'homme began growing indigo. In 1795, he hired François Emont as his *indigoteur*, an experienced indigo specialist to facilitate production.[170] At that point, Emmanuel Prud'homme was the third-largest slave-holder in Natchitoches.

Jean Baptiste LeComte's early agricultural efforts concentrated on tobacco production. In 1765, he recorded having harvested 2,000 pounds of tobacco and thirty-five barrels of corn.[171] Like many planters in the region, however, the LeComtes made the transition from tobacco to cotton around the turn of the century.

Statewide, both tobacco and indigo production were eventually surpassed by sugar cane and cotton, crops that were destined to be staples of post-colonial Louisiana.[172] Around Natchitoches, cotton came to dominate plantations, including both Bermuda (later Oakland) and Magnolia.

As early as 1720, French explorer Jean Baptiste LaHarpe observed that the "bottom lands of the

164. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 127-135.
165. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 127-137.
166. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 15.
167. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 16.
168. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 139-141.
169. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 15.
170. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 139-140.
171. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 22.
172. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 19.

upper Red River were adapted to the cultivation of cotton." By 1732, serious attempts by Louisiana planters were underway to grow cotton, and cotton was found growing statewide by mid-century. Initially, cotton was not grown on a large scale because it was difficult to remove the lint from the seed, and so cotton was primarily used for domestic purposes with limited exportation.[173]

In 1793, however, the prospects of cotton as a cash crop greatly improved. That year, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. His machine completed the otherwise laborious task of separating the lint from the seeds and revolutionized the cotton industry. Shortly after Whitney completed the design, his model and drawings were stolen, and ginning machines began to be manufactured, based on his pirated designs, across the cotton-growing South.[174]

Prud'homme family tradition holds that Emmanuel Prud'homme was the first planter to successfully grow cotton on a large scale, beginning in 1797.[175] Shortly thereafter, cotton production spread across Louisiana. The profitable crop allowed planters to easily recover losses from the tobacco bust of the 1790s. By 1802, twenty-five cotton gins had been built on Red River plantations and the region had shipped 900,000 pounds of cotton to New Orleans.[176] By 1809, cotton had become the principal staple crop of the Red River Valley.[177] By the war of 1812, the LeComtes were growing cotton as their primary cash crop.[178]

Cane River Plantations

Oakland Plantation

Members of the Prud'homme family resided in Natchitoches almost since its founding. The first-generation Prud'homme, Jean Pierre Philippe, arrived just over a decade after the fort was established. In 1758, his son, Jean Baptiste, trained as a physician in France before returning to Natchitoches and establishing a hospital, purchased 9 arpents of land with money inherited from his godfather. Family legend dictates that the land was granted from the French government, who had control of Louisiana at the time. In 1763, after Spain acquired Louisiana, Jean Baptiste retired from medicine and began developing his land as a planter.[179]

It was Jean Baptiste's son, Jean Pierre Emmanuel, who would go on to establish Oakland Plantation. As mentioned earlier, by 1785, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme (Emmanuel) had begun farming 700 acres on both sides of the Red River (now Cane River Lake) approximately 13 miles south of Natchitoches, a portion of which would eventually become Oakland Plantation.[180]

There is speculation that Emmanuel's lands on Red River may have been occupied by him via a rental agreement with the property's original grantee, Nicholas Rousseau. Prud'homme family tradition holds that Emmanuel was granted the land by the Spanish provincial governor, Estevan Miro, in 1789, but there is no supporting evidence for that account.[181] Although he had his land on the Red River under cultivation, in the early 1790s, Emmanuel Prud'homme actually lived on a 51-acre tract opposite the post in Natchitoches that he likely inherited from his father. Felix Trudeau, a

173. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 14-20.
174. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 13-26.
175. Hartrampf, Inc., *Gin Complex HSR*, 16. The CARI museum collection includes an oil portrait of Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme holding a cotton boll (CARI-22695). Family oral tradition holds that the cotton boll signified that he was the first successful cotton grower west of the Mississippi River.
176. Burton and Smith, *Colonial Natchitoches*, 141.
177. Williamson, *Yesterday and Today*, 26-27.
178. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 13-14.
179. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 8-9.
180. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 9; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 15.
181. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 15.

resident of Natchitoches, testified in 1820 that Emmanuel Prud'homme's 51 acres had been cultivated since 1796 and was "one of the first settled plantations in the parish."[182]

It was not until around 1792 that Emmanuel, his wife Catherine Lambre, and their children moved to the site of what is now Oakland Plantation. The initial land purchase was located approximately 13 miles south of Natchitoches in Township 8 North, Range 6, Sections 104 and 44, which were later divided. Although the family resided on the property, records indicate that its purchase from Nicolas Rosseau was not completed until about 1797.[183]

Family tradition has it that the plantation was historically known as Bermuda, although there is no record of this usage prior to the Civil War; the name appears to be linked to the naming of the post office there in December 1877.[184]

Organization of the Oakland Landscape

The organization of colonial plantations was based more on the relative utility and proximity of houses, outbuildings, and fields, rather than the stylized and formal spatial arrangements that developed during the antebellum era. The original main house at Oakland would have been built atop the natural levee of the Red River Cane River Lake (now Cane River Lake), out of the flood zone. Gardens, fields, farm structures, and workers' cabins would have extended out into the landscape, but not too far from the main house. The owners would have had horses for transport and would have ridden them periodically throughout the day to check on workers and crops.[185]

While the Red River flooded on occasion, its headwaters were located away from areas where snowmelt contributed to sometimes cataclysmic annual flooding, as it did in the Mississippi River. With the Red River's system of rafts, raft lakes to handle backflow, and lack of snow-melt, it would have been more stable and consistent than other rivers associated with larger watersheds.[186] That is not to say that floods did not occur, they just did not do so with the frequency or severity of those of other major rivers in the Americas.[187]

Due to this hydrological regime, high levees were not essential, as they were in other locations in Louisiana. Field drainage was more easily achieved by ditching on the edges of the large fields where crops were grown. The soils of the Red River valley also drained better than the gumbo alluvial soils of the Mississippi, so thunderstorms and heavy rain events was not as disastrous for area planters.

The Great Raft, which had formed several hundreds of years earlier, made navigation and exploration on the Red River difficult and served

182. Breedlove, *Bermuda/Oakland Plantation*, 6. Even though Prud'homme established a plantation near at the site of the present-day Oakland, he did not reside there, instead, living in town and closer to the added security of the fort.
183. McClendon, *Oakland Plantation*, 2-6.
184. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 16; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Prud'homme's Store HSR*, 20.
185. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 43.
186. Raft lakes: "As the river shifted its course or created new logjams, it dammed the mouths of some of the streams feeding it, backed up their waters, flooded surrounding lowlands, and created a great chain of natural lakes extending from the lower part of the river. Some of the lakes, now with dams rebuilt by man, still exist today. These include Caddo Lake, once much larger and a part of an artery to Jefferson, Texas; Bodcau Lake, which extends into Arkansas; Cross Lake, which supplies Shreveport with water; Lakes Bistineau and Black, still fabled fishing grounds. Other equally large lakes, such as Sodo, Ferry, Bayou Pierre, and Poston lakes, were drained [naturally] when the raft was removed, and their former bottoms are now rich, cultivated fields. Only old maps and navigational charts still keep alive the names of these ghosts of the past, and cotton grows where steamers once plied." Lowrey, "The Red," 53.
187. Lowrey, "The Red," 52.

to push backflow water up into adjacent streams, lakes, chutes (a shortcut across a meander), and bayous. During the summer and fall seasons, when rainfall was lower, these connecting water bodies maintained the flow of the river at a more consistent level, without the major fluctuations in water volume that occurred in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. As described by Walter M. Lowrey in *The Rivers and Bayous of Louisiana*, "[t]he existence of these enormous lakes with their naturally permeable dams of logs and driftwood provided a constant source of water for the main channel even during the arid seasons."[188]

Buildings

No buildings survive on Oakland Plantation from the colonial period and the precise location of these early buildings is not known. It can be speculated, however, that they followed known forms or styles of the time. It is possible that some of the earliest buildings on what became Oakland Plantation were reused to construct some of the extant buildings on the property. This is the case with the Doctor's Cottage, in which some of the attic beams display signs of white paint, remnants of wallpaper, and even open holes that would have held pegs and open dovetail joints.[189]

Malone notes that

> living was rudimentary during the colonial period. Structures occupied by early French colonists were usually quite simple. Post-in-the-ground, cypress and *bousillage* constructions… remained standard well into the nineteenth century for the less affluent.[190]

Bousillage, described as clay kneaded with moss, was a technique that French carpenters and house builders brought to the new world as a substitute for the stone that would have been used in Europe.[191] *Bousillage* was typically made by digging a hole, called a *tache*, that is filled with layers of clay and Spanish moss and soaked with water. Men known as *tacherons* used their feet to crush and mix the moss, soil, and water to the consistency of mortar.

Once the *bousillage* was ready, it was applied to *barreaux*, a wood latticework set between upright posts, and boards were placed diagonally between the upright posts as support (Figures 3-6 and 3-7). Completed walls were often treated with a slip coat of deer hair and lime slurry, then



FIGURE 3-6. Photograph of Gabe Nargot's cabin in 1969, with sun-lit *bousillage* wall. Estes.



FIGURE 3-7. Detail of a window and *bousillage* wall in Gabe Nargot's cabin. Estes.

188. Lowrey, "The Red," 53
189. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 41.
190. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 16.
191. Edwards and du Ballay de Verton, *A Creole Lexicon*, 32; Miller and Keel, *Gabe Nargot's Cabin*; Fricker, "Origins," 138.

whitewashed, and in some cases, covered with weatherboard.[192]

Later homes, particularly those for more affluent individuals and families, would likely have been inspired by what is known as "French Creole" or "French Colonial" architecture (Figure 3-8).[193] The exact origin of the French Creole style is disputed, with some believing it originated in France and underwent changes in the Caribbean during the French occupation of that region. Today, French Creole architecture, also known as French Colonial, is associated with buildings constructed in "New France" during the colonial period (1699–1762), but continued well into the nineteenth century.

A typical Creole dwelling had seven distinctive characteristics: (1) large galleries; (2) a broad roofline; (3) gallery roofs supported by wood

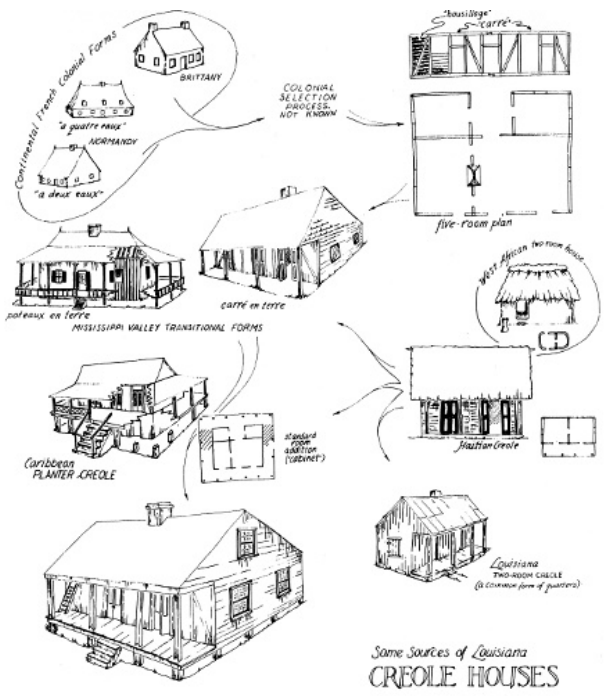


FIGURE 3-8. "Some Sources of Louisiana Creole Houses." Louisiana Folklife Program.

colonnettes; (4) the main structure positioned high above grade; (5) construction using heavy timber framing with French joinery, infilled by either brick or *bousillage*; (6) French doors or casement windows extending almost to the floor and often functioning like doors with only a small step into the building; and (7) French wraparound mantels (*retardataire*) on the interior fireplaces (see Figure 3-8).[194]

French joinery is a framing system that includes exceptionally steep angle braces that run from the sill to the plate, unlike English joinery, which uses angle braces at a consistent 45-degree angle (Figure 3-9). Infill in the Oakland and Magnolia plantation buildings would typically display *bousillage* rather than brick.

Interior floor plans of Creole houses varied, but traditionally lacked interior hallways. Wall openings were placed based on interior convenience, rather than exterior aesthetic. Typically, the rear range of rooms would include an open loggia flanked by small rooms, known as *cabinets*, which were simple plank-walled spaces used as offices or bedrooms for children.[195]

Urban Creole houses, such as the Creole cottages of New Orleans or Creole townhouses of Natchitoches, were different from rural houses in that they typically stood flush with the property line and did not have a gallery. Both the Prud'homme and LeComte/Hertzog families had townhouses in the town of Natchitoches, in addition to their plantation homes.[196] One of the townhouses, today known as the Prud'homme-Rouquier House, was constructed on land owned by Jean-Baptiste Prud'homme and gifted to his daughter Marie Louise in 1778 upon her marriage to Francois Rouquier (Figure 3-10). The house

192. Miller and Keel, *Gabe Nargot's Cabin*.
193. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 15; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 16.
194. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 15; Fricker, "Origins," 151.
195. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 16.
196. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 15.

stands today at 446 Jefferson Street in Natchitoches.[197]

Magnolia Plantation

Magnolia Plantation was established through multiple land transactions made by the LeComte family, but was not fully formed until the 1830s. The first portion of property that would become the plantation was acquired by Jean Baptiste LeComte I in 1753 through a French land grant, when France held control of Louisiana.[198] The grant included lands on both sides of the Red River (now Cane River Lake), and he and his wife, Marguerite LeRoy, settled on the bank opposite of what eventually became Magnolia Plantation.[199] The LeComte's son, Ambrose I, was born on the property in 1760 and succeeded his father after Jean-Batiste's death in 1784. By the time of the census in 1787, Ambrose I reported ownership of 64 arpents, or 54.16 acres.[200]

Ambrose I further expanded the LeComte family holdings when he acquired a Spanish land grant for a second parcel approximately 30 miles west of Cloutierville, where he established a *vacherie*.[201] This land grant came from the Spanish government, which had control of Louisiana at the time. By 1795, Ambrose I had obtained two Spanish land grants resulting in total holdings of two leagues (one league equals 4,428.4 acres).[202] By the early nineteenth century, the LeComtes were among the largest landowners in Natchitoches Parish.[203]

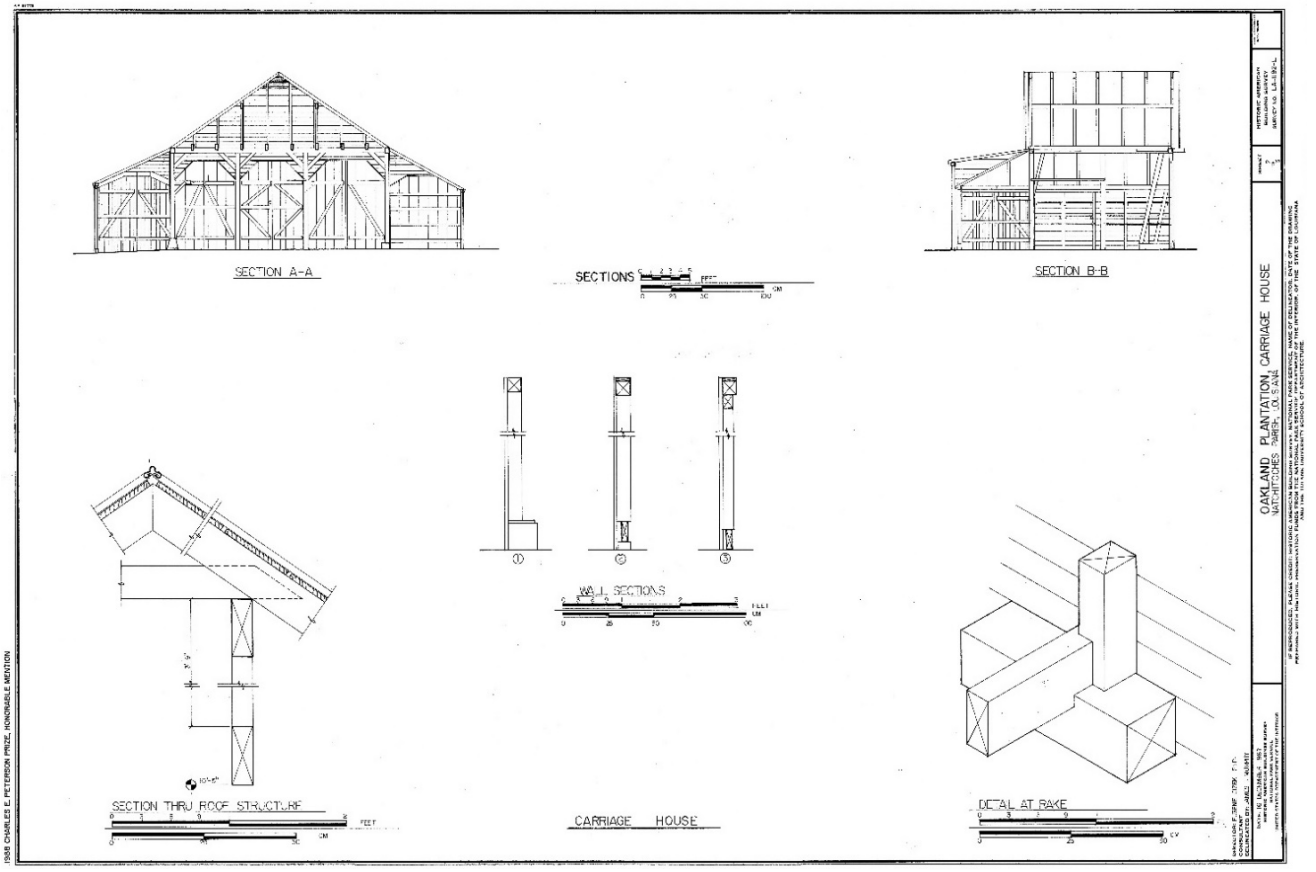


FIGURE 3-9. Drawing of the Oakland Plantation Carriage House, illustrating French joinery. HABS/HAER/HALS

197. Cane River National Heritage Area, "Prudhomme-Rouquier House."
198. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 14.
199. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 9.
200. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 22.
201. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 9.
202. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 23.
203. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 11.

Eventually, rather than operating both the ranch and the plantation inherited from his father, Ambrose I appointed his son, Jean Baptiste II, to manage the Cane River plantation. Jean Baptiste II married Marie Anne Cephaldie Lambre in 1806, and the couple had a son, Ambrose II, in 1807. It is Ambrose II who eventually acquired additional property and assembled what became Magnolia Plantation in the 1830s.[204]

Buildings

During the colonial era, the LeComte family resided on the opposite side of the river from Magnolia. No buildings were constructed on the plantation site. There were several townhouses associated with the LeComte family in Natchitoches, one of which was located on the corner of Church and Front streets. The exact date of the construction of this house is not known, but since it is attributed to Ambrose I, who died in 1834, it would have been before that date.[205]



FIGURE 3-10. The Prud'homme-Rouquier House in Natchitoches. Natchitoches.net.

204. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 24-25.

205. Finch, "Ambroise Lecomte I."

Chapter 4: Statehood/Antebellum Period (1812–1860)

Introduction

Louisiana became a state in 1812 after nine years of territorial status. During the period between 1812 and the year before the start of the Civil War, the population of Natchitoches Parish more than doubled due to the influx of immigrants from Ireland and Germany, and Americans from other parts of the United States. One result was the dilution of the Creole culture as it became integrated into the larger American national culture. At the same time, this period saw the removal of most of the Caddo to Texas.

Cotton became the most important crop in the area, and the power wielded by the planter class, including the owners of Bermuda (later Oakland) and Magnolia plantations, increased along with their economic success. The slaveholdings of the Prud'homme and LeComte families reached an all-time high by 1860. As part of the United States, slaveholders faced new national and state restrictions regarding slaveholding and the treatment of fugitive enslaved people.

Local planters suffered a brief economic downturn following the 1838 initial removal of the Great Raft, which permanently changed the course of the Red River, leaving the Natchitoches and the downriver plantations behind on the backwaters of what became Cane River Lake. The Great Raft, also known as the Red River Raft, was a series of logjams created by natural processes over centuries that clogged portions of the Red River for over 150 miles. The raft discouraged settlement in the area by those whose schemes of making their fortunes in cotton depended on steamboats for transport. Although subsequent logs jams occurred on the Red River, it was completely cleared by 1873.[1]

The local downturn worsened due to the Panic of 1837, which impacted the entire state, affecting both the influx of new settlers and the output of cash crops from Louisiana plantations. Prior to this, with British manufacturers demanding more and more American cotton, its price increased dramatically, and planters borrowed money to buy more and more land. At its high point, between 1830 and 1836, American trade with Britain had doubled in value. To sustain this growth, high levels of foreign capital were necessary. However, between April 1836 and May 1837, prices of commodities in the New Orleans market began to decline. Starting in February 1837, cotton prices started dropping, and by the end of March were down by 25 percent. The New Orleans banks ran low on money and began suspending payments, resulting in 2,800 bankruptcy suits filed between March and December 1837.[2]

1. Gudmestad, "Steamboats." Local legend (shared by John Sibley) has it that a sand bar formed in 1828 at the upper end of what became Cane River and diverted the main flow of the Red River down the Rigolette de Bon Dieu. It is said that as late as 1860, planters could still ship their cotton down the river after it rose in late winter and spring.
2. Reed, "An Overview," 15-16.

The disaster was statewide and wholesale prices for locally produced goods continued to fall into 1838. Globally, the crisis caused only a ripple of impact, but in Louisiana, it was not until the summer of 1838 that there were noticeable price increases. But this was short lived. Following a period of extensive borrowing from European lenders, the British experienced serious crop failures in 1838, beginning a chain of events that culminated with a banking crisis in 1839 against which the Panic two years earlier paled in comparison. New Orleans banks suspended payments, wholesale prices of all commodities dropped and continued to fall, and by May 1840, reached their lowest point in nine years. By 1842, Louisiana had sunk into an economic depression from which it did not recover until the 1850s.[3]

The price of cotton finally began to rise in 1851 and the subsequent decade was an economic heyday for Louisiana plantations. New varieties of cotton were developed that increased yields per acre, quality, disease resistance, and picking efficiency. These increases also demanded a greater number of enslaved workers to plant, harvest, and process the cotton. Joe Gray Taylor writes that by 1852, the people of Louisiana had convinced themselves of the good of slavery, to the point of passing legislation that allowed free blacks to select masters and become themselves enslaved.[4]

By 1860, Natchitoches Parish had forty-two plantations that held what was classified by historian Joseph Karl Menn as "large slaveholdings," or those that reported at least fifty enslaved persons in the 1860 census. Cotton had become "King Cotton," and the plantations of the Cane River were booming with cotton production and growth.

People

The first federal census taken for Louisiana as a state occurred in 1820. By then, the population of Natchitoches Parish had reached 7,486, including 4,725 whites, 415 free "colored," and 2,326 enslaved. The parish population fell over the next decade, dropping to 7,095 total residents in 1830, with 3,802 whites, 532 free colored, and 3,571 enslaved.[5] However, by 1840, aligned with national trends, including an influx of immigrants, particularly from Ireland and Germany, Natchitoches Parish's population had doubled to 14,350, including 7,042 whites, 657 free colored, and 6,651 enslaved.[6] In 1850, the population statistics changed only slightly, with a total of 14,228, consisting of 5,466 whites, 881 free colored, and 7,881 enslaved. However, by 1860, following several robust economic years, the population had grown to a total of 16,699 in 1860, including 6,306 whites, 958 free colored, and 9,434 enslaved.[7]

A variety of classes, or levels of society, were represented within each of the ethnic groups. For example, while the white Creole Prud'homme and LeComte families were members of the planter class, there were other white families that worked for the planters on the plantations, in stores, or provided religious or educational services in Natchitoches or locally. African Americans, free or enslaved, could be members of black high society, as were some Creoles of color, or the workers who supported them and the white planters. In some instances, the distance from slavery helped to define the classes within the African American peoples, although this, too, is an oversimplification of the issue.

3. Reed, "An Overview," 17-19.
4. Olmstead and Rhode, "Biological Innovation," 1,128; Taylor, "Slavery in Louisiana during the Civil War," 27.
5. Mills, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 4.
6. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 11; Mills, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 4.
7. Mills, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 4. These numbers were based on the population of the parish, which fluctuated as new parishes were formed out of the parent parish, Natchitoches Parish.

American Indians

The Caddo remained in the area for a few decades into Louisiana's statehood, holding lands along the Red River from south of Natchitoches to the great bend in Arkansas and Texas, which was occupied by the Kadohadacho. In 1835, the Caddo tribes sold all their lands in a treaty signed at the Caddo Indian Agency, located just south of Shreveport.[8] In the terms of the treaty, the Caddo agreed to move to Texas, which was then part of Mexico, where they would join the Choctaw. They promised "never to return to live, settle, or establish themselves as a nation or community" within the confines of the United States. The Caddo were paid $30,000 in goods and horses, and were promised $50,000 in cash to be paid over a period of five years. Although the Caddo migrated to Texas, they were later relocated to Oklahoma, where much of the tribe, formally named the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, resides today. [9]

Even though most were removed from Natchitoches, some Caddo remained, and still others have since returned. The tribe still maintains a strong connection to the Natchitoches area as its "spiritual homeland."[10]

Americans

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the demographics of Natchitoches began to change as Americans from other sections of the United States migrated to the area seeking land and work. The social power of Roman Catholic white Creoles and Creoles of color began to diminish due to the huge volume of migrants from other parts of the country. These newcomers were distinguished as "Americans," and were Protestant and of Scots-Irish descent. Migration and immigration waned during the depression following the Panic of 1837 but resumed during the cotton boom years of the 1850s. Some of these migrants and immigrants were put to work as hired laborers in the area. In the 1830s, the Prud'hommes hired Irish workers to dig ditches on either side of the plantation. They also employed "local whites" at the family's sawmill.[11]

White Creoles

Long after Louisiana became a state and joined in politically, economically, and socially with the rest of the American South, its Creole community worked to closely guard their Creole identity. While the Natchitoches Creole families socialized and kept ties with other Creoles in New Orleans and elsewhere, they held themselves distinct from the Americans. In addition, as the primary language outside the home changed to English, the white Creoles continued using French in their homes and church, while their children were educated in both languages. Although the young women were educated outside their Francophone homes, and used English when writing to each other, as white Creoles they considered themselves culturally distinct from the monolingual English speakers, or "Americans."

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8. Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana*; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 35. The Caddo Indian Agency was essentially a branch office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (and its predecessors) that was originally established in 1804 in the town of Natchitoches. The agency relocated twice, first to Sulphur Fork in Arkansas Territory, where its name was changed to Red River Agency, and finally in 1831 to the Bayou Pierre Channel south of Shreveport.
9. "Caddo Nation." The Natchitoches Tribe of Louisiana is now a State Recognized Tribe, and maintains a Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/ComingHomeReunion/.
10. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 36; Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana*. Natchitoches is one of the Louisiana communities identified by Kniffen, et al., where a population of *métis*, or mixed raced group, developed, retained a strong American Indian identity, and often a tribal affiliation.
11. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 38-69.

As more and more of the population of Louisiana was "American," white Creoles grew aware that their lifestyle as "lovers of music and dancing, masked balls, fashionable clothing, eating, drinking, paying cards, and gambling," was being threatened. However, some attempts to open their society to Americans is illustrated in a letter written by Coralie Buard on September 12, 1858, to her cousin Fannie Bossier; when they were both in their late teens,

> there were no Creole gentlemen present, excepting our dear cousins (Herzog) and Felix. The party was gay and went off better than we had expected.… As for the fishing party last Thursday, we also enjoyed it better than we had expected in the company of American girls and gentlemen.[12]

It is clear that in social situations, it took some effort to overcome Creole insularity.

Oakland Plantation Family

When Louisiana became a state, planter Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme was twenty-eight years old and already owned land on the Red (later Cane) River. A local leader, Prud'homme sought to expand his role, and took part in the Louisiana Constitutional Convention, held in Baton Rouge in 1812. Prud'homme and his colleague, Pierre Bossier, represented Natchitoches in developing the new state constitution, although much of the document was based on Kentucky's constitution.[13]

At the time of the Constitutional Convention, Jean Pierre Emmanuel ("Emmanuel" hereafter) was already married, having wed Marie Catherine Lambre on January 7, 1784 (Figure 4-1).[14] The couple had eight children, two of whom did not survive infancy, with the youngest son being Pierre Phanor Prud'homme ("Phanor" hereafter), born in 1807.[15]

Emmanuel and Catherine began construction on the Big House beginning about 1818. Their first house had been closer to the river and was ultimately lost to its ravages. Although the first house had likely been constructed in the first decades of the nineteenth century, it is clear from records that the family had resided in the area since at least the 1790s, occupying property officially owned by Nicholas Rousseau, which was the future site of Oakland Plantation.[16]

Emmanuel and his family were not the only Prud'hommes in the area either: census records from 1810 to 1830 indicate that many of the Prud'homme relatives lived on neighboring plantations or nearby properties along the River; however, only Emmanuel and Catherine's family lived at what later became Oakland.[17]

Marriages at the time were not only a legal union, but a contractual agreement and exchange of property. In 1835, Phanor Prud'homme married Suzanne "Lise" Metoyer at Isle Brevelle.[18] She was born in 1818 to Francois Benjamin Metoyer and M. Aurore Lambre. The marriage contract included articles stipulating that "community property and pre-existing debts would be paid by the respective parties." The contract also listed the couple's assets: Phanor's property was valued at 30,412 *piastres* (Spanish currency), 5,000 of which he gave to Lise as a wedding present. Lise had a dowry that included an advance of 2,000 *piastres*.[19]

In addition to his family and plantation responsibilities, Phanor followed in his father's footsteps, also engaging in state politics by serving as one of the electors at the Louisiana constitutional convention of 1842 (Figure 4-2).[20]

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12. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 44.
13. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 17.
14. Third generation in America; first generation at Oakland.
15. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 145-147.
16. Malone, "Oakland Planation, Its People's Testimony," 26, 45.
17. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 15.
18. Second generation at Oakland.
19. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 9.
20. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 12.

Three years later, after his father died, Phanor took over responsibility for the plantation. His mother, Catherine, died a short time later, in August 1848.[21] Emmanuel's and Catherine's succession inventories, listing the family's land holdings, enslaved workers, and valuables, took several years to complete. Emmanuel's funeral expenses, and likely Catherine's as well, were paid to the Church of St. Francis.[22]

Phanor and Lise had had five children together: Adeline (b. March 6, 1836), Alphonse (b. April 17, 1838), Emma (b. August 11, 1839), Henriette, who went by Harriet in later years (b. May 26, 1842), and Pierre Emmanuel (b. January 8, 1844).[23]

Lise died from an unnamed illness on May 17, 1852, a tragedy that shook the whole family.[24] At the time of her death, Lise was just thirty-three years old, and her children ranged in age from four to eighteen. Emma, who was twelve at the time of her mother's death, passed away two years later in 1854.[25]

During the mourning period that followed their mother's death, the Prud'homme children were cared for by their aunt, Lise's sister, Cephalide Metoyer Archinard. Cephalide was a widow with two daughters, Desiree and Irene. The close family formally unified in 1855 when Cephalide and Phanor married. The marriage contract listed her seven slaves and his ninety-nine slaves, and stipulated that the Phanor would bring "into the



FIGURE 4-1. Portraits of Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme and Marie Catherine Lambre Prud'homme, painted in Paris in 1821. CARI.

21. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 16.
22. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 14-15.
23. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 44, 148-149; Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 15-16; Finch, "Adeline Catherine Prudhomme Breazeale" and "Harriet Prudhomme Breazeale."
24. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 42-43; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 16.
25. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 44.

community" all household items he acquired in Lise's succession. Among the debts and assets were 160 unsold bales of cotton from the previous year, along with the 1855 harvest, and debt to Jean Baptiste Prud'homme to be paid by 1864. Tragically, the couple's only child together died as an infant. Cephalide and Phanor were only married two years before Cephalide, too, passed away in 1857.[26]

Phanor and Lise's oldest daughter, Adeline, attended boarding school at the Sacred Heart Convent in Natchitoches.[27] She was among a generation of women who came of age during the antebellum era; they were commonly known as the "Belles of *La Cote Joyeuse*."[28] Henriette also attended Sacred Heart, but later she traveled to New Orleans to attend another boarding school.

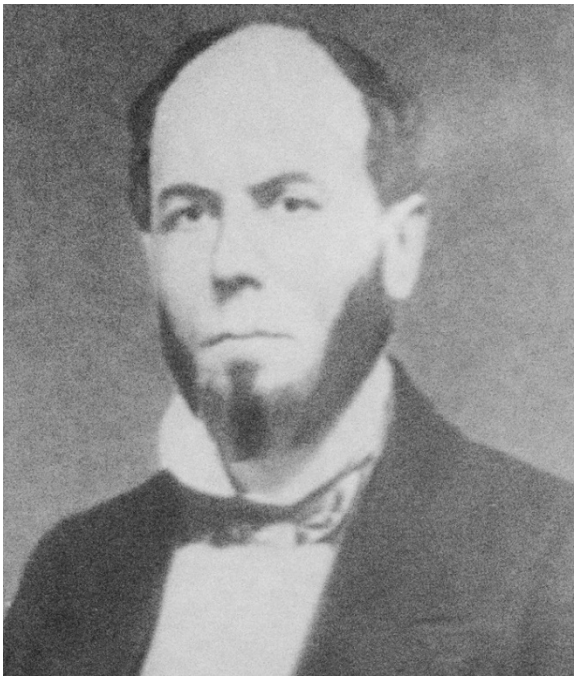


FIGURE 4-2. Portrait of Pierre Phanor Prud'homme. CARI.

In 1856, when Adeline was twenty years old, she married Winter Wood Breazeale. The young couple moved to their own plantation 20 miles south of Natchitoches, where they raised eleven children.[29]

After switching schools several times, including attending the Commercial Institute at New Haven, Connecticut, due to concern about attending school outside the slave-holding states, the eldest of Phanor and Lise's sons, Jacques Alphonse (hereafter Alphonse), attended the University of Virginia from 1856 to 1858. After changing schools one last time, he graduated in 1860 from the University of North Carolina with a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering. The fast-approaching end of the antebellum period and the coming war impacted the educations of both the youngest Prud'homme son, Pierre Emmanuel II, and his sister Henriette. Emmanuel II entered Georgetown University in Washington, DC, around 1859, but returned home in 1861 with the outbreak of the Civil War. Henriette also returned home from New Orleans about the same time to be with her father and stepsister/cousin, Desiree. Alphonse, Emmanuel II, and Desiree's husband, Emile LaCoul, all joined the Confederate Army.[30]

Magnolia Plantation Family

Like most of the Cane River planter class families, the LeComtes were linked to many other major families in the region through marriage. Jean Baptiste LeComte II, for example, married three times during his life, each time to a woman connected to the Prud'homme family. His first two marriages took place at the end of the colonization period, and included his 1806 marriage to Mary Anne Cephalide Lambre, daughter of Remi Lambre, and Suzanne Prud'homme. Suzanne was the sister of Emmanuel Prud'homme while Remi

26. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 19; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 44.
27. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 41; Finch, "Adeline Catherine Prudhomme Breazeale,"
28. *"La Cote Joyeuse,"* or "the Joyous Coast," was a name given to the area by steamboat captains in reference to the jubilant lifestyle of the residents of the Cane River region: Gould, et al., *Natchitoches*, 56.
29. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 45.
30. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 47; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 22.

was brother to Emmanuel's wife, Catherine. The LeComtes produced one son, Ambrose LeComte II (future founder of Magnolia Plantation), who was born on June 11, 1807. Less than four years later, Mary Anne died on January 23, 1811.[31]

Just under three years later, on December 22, 1814, Jean Baptiste II married Marie Adele Prud'homme, daughter of Emmanuel and Catherine Prud'homme. Marie Adele died almost a year after their marriage. Jean Baptiste II's third marriage, this time to Suzette Prud'homme, took place in 1824. The new Mrs. LeComte was the daughter of Antoine and Marie Lambre Prud'homme.[32] Antoine Prud'homme was Emmanuel Prud'homme's brother, and Marie Lambre was Catherine Lambre Prud'homme's sister.

Around 1825, during the year after his third marriage, Jean Baptiste's mother, Heléne, died. Before she died, Mrs. LeComte had willed half of the LeComte holdings to her grandson, Ambrose II. Jean Baptiste LeComte II subsequently died during the same year as his mother.[33]

With the inheritances from his grandmother and father, Ambrose II was well-positioned to establish himself as a planter (Figure 4-3). He married Julia Buard in 1827, a union that produced six children (Figure 4-4). Their two sons, Jules and Jean Baptiste, died in infancy. The LeComte daughters included Marianne Cephalide Laura (b. October 11, 1828), Ursula Atala (sometimes spelled Attala, b. October 28, 1830), Eulalie Cora (b. March 10, 1837), and Eliza Elizabeth (referred to as Elisa, Eliza, and Elise; b. November 19, 1840).[34] In 1835, after Ambrose II and Julia were married, they established Magnolia Plantation.

Julia and Ambrose II were married for eighteen years before she passed away in 1845. During the following year, Ambrose II married Victorie Désirée Sompayrac. Désirée, the widow of Judge Jules Victor Bossier, had two children with her first husband, Marie Eugenie Clothilde and Placide. Following their marriage, Ambrose II and Désirée moved to the LeComte family townhouse in Natchitoches, leaving overseers to run the plantation. Even with the move, the property was not vacant, since LeComte's former sister-in-law, Suzette Hertzog Buard, her children, and her brother, Matthew Hertzog, lived there, although it is not clear where they lived, since the Big House was not completed until the early 1850s.[35]

The three eldest of Ambrose II and Julia's daughters attended boarding school at Nazareth Academy, operated by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, near Bardstown, Kentucky, although only Atala graduated. All four of the girls married: Atala and Laura married brothers Matthew and Henry Hertzog, respectively. Eulalie Cora married Jean Francois Ursin Lambre, and Elise married J. Alphonse Prud'homme of Bermuda.[36]



FIGURE 4-3. Portrait of Ambrose LeComte II. CARI.



FIGURE 4-4. Portrait of Julia Buard. CARI.

31. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 12; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 40.
32. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 40-41.
33. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 2.
34. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 6; Finch, "Marianne Cephalide Laura Lecomte Hertzog," "Ursula Attala Lecomte Hertzog," "Eulalie Cora Lecomte Lambre," and "Elisa Elizabeth Lecomte Prudhomme."
35. Finch, "Deseree; Sompayrac Lecomte;" Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 28; Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 9.
36. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 12-19.

Matthew Hertzog and Atala LeComte were married in 1852. The couple stayed on the plantation, as Matthew had received 40 percent interest in partnership with Atala's father. The couple had several children that died in childbirth but produced two that survived into adulthood: Ambrose J. Hertzog (b. 1857), and Frances "Fanny" Hertzog (b. 1865).[37]

Creoles of Color

Well-known within the planter class of Creoles of color within Natchitoches were former slave Marie Thérèse Coincoin and her family. Louis Metoyer, Coincoin's son, built a large and beautiful plantation house, now called Melrose, a national historic landmark, on the property his family cleared and developed into a profitable plantation.[38] In some instances, such as with the Coincoin family, Creoles of color owned enslaved workers themselves, but usually just a few, and often these were a husband, wife, or other relative who could not legally secure freedom papers.[39] However, the largest concentration of freed African Americans in Louisiana, who themselves owned enslaved workers, resided in the parishes of Iberville, Natchitoches, Pointe Coupée, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, Ouachita, West Baton Rouge. [40]

In the late antebellum period, the Creoles of color began to lose some of the respect they had previously received from the white community. As slavery became more and more important to the survival of the United States, the presence of the self-sufficient free Creoles of color was perceived by the whites as an affront to their institutionalized superiority. Due to the rising insecurity of the white community, Creoles of color were met with increased restrictions, including the requirement that they always carry documents certifying their free status. Anxiety concerning slavery caused white Creoles to begin to sever their historical cordial relationships with Creoles of color.[41]

The Creoles of color of the Cane River area formed themselves into a tightly knit society separate from white Creoles, enslaved blacks, and Americans. Like the white Creoles, they spoke French and were Catholics. Planter class members of the Creole of color group were educated and known to travel to France. They knew free people of color from other parts of the state and took care to marry among them. In fact, Creoles of color were believed to be more numerous, more prosperous, and more powerful than free persons of color. For the most part, the planter class of Creoles of color "sought to live as the beneficiaries of and contributors to French high culture."[42]

For a time, free Creoles of color of all classes lived as a separate segment of society relatively free from harassment. Racially motivated laws, such as the Black Code, or *Code Noir*, prevented their full participation in white society and civic life because of their African ancestry. Despite the systemic racism, they were able to prosper because of their knowledge, skills, hard work, and, to some extent, their connections with white Creoles. Many Creoles of color were professionals, such as physicians, teachers, writers, musicians, artisans, and merchants.[43]

In the Natchitoches area, there were several communities of Creoles of color associated with local churches. These included St. Augustine, which was established in 1829 and catered to the Creoles of color at Isle Brevelle, and St. John the

37. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 28.
38. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 44.
39. These individuals may not have been Creoles of color; however, the combined Metoyer families of Natchitoches Parish, who were free Creoles of color, were recorded in the 1810 census as the owners of a total of fifty-eight slaves. The same census recorded only four other families in the parish who were free people of color with slaves. These families each owned an average of two slaves. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 76.
40. Miller and Smith, *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, 263.
41. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 47.
42. Sullivan, "Composers of Color," 73; Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 45-47.
43. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 47.

Baptist in Cloutierville.[44] St. John's was the lone Catholic church in the community and accommodated different ethnic groups through their place of entry and seating. Whites, African Americans, and Creoles of color each entered through separate doors, with white congregants sitting in pews in the center, black Catholics taking all the pews to one side, and Creoles of color taking the pews to the opposite side, each in their own group.[45]

African Americans

During the antebellum period, there were two classes of African Americans: freedmen, who had been either freed from enslavement or descended from freedmen, and the enslaved.[46] The term "negro" was used exclusively for enslaved African Americans, but never for free persons of color.[47] Within each of these categories, distinctions of class further defined the members.

Enslaved

Although the US Congress prohibited importing enslaved workers from Africa starting in 1808, it was an edict that was ignored by some Natchitoches planters. Creole planters were accustomed to importing enslaved workers as they had since the colonial years. They preferred those from West Africa, specifically Senegal, Gambia, and Congo, which were often generically called "Guinea."[48] The planters, including Emmanuel Prud'homme, could continue these purchases through French traders directly.[49]

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of the enslaved in Louisiana dramatically increased through various means, all to support the cash crop economy. The slave trade slowed in Louisiana briefly between 1831 and 1834, because the legislature passed an act that prevented dealers from importing the enslaved from other states. They feared that rebels, such as those of the Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia, would enter the state.[50] After the restrictions were repealed in 1834, the slave trade was "reinvigorated," although it slowed shortly thereafter when the economic Panic of 1837 set the economy on a decline for much of the 1840s.[51]

The enslaved were also transferred as valuable property by the plantation owners. For example, Antoine Prud'homme, brother to Jean Pierre, prepared an Act of Donation and Sharing, circa 1851. This document provided for transfer of ownership of approximately eighty-nine enslaved workers and thousands of acres of property upon his death.[52]

The 1850s were an economic heyday for Louisiana plantations, and as the state continued to profit from slavery, pro-slavery sentiments and racial divisions grew stronger. By 1852, the white population was so convinced of the positive aspects of slavery that the state legislature made it impossible to emancipate a slave. Pro-slavery sentiments increased over the next decade and a statute was adopted that allowed free blacks to select masters and voluntarily become enslaved themselves. Records indicate that only twelve free

44. Parish of St. Francois of Natchitoches, Register 6, 116.
45. Crespi, *Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation*, 26-27.
46. Creoles of color, who were also free, did not consider themselves African American, and thus are presented as a third ethnic group in this document.
47. Louisiana State University Library, "Free People of Color in Louisiana."
48. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 40.
49. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 17.
50. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 37. The Nat Turner Rebellion occurred in 1831, when a group of slaves led by Nat Turner rebelled and killed fifty-five white people in Southampton County, Virginia. "People & Events, Nat Turner's Rebellion, 1831."
51. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 49.
52. Cane River Creole National Historical Park Facebook page, posted April 16, 2018. CARI-202.

persons attempted to enslave themselves, although their motivations are not explained.[53]

By 1860, Natchitoches Parish had forty-two plantations that held what was classified by historian Joseph Karl Menn as "large slaveholdings," or those that reported at least fifty enslaved persons in the 1860 census. Included in this group were both Phanor Prud'homme and Ambrose LeComte; although LeComte's last name is alternately spelled "Lecompte" in the document. Approximately 43.4 percent of the enslaved workers in Natchitoches lived on cotton plantations that had more than fifty enslaved workers, a number that was slightly higher than the 20.5–35.7 percent in the sugar-cotton parishes. These large slaveholders often also owned the most valuable land, which was especially true of the Red River region. Natchitoches Parish was the only one in the Red River region where white Creole slave owners outnumbered American planters. Six Natchitoches plantations produced 500 bales of cotton or more in the 1859 season, and of those, five were under Creole ownership. Included in those large producers was Magnolia, with LeComte credited with 1,133 400-pound cotton bales ginned that year, and Oakland (as Bermuda), with Prud'homme credited with 698.[54]

During the antebellum period, the number of enslaved persons greatly increased at both Bermuda and Magnolia plantations. "King Cotton" demanded scores of hands to plant, cultivate, harvest, and process, as well as the other demands of running a sizable plantation.[55] For the plantation to have a high level of profitability it needed a workforce that could handle the conditions, such as long days under the hot sun. To keep the workforce strong, new enslaved workers were in constant demand, and those that were problematic or unproductive were replaced.

Sale of enslaved persons occurred in a variety of manners, including voluntary sales, succession sales, and foreclosures.[56] Sales were advertised in the local newspapers; such an ad from the *Natchitoches Courier* in 1827 stated:

> Notice.
>
> Will be sold on Friday the 5th of July next, at 9 o'clock A.M. at the store lately occupied by James Fleming & Co. in the Town of Natchitoches,
>
> Four Slaves of both sexes,
>
> Belonging to the firms of James Fleming & Co. and George H. Grovenor & Co.
>
> CONDITIONS
>
> One years [*sic*] credit will be given from the day of the sale, with security in solido [*sic*], and interest at 10 pr. cent pr. annum from the day of sale until paid.
> John C. Carr
> P. J. June 4.[57]

Enslaved persons could also be purchased from door-to-door salesmen, although one account suggests that people of central Louisiana preferred buying from someone they knew, or a professional firm, rather than from a traveling dealer. In 1824, Alfred Flourney, who was not a professional slave trader, traveled through from Tennessee through central Louisiana trying to sell his slaves. From Natchitoches, he wrote his wife:

53. Taylor, "Slavery in Louisiana during the Civil War," 27; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 27; Schafer, *Slavery*, 179.
54. Menn, *Large Slaveholders*, 7-12, 84, 296-301.
55. On March 4, 1858, Senator James Hammond of South Carolina gave a speech, warning, "you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is king." The term, "King Cotton," became a pro-secessionist rallying point. The South believed that cotton gave it leverage to be recognized as a new country, in part by the demand of British textile mills. This, however, backfired when 1860 production was so large that mills did not feel a shortage until late 1862. Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *Civil War Desk Reference*, 65, 204.
56. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 21.
57. Notice, *Natchitoches Courier*, July 3, 1827, 1.

> I arrived at this place after passing through the Attacapas [*sic*], Oppaloosas [*sic*] and Alexandria, without being able to make one single sale of any description. The only alternative that offered to dispose of my property was to make an exchange for mules, to sell my negroes for cash at a fair price was out of the question. I arrived in market just two months too late. I bargained last night for sixty mules and sold Celia, Judy and Pamela. . .I am sure I sold the girls for more than two hundred dollars more than I could have got for them in cash. . . My expenses has [*sic*] been enormous, but for the future it will be less as I shall camp out altogether. I can scarcely enter a house in this county without paying five or six dollars for it.[58]

By the late antebellum period, there were few enslaved persons left at Bermuda (and presumably, Magnolia) who were old enough to remember their lives and family in Africa. The multi-generational family network on these old plantations was maintained in part because the masters seldom chose to sell and separate families. Generally, agreements around slave exchanges made between 1840 and 1860 allowed the enslaved the opportunity to visit their relatives on neighboring plantations.[59] Enslaved people were often shared, sold, or traded between family members. For instance, in April 1830, a Prud'homme cousin, Narcisse, sold eight enslaved workers to Phanor for just over $3,000. The sale included a couple, Thibuad and Salinette, and their six children.[60] Both sales and reproduction are evident in the increase of the number of enslaved persons during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Between 1810 and 1860, the Prud'hommes owned between 50 and 145 people, putting them in the upper 9 percent of Louisiana slave owners (Table 4-1).[61] A document entitled the "Act of Donation and Shares" and written in Louisiana French, was drafted in 1851 to stipulate the division of enslaved workers and acreage among the heirs of Antoine Prud'homme prior to his death. The valuable resource enumerates at least eighty-nine people between the ages of five months and seventy-seven years.[62] The slave holdings increased steadily, and as a result, in 1860, Phanor owned the third highest number of enslaved persons of any plantation owner in the parish. [63]

Table 4-1. Prud'homme Family Slave Holdings 1810-1860

Year	Number of Slaves	Comments
1810	53	
1820	74	
1830	92-96	51 males/41 females; 18 of which were children.
1840	104 + 40	Emmanuel owned 104; Phanor owned 40.
1845	99	Emmanuel died; slaves include 37 men; 61 women and children under 16, and ½ interest in blacksmith, Philippe. Total appraised value was $32,795.
1849	103	Catherine died.
1850	126	
1860	145	Phanor was slave owner and had 30 slave dwellings.

This information comes from Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 8-17, and Miller and Wood, Oakland Subsurface, 17, 26, and 28.

58. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 38.
59. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 80.
60. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 9.
61. Suarez, "The Struggling Majority," 131.
62. The "Act of Donation and Shares" was donated to the Cane River Creole National Park by Prud'homme descendent, Sandra Prud'homme Haynie, in April 2018.
63. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 40.

Magnolia's slave ownership figures are similar to Bermuda's, with the LeComtes also increasing their number of enslaved persons and land holdings to meet cotton production requirements. Like the Prud'hommes, the LeComtes were in the upper ninth percentile of Louisiana slave owners, which required ownership of between fifty and 1,000 people.[64] By 1860, the LeComtes only owned 234 people, which were distributed throughout the family's three plantations, Magnolia, Shallow Lake, and Vienna, as well as at LeComte's townhouse in Natchitoches and other properties (Table 4-2). During this time, 112—roughly half of the enslaved—resided on site in the Magnolia Quarters.[65]

Table 4-2. LeComte Family Slave Holdings 1820-1860

Year	Number of Slaves	Comments
1820	96	62 males, 34 females.
1830	136	73 males, 63 females.
1845	155	Magnolia Quarters completed this year.
1850	182	
1859		70 slave cabins with an estimated 3.4 people per dwelling.
1860	234	Largest slaveholder in the parish. Plantation included 70 slave dwellings.

This information comes from Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 24, 28; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 8; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 19, 24; Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 14; and Menn, *Large Slaveholders*, 298-299.

It is difficult to interpret what the daily lives of enslaved persons may have been like. Much of the recorded materials available on the enslaved were scribed by the white planters and overseers, and were taken from a labor and crops perspective, rather than expressing the inner workings of their slaves' lives. Plus, the experiences of the enslaved would have varied depending on the age of the individual, their gender, role on the plantation, and position in their communities.[66]

In plantation records, the enslaved were often listed by first name and task. For example, in a cotton book of 1836, Phanor Prud'homme's overseer, J. F. Culbertson, provided the date and then listed the first names of seventy-seven enslaved persons who had worked seven days a week to harvest the cotton that year.[67]

Because the enslaved communities in Natchitoches—particularly at Bermuda—were well-established and traceable to the colonial era, the lives of the enslaved had greater stability than they might have from smaller planters, or if they had been on plantations where sales were a constant threat. At Bermuda, the enslaved established their own nuclear families and maintained relationships with kin. By the 1850s, the over 100 enslaved people at Bermuda were balanced along gender and age distributions. According to Malone, the multi-generational community "provided emotional depth and support… [and were] likely to have had the human resources to support members in crisis."[68]

For example, based on records on the Helaire family that date back to the colonial era, enslaved parents, Hilario and Jeanne, had a son, Helaire, at Bermuda Plantation, where he became the

64. Suarez, "The Struggling Majority," 131.
65. Brown, *A Preliminary Report on the 2006 Excavations*, 28.
66. National Park Service, *The Helaire Family*.
67. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 38. The enslaved did not typically have surnames.
68. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 80.

property of the Prud'hommes.[69] Helaire grew up on the plantation and eventually married Felis, with whom he had seven children. The family remained enslaved at Bermuda until the end of the Civil War. [70]

Early records on Helaire are scant, but by 1845, he had reached the position of driver at the plantation. Drivers were assistants to the overseers, and often served as a middleman between the overseer/planter and enslaved workers.[71] His position may have been the qualifying factor that led to his high value; in 1849, at forty-two years old, he and Jeanne were appraised at 1,100 *piasters*; a value which increased to $1,500 the following year. By 1853, as a driver, Helaire was worth $1,400, second only to the blacksmith. Helaire did receive some limited privileges for his position, in addition to the garden plot allotted to all enslaved people. Helaire was among the few that were permitted to own cattle, even selling his stock to a white planter.

Helaire's wife, Felis (also spelled Phillis), was listed as a "washer" by the overseer in 1860.[72] However, that was likely not the limit to her tasks. She, like many other enslaved women, would have been responsible for house work, field work, work in the yard, and caring for her own children.

Enslaved persons were allowed some recreation and travel privileges. According to Malone, it appears that the Prud'hommes were somewhat lenient in allowing traveling for personal visits. The enslaved at Bermuda were allowed to visit friends and relatives along the Cane River, hold or attend dances, marriages, baptisms, funerals, and occasional church services. Cane River planters often took turns sponsoring Christmas and New Year's "balls" and summer barbecues for the slaves.[73] Enslaved people were also allowed some agricultural autonomy, tending personal vegetable gardens and raising livestock, and were sometimes allowed to travel to other plantations for these purposes.

At Bermuda, the records of punishment included suspension of privileges and subjection to heat, boredom, or ridicule. According to Malone, there was no evidence that the enslaved at Bermuda were whipped; however, in the margins is a handwritten note that says in 1857, overseer Seneca Pace reported whipping an enslaved woman named Janet. At Magnolia, there are also few extant records of punishment or abuse to the enslaved, but being locked in the stocks and losing privileges is indirectly noted. In general, Creole planters were known to be more lenient than their American peers, who were more inclined to use

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69. Slave ownership followed the mother's line. If the mother was enslaved to a certain family so were her offspring. Bowden, "Infanticide," 212-213.
70. National Park Service, *The Helaire Family*. CARI is conducting a lineal descent study of African Americans and traditionally associated people of color with ties to the park. Both units of CARI were home to successive generations of African Americans and people of color, from enslavement during the Colonial era through sharecropping, tenant farming, and day labor negotiations at the end of the plantation era. This project traces the lineage of several historical figures, plantation descendants, and contemporary individuals from Cane River back to their African nations of origin. It further involves research to trace the diaspora of African Americans from Cane River to urban centers during the Great Migration and Civil Rights Movement and seeks to enhance the park's understanding of the relationship between people of African descent and the museum collections, cultural landscapes, architecture, and archeological resources of CARI. The study shall result in new research related to the African American experience at NPS-CARI and will fulfill recommendations related to resource management and interpretation.
71. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 139; National Park Service, *The Helaire Family*.
72. National Park Service, *The Helaire Family*.
73. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 78.

corporal punishment. Other area planters, however, were charged with such acts.[74]

Clothing, food, and housing were provided for enslaved workers. An inventory from 1860 shows that A. LeComte had ordered "19 coats and pants, 38 'hickory Shirts,' 18 linsey dresses and 54 brown cotton chemises."[75] According to an archeological study, the enslaved at Magnolia had better housing conditions and diets than others in the area. Enslaved workers received rations, including corn meal, pork, and molasses; beef, flour, rice, macaroni, and oysters were also occasionally provided. In addition, they ate fish, wild game, and vegetables from their personal garden plots, including sweet potatoes, turnips, and peas.[76]

There were a variety of ways that an enslaved individual could leave bondage behind. Some people were emancipated by their masters, and others ran away. Both the Prud'homme and LeComte families occasionally emancipated some of their enslaved workers. The 1830 census reported that the Prud'hommes had one free woman of color living with them, aged between 55 and 100.[77] It is also possible that emancipation was granted when an enslaved person reached such an age that he or she could no longer work; however, there is no evidence that this was the case in this instance. Public notices published between 1825 and 1826 provide evidence that both Ambrose LeComte and Emmanuel Prud'homme planned to emancipate enslaved persons:

> NOTICE
> AMBROISE LECOME, inhabitant of the Parish of Natchitoches, having intention to emancipate his molatress [*sic*] slave, named Margarete, aged about 40 years; every person who may have any legal opposition to said emancipation are requested to file said opposition in the office of the Parish Court, of said Parish, within forty days from the date of the presnt [*sic*] notice. B. BULLITT, *Sheriff*
> December 12.[78]

and

> NOTICE.
> Emanuel Prudhomme, inhabitant of the Parish of Natchitoches having intention to Emancipate his Negro woman slave, named, MARIE,
> Above thirty years of age, any person who may have legal opposition to said Emancipation are requested to file said opposition in the office of the Parish Court of said parish within forty days of the date of the present notice.
> B.Bullitt
> Sheriff
> January 3d.[79]

Some enslaved people took the enormous risk of escaping their plantation to obtain freedom. Throughout the history of slavery in the United States, 80 percent of the fugitive runaways were young males between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five.[80] About one-third of those runaways was skilled laborers or had experience in a job outside of the field. Many of the fugitive women traveled in groups, often with children and spouses.

Fugitive enslaved persons were such a problem that many laws and policies were enacted concerning the runaway. In the 1820s and 1830s, new Louisiana state laws were passed to establish central depots where runaways, if unclaimed for two months or longer, were to be transported.[81] Prisons were established in Orleans and East Baton Rouge parishes, followed by facilities in the city of Alexandria and in Ascension Parish. These jails could use the captives for public works

74. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 84; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 19.
75. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 15.
76. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 19; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 85.
77. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 8.
78. "Notice," *Natchitoches Courier*, December 26, 1825, 1.
79. "Notice," *Natchitoches Courier*, January 2, 1826, 2.
80. Teal, "Underground Railroad Route."
81. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 172.

projects and were responsible for these workers while they were imprisoned. Notices of runaways were placed in the local newspapers, such as the statement below that was posted in the *Natchitoches Courier* in 1826:

> Runaway in Jail.
>
> Was Committed to the jail of the Parish of Natchitoches, as a runaway on the 13th inst. A negro man who says is name is
> JIM,
>
> And that he belongs to a Mr. H. Munson of Rapide, Alexandria, he is about 30 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches high. The owner of the said negro is requested to come forward prove property, pay charges, and take him out of jail.
>
> J. S. Roberts,
> Dpt. Sheriff
>
> Natchitoches Oct. 18, 1825.[82]

Although the enslaved were valuable property, runaways were not always claimed by their masters. To handle these unclaimed individuals, in 1845 the state legislature implemented a law that required municipal jails to advertise runaways once a week for three months. After the three-month deadline, any unclaimed slave who had been imprisoned as long as twelve months prior to March 10, 1845, was to be sold at auction, which must also be advertised for thirty days.[83]

During the colonial era, enslaved people escaped into Texas through the El Camino Real, passing through Los Adaes into Texas, west of Natchitoches. The popularity of this route is believed to have diminished in 1809 when the Commandant General Salcedo sought to limited immigration into East Texas and closed the border to people of all ethnicities.[84]

It is possible that enslaved people may have traveled northern routes, escaping to the free states, or even Canada, taking advantage of the Underground Railroad. This network of people and places that provided routes and hiding places to the enslaved escaping to free states was strongly focused in Louisiana on the Mississippi River, towards which an escapee fled and then headed north along the Natchez Trace. The route north took about three months to traverse on foot, moving only at night, and traveling around 20 miles a night.[85] No documentation has been found that records any escapes from either Bermuda or Magnolia plantations.

Lifeways

After Louisiana became part of the United States, improvements included a public postal service. In the 1830s, a newspaper advertisement placed in distant Washington, DC, sought mail carriers in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri.[86] Specific routes included:

> 2852. From Alexandria by Cotile, Cloutierville, and Isle Breville, to Natchitoches, 77 miles and back, twice a week.
>
> Leave Alexandria every Wednesday and Sunday at 11 a m, arrive at Natchitoches next days by 11 p m.
>
> Leave Natchitoches every Sunday and Thursday at 6 a m, arrive at Alexandria next days by 6 p m.
>
> 2853. From Natchitoches, by Rusellville, and Allen's Settlement to Hempstead, c h Ark Ty. 178 miles and back, once a week.

82. "Runaway in Jail," *Natchitoches Courier*, January 2, 1826, 1.
83. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 173.
84. Teal, "Underground Railroad Route."
85. Schiller, "Haunting Underground Railroad Images."
86. "Proposals," *Washington* (D.C.) *Globe*, September 2, 1833, 1.

> Leave Natchitoches every Tuesday at 6 a m, arrive at Hempstead c.h. every Tuesday by 6 p m.[87]

The paper indicated that the employment was for a four-year period, from January 1, 1834, to December 31, 1837.

Health

There were several outbreaks of communicable diseases during the antebellum period. One of the first was in the 1830s, when a yellow fever epidemic hit New Orleans. Several people arrived in Natchitoches after being exposed to the disease in New Orleans and ended up dying in the town. Fortunately for the town and surrounding parish, most of the steamboats that regularly traveled between New Orleans and Natchitoches were cut off before the fever reached epidemic status.[88]

A second yellow fever outbreak in 1853 had a greater impact on the residents of Natchitoches. The fever claimed several of the leaders at the Sacred Heart convent, including the Mother Superior and several of the young nuns. The appointment of Mother Ursula Simoini as replacement superior was made by letter, and was greeted with excitement; however, before mid-November, Mother Simoini was also laid to rest in the cemetery. Mother Maria Cutts then attempted to visit the convent to offer her help, but she was turned back four times due to quarantines. It was not until December 31 of 1853, that Mother Cutts, arriving with four new nuns, was able to take over and reopen the school.[89]

Yellow fever struck the school again in 1854, this time affecting the children directly. The first child to show signs of the disease was sent home immediately, but two more developed signs within days and their parents refused to bring them home for fear the school would again close. When four new cases of children with the disease were declared, the school had no choice but to close. All the pupils had been removed by November 2, when another nun, Mother Ellen McConomy, also died of the fever. Additional outbreaks occurred in Natchitoches Parish in 1858 and 1865. There were also cholera outbreaks recorded in 1833, 1849, and 1851.[90]

Disease and early death also affected the plantation families. Of the six children of Ambrose LeComte II and Julia Buard LeComte, two sons, Jules and Jean Baptiste, both died in infancy, and Julia Buard, herself, died young in 1845, at the age of thirty-five.[91]

Another major loss to the plantation families occurred on May 19, 1852, when Susanne Lise Metoyer Prud'homme, wife of Phanor, died of an unknown fever and "suffering much with a pain in her shoulder," despite being attended by two different doctors. She was only thirty-three at the time of her death, and left behind her husband and five children, the youngest not yet four years old. Lestan Prud'homme's diary included observations about the loss,

> The house was full with the relations of the deceased, all crying and plunged in the deepest sorrow…. Never shall I forget the appearance…of the unfortunate husband his face bathed in tears, his eyes almost wild."[92]

With the high number of enslaved people held by both Bermuda and Magnolia plantations, their health care was a constant challenge. In the 1850s, Dr. Samuel A. Scruggs, of Cloutierville, recorded treating these workers, writing prescriptions, and other general care services. Hunter reports that in 1851, Dr. Scruggs had at least a dozen patients on

87. "Proposals," *Washington* (D.C.) *Globe*, September 2, 1833, 1
88. Monette, *Observations on the Epidemic*, 110-111.
89. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 498-499.
90. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 499-500; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 84.
91. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 6; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 18.
92. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 20-21.

the plantation, with issues ranching from a broken tooth to an outbreak of cholera.[93]

Bermuda Plantation had a hospital or infirmary for treating enslaved people, although little is known about the building. The hospital was staffed by a full-time nurse, and doctors were consulted regularly. The hospital was divided into several areas, divided to isolate the contagious from the general population, as well as those giving birth. A doctor resided on the plantation by 1860, living in the Doctor's/Leveque House south of the Big House. In addition to the plantation doctor, the enslaved themselves would have relied on their own midwives, or "granny women," who were also herbalists.[94]

Enslaved families were more apt to be separated by an untimely death than free persons because there was a high mortality rate for young adults, infants, and children. Indeed, Louisiana claimed the highest mortality rate of all people, enslaved or not, in the antebellum period. Mortality rates, however, for the enslaved at Bermuda were lower than at other plantations in Natchitoches Parish, but were still high compared to plantations in other parishes.[95]

Causes of death included consumption, dysentery, bilious fever, typhoid fever, pneumonia, dropsy, sore throat, paralysis (stroke), old age, and "bay fever." Children succumbed from such things as lockjaw, pneumonia, colds, fever, whooping cough, worms, and bowel inflammation; and infants were sometimes stillborn or miscarried. Typhoid fever was especially common on Louisiana plantations as it was easily transmitted through water, food, and feces. Adults also often suffered disabilities, including hernias, or being "lame" from some type of injury, or having had "dropsy," which was the accumulation of fluid in the chest, abdomen, face, and extremities, possibly related to cardiovascular system disease.[96]

Mortality records associated with the 1850 census indicate that common causes for the death of infants and children in the enslaved community were whooping cough and worms. That year, dirt eating was reported as the cause of death for over twenty enslaved people in Natchitoches Parish, ranging in age from three to sixty. Malone hypothesizes that this could be because of poor nutrition, but that some experts believe that addictive dirt eating was a "cultural phenomenon." One enslaved person at Bermuda was recorded as having eaten dirt, and at Magnolia another was hospitalized (on-site) for "eating ashes plentifully." Droughts, floods, hurricanes, and tornados also had an impact on the overall plantation population.[97]

Enslaved persons that died at Bermuda Plantation were buried in a cemetery on Prud'homme property, near Bayou Brevelle, and possibly one other across the Cane River. Some slave burial markers included wrought iron crosses, such as those attributed to Bermuda's blacksmith, Solomon Williams (Figure 4-5). From Magnolia,



FIGURE 4-5. Detail of one of Solomon William's wrought iron crosses, CARI 6009. CARI.

93. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 15-16.
94. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 21; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 64.
95. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 80-83.
96. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 80-83.
97. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 83; Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 28; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 20.

enslaved people who died were buried at Shallow Lake Cemetery, located on the LeComte's Shallow Lake Plantation, although later interments were made in the "people's graveyard" east of the slave quarters on Magnolia.[98]

Pregnancy and childbearing were considered by Southern society as the most sacred calling for white women, with the number of children produced by a woman able to enhance her position in Louisiana society. Pregnancy was a "normal" state for women of the antebellum era, with births typically stopping only by age or by death. Legends even surrounded the Mississippi River and its ability to cure sterility. Large families were common, typically with a new baby born every two years.[99]

Religion

During the antebellum period, there were traditionally two prescribed roles for women: motherhood or the religious life. Religious life as a nun allowed the women more opportunity to occupy public positions without fear of criticism. For example, when the newly appointed Governor W.C.C. Claiborne first arrived in New Orleans, he visited various local dignitaries—with the lone woman being the superior of the Ursuline convent.[100]

New convents were established in Louisiana during the antebellum period, but most were located near New Orleans or major population centers. Communities like Natchitoches continued to have only periodic visits by priests or others in religious life. One tale illustrates the importance of religion to the people of Natchitoches, and just how rare the opportunity for first communion or baptisms were in the first decades of the nineteenth century:

> After the women of Natchitoches arranged and decorated a hall as a chapel… they organized the sixty children who made their first communion and whom the priest-missionary pointed out had been properly instructed and the women probably line up the godparents and families of the 350 infants and children to be baptized.[101]

In 1828, the fourth Catholic church was constructed in Natchitoches, replacing the stone church that had been lost to fire, but that church also burned.[102] Then, in 1839–1843, a fifth Catholic church was constructed. In the late 1840s, a priest and several nuns came to Natchitoches to permanently staff the church and to establish a convent and school. There was great excitement about their arrival, and the experience was described later by Mother Louise Callen:

> [i]n the 1830s, religious activities were met by missionaries, then in the early 1840s, Father John Timon made regular trips to the community. In 1847, nuns from the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau and St. Michael's. By 1847, Natchitoches had a resident priest and a small group of nuns from Grand Coteau and St. Michaels had arrived to establish a convent and school.[103]

The nuns arrived in Natchitoches on May 15, 1847. One wrote of the experience, "Our arrival was like a triumph."[104] The newly arrived party was greeted by many of the families with plantations on the Cane and Red rivers. Among those in the welcoming party were "whole families with retinues of slaves" who drove to town to greet the nuns. Crowds gathered on the verandas and in the gardens of the houses along the route traveled by the nuns, all with the hope of catching a glimpse of the new arrivals.

Initially, the nuns resided in the home of a friend, who had put half of her house at their disposal.

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98. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 65; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 20.
99. Labbé, "Mothers and Children," 163.
100. Labbé, "Mothers and Children," 162.
101. Labbé, "Mothers and Children," 168.
102. Association of Natchitoches Women, *Natchitoches*, 20. There is no information available for the dates of either of these fires.
103. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 493.
104. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 493.

Once settled in the house, the homeowner's parlors were reputed to be "invaded by eager mothers, bringing their little girls to register once in the new academy." The new school, a gift from a "group of Catholic and non-Catholic citizens," was a "fine old colonial mansion with wide galleries, unusually large rooms, and handsome interior finish."[105]

In 1854, the Diocese of Natchitoches was created, and St. Francis Catholic Church was made a cathedral. Many members of the planter class in Natchitoches, particularly those of Creole descent, were members of the Roman Catholic Church. This included both the Prud'homme and LeComte families of Bermuda and Magnolia plantations, respectively. The section on Jacques Alphonse Prud'homme and his family in the 1890 *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana* reported that "Mr. Prudhomme and his wife are consistent members of the Catholic Church."[106] Mrs. Prud'homme was Miss Eliza LeComte, of Magnolia Plantation. Like the Prud'hommes the LeComte family was Roman Catholic, with many of their dead buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Natchitoches.[107] This is confirmed by the obituary of Ambrose LeComte II, which included among the accolades, that LeComte was a "devote and zealous member of the Catholic church."[108]

In 1817, a second Catholic church was founded in Cloutierville on land donated by Alex Cloutier. It would be another 30 years before it became a parish in its own right and gain its own resident priest. Until then, pastors from Natchitoches would visit the chapel once or twice a year to record the year's baptisms and marriages.[109]

A third Catholic congregation in Natchitoches Parish constructed a place of worship about 1829. That year, the oldest of Marie Thérèse Coincoin's sons, Augustin Metoyer, had the chapel built on the banks of Cane River.[110] A blessing ceremony was held for the chapel, followed within a few days by five wedding ceremonies there. A large cemetery is associated with the chapel. The date of the first interment is uncertain but it is likely that the first burial was that of Marie Agnes, wife of Augustin Metoyer, in 1839. There are earlier dates on two of the markers, but it is likely that the markers were both moved to the site from elsewhere.[111]

St. Augustine Catholic Church was made an independent parish in 1856. This honor was bestowed by Bishop Auguste Martin on March 11, 1856, resulting in the church receiving its first resident pastor. After seeing his dream of having the designation of St. Augustine as a parish church came to fruition, Augustin Metoyer passed away on December 19, 1856. Metoyer is buried in a prominent above-ground tomb, shared with his wife Marie Agnes, in the church cemetery.[112]

While the Catholic faith dominated the Natchitoches culture, it was certainly not the only religion practiced. The first protestant church to be erected in Natchitoches was Trinity Church, serving the local Episcopalian congregation. The church was begun in 1857 and is one of the oldest protestant churches in North Louisiana.[113]

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105. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 493-494.
106. The Southern Publishing Company, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 366.
107. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 2.
108. "Natchitoches Correspondence," *The Times* (Shreveport), March 14, 1883, 2.
109. The Forgotten People, "Bits of Evidence, No. 456."
110. Oral tradition has it that the chapel was constructed as early as 1803, but scholarly work by Elizabeth Shown Mills reports no records that can substantiate this claim.
111. Blokker, *St. Augustine Catholic Church and Cemetery*, 11.
112. Blokker, *St. Augustine Catholic Church*, 11.
113. Association of Natchitoches Women, *Natchitoches*, 22.

Education

In 1819, the state legislature turned the management of state-aided schools over to the parish police juries.[114] The new regulations granted each parish, except Orleans, an annual appropriation of $600 to support the school or schools within the parish jurisdiction.[115] On March 6, 1819, the Academy of Natchitoches was chartered by forty-eight incorporators, who then went on to elect from within their numbers five trustees. The first trustees were John Sibley, Samuel Davenport, Alexander Deblieux, Charles Solcum, and John Cortes. The school was to be open to both boys and girls, employ teachers of French and English, and include among their subjects, grammar, mathematics, geography, and other languages such as the "state of their funds would admit."[116]

Three years later, in 1821, new Louisiana legislation transferred the supervisory power of the police juries to a board of trustees composed of resident landowners appointed by the police jury. The schools continued to be funded by the state, at an increased rate of $800; however, to gain this funding, the board of trustees was required to admit eight indigent students to their parish schools free of tuition and provide all the necessary classroom materials.[117]

Over the next twelve years, administration of the parish schools was altered two additional times. The first change occurred in 1827 and required that police juries appoint boards of five administrators to supervise all parish schools receiving money from the state and limiting state appropriations to a maximum of $1,350 per parish based on the number of voters. The second occurred in 1833, when the state legislature removed the limitation on the number of children educated at public expense. It held the maximum state aid grant to $1,350, but the amount of the grant would be based on the number of students taught rather than the number of voters in the parish.[118]

In 1842, Act 66 was signed into law to incorporate two educational academies. The act first established the Vermillionville Academy, in Lafayette Parish. The act also established the Cottage Hill Male and Female Academy of Natchitoches, which was led by William Hunter, Alfred Bloodworth, John B. Packer, P. A. Morse, and Thomas H. Airey.[119]

Schools continued to receive limited funding from the state until 1845, when the previous ultra-conservative Constitution of 1812 was replaced. In the new constitution, the delegates provided for the establishment of "free public schools throughout the State." The public-school system was placed under the supervision of a state superintendent appointed by the governor, with parish schools administered by local superintendents elected by parish voters. Two years later, the Public School Law of 1847 spelled

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114. In 1806, the first act was passed that established the "police jury" system of government. It required that a judge and the justice of the peace, jointly with a jury of twelve inhabitants of the county (now known as a parish), work together to govern. The designated group was empowered to pass regulations relative "to order and provide for the execution of whatever concerns the interior and local police and administration of their parish; and likewise, to undertake all improvements which they deem to be useful to the community," including new roads, bridges, and navigation. By 1811, enabling acts were clarified to include within each parish an appointive judge and justice of the peace would serve as an ex-officio member of the elected jury of inhabitants. In 1813, the law was clarified further to ensure that each juror would represent a different ward within the parish. Since 1813, there have been further modifications, but essentially, all parishes have a similar police jury arrangement of government. Cole, "The Police Jury of Louisiana," 55-67.
115. Suarez, "Chronicle of Failure," 113.
116. Fay, *History of Education in Louisiana*, 56.
117. Suarez, "Chronicle of Failure," 113.
118. Suarez, "Chronicle of Failure," 114.
119. Public Act No. 66, 15th Legislature, 2nd session (13 December 1841), 166.

out the administrative organization of the schools, including roles of the supervisors, and establishing how taxes would be levied.[120]

Although approached with great hope, Louisiana's established public school system broke down before the Civil War. These schools did not admit children of color—ironic since the first superintendent of education, Alexandre Dimitry, was himself the grandson of a freed slave. The Natchitoches Parish census of 1850 revealed only one public school, led by a single teacher.[121]

Although public education efforts were in place early in Natchitoches, the wealthy members of local society, particularly those with French roots, continued to send their sons to France for their formal education. As early as the 1820s, Phanor Prud'homme, youngest son of Emmanuel and Catherine Prud'homme, was sent to school there.[122]

In Natchitoches, the white Creole girls' school of the Society of the Sacred Heart was opened on May 24, 1847, with six students. Within a few weeks, the school had thirty-eight pupils enrolled and at the end of the first year, it had ninety. By spring 1848, the school was so crowded that they purchased an adjoining property for a day school. The new facility provided "ample parlor accommodations for the parents and friends who came in large numbers on Sundays to visit the children."[123] While early student records are not available, based on the dates of their births, it is likely that at least the two youngest LeComte daughters would have attended the Society of Sacred Heart. Marie Eulalie Cora LeComte and Elisa Elizabeth LeComte would have been ten and seven, respectively, when the school opened.[124]

The school continued to expand, and by 1850, had reached almost one hundred boarding students. This new milestone required the construction of an additional three-story wing, which included a chapel, assembly room, and student dormitories. The new addition was connected to the main structure by wide covered galleries that doubled as play areas for the younger children during inclement weather. Among the students at Sacred Heart were Phanor Prud'homme's daughter, Adeline, and her first cousin, Desiree Archinard. During Adeline's time at the school the girls were known as the Belles of *La Côte Joyeuse*.[125]

During Phanor's time, classes for younger children were led by a private tutor and were held in the Big House at Bermuda.[126] The classes, which were held for both the Prud'homme children, as well as related children who lived nearby, likely took place in one of the rooms on the north side.[127] The house was well equipped to host classes and possessed a library with an extensive collection of books, many written in French.[128]

Older white Creole children left home to complete their educations. Phanor and Lise's oldest son, Jacques Alphonse Prud'homme I, attended Commercial Institute in New Haven, Connecticut, before entering college. It was his intention to continue his education at Yale, but due to "intense sectional feeling over the Kansas-Nebraska Bill," Phanor sent him instead to the University of Virginia in 1856–1858.[129] Phanor's concern lay in the fact that he did not want his son exposed to the abolitionist sentiment in New England.[130] Following his stepmother's death in October 1857, Alphonse transferred to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he studied civil

120. Suarez, "Chronicle of Failure," 117.
121. Fischer, "Country Parish Schools," 351; Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 208.
122. Jones, *Big House*, 18.
123. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 494.
124. Finch, "Marie Eulalie Cora LeComte Lambre," and "Elisa Elizabeth Lecomte Prudhomme."
125. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 494; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 7.
126. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 42.
127. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 20.
128. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 42.
129. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 47. Considered by historians as the most significant event that led to the Civil War, the act made it possible for the Kansas and Nebraska territories to open to slavery, reversing the ban on slavery that was part of the Missouri Compromise.
130. Brennan, *A Planters Son*.

engineering and graduated in June 1860 with a Bachelor of Science degree.[131]

In 1859, two other children of the Prud'homme family sought to continue their education far from the plantation. When Emmanuel Prud'homme (younger brother of Alphonse) entered Georgetown College in Washington, DC, Henriette left the plantation to attend boarding school in New Orleans.[132]

The number of public schools in Natchitoches Parish gradually increased as time passed, with most of the increases benefiting white children. In 1860, census records indicate there were forty public schools for whites. There was also one male (Catholic) college and one private female (Catholic) academy. None of these schools accepted students of color. Multiracial students had to rely on a private education.[133]

The prejudice against educating people of color was not limited to Natchitoches Parish, or even Louisiana. Many of the states in the South held this principle, with some passing laws to make it illegal to teach persons of color, free or enslaved, to read and write. In Louisiana, instruction was "tacitly tolerated" but not publicly encouraged. Given their wealth and community standing, it is not surprising that the Metoyer children of Coincoin were educated. By 1820, when the second generation of the Metoyer family was reaching adulthood, all but one of the males were literate; however, their sisters were not even able to sign their names.

An early teacher in Isle Brevelle was Nicholas Charles LeRoy, a native of Marseilles, who came to the United States in 1828, and by the 1830s had moved to Natchitoches Parish. He taught on Isle Brevelle until about 1841, when he left to teach the children of wealthy white planters on *La Côte Joyeuse*. In spite of his departure from the Isle community, he remained on friendly terms with the Creoles, writing to August Metoyer in 1841, which concluded with the sentiment, "*votre tout devotée*" or, approximately, "devoted to you all."

Often, schools were associated with local churches. In Isle Brevelle, after Bishop Martin declared the mission to be a parish in its own right in 1856, the Daughters of the Cross convent was invited to establish a school there. The nuns had established a convent the previous year in Avoyelles Parish. Mother Superior Hyacinthe LeConniat wrote to her brother, "Father Martin has charge of this mission and the population is all mulatoo. These are people of leisure and many of wealth and means. The Bishop bought us a house with sixty acres of land there." In 1858, after most of the repairs had been completed on the property, Mother Hyacinthe sent another letter to her brother on the topic:

> We have already twenty-seven pupils and in the spring we will have forty or fifty more for sure. This is a simple school – a modest school. The students pay $4 a month, that is twenty francs and something. Next year we will take some boarders. The people of this parish, although they are very rich, are distained by the white people who do not want the mulattoes in their schools. So here we will have only mulattoes. . . .[134]

Mother Hyacinthe's predication on the size of the school fell short of the actual enrollment; by 1859 the school listed between 120 and 130 girls. The mile-long walk each direction to receive mass proved too much during the heat of the summer and cold of winter, so the residents of Isle Brevelle raised funds for a new convent to be located next to St. Augustine Church. The new building was large enough to also accommodate boarding students who lived too distant to commute daily; additional nuns were brought in as enrollment continued to rise. The school flourished through 1862, until the effects of the Civil War resulted in a plummeting enrollment; in December 1863, the

131. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 22.
132. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 21.
133. The information in the rest of this section comes from Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 207-214.
134. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 211-212.

convent was closed, and the nuns were called home to the Avoyelles.

Education of Cane River's free Creoles of color was a critical tool for their survival. Each new generation had to be educated to stay abreast of the increasingly restrictive laws imposed following Louisiana becoming a state. By being educated, the Creoles of color were able to defend their property and their families.

Social and Recreational Life

During the antebellum period, the planter class and their families had an overseer to manage the work and enslaved workers to implement it, leaving the planter families with "plenty of time to amuse themselves." Neighbors, most of whom were extended family members, visited daily. Daily travel often included a mid-day dinner at one house, supper at another, and then an evening *soirée* at a third. Sundays included travel to Natchitoches to attend mass, and to visit with sisters and cousins at the boarding school.[135]

A diary by a relative of the Prud'homme's, Pierre Lestant Prud'homme, provides a glimpse into his life, thoughts, and daily activities, beginning in January 1850.[136] Lestant was newly back on the Cane River after completing four years of college and was planning to study law. To ready himself for the task of reading and writing in English—although French was his preferred language—Lestant recorded in English the events of his time in the area. One of young Lestant's diary entries spoke about summer vacation for the students of the local convent school, and described the activities during the six-week break:

> These vacations have been the source of general recreation, young and old all delighting in pleasant entertainments. Promenades on horseback nearly every evening, dinners and parties very frequent, in all of which gaiety reigned supreme…there were dinners at which no less than forty-five to fifty-six persons were assembled, and that exclusive of children, who were some fifteen or twenty in number. During these parties the jovial dance was introduced in spite of the heat and was no less gay for that; as all generally participated in it and appeared to enjoy themselves heartily.[137]

With the large families of both the Prud'homme and LeComte families, the plantations were host to numerous weddings, and not necessarily all of them approved by the parents. When Jean François Hertzog and Marianne Désirèe Prud'homme wished to marry, there were stories that, because the groom was a "peddler" and "lacked financial resources," her parents, Antoine Prud'homme and Marie Jacque Lambre, objected to the wedding. Two stories arose about how the issue was resolved: the first that the bride-to-be took matters into her own hands and was caught sitting in the lap of her prospective groom; and the second, that the bride-to-be invited the prospective bridegroom into her bedroom, then feigning alarm, screamed so the servants would catch them together, thus forcing the marriage. However it was brought about, the couple did marry and eventually produced eight children.[138]

In addition to the parties and family gatherings, there were formal social clubs available in Natchitoches, including the Free and Accepted Masons Lodge, which was chartered on October 6, 1836.[139]

Horse racing was a popular hobby. Emmanuel Prud'homme owned a race track on a 208-acre parcel across the river from Natchitoches. After Catherine Prud'homme's death in 1849, Ambrose II and Ambroise Sompayrac (presumably his father-in-law) purchased a race track formerly owned by the Prud'hommes.[140] The pair leased it to the Natchitoches Jockey Club, of which both LeComtes and Prud'hommes were members. Ambrose II was known for his race horses, two of which won silver awards during the 1840s and

135. Saxon, *Old Louisiana*, 166.
136. Saxon, *Old Louisiana*, 165-167.
137. Callan, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, 496.
138. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 11-12.
139. Mills, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 313.
140. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 14.

1850s. One of the LeComte's winning horses was Flying Dutchman, a "blood bay sixteen-hands high," who raced regularly at the Metairie race course in New Orleans. After a winning season in 1854, the LeComtes' received a silver service by Tiffany, Young and Ellis, the forerunner of Tiffany and Company. LeComte family legend holds that the horse, after it died, was buried in the front yard of the Big House. So serious were the planters about the horse racing hobby that Ambrose II, and later Matthew Hertzog, maintained their "Turf Book," which detailed the record of the plantation's racing and breeding.[141]

Perhaps one of the most telling aspects of the Lestant Prud'homme diary was his failure to mention the enslaved Africans on the plantation, including his own personal servant or body servant. Louisiana writer Lyle Saxon wrote of this gap in the narrative, saying

> [h]e has lived on a plantation all of his life, and is so accustomed to the goings and comings of the negro slaves that he never mentions them, except in the most casual way; one would think that he did not see them at all. And yet we know that he had his own personal servant. . .who awakened him in the morning by bringing coffee to his bed, who did the thousand and one things which he wished done, and who accompanied him frequently on his trips over the country. Never once does he tell us of this man; never does he mention his name. The negroes did not exist, as far as he was concerned, any more than the furniture around him.[142]

Life certainly was not easy for the enslaved during this period, but they, too, had opportunities for some entertainment. Nonetheless, in 1825, the Natchitoches Board of Trustees attempted to control even the pastimes of the enslaved, passing an ordinance that read:

> hereafter slaves in this town, shall not be permitted to have balls, except on Sundays and festivals, and not after sunset; and everyperson [*sic*] who shall give negro-balls, contrary to this resolution, shall be liable to pay a fine of twenty dollars, recoverable before any Justice of the Peace, and every slave found in such balls, shall be punished with twenty lashes."[143]

Still, the enslaved were able to enjoy dances, often held at the end of harvest or during holidays. A note in an overseer's diary at Bermuda indicated that there was just such a dance on January 1, 1861, when they danced all night. The overseer commented further that there had not been an angry word exchanged and that everyone was willing enjoyed good conduct.[144]

Occupations

Planters

As "King Cotton" grew and flourished in antebellum Louisiana, so did planter class plantations and wealth. Planters' responsibilities continued much as in the late colonial years; in some instances, however, planters may have chosen to rely more heavily on their overseers and other paid workers, as well as their ever-increasing enslaved population.

The planter who came to define Bermuda (later Oakland) Plantation's antebellum era was Phanor Prud'homme. As the son of Emmanuel and Catherine Prud'homme, Phanor began assisting his father with plantation duties around 1830. Emmanuel Prud'homme died in 1845 and Phanor took over operations. He was also responsible for the family *vacherie* on Saline Lake (northeast of Natchitoches). Under Phanor's leadership, agricultural production at the plantation greatly expanded.

Ambrose LeComte II established Magnolia Plantation in 1835. His life and responsibilities as a planter did not likely differ from those who owned other plantations nearby. In 1845, Ambrose's first

141. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 16; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 14.
142. Saxon, *Old Louisiana*, 167-168.
143. "Ordinances," *Natchitoches Courier*, July 26, 1825, 1.
144. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 81.

wife, Julia Buard, died. The following year, after he married his second wife, Lise Victorie Désirèe Sompayrac, Ambrose II began to divert his attention away from the daily operations of Magnolia and indulge his passion for horse breeding and racing. Ambrose II left general management of the plantation to his overseer, W. D. Eddins.

In 1852, Ambrose and Lise's new son-in-law, Matthew Hertzog, became a second planter at Magnolia. LeComte and Hertzog split the plantation's interest sixty/forty, and Matthew took over as resident planter on Magnolia, an act that likely coincided with the death of their former overseer earlier that year.

Overseers

The overseer, or farm manager, was one of the most important people on the plantation. He was responsible for the success or failure of all agricultural activities carried out on the planter's property. The overseer was entrusted with the

> welfare and supervision of the Negroes; the care of the land, stock, and farm implements; the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of both staple and subsistence crops; and many other responsibilities associated with the management of commercial agricultural enterprise.[145]

Overseers were also responsible for recording all work-related activities on the plantation, and requesting supplies to be ordered by the planter, although they did not have purchasing authority.[146] Overseers were typically under-compensated for their work and seldom given raises. The average salary of an overseer on a plantation with between 50 and 100 enslaved workers was $800 to $1,200 a year ($15–25k in 2018), but they would have been given housing on the plantation. From 1838 to 1863 at Bermuda (now Oakland), the overseers were compensated only $800 annually, at the low end of the average. In addition to low wages, overseers, who were usually white men, were considered as having a lower social status than planters, which was well-known to the enslaved and sometimes made management difficult.[147]

There are several known overseers who worked at the plantation for Phanor Prud'homme, although the amount of information on each man varies. In 1836, a "cotton book" was recorded by overseer J. F. Culbertson. While few personal details are known about Culbertson, his record keeping, which included recording daily individual totals picked and cumulative totals for the entire plantation, were all in good order. The one hint about Culbertson was his note on the cover of a journal that read, "Hurra for the Emerald Isle."[148] As of 1852, the overseer at Bermuda was a Mr. Russell.[149]

By 1857, and into the 1860s, Seneca Pace was Bermuda's overseer.[150] Pace, who was born in Mississippi around 1824, was unlike many other overseers in that he also owned his own

145. Scarborough, *The Overseer*, xix.
146. Suarez, "Hired Laborers," 133.
147. Scarborough, *The Overseer*, 28; Suarez, "Hired Laborers," 131-134.
148. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland," 98. It is unclear what Culbertson was referencing. It may be that he was of Irish descent and was using the poetic term for Ireland. Unfortunately, he is not included in any of the census records for Magnolia, and there is little known about him beyond the approximate years he was in Derry, Louisiana. It is also possible that Culbertson was referencing the ballad or poem written in 1828 by West Diggs, entitled, "Hurrah for the Emerald Isle." Interestingly, the first part of the song's second verse is: "And here's to bosom's bright glow When the banner of Liberty waves; And here's may she conquer her foe Ere the sons of her glory be slaves!" [Hurrah for the Emerald Isle: as sung by Miss Rock at her benefit, and now performing by Miss Clara Fisher at the Park Theatre (New York: Firth & Hall, circa 1830).]
149. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 38.
150. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 19.

property.[151] The 1860 census indicates that Pace, along with his father, owned real estate valued at $3,000 and recorded his occupation as "planter" and not overseer. This implies that in addition to working for the Prud'hommes, he may have farmed some of his own land.

At Magnolia Plantation, the earliest known overseer was George Cobb, who was listed as residing on the plantation in the 1850 Federal census.[152] In 1851, Cobb was replaced by W. D. Eddins, who, in addition to managing Magnolia's agricultural operations, oversaw construction of a new residence, likely the original Big House at Magnolia.[153] In his letters, Eddins regularly informed Ambrose LeComte II of the status of his real estate and commercial interests; the condition of crops, health of the enslaved, and made requests for supplies.[154]

Eddins died in September 1852. It is speculated that the overseer's death may have been the reason the Matthew Hertzog family occupied the new house, since this is about the same time that Matthew assumed management of the plantation. By the time of the 1860 census, the Hertzogs were no longer living in the Big House, but were recorded as living in two different locations. Since members of the planter class frequently had more than one residence, including one in Natchitoches, the fact that they were recorded twice is not that unusual. However, with Matthew's absence from the plantation, there appears to have been two probable overseers present: Theodore Lacour and G. E. Spillman.[155]

Plantation Doctors

Plantation doctors maintained both the health of the plantation owners and their workers. These doctors sometimes lived on the plantation, as they did at Bermuda, or lived nearby and made occasional calls, as it was at Magnolia. At least by 1860, and possibly earlier, Dr. Heulin was living in what is currently known as the Doctor's/ Leveque House on Oakland Plantation. Dr. Heulin was born in France, but little additional information is available for him, since he was apparently no longer living at Bermuda by 1864, when Jacques Alphonse and Elise LeComte married, and definitely by 1866, when Dr. Leveque and his family moved into the cottage. There is a notation in the plantation journal in April 1862 where Phanor mentions "renting a 'negress' to Dr. Lahaye at $12 a month at the same time he was renting the doctor a house for $100 a year."[156]

During the 1850s, enslaved persons at Magnolia were treated by Dr. Samuel A. Scruggs of Cloutierville. Records indicated that he assessed their ailments, prescribed medications, and performed other general care services. Hunter records that in 1851, Dr. Scruggs,

> …visited Daniel on March 23rd, and performed "bleeding and cupping." He visited Daniel again on the 24th and 25th. On April 3, he visited two other workers and prescribed Codeine, which was administered by Eddins [the overseer]. On July 30th, he visited five workers, who were treated for cholera, requiring 'attention all night." On November 15th, he extracted a tooth for "Joe," described as a "driver." [157]

It appears that Dr. Scruggs did not live at the plantation, but that his successors did.

Hired Laborers

Plantation owners occasionally hired additional workers when tasks could not be completed by enslaved workers alone. Suarez writes,

> There were many jobs available on plantations for the carpenters, painters, brickmasons [*sic*], coopers, and blacksmiths who lived in the

151. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland," 98; *Schedule 1- Free Inhabitants in Natchitoches County Louisiana*, 4.
152. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 10.
153. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 9.
154. Vlach, 84.
155. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 10-11.
156. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 16; McClendon, 7-3.
157. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 15-16

> villages or who were itinerant artisans traveling from plantation to plantation stopping where work would be found.[158]

Employment for these workers varied; they could be hired by the day, month, or job. Suarez implies that paid laborers had diverse backgrounds, including "Negros" (presumably free African Americans), Cajuns, immigrants, and others. Immigrants, especially those of Irish and German descent, were often paid to do the toughest, most dangerous jobs, including building levees and drainage ditches.[159] In the 1830s, the Prud'hommes hired Irish workers to dig ditches on either side of the plantation. The family also employed "local whites" to work in the sawmill.[160]

As the enslaved population increased, the paid laborers had a greater challenge finding work. The exception was when the craft was so specialized that it required a professional or was so dangerous that the planter did not want to risk damage to his human property.[161] Many large plantations had trained, enslaved workers to provide skilled labor, which was the case at Bermuda and Magnolia.

Enslaved Workers

In the plantation system, enslaved workers completed the various tasks necessary for raising, harvesting, processing, and shipping cotton, as well as a variety of other jobs that kept the plantation running day-to-day. In the nineteenth century, most enslaved workers in Louisiana's four northeastern parishes worked on cotton plantations with more than fifty slaves. Between 1810 and 1860 the Prud'hommes owned between 50 and 145 people, putting them in the upper ninth percent of Louisiana slave owners.[162]

The LeComtes/Hertzogs of Magnolia were also in the upper percentile of slaveholders. As of 1860, Ambrose LeComte II was the largest slaveholder in the parish, owning 234 people.[163] These workers were distributed throughout LeComte's three plantations: Magnolia, Shallow Lake, and Vienna, as well as at his townhouse in Natchitoches and other properties. During the antebellum period, 112, or roughly half of the LeComte slaves, resided on-site in the Magnolia Quarters.[164]

Within the ranks of enslaved laborers, there were varying degrees of jobs and responsibilities. Some worked in the Big House, others were skilled laborers with specific tasks, and still others were field workers. Each position was a crucial element of the plantation system and necessary for the successful production of cotton. There are more available records from Oakland Plantation that list specific slaves and their duties than there are Magnolia; it can be assumed that because of their similar size and resources, that the two plantations likely had enslaved workers performing similar tasks.

Specialized skills increased the production value of the enslaved worker to the owner, but also determined if he or she were ever to be sold. Examples of skills can be taken from succession and inventory records compiled at Oakland Plantation, which list job titles, such as driver, blacksmith, coachman, laundress and ironer, carpenter, midwife/nurse, weaver, and domestic staff, including cooks.[165] The blacksmiths at Bermuda (later Oakland)made farming implements, horse shoes, and branding irons, and crafted hardware, such as door latches, as well as iron grave markers.[166]

The earliest known blacksmith at Bermuda was an enslaved man named Phillipe, who was 50 percent owned by Emmanuel Prud'homme and 50 percent

158. Suarez, "Hired Laborers," 139.
159. Ibid., 131-140.
160. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 69.
161. Suarez, "Hired Laborers," 140
162. Taylor, "Louisiana Slaves at Work," 202; Suarez, "The Struggling Majority," 131.
163. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 14.
164. Brown, *A Preliminary Report on the 2006 Excavations into the Quarters Community*, 28.
165. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 92-94.
166. "CARI Interior Collections Management System Eminent Figure: Williams, Solomon," 1-4.

by another, unnamed person.[167] Phillipe was released from his position after becoming "deranged," and was hospitalized in New Orleans. Phillipe was replaced by Solomon Williams, who was later succeeded by his son, also Solomon. Williams and his son came to Louisiana from Virginia, where Solomon, Jr., was born in 1819. [168] Solomon Williams, Sr., was well-known for his blacksmithing on the plantation after the Civil War ended.

According to family tradition, Solomon Williams, Sr., created wrought iron well-drilling equipment designed by a French engineer, a house guest of the Prud'hommes around 1820 (Figure 4-6).[169] The engineer, who had experience in boring wells in his homeland, described his work to Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme, who became determined that his plantation should have "pure" water for his home and plantation residents. The guest designed the well-drilling equipment and a rig for Prud'homme, and instructed the enslaved well drillers in their use.



FIGURE 4-6. Wrought iron well-drilling tool made by enslaved blacksmith, Solomon Williams. CARI Catalog Number 27071. CARI.

Although the equipment was well made, and between three and four wells were attempted, they did not reach clean water. Instead, they encountered a layer of natural gas at a depth of around 400 feet. At the time, the Prud'hommes knew nothing of the commercial value of the gas and the wells, considered useless, were abandoned.[170]

The well-drilling equipment, including various drill bits and drill shafts, hung in the Blacksmith Shop until they were discovered in 1924 and added to the museum collection in the Big House. They were also featured in the April 1930 issue of *National Geographic* magazine.[171] Blacksmiths made branding irons as well: such evidence is scarred on the door to Magnolia Plantation's Blacksmith Shop (Figure 4-7).

Many of the items crafted by the blacksmiths of Oakland and Magnolia plantations are now part of the CARI museum collection. These include hand-wrought ironwork made by enslaved blacksmiths, such as the drilling equipment, grave markers, and architectural features of Oakland and Magnolia plantations (Figure 4-8).



FIGURE 4-7. Brand in door of Magnolia blacksmith shop depicting the French word, *fils*, which denotes "son" or "sons." CARI.

167. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 13.
168. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74-75.
169. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 65-66; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 75.
170. "First Gas Well – 1823." Manuscript, CARI, CGHRC001.
171. "CARI Interior Collections Management System Eminent Figure: Williams, Solomon," 1.

Another skilled position at Bermuda was that of carpenter. There were many carpenters over time, including Solomon Wilson. Wilson was born into slavery in Virginia in 1815; his path to the plantation is unknown. The Prud'hommes furnished him with the tools necessary for carpentry, including "a set of augers, five planes, an adze, and a trimming hatchet."[172]

It was often the practice to assign pregnant women, the elderly, and the infirm to the gin to do the less-strenuous work of picking sticks and leaves out of the seed cotton, and to turn the damp cotton as it dried on scaffolding. In 1860, an enslaved woman, known as Arsen or "Big Belly," was sent by Seneca Pace to work at the Bermuda gin until she had her child on October 22 of that year.[173]

On a cotton plantation, one of the most important skilled positions was that of gin operator, or "engineer."[174] In 1854, an enslaved man from Bermuda Plantation, named Raymond, was sent to Union Plantation to be trained by John B. Clarkson on the new steam-powered gin.[175]



FIGURE 4-8. Wrought iron cattle brand with the initials "J A P," for Jacques Alphonse Prud'homme. CARI Catalog Number 23014.

Raymond was eager to learn the valuable trade, and in a letter to Phanor, Clarkson remarked,

> I have seldom met with a Negro who showed more anxiety to learn everything pertaining to a Steam Engine… [He is] cheerful, attentive, and obedient in all things, and I have no hesitation in saying that with a little more practice he will make a competent and careful engineer.[176]

Operating the presses was dangerous work: at Magnolia an enslaved worker was recorded as having died by being "burnt in the press." Other injuries, and even death, were recorded in gin accidents across the South. While no records at either Magnolia or Oakland plantation indicate any fires resulting from spontaneous combustion of cotton, this was known to happen in other places. The *New Orleans Crescent* reported a fire started in this manner that destroyed about 150 bales of cotton on a ship in New Orleans. Fire was also a problem at cotton gins in other places, where a gin was destroyed by fire, often with the fire consuming the cotton as well.[177]

A few enslaved workers were entrusted with low-level management responsibilities. These individuals were known as drivers and typically lived in the best cabin or dwelling, usually at the head of the first row of housing. Drivers were assistants to the overseers, with an estimated two-thirds of the total national slave population toiling under African American supervision.[178]

So highly regarded were the drivers by the planter that, when no overseer was present, the driver often filled his role. As described in a popular nineteenth-century plantation manual:

172. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 68; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 91.
173. Kathleen Byrd, personal communication.
174. Taylor, "Slaves at Work," 205.
175. There were at least two plantations named "Union" in Louisiana during this period: one in Iberville Parish and the other in St. James Parish. Records have not been located to indicate which is referred to here. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 21.
176. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 76.
177. Heacock, 37. "Fire," *The New Orleans Crescent*, March 24, 1848, 3; "Gin and Cotton Burned," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), August 30, 1860, 1.
178. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 24. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 139.

> The head driver is the most important negro on the plantation. He is to be treated with more respect than any other negro both by the master and the overseer. He is on no occasion to be treated with any indignation calculated to lose the respect of other negroes without breaking him.[179]

Bermuda's driver was Helaire, whose biographical information is included in the "People" section of this chapter.[180]

Enslaved workers performed numerous other specialized tasks on the plantation. For example, at Bermuda, Alexis, the head shoemaker, was noted as working with an apprentice, Joseph. A worker named Nathan was listed as a painter. An enslaved man named Lindor was the weaver at Bermuda, although this was "a somewhat unusual assignment for a male slave."[181]

Another enslaved man at Bermuda, named Butler, was identified as a brick mason. Brick construction was typically limited to house foundations, outbuildings, and forming cisterns.[182] At Magnolia, the preponderance of brick structures, including foundations, cisterns, and the Slave Cabins, suggests that Magnolia would also have had a skilled brick mason.

Some enslaved people worked as basket makers, an important position, since oak baskets were among the tools needed for cotton picking. Basket makers at Bermuda included Thibaut and Claiborne. Claiborne became Clement Claiborne after emancipation and stayed on the plantation as a paid worker.[183]

While most of the skilled positions held by the enslaved on the plantation were filled by men, some enslaved women were also highly skilled, particularly in medical roles. At both Bermuda and Magnolia, hospitals for the enslaved were established to care for the injured and ill, so they could return to being productive workers. At Bermuda, two enslaved women, Celeste and Nanette, were midwives in charge of the plantation hospital, and were able to assist with other aspects of healthcare as needed. Other less-skilled women were assigned to provide childcare for enslaved children. In 1858, a nursery for this purpose was located near the Slave Cabins at Magnolia; plantation nurseries were typically operated by an older enslaved female.[184]

One of the most desired roles to fill on a plantation was that of a domestic worker. Often, when the enslaved became too old to work in the field, they were trained in specialized domestic skills, although the domestic workers were not exclusively elderly. Domestic workers were in such close contact with the planter's family that according to Malone, they often developed close bonds. They were also sometimes given better clothes and housing than the field workers. Domestic workers, such as the coachman, cook, or personal servant, were able to achieve a higher status with the owners.[185]

From 1840 to 1862, the Prud'homme's coachman was an enslaved man named Charles. Otherwise, the names of the coachmen at Magnolia are unknown, but quarters for a coachman's family were provided in the former stables. Among the cooks at Bermuda were Venus, the head cook, until she was sold in 1850, and Ben Helaire. One of the cooks at Magnolia was Cassey, "wife of Jack,"

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179. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 139.
180. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74.
181. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74.
182. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74.; Suarez, "Hired Laborers," 139.
183. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 77.
184. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 26.
185. Taylor, "Slaves at Work," 213; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74-75.

who was sick at the time of her purchase in 1854.[186]

At both Bermuda and Magnolia, the arrangement of the buildings means that many of the domestic tasks were carried out in the ancillary structures close the Big House and the area of plantation that is commonly called "the yard." The yard was an open patch of land that typically served as an extension of the kitchen, where meal preparation tasks and washing occurred. In 1850, the washerwoman at Bermuda was identified as Martha Ann, and by 1860, Felis, wife of the driver Helaire, served in that position. Magnolia had an enslaved washerwoman working full time in 1852; a second washerwoman named Martha was purchased in the late 1850s.[187]

Studies indicate that in the late antebellum period, the number of full-time plantation craftsmen who became highly skilled was approximately 5 percent, depending on what skills are included in the calculation. In 1845, when considering only the enslaved over fourteen years of age, 19 percent of the total enslaved population was recorded as having special skills, but if just the major skills of blacksmith and carpenter are considered, the average falls to 3 percent.[188]

The remaining enslaved workers labored in the fields, planting, tending, and caring for crops and livestock. This is illustrated by records reporting that the harvest of 1860 required ninety workers to pick cotton in the last full week of August at Bermuda. The top picker was a twenty-four-year-old enslaved man named Andrew, who harvested 335 pounds in a single day and averaged 248 for the week. Women pickers were known for having more dexterity and were often equal to the men in amounts picked. The second-highest picker was forty-seven-year-old Rosalie, who harvested 330 pounds.[189]

Politics and Government

In 1812, less than a decade after officially becoming a territory of the United States in 1803, statehood for Louisiana was authorized by Congress. The constitutional convention for the proposed new state had convened in New Orleans in 1811, with Natchitoches Parish represented by Emmanuel Prud'homme and Pierre Bossier.[190]

There was great debate in the US Congress around the admission of Louisiana as a state. Some opponents to statehood cited the French and Spanish heritage of the region's inhabitants, their Roman Catholicism, and their lack of awareness of American customs and traditions, all of which made them unfit candidates. Other opponents objected to Louisiana's large enslaved population, concerned that, if there was a revolt, the cost of funding against an uprising would be extravagant. In spite of these concerns, Louisiana became a state on April 30, 1812.[191]

In the subsequent years, debates about slavery in the United States increased, and in 1820, the United States attempted to balance the number of states that allowed slavery with the number of "free" states, that is, those that did not allow slavery. The previous year there had been an equal number of free and slave states, eleven each, but with the addition of Missouri into the union, that balance would be lost. To resolve this problem, the union first admitted Maine as a free state in 1820,

186. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 27. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74-75. Heacock, "Appendix A, LeComte's Account Ledger," 40.
187. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 34; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74; National Park Service, *The Helaire Family*; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 27; Heacock, "Appendix A, LeComte's Account Ledger," 40.
188. Genovese, *Roll, Jordon Roll*, 290; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 94.
189. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 69.
190. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 15.
191. Rodriguez, *The Louisiana Purchase*, xxvi, 370.

then Missouri as a slave state in 1821. Known as the Missouri Compromise, the act further required that no other state created from lands within the Louisiana Purchase north of the parallel 36° 30' latitude (the southern border of Missouri) would enter the union as a slave state. Finally, the act stated that slavery south of that parallel would remain legal, and made it illegal to capture fugitive enslaved in non-slave territories.[192]

The enslaved who sought freedom through escape continued to be a problem for slaveholders across Louisiana. Additional legislation was passed to inform local governments how to deal with found fugitives:

> Any person who captured a runaway was to send him to his owner, if the owner lived nearby; otherwise the runaway was to be sent to the parish jail.
>
> The owner was responsible for the following expenses:
>
> > Captor was to receive six dollars if the Negro had been taken in the woods; three dollars if on a road or plantation
> >
> > Captor to receive ten cents a mile for taking his prisoner to the master or to jail
>
> If the fugitive were lodged in jail, the jailor paid these fees, charging them against the owner.
>
> Committing magistrate and the jailor received a dollar each for receiving and confining the Negro.
>
> Prisoner's board was twenty-five cents a day.
>
> Jailor required to advertise his detention three times in the nearest newspaper.
>
> When the master claimed his property he paid all these costs, as well as another dollar to the magistrate for receiving proof of ownership and fifty cents to the jailor for delivering the slave into custody.
>
> No board was to be charged for the days the captive had been used on public works.[193]

These expenses may have been why some apprehended freedom seekers went unclaimed by their owners.

On the national stage, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 stated that

> [n]o Person held to Service of Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping to another, shall, in Consequence of any law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.[194]

On May 30, 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, was passed. The new legislation expanded slavery into the new states of Kansas and Nebraska, and reversed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had set the northern boundary of "slave" states at the 36° north-30' west parallel lines. The bill's author, Stephen Douglas, insisted that the country had already abandoned their efforts to contain slavery with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which also required Northerners to help capture and return freedom seekers. The passage was a move toward "popular Sovereignty," in which each state would decide the issue through a popular vote.[195]

In 1855, the Louisiana legislature passed a comprehensive act that assembled all phases of slavery legislation. Although passed and approved by the governor, Louisiana's Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional. A second attempt at such legislation was more successful. The new act, approved in 1857, kept the same fee structure established in 1848, but established Baton Rouge as the central depot for fugitives from all parishes that had been kept for sixty days

192. Thompson, Conyers, and Dawson, *The Frederick Douglas Encyclopedia*, 123.
193. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 173-174.
194. Johnson, "The Constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Acts," 161.
195. Thompson, Conyers, and Dawson, *The Frederick Douglas Encyclopedia*, 95.

without being claimed. The revised legislation added a ten cent per mile (coming and going) transportation fee for the responsible sheriff. Any fugitive enslaved person that went unclaimed for twelve months was to be turned over to the state, and the state treasurer was to pay the depot fees. The imprisoned enslaved people were to be worked as state-owned hands. The fugitive could still be claimed by his or her master, if the master could provide proof of ownership and by pay all accrued expenses.[196]

Fugitive enslaved grew to be such a problem that the Louisiana legislature ruled that whomever harbored a fugitive should be punished with a fine of $200 to $400 dollars. Providing an enslaved person with fabricated free papers was considered a forgery, an offence punishable by fourteen years in the state prison. Assisting a fugitive carried a punishment of two to twenty years in prison. Additional policies were adopted to prevent the enslaved from making their escape on watercraft.[197]

Local government included the role of the justice of the peace, filled by Phanor Prud'homme in the 1830s.[198] There was also a long tradition of local militia troops, perhaps dating from the days when Natchitoches was Fort St. Jean Baptiste. By the 1820s, the local militia met regularly, with notices placed in the local newspaper, the *Natchitoches Courier*. Once such notice appeared on July 10, 1827:

> TROOP OF CAVALRY.
>
> The Company will meet on Saturdah [*sic*] the 21st instant, at Deterville's Corner, in the Town of Natchitoches, for parade and exercise.
>
> The Offices, non-commissioned Officers, and Troopers, will appear mounted and fully uniformed and equipped. Those of the troopers who have not their uniforms will be in *blue Coats* and *white pantaloons booted and spurred* with their *caps, cartridge box, sword & belt*, and a day will be fixed within which they shall make their appearance completely equipped.
>
> The roll will be called over at 4 o'clock P. M. The commander enjoins strict compliance with this order, giving warning to all, that from this day, all fines decreed by the regulations shall be strictly assessed and their payment enforced.
>
> H.F. Deblieux,
> *Captain*
>
> July 10.[199]

A month later, another notice appeared in the *Natchitoches Courier*:

> Militia Notice
> The Officers of the 18th Regiment Louisiana Militia are ordered, to meet at the Court House, on the 11th day of August next, at 12 of the clock, for the purpose of electing a Colonel, to supply the vacancy, occasioned by the resignation of P. A. Rost Esq. By order of
>
> LT. COL. BREAZEALE
> CHARLES GEO. LEWIS
> Act. Adjutant
> 17th July, 1827.[200]

In 1842, Phanor Prud'homme, who was already known as "a man of culture and refinement," accepted the role of captain of the state militia.[201]

By 1856, Phanor Prud'homme had become politically active, serving as a delegate to the Louisiana convention of the American, or "Know-Nothing," Party, held in Baton Rouge. The local arm of the party published a column in the *Natchitoches Chronicle* that stated "Slavery is LOCAL, not NATIONAL" and demanded "redress of . . . the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the introduction of slavery into

196. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 174-175.
197. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 175.
198. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 18.
199. "Troop of Cavalry," *Natchitoches Courier*, July 10, 1826, 2.
200. "Militia Notice," *Natchitoches Courier*, July 24, 1827, 2.
201. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 21.

Kansas."[202] The American Party had strong nativist and, interestingly, anti-Catholic sentiment. Party members were concerned about the impact of the recent wave of immigration nationwide. They mistrusted traditional political parties, such as the Democrats and Whigs, and in their nativist zeal, sought for a "return to the purity of former days."[203] In heavily Catholic regions of Louisiana, some party members rebuked the anti-Catholic sentiment. In much of Louisiana, the party somewhat departed from its national platform and "toned down" its anti-Catholic stance, taking a strong pro-slavery stance, as well as an aim to fight political corruption.[204] It is difficult to know Phanor's personal political beliefs, but the national stance of the party suggests he may have held a stronger interest in his economic position as a slaveholding planter, rather than his social position as a Catholic Creole.

Abraham Lincoln was elected the sixteenth President in November 1860 on a platform that opposed slavery's expansion. This proved to be the last straw for many of the residents of the South, and within days, South Carolina convened a convention to consider secession. It was approved on December 20, 1860, by a vote of 169–0, making South Carolina the first of the southern states to secede from the Union.[205] The Louisiana state convention occurred on January 23, 1861, and resulted in the passing of the Louisiana Secession Ordinance. This document read, in part:

> We, the people of the State of Louisiana, in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and it is hereby declared and ordained that the ordinance passed by the State of 22d November, 1807, where-by the Constitution of the United States of America and the amendments of said Constitution were adopted, and all the laws and ordinances by which Louisiana became a member of the Federal Union, be, and the same are hereby repealed and abrogated, and the Union now subsisting between Louisiana and the other States, under the name of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved.
>
> We further declare and ordain, that the State of Louisiana hereby resumes the rights and powers heretofore delegated to the Government of the United States of America, and its citizens are absolved from allegiance to the said Government, and she is in full possession of all the rights and sovereignty that appertain to a free and independent State.[206]

While there was great support for secession across the South, this was not wholly true of Louisiana. Because of the transportation connection with New York and ports along the Mississippi, and its large immigrant population, New Orleanians were, "at best, lukewarm to the secessionist cause." In contrast, the secessionist sentiment ran strongest in the cotton parishes along the Mississippi and Red rivers, areas characterized by large plantations and a heavy concentration of enslaved persons.[207]

By the time Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, the Confederate States of America had formed. With Lincoln as president, planter family members away from home began to return to Natchitoches. Emmanuel Prud'homme left school at Georgetown, Henriette returned from New Orleans, and following the outbreak of war at Fort Sumter, Alphonse returned from his job on the Mississippi and Pacific Railroad. Both Alphonse and Emmanuel enlisted in the Confederate Army. Phanor's stepdaughter/niece, Desiree, returned to Bermuda after her husband, Emile LaCoul, also joined the army.[208]

The actions of the LeComte/Hertzog family as the war approached are less clear. In 1861, Ambrose LeComte II would have been fifty-seven years old, which may have been the reason he did not join the effort.[209] Matthew Hertzog was thirty-two in 1861, and his son, Ambrose John, was only four

202. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 20-21.
203. Carrier, "Political Leadership," 182-183.
204. Hall, "A Glorious Assemblage," 2-15.
205. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 22.
206. Moore, "Documents," 26.
207. Dew, "Who Won the Secession Election," 18.
208. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 22.
209. Finch, "Ambroise Lecomte II."

years old.[210] Both LeComte and his family, and the family of Matthew Hertzog, are believed to have retreated to the relative safety of their town houses in Natchitoches.[211]

Transportation

Water

The advent of the steamboat era caused a radical shift in transportation of goods and people within the region. What had been a slow method of moving goods by flatboats became exponentially quicker once steam engines began to drive larger vessels through mechanization. Carl Brasseaux and Keith Fontenot wrote extensively about the steamboat era:

> During its first decade of development, most of the steamboat trade was concentrated in the New Orleans to Natchez route, which was the most dependable early source of cargoes and lucrative fares. Technological improvements permitted the expansion of routes, and by the 1820s most river steamers operated between New Orleans and Louisville, Kentucky, where the famous rapids impeded the ascent of the Ohio River. The locus of river traffic changed over succeeding decades as a result of demographic changes stemming from the movement of the trans-Appalachian frontier across the Mississippi River. Steam traffic in the trans-Mississippi West began in 1815, when Captain Shreve ferried soldiers to the Red River rapids at Alexandria, Louisiana. The explosive growth in antebellum steamboat traffic allowed New Orleans to realize its potential as the Mississippi Valley's principal entrepôt...The city's role as a trade center was a direct consequence of the national government's failure to integrate the Old West into the national transportation infrastructure.[212]

Between 1801 and 1850, the value of goods deposited at New Orleans grew from approximately $4,000,000 to almost $100,000,000. This increase in trade and population made New Orleans the largest and most affluent city west of the Appalachians in the period between 1803 and 1850.[213]

While larger steamboats plied the Mississippi to and from New Orleans, by 1825, smaller, shallow-draft steamboats served the Natchitoches area; the Great Raft made it difficult for larger ships to navigate the Red River. Use of the Cane River was seasonal, especially after the Red River completed its channel shift. Planters frequently had to wait until spring rains raised the river to transport cotton bales via flatboats or small shallow-draft steamboats, which operated late winter through the early spring before water levels receded below navigable heights.[214]

Because of the relative lack of dependable river transport to distant markets, Cane River plantations were more self-sufficient than those along the Mississippi, where year-round transport of goods was possible. The level of self-sufficiency was judged by the amount of corn, vegetables, and meat produced per person on each plantation.[215]

Location in proximity to a river for ease of transportation was made possible to most landowners because of the arpent-based system of long lots, ensuring that each parcel of land had water access. Whether the plantation had a "big house" or was an outlying plantation owned as another productive investment, access to water transport determined the location of fields, docks, and processing equipment.

Magnolia

The Red River during the antebellum period played a central role in the lives of everyone at the plantation. Overseers wrote to Ambrose LeComte II reporting on shipping cotton and other freight, and commenting on the rise and fall of the river.

210. Finch, "Matthew Hertzog."
211. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 11.
212. Brasseaux and Fontenot, *Steamboats*, 8-9.
213. Brasseaux and Fontenot, *Steamboats*, 8-9.
214. Brasseaux and Fontenot, *Steamboats*, 8-9; Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report*, 82.
215. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report*, 33-34.

For example, G. E. Spillman wrote asking for instructions in January 1860: "Let me heare from you about shiping cotton thare will be a Boate up in Ten Days if the River Rises on."[216]

In February 1851, overseer W. B. Eddins wrote to LeComte about several shipments of goods:

> I received the articles - left at Boxton's Landing for me - by Hecla a few days ago by sending for them. As the Hecla came down the River this last trip - I received from her the articles for the plantation – all – as per Bill of Lading Except one Box of Merchandise which she did not put out.[217]

The Hecla was a steamboat that made several stops at Magnolia in the spring of 1851. It also sometimes left freight for Magnolia at other landings. The location of Boxton's Landing is not known, but it might have been further downstream or on the Rigolets de Bon Dieu, which was the main channel of the Red River by the 1850s. When the Cane River was low, small steamboats would use the Rigolets de Bon Dieu to reach Natchitoches. LeComte owned several pieces of land beside the Rigolet de Bon Dieu and may have maintained a landing on one or more of these properties.[218] Another overseer, A. Wheeler, wrote in May 1855:

> You spoke of shipping freight at Durans Landing let me say to you not to do so for it is impossible to haul cotton there on the account of little rivers being so bad to cross have it shipped to - or at - Boxton landing for the latter is a good road and just as near you can Telegraph to you Merchant before he ships.[219]

As with Boxton's, the exact location of Duran's Landing is also not known.

Flatboats were employed to ferry goods and people the short distances between neighboring plantations and for short distances up and down the river, but sometimes even these could not be used because of low water levels. In early January 1862, W. S. Campbell, who was likely managing the plantation but addressed Lecomte more as a friend of the family than as an employer, wrote about using a flatboat to fetch some rations:[220]

> I think the river too low at present to get either Henry's or your flat down, so I think we had better wait for rain, as it does not take much to raise the river 8 or 10 inches, and in the mean time we might send the wagons for a few bbls. if you wish, but we might wait a week for rain as we have hogs heads and other parts of the hogs we killed that it will not do to try to keep too long.[221]

Walmsley's 1858 map of Magnolia did not record the location of a landing there, but it was probably fairly close to where cotton bales were stored ready for shipping and somewhere next to the main complex of plantation buildings (see Figure 4-34). That would place it downstream from the Big House, on the outside of a bend in the river, so the current would swing against the bank making it easier to dock a boat.[222]

Walmsley's map shows two artificial levees crossing the plantation, one close to the Big House, to protect it from floodwaters coming from the bayous, and the other at the edge of the

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216. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 114-117.
217. W. B. Eddins to A. LeComte, February 1, 1851, transcribed in Keel, et al, *A Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 84.
218. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 83.
219. A. Wheeler to A. LeComte, May 10, 1855. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 901, UNC, Chapel Hill.
220. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 83.
221. W. S. Campbell to A. Lecomte, January 11, 1862. Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog. Campbell might have been a lawyer; a payment to a lawyer of that name was recorded in the 1845 succession inventory.
222. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 83-84.

woodlands to protect the fields. In March 1851, Eddins reported on some spring flooding:

> Our Levee holds the water back well - The River has fallon here in front - about 7 inches - and back of the Levee about 12 in - a good deal of our com Land was over flowed though I think if the River continues to fall - our Land will be all dry in the course of 6 or 8 days more -.[223]

Natural levees lined the riverfront and protected the property from Cane River floodwaters. The natural levees were rarely overtopped, although that had happened in some places in 1849.[224] In most years, however, floodwaters generally rose up from the bayous that laced the floodplain between the main channels of the river system. In 1851, Eddins noted, "…The plantation on the other side was over flowed from the back part...."[225] Walmsley's survey of Magnolia did not show the bayous in the back part of the plantation, but they were charted on later maps. Branches of the Bayou Charette, which drained to Little River, wound through the eastern and northern parts of the plantation. The levee Eddins referred to would have been built to stem the rise of waters coming from Little River via these bayous at the back of the plantation.[226]

Eddins' letter suggests there was only one levee in existence in 1851. If so, it was probably the front levee because the letter leads one to believe there was considerable cultivated ground flooded behind it. The "set back" levee at the edge of the woods that protected the fields was probably built between 1851 and 1858 during the prosperous years when higher cotton prices justified such expenditures and more land was probably being cleared from the woodland area.[227]

On the east side of Magnolia, the two levees met at the property boundary and became a single levee that ran along it towards the Cane River, where it ended at the natural levee. On the west side of the plantation, the two levees ended near what would become known as Hertzog Lake. In 1858, half of this lake was situated on LeComte's land and half on Henry Hertzog's plantation. Magnolia's front levee terminated south of the lake, running into the natural levee, while the set-back levee ended at the eastern shore of the lake and isolated it from the headwaters of the Bayou Charette.[228]

From the Hertzog plantation side, several bayous entered the lake and a very complex drainage pattern evolved, portions of which were no doubt manmade. Two of these bayous were also connected to the main channel of Cane River, but it is not clear what prevented floodwaters from the river flowing into the lake via these bayous and onto the lands between the levees. To prevent this, there were likely some flood barriers in these bayous, but these do not appear on Walmsley's drawing. Dams were known to be built at Emanuel Prud'homme's plantation to prevent floodwaters from backing up major drainage channels connected to Bayou Brevelle. It is possible that there were similar devices to control the rise of water in the bayous on the western side of the lake; Walmsley's surveys of Magnolia and Henry Hertzog's plantation, however, do not show them. The river road is shown crossing these bayous where they entered the main river, so combined bridge and dam structures might have been constructed at those crossings.[229]

Oakland (Bermuda)

The location of the Bermuda/Oakland big house was possibly related to the patterns of the river's shallows and deeps created by variations in its currents. The western bank was on the outside of a

223. W.B. Eddins to A. LeComte, 21 March 1851, transcribed in Keel, 85.
224. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 115.
225. Eddins to LeComte, 21 March 1851.
226. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 84.
227. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 82-85.
228. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 82-85.
229. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 82-85; Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 115.

gentle curve, which provided a safer place for a landing. Currents on the outside of a curve typically scour deeper channels and maintain depth without the need for extensive dredging.[230]

The natural timeline of river traffic in the high water associated with spring rains affected schedules of ginning and pressing. These activities began as soon as the harvest started—usually sometime in August. It was important to immediately begin processing the cotton to reduce the amount of storage space required for the ginned and pressed bales. Since cotton was not perishable, the work could continue through the winter and the following spring until all the previous year's cotton was processed and stored. The bales were sent by steamer down the river during times of high water. In addition to data related to the quality of cotton, production rates of workers, and numbers of bales ginned and pressed, the plantation record books also reported levels of water in the river.

In addition to the flatboats that ferried equipment and people back and forth across the river to the two sides of the plantation, a temporary bridge was also sometimes used. It would be constructed once water levels fell below that needed for safe navigation. The timing of construction of this temporary bridge changed from year to year depending on the amount of spring rains and river heights. It is reported within the documentary evidence that the temporary bridge was an annual event as of the late 1850s. Once regular rainfall commenced in late fall and early winter, the bridge was taken back down to allow steamboats to navigate upstream from New Orleans to transport the previous year's cotton bales to market.[231]

Once the Red River shifted course and vacated the channel that was then renamed Cane River, low water became as much of an issue as high water had in previous decades. Without adequate water levels, the shallow-draft steamboats that plied the interior waterways of Louisiana could not navigate to Natchitoches. In 1852, Lestan Prud'homme records the arrival of the steamboat Kimball in March of that year:

> The Kimball went up the Bondieu Sunday morning and got to Natchitoches at about 5 P. M. Several rounds of the canon were shot at her arrival expressive of the joy and satisfaction of the inhabitants of this place, seeing the navigation once more established after having been stopped for the last 8 or 9 months.[232]

To address the unreliability of water transport, area planters discussed the possibility of a railroad link connecting Natchitoches to the New Orleans and Opelousas Railroad. These discussions, however, went nowhere during the antebellum years, and area planters remained dependent on the smaller riverboats that plied the Cane and Red rivers.[233]

During the winter and early spring, when the river was navigable, two or three steamboats a week made the trip up Cane River. Their timing, however, was not predictable, as they were dependent on navigation issues further downriver to make their forward journey to Natchitoches. Frederick Law Olmsted noted this unpredictability when he was making his journey through the Southern states, and wrote of his frustration as he sat in New Orleans, awaiting transport to Natchitoches.[234]

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230. Gregory and Moran, *We Know Who We Are*, 81, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 43.
231. R.A.B. April 28, 1857, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 80.
232. Lestan Prud'homme, February 17, 1851, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 115.
233. Lestan Prud'homme. September 10, 1852 and October 10, 1852, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 115.
234. Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 603-607, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 115.

During periods of low water in late spring, summer, and early fall, it was possible for people and animal to ford the Cane River, quickly and easily crossing between its banks. In either high or low water, daily life revolved around the vagaries of transportation related to water and the seasons.

Roads and Lanes

Local traffic used a network of river roads, which ran along the riverbank or at the base of its levee, minor roads, which lay inland and roughly paralleled the river roads, and farm lanes, which led away from the rivers into the production areas of the plantations. The river roads were the main routes connecting plantations and settlements and were open to the public. They were maintained by local governments and were of higher quality than minor roads or farm lanes.[235]

Minor roads threaded the backcountry, fording bayous at suitable points. Where there were narrow necks of land at major bends in the river, shortcuts, or "cut-offs," developed to save travel time; although they passed through private land, owners did not restrict their use. Owners assumed the responsibility of maintaining these minor roads.

Farm lanes were dirt tracks that connected the river and minor roads to the interior of plantations. They were the means by which goods were moved from processing areas to flatboats, keelboats, and then shallow-draft steamboats on the river. Farm lanes also ran along the bayous that radiated away from the river to back swamps and far reaches of properties. These private lanes were frequently fenced and gated to serve the dual purpose of protecting private property while restricting the movement of livestock. Farm lane repair and maintenance was an ongoing effort of the enslaved workforce. Plantation records reflect periodic construction and maintenance of roads and associated ditches. Where farm roads met the river, ferries were sometimes established to cross the river where fording was impossible, or not dependable.

As the antebellum period advanced, roads became more important. With the shift in the course of the Red River, the relict Cane River became a less dependable means of year-round transport. Fluctuations and low water levels forced plantation owners to start using the public road system more often, and their maintenance became more important in day-to-day operations.

There are many references to roads and lanes in Bermuda/Oakland and Magnolia plantation records, but very little to indicate their exact locations, except for the 1858 Walmsley map of Magnolia. Otherwise, no maps of the road network in the Cane River area have been found that pre-date 1921, when the earliest known soil survey map of the area was made.

Magnolia

The 1858 Walmsley drawing shows a circulation pattern that is typical of plantations in that region. The river road ran along the bank of the Cane River, and a central lane led from the river road into the interior of the plantation. On either side of the central lane extended a network of "turnrows," that is, small areas of fallow land at the side or end of a field where a plow may be turned around at the end of a furrow.

The river road that passed the inland side of Magnolia carried traffic parallel to the nearly 30 miles of the serpentine course of the Cane River between Cloutierville and Natchitoches. At Henry Hertzog's plantation, the river road cut across the neck of land opposite the junction of Cane River with Old River. At Magnolia, there were no cut-offs in the river road, but it is possible that some turnrows were used to shortcut the river bends, particularly the sharp curve below the Big House.

Walmsley's survey of Matthew Hertzog's land showed a ferry crossing upstream from Magnolia.

235. The following information about roads is from Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 117-118.

It was known as the Twenty-Four Mile Ferry because it was 24 miles downstream from the courthouse at Natchitoches.[236] A short distance upstream from this crossing, travelers could shorten their trips into town by leaving the river road and taking a more direct route west of the river. This route was referred to as a "summer road," indicating it was only usable at certain times of the year.[237] The Walmsley map does not indicate how the river was crossed at Magnolia, although it is known that a flatboat was used to move supplies up and down the river, likely connecting Magnolia with the plantation across the river. Oral tradition has it that there was also a footbridge that connected Cat Island to Magnolia Plantation and was used by congregants to access St. James AME and St. Andrews.[238]

At Magnolia, a straight, central lane led from the main house complex led to the pastures and woods in the interior of the plantation. Walmsley indicates it was at least the same width as the allée leading to the Big House. Today, the western edge of the lane is lined with Osage orange, or *bois d'arc* (*Maclura pomifera*). Their size and condition suggest that some might have been planted as part of a hedge during the antebellum period.[239] Although farm lanes were usually fenced and gated, gates are not indicated on Walmsley's drawing. He did, however, depict some turnrows with double lines, emphasizing their width and importance.

Paths within Magnolia Plantation are indicated with dashed lines, frequently across the middle of plowed fields, often called "cuts."[240] In cut number 13, immediately northwest of the Big House, he drew a double line of dashes, labeled "Road to Dwelling." This road linked the Big House to the front levee, meeting it at a junction with a major turnrow. If one followed that turnrow north, one would arrive at Hertzog Lake, so the path might have provided a convenient way to get from the house to the lake.

A single line of dashes crossed through the smallholding owned by Marie Adelaide Mariotte; a note in the margin of the map reads: "The turning row continued to the river through Mariot's [*sic*] tract [finishes] at the live oak." The other dashed lines are not labeled and except for the route through Mariotte's smallholding, the function of these paths in the overall circulation system of Magnolia is not clear. The other paths crossed cuts number 6, 14, 15, and 24, but their destinations are not clear; perhaps the lines indicate temporary turnrows created by a division of crops, rather than permanent paths. The addition in pencil of a dotted line at the east end of the pasture field to indicate the area being used by Fontenot as a cotton patch supports this interpretation.

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236. "Partition of Land Between Ambrose J. Hertzog and Fanny H. Chopin," January 18, 1903, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog, original at Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court, Natchitoches Courthouse, Instrument 29021, Conveyance Record 110-A, 485.
237. Mershon, *Natchitoches and Alexandria Survey*.
238. Dustin Fuqua, 2017, citing ethnographic documentation.
239. Rows of *bois d'arc* were frequently maintained in the South as hedges because their thorns deterred cattle movement and browsing. A hedge of *bois d'arc* was planted at Oakland around the fruit and vegetable garden in the antebellum period; Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 129-130.
240. A "cut" is a unit of plowed land of variable size. While fenced together with other cuts, individual cuts were separated from each other by drainage ditches and turnrows. Cuts were sometimes given numbers or names to simplify communication. Magnolia, for example, had numbered cuts, as well as named, including "the Levy cut." Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 88.

Although Walmsley's survey did not show a lane at either the eastern or northwestern sides of Magnolia, he did indicate one connecting Henry Hertzog's plantation and Matthew Hertzog's place, and another in the middle of Matthew's property, so it is likely that if there had been a lane between Magnolia and Henry Hertzog's land, Walmsley would have drawn it in. In later years, a lane led along the eastern side of the plantation; it still exists and leads to the Little River. It is possible that it also existed in the antebellum period and could have been the route to Duran's Landing referred to by Wheeler in the letter quoted above.

Bermuda/Oakland

Bermuda/Oakland records refer to roads and lanes, but they do not place their locations within the larger geographic landscape. It appears that the river road referred to in the 1850 sale record formed the northern boundary of the plantation property. Lestan Prud'homme reported that the distance between Bermuda and Natchitoches was 15 miles by the river road on the west bank, and that the trip typically took approximately three hours by horse or carriage.[241]

On the east side of Cane River, it appears that there were three minor roads or farm lanes leading to the river road. A central farm lane that aligned with the allée in front of the main house extended to the river. A minor road on the southern edge of the property, sometimes called the Bon Dieu Road, also met the river road, as did a farm lane that ran along the northern edge of the property between Bermuda and its neighbor.[242]

A ford and a temporary bridge crossed the river at Bermuda/Oakland. The ford was used during period of low water; the bridge was erected each summer when steamboat traffic ceased.[243]

Larger Landscape/Environment

Forests and Lumbering

By the onset of the Civil War, the Prud'homme family had accumulated extensive holdings of pine timber in the Kisatchie Hills forests. From these holdings, they cut timber, then milled it, and either used it for construction projects on their properties or sold it at market. The family also spent portions of their summers in the Kisatchie Hills in retreat from the heat, humidity, and disease associated with lower-lying areas. While the difference in elevation was minimal compared to other summer enclaves of the plantation South, leaving the banks of Cane River and traveling to higher elevations with clean-running springs was a means to increase comfort and health in the subtropical climate of south Louisiana.[244]

Plantation families also cut lumber in the Cane River back swamps, which are low, wet areas inland from the river, forested primarily with cypress, a slow-growing, deciduous conifer. Families with land along the banks of the Cane River used their back swamps as a source of both lumber for construction, and firewood for heat and cooking. Large quantities of this lumber were burned to generate the steam needed to run ginning machines and cotton presses during harvest season.[245]

Water Control

When the Red River shifted course in the 1830s, areas that had been regularly scoured by flooding in spring were now subject to siltation and plant growth along the banks. Plantation owners regularly grazed cattle along the banks to keep

241. Lestan Prud'homme, June 25, 1852. In Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 117
242. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 117-119.
243. Dustin Fuqua, 2017, citing ethnographic documentation.
244. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 156; R.A.B. November 8, 1860 and Saw Mill Accounts, 1860-62, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 76.
245. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Cultural Landscape Report,* 14-15.

plant growth to a minimum and to keep the banks clean and usable.

Along these river edges, the plantation families constructed levees to keep water from flooding agricultural fields and residential landscapes along the river, and installed ditches to drain water to the back swamps. Ditching was very difficult, and sometimes dangerous, work. Historian Joe Gray Taylor notes that "Louisiana planters preferred to hire Irish laborers for heavy ditching and clearing work, so as not to endanger the health of their valuable slaves." Irish workers traveled in groups performing these services, and generally stayed in an area, working at several plantation and locations before moving to another area of the state. Once the basic structure had been created, as it had been at Bermuda in 1837, enslaved workers were then used to maintain the depth and utility of ditches.[246]

Irish immigrant laborers also did other difficult work, including lumbering and clearing waste land. As one overseer observed, "it was much better to have Irish to do it, who cost nothing to the planter, if they died, than to use up good field hands in such severe employment."[247]

Cemeteries

Upon their deaths, Prud'homme family members were traditionally buried in either the American or Catholic cemeteries in Natchitoches. However, slaves were typically buried on the plantation.[248] At Oakland, the slave cemetery has been identified at a location towards the backswamp area of the property on lower ground that was generally not useable growing crops.[249]

The LeComtes may have also followed this practice, but the location of the slave cemetery at Magnolia is not known. The LeComtes were known to use Shallow Lake Cemetery for slave burials.

Plantations

Because of incomplete mapping, and the under- or over-reporting in the census records, it is difficult to know exactly how many plantations there were in Natchitoches Parish during the antebellum period. In the 1860 census, however, 142 men reported their occupation as overseer or farm manager in Natchitoches Parish.[250] In contrast, only forty-two men were counted as owners of over fifty enslaved persons. These men owned a total of 124,556 acres of land in the parish, or about 15.5 percent of the total land. The large number of overseers compared to slaveholders suggests that while there is one owner, he could, and often did, own more than one plantation and employed an overseer or two for each one.[251]

During the antebellum period, the size of plantations in Natchitoches Parish grew dramatically. Following the death of his parents in the 1840s, Phanor officially purchased the Bermuda/Oakland Plantation. This gave him the ability to make key decisions and expand the holdings as he wished. Among the expansions included the family *vacherie* on Saline Lake (northeast of Natchitoches) and, along with his brother Jean Baptiste, a league square land claim "at the Adayeas."[252]

Magnolia was also established during the antebellum period by Ambrose LeComte II. After he remarried and began to devote his time to horse breeding and racing, Ambrose LeComte II moved his family moved off the plantation to their Natchitoches townhouse for a period, likely while

246. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 84, quoted in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report,* 55.
247. Russell, 273.
248. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 136.
249. Conversation with Dustin Fuqua, September 27, 2016.
250. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 98.
251. Menn, *Large Slaveholders of Louisiana*, 298-299.
252. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 14.

the new Big House was being built.[253] Suzette Buard, the widowed sister-in-law of LeComte's first wife, Julia, still lived at the plantation with her daughters, Ulalie (14), Caroline (10), Julie (8), and sons, Alex (12), Everiste (5), and Ernest (4). Matthew Hertzog (22) also lived at Magnolia.[254]

When one of the LeComte daughters, Atala, married Matthew Hertzog in 1852, Magnolia's holdings expanded to include his family's land, called Ferry Plantation. Ambrose II also gave 40 percent interest in his holdings to Matthew, while retaining 60 percent for himself.[255] Matthew and Atala moved into Magnolia's new Big House ca. 1852, likely following the death of overseer W. B. Eddins, and took over management of the plantation, enabling Ambrose and Lise to stay in the townhouse in Natchitoches. Over the next decade the LeComtes and Hertzogs moved between the various family residences, something that was popular with many of the Creole planter class.[256]

Like any farm, the plantation had a yearly cycle of planting, harvesting, and general chores. In January on a cotton plantation, workers made repairs to fences and machinery, cleared fields, and cleaned stables. At Bermuda, some enslaved workers were sent to the *cypriere* (cypress brake) to process lumber into cypress shingles.[257]

Plowing began in February and oxen were employed to break the heavy clay soil. Southern farmers used the iron-plated wooden Carey plow, or some version of the shovel plow, which was developed before the American Revolution. Either plow could be made on-site by the plantation blacksmith. In the 1820s and 1830s, lighter plows with wrought iron points and moldboards came into use. In 1838, Phanor Prud'homme records having a "Spanish plow" and what may have been a Carey plow. That same year, he also recorded plowing with oxen and tilling with pickaxes. Cast-iron plows manufactured in the North were resisted in the South due to their cost and lack of adaptability; they were replaced by steel plows in the 1840s and 1850s.[258] Harrows were used to smooth the ground after being plowed. By the 1790s, two styles of harrow were used in the Americas, square and triangular, and were made of wood, then later, with iron teeth. Harrows were mentioned in the earliest available planting records at Bermuda (1838).

The enslaved worked many hours every day chopping cotton or weeding corn and other crops. Into the 1830s, most farmers cultivated their crops with hoes; at Bermuda these included grubbing hoes or mattocks, picks, and many unspecified hoes. Tools called "sweeps" and "scrapers" were also used. Sweeps were light plows with small iron points that held sharpened iron strips that were used to weed between rows. Scrapers had long horizontal wrought-iron blades that cut weeds below the earth surface between rows and were especially suited to the loam in Louisiana. Both tools could be made at plantation blacksmith shops, and both were recorded at Bermuda in the 1840s. The Prud'hommes invested heavily in their farm equipment: in the 1850 and 1860 census, their tools were some of the highest valued in the parish.[259]

After the ground was plowed, planting commenced. Corn was planted as early as mid-February, but usually in March.[260] Sweet potatoes were planted in hillocks mid-March; in late March/early April, field workers planted pumpkins, replaced the corn that did not germinate, and began sowing cotton. In 1839, Phanor Prud'homme recorded planting two types of cotton at the turn of March and April: "Petit

253. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 10; Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 9.
254. United States Department of Commerce, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*.
255. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 1.
256. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 10.
257. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 66.
258. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 83; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 72-73.
259. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 82-85.
260. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 67.

Gulf" and "Grande Terre." Cotton was planted in wide rows six to eight feet apart by a group of women and children who placed seeds in the trough created by a plow.[261] The seed was then covered with a harrow pulled by a mule or horse. Not all the workforce was required in planting; often some of the men would work preparing other fields, while some women hoed weeds out of the corn.

The cotton seeds took eight to ten days to germinate, at which time the areas that did not come up were replanted. Once the plants began growing, the next step was hoeing, or rather "chopping" away the weeds. Scrapers were used to work the ground. Enslaved workers would follow the scraper with hoes and cut away weeds that had grown since planting. The young plants were thinned, usually either placed in rows eighteen inches apart or planted in small "hills" two to three feet apart, and re-covered. Hoeing typically occurred two to three times a season.[262]

Growing cotton was a labor-intensive process. There was planting, scraping, chopping, and thinning, all before early July, when the cotton began to mature. In the period before cotton harvesting, workers were kept busy gathering fodder and harvesting corn. Cotton picking began at the turn of August/September. Cotton was handpicked by enslaved laborers and usually required nearly the entire workforce. Women and children typically picked cotton from dawn until dusk six days a week, excluding Sunday. Men picked alongside them unless there was other required work, such as harvesting corn or cutting wood. Workers hauled the crop through the fields in woven baskets or sacks of heavy cotton duck; some strong men could haul a sack as long as twelve feet. A sack of cotton could weigh up to 300 pounds, all depending on the size of the sack, length of rows being picked, the quality of the crop, and the distance to the weigh station. On a well-run plantation, however, fields were laid out so that a worker would not have to carry a sack with more than 25 pounds of cotton before reaching the end of a row, where he or she could deposit the cotton into a basket. It was commonly believed that women could pick between 100 and 125 pounds a day, whereas a man could pick between 200 and 400 pounds a day. Statistics at Bermuda varied on this issue, with some women picking amounts to rival the men.[263]

Cotton bolls opened at different times during the season, meaning that fields had to be picked three or more times during harvest. If cotton was damp at the time of picking, it was spread on platforms to dry before it was ginned. Once a bag or basket had reached its maximum capacity for the laborer, it was weighed on scales in the field and loaded on a wagon to take to the gin for processing. In general, one full wagon load was equal to one bale of cotton. Although cotton picking occurred in late summer, cotton ginning often extended from the harvest until March, at the start of the new planting season.[264]

Once the cotton was picked it was moved to the cotton gin (or engine) for processing, which was done even as picking continued in the fields. Ginning had two processes: the first involved passing the cotton bolls through the ginning machine, where the seeds were removed, and then combing the cotton into fibers using the gin stand, which consisted of combs mounted on revolving cylinders. Before 1850, the gins were operated using manual labor, but by 1854, at least one of the Prud'homme gins, believed to be the one opposite the Big House, was converted to steam.[265]

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261. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 58; Taylor, "Slaves at Work," 203.
262. Taylor, "Slaves at Work," 203-204.
263. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 67; Taylor, "Slaves at Work," 204; Hartramph and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 20; Hartramph and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 20.
264. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 78-79; Hartramph and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 20.
265. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 20-21.

The second step of the process was pressing the cotton into the standard 400-pound cotton bales for shipment. In the 1830s, screw presses, typically powered by draft animals, were widely used across the South. The animals were connected to the press by "buzzard wings" or sweeps that extended down from the top of the press. The presses were often free-standing structures placed close to, but not attached, to the gin house. As the animals walked around the screw press, it turned, compressing the cotton into a box, which formed the bales.[266]

As improvements in the process were made, the presses were operated by steam, and inventions enabled the press to be moved inside. Steam-driven cotton gins and presses would usually have a tall chimney of brick or sheet metal, in addition to the brick or wood buildings needed to house the operations. As one author described it, the cotton gin enterprise was "a far cry from the bucolic landscape generally envisioned as the 'southern plantation.'"[267]

The Prud'hommes were forward-thinking antebellum farmers and took measures to keep soil fertile during a time when other planters just acquired more land in anticipation of what they had "wearing out." In the 1830s, Phanor Prud'homme cycled the crops; he planted corn on soil fertilized with cottonseed hulls and threw cottonseed on Guinea grass (now called "Johnson grass") before plowing it in for added fertilizer. At the time, the spare cotton seed, which had a high nitrogen content, was typically burned or thrown out by other planters. In the 1840s, the US began importing guano from Peru to be used as fertilizer, which Phanor Prud'homme applied to a cabbage field. Pigeon droppings, from the birds kept in the *pigeonniers*, was also applied. Farmers believed that, in addition to acting as a fertilizer, the droppings discouraged other fowl from consuming newly planted seed. Newspapers in Natchitoches advertised other fertilizers, such as phosphates from guano and lime, "coarse ground bones," and "Pourette… night soil," any of which could have been used at Bermuda and Magnolia.[268]

Livestock and Crops

Like many planters, the Prud'hommes raised and bred livestock for a variety of functions, including food, sale, and drafting. In the 1840s, the family raised livestock in the woodlands of Bermuda/Oakland, including free-range sheep, hogs, and cattle. By the 1850s, much of the family's cattle and horses were raised on a *vacherie* in Texas, apparently in partnership with Jean Baptiste Prud'homme. The family also kept livestock in a *vacherie* on Sabine Lake, northeast of Natchitoches.[269]

Horses were an important commodity and status symbol for planters. According to historian John Michael Vlach, "the importance of horse raising to the planter class cannot be overestimated; it was a commonly accepted dictum that 'a man was only as good as his horse.'"[270] At Bermuda, horses were raised both at the family's *vacherie* in Texas, and on the plantation. The 1845 succession inventory recorded "Creole mares, young Creole fillies, Opelousas horses, *vacherie* horses, carriage horses, and draft horses and mules."[271] Creole horses, also called "Criollo" horses, are the descendants of horses brought to the Americas by early Spanish explorers.[272] Opelousas horses were a "small breed of mixed Spanish and Indian" that were "very hardy and accustomed to subsist on grass and bark of trees."[273] At the time of Catherine Lambre Prud'homme's death in 1849, Bermuda's stable included a pair of carriage horses, and twenty-six

266. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 19; Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 13. Bales might have weighed anywhere from 300 to 500 lbs.
267. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 21.
268. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 65.
269. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 66; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 13 and 68.
270. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 111.
271. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 70-71.
272. "Origins of the Criollo horse."
273. "History of a Voyage."

"other" horses.[274] By the time of the 1850 census, there were twenty horses being kept at the plantation.[275]

At one point, Emmanuel Prud'homme owned a race track on 208 acres near the town of Natchitoches. The track was purchased by Ambrose LeComte II and Ambroise Sompayrac after the death of Catherine Prud'homme in 1849; the new owners leased the property to the Natchitoches Jockey Club, of which the Prud'hommes were members. After his marriage to Lise Victorie Desiree Sompayrac, Ambrose LeComte began to devote his time to horse breeding and racing.[276] The LeComte family was known for their excellent race horses, with the most famous of these being the "Flying Dutchman" and "LeCompte."[277] Races were not limited to the formal track in Natchitoches; many of the plantations of the Cane River region also had what is called "bush" tracks.[278]

In addition to horses, mules and oxen were used as draft animals on the plantations. From his parents' estate in 1850, Phanor Prud'homme purchased five teams of oxen, two individual oxen and thirteen mules. The 1850 census reported twenty-three mules and fourteen oxen at Bermuda. Oxen were most popular during the early nineteenth century, and although planters continued to use them through most of the century, they were gradually replaced by mules.[279]

Although mules were more expensive, they were faster and lived longer than horses. Additionally, it was popularly believed that mules ate less than horses, making them more affordable to maintain. Mules were first bred at George Washington's Mt. Vernon plantation and were soon determined to be well-adapted for southern plantation agriculture. By 1860, 47 percent of all mules in the United States were in Southern states.[280]

Neither horses nor mules were considered food, but cattle on plantations served a "quadruple purpose," being reared for their meat, milk, hides, and draft capabilities. In general, a planter's herd was of higher value than those of the yeoman farmer, as they were able to afford "blooded stock" (purebred or purposefully bred). At the time of Emmanuel Prud'homme's death, Phanor and Jean Baptiste held 200 head of cattle at the family's *vacherie*. In 1850, Bermuda recorded fifty milch cows and 150 other cattle.[281] That same year, 500 pounds of butter was produced and $600 worth of animals was slaughtered. Bermuda cattle appear to have spent part of the year "on the open range," as succession inventories listed the animals being appraised "in the woods." The Prud'homme family's cattle were marked by several different brands at various periods; Phanor Prud'homme's brand was simply "PPP." An iron with this brand, along with others, have survived and are currently in the CARI collections (CARI 23010 and CARI 23013). There is even evidence of some enslaved persons owning cattle at Bermuda. In the 1860 "Inventory of Stock and Implements," overseer

274. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 15.
275. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 68.
276. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 17; Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 10.
277. Lee, *Oral History*, 54. "LeCompte" is correct, although the family is LeComte.
278. "Bush track" is used to describe informal horse races run in the rural United States and southern Canada. Amateur jockeys would race quarter horses on rough tracks, often set up where the horses are pastured. Track lengths were generally not uniform and race times never kept. Louisiana produced many top jockeys who started on bush tracks. *Wikipedia*, referencing Joe Drape, "Love of Racing Grows in the Bushes," *New York Times*, March 9, 1997, and Ray Romero, "Small town in 'Bayou Country' home to many jockeys," *Ocala Star Banner* (Florida), February 18, 1993, 4C.
279. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 15, 68-69.
280. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 112-113.
281. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 15-72. The term "milch" means a cow, or other domestic mammal that is kept for its ability to give milk.

Seneca Pace reported that twenty head belonging to enslaved persons were branded.[282]

Like cattle, sheep also provided a multitude of purposes, including providing wool, and ultimately becoming a food source. In 1838, Emmanuel Prud'homme recorded having 116 sheep, which had reduced to 100 by the time of the 1850 census, and to 30 by 1860. Perhaps this reduction was offset by the increase in cotton, which would provide a much friendlier fabric for hot southern summers. In 1860 at Bermuda/Oakland Plantation, shearing resulting in a total of 140 pounds of wool. In comparison, that same year, Phanor Prud'homme recorded 628 bales of cotton with each bale weighing 400 pounds.[283]

The hogs raised on the plantations were another popular food source, with pork considered a "mainstay of the Southern diet" and especially important for the enslaved. Records indicate that at Bermuda, there were twenty-five hogs in 1849, with this number rising to forty in just one year.[284] It is possible that hogs may have also spent a portion of the year living free-range in nearby woods and prairies, as did the Bermuda cattle. If they did, they would certainly have been "earmarked" to identify ownership.[285] Earmarking involves clipping a notch or pattern of notches along the edges of a pig's ear to indicate ownership or other information, such as year of birth. Today, this practice has given way to attachment of pre-printed plastic ear tags.[286]

As mentioned in Chapter 3, it was common in French-settled areas to keep pigeons as livestock. Both Bermuda and Magnolia plantations had *pigeonniers*, or pigeon houses, to house their birds. Pigeons and their eggs were consumed by the plantation owners, and the pigeon droppings often served as fertilizer for the kitchen gardens. Pigeon keeping is derived from Roman custom, and the associated dovecote became a symbol of aristocracy in sixteenth and seventeenth century France. Writings on the practice of keeping pigeons reveals that, in France, peasants were forbidden to hunt on estate lands without permission and the two-story *pigeonniers* provided physical evidence that they were on estate lands. Similarly, with the *pigeonniers* prominently placed near the plantation big houses, they were a clear symbol of American aristocracy.[287]

During the antebellum period, cotton was considered the prime crop, particularly on larger plantations like Bermuda and Magnolia. After the War of 1812, "cotton fever" took the South, and prices remained high until the Panic of 1819. Thereafter, cotton fluctuated but remained profitable for planters who were able to invest in slave labor and land. Cotton remained a successful venture until the next economic downturn in the 1830s.[288]

In 1836, the cotton harvest at Bermuda yielded approximately 234,619 pounds on the right bank of the Cane River and 163,300 on the left. This equals a total of 406,919 pounds and, at a standard 400-pound bale, this would have amounted to approximately 1,017 bales.[289] Unfortunately, the successful season was followed by an economic collapse, both locally and statewide, which was compounded by a drought in 1838, resulting in a total yield of only 327 bales.[290]

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282. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 72-73; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 71.
283. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 56, 74.
284. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 15, 68, 73.
285. Smith, *A Good Home,* 94.
286. "Earmark (agriculture)."
287. Edwards and du Ballay de Verton, *A Creole Lexicon*, 156.
288. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 19.
289. Bales were never exactly 400 lbs., but could range from 300 to over 500 lbs., depending on the type of cotton press used. Freight charges were based on the number of bales of a standard dimension, not the weight of the bales. Kathleen Byrd, personal communication.
290. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 55.

Despite the tumultuous market, the Prud'hommes persevered. The cotton market turned around in 1849, and the years between 1850 and 1860 were the "hey-day" years of Bermuda.[291] The 1850 federal census reported that Phanor Prud'homme owned 1,800 acres, 800 of which were improved, and 124 enslaved people. That year he produced 210 bales of cotton and 4,500 bushels of corn. By 1853 the crop had increased to 500 bales.[292] By 1860, census records reported that Phanor owned 3,400 acres, of which 1,000 were improved, and owned 145 people. The season prior, the plantation produced 698 bales of cotton and 7,000 bushels of corn.[293] Overall that year, Natchitoches Parish was seventh statewide in cotton production.[294]

High cotton productivity enabled the Prud'hommes to invest in machinery for the plantation. As of 1860, three gins were in use at Bermuda, two on the Oakland side and one across the river at what would become Atahoe Plantation following the Civil War. The two gins on the Oakland side of the river were distinguished as "Old Gin" and "New Gin." The New Gin was constructed in 1859–1860, as referenced by overseer Seneca Pace, who stated that cotton was hauled from the "New Gin to the Mule Gin," the latter being the old gin and mule barn, suggesting that the Old Gin was mule-powered instead of steam-powered like the new gin.[295] Steam gins were most likely to be found on large plantations; these industrial engines could operate several gin stands and a press at the same time. The *Natchitoches Chronicle* newspaper advertisement from July 1860 for a machine shop in Alexandria indicated that Phanor Prud'homme would be able to provide a reference for their work; clearly Prud'homme had utilized the shop for the new gin and its installation.[296]

Cotton was also the primary crop of Magnolia, despite the cotton prices falling sharply due to the Panic of 1837 shortly after Magnolia was founded. Fortunately, cotton was profitable again by 1849, where it remained through the 1850s.[297] During the 1840s, Magnolia processed cotton with draft animal-powered gins and the extant screw-powered press.[298] At the time of Julia Buard LeComte's death in 1845, the plantation had picked 150,000 pounds of cotton, or approximately 333 bales, which was valued at $2,000; an estimated $4,500 worth of cotton was still in the field.[299] In 1847 there was a flood, resulting in only 103 bales picked.[300]

In the 1850s, facilities for processing cotton improved at Magnolia. In 1852, Ambrose LeComte II recorded in his journal that it was an "excellent year," having harvested 479 bales.[301] Further improvements occurred when, in 1856, the cotton gin was converted from mule to steam power.[302] The plantation set a record in 1860, when it produced the most cotton (1,133 450-pound bales) and owned more people (235) than any other plantation in the parish.[303] As a side effect of the success of cotton, in 1860, earlier cash crops in the region, including tobacco, rice, and sugar, had no measurable production within the parish.[304]

Corn was another major crop grown on area plantations, and was used for cornmeal to be consumed by both the enslaved and planters, as livestock feed, and as a commercial cash crop. In

291. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 66.
292. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 56.
293. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 26, 28.
294. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 56.
295. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 60.
296. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 76-77.
297. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 19.
298. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 13.
299. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 28.
300. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 17.
301. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 17.
302. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 10.
303. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 19.
304. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 54.

the 1830s, Bermuda's overseer recorded delivering barrels of corn to various people, and in 1839, Phanor Prud'homme remarked that he had planted his "famous eight-ear corn." The 1850 census reported that Prud'homme grew 4,500 bushels of corn, which was high compared to most of the parish.[305]

In harvesting, first the leaves were stripped from the corn stalk, then bundled, dried, and stored for wintertime livestock fodder. Workers would then go down the rows, "bending" the corn, or turning the cobs downward to dry, then sometime later, harvesting the dry cobs.[306] In 1845, Emmanuel Prud'homme's succession inventory listed 20,000 pounds of the fodder and the same amount was listed in Lise Prud'homme's 1853 succession.[307]

Corn production at Magnolia in 1845 amounted to 12,000 bushels of harvested corn that was valued at $480, along with $2,250 worth of "corn in the field."[308] Production specifics are not available for the Magnolia plantation from the 1850 census.

In 1851, overseer W. B. Eddins made multiple references to the condition of the corn fields in his letters to Ambrose LeComte II.[309] Throughout the 1850s, cotton acreage grew by more than 100 percent, while acres devoted to corn only grew 17 percent. Based on the 1860 census, however, the "output [of corn] in Natchitoches Parish appears to have held steady." This is illustrated by Bermuda's recorded 7,000 bushels of corn, which was only exceeded by one other planter in the parish.[310] That same year, LeComte produced a combined 20,000 bushels on all his holdings.[311]

The Prud'hommes also attempted to grow other grains besides corn. In the 1850 census, Phanor Prud'homme was the only planter in the parish that year to produce oats. Other planters, however, also grew oats from time to time. Prud'homme reported that Bermuda had a *grenier*, or granary; however, it is possible that this was a corn crib or grain storage facility. He also tried growing wheat at various points, but this did not prove to be successful, perhaps because of the heat during the growing season. [312]

Livestock feed was grown on both Bermuda and Magnolia plantations. The most common crops for animal food were hay and legumes. Specific statistics on hay production are unavailable for either plantation, but it is likely that the amount was substantial. "Cowpeas," a type of legume, were also grown in the area to feed livestock. The Prud'hommes planted a small amount of cowpeas; some was chopped for fodder but most was left to dry in the fields for the livestock to feed on in winter. A small portion of the cowpea crop was gathered for human consumption.[313] In addition, corn leaves were also used to feed livestock; records indicate that Phanor purchased 2,000 pounds of fodder (corn leaves) from his father's estate in 1850.

Sweet potatoes were grown for human consumption and proved to be a popular crop throughout the antebellum period and beyond. At Bermuda, sweet potatoes were planted in late March, after the corn and around the same time as cotton, and harvested in early November. Other produce grown at Bermuda included pumpkins, melons, cabbages, Irish potatoes, and fruit.[314] Orchard products recorded by Phanor Prud'homme, included

> white and Indian peaches from Tennessee; and "big yellow" peaches. Pecan trees were also planted… other tree fruits and specialty plants were added to the gardens. In addition, at one time or another he planted a lime tree,

305. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 59-60; Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 17.
306. Kathleen Byrd, personal communication.
307. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 60.
308. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 28.
309. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 84-86.
310. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 59.
311. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 14.
312. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 63.
313. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 60-61.
314. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 62-63.

> horseradish, castor bean plants, grenadines, scuppernongs or muscadines. . .and a jujube.[315]

Grapes were also grown at Bermuda and records imply that wine was made from their juices. There are records of wine bottles being shipped to Phanor Prud'homme's children and to the bishop in Natchitoches. In addition, succession records list hundreds of wine bottles and some casks.[316]

Even enslaved people were granted permission to have personal garden plots. Of these plots, historian John Michael Vlach writes:

> Throughout the antebellum period, planters debated the virtues of encouraging slaves to plant gardens and raise livestock. Although opinion was divided, there can be no doubt that the practice was widespread. When slaves were allowed to have gardens, planters were spared the expense of providing rations, but gardening was also considered dangerous because it gave slaves a significant opportunity to claim a degree of autonomy.[317]

Enslaved people at Oakland produced small crops of their own for subsistence and to sell. They were also allowed to own small numbers of free-range livestock. Because of these allotments, some were able to save capital, which helped them start their post-emancipation lives. Field laborers tended their personal gardens on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. They raised sweet potatoes, watermelons, turnips, and other vegetables. Observations of the enslaved hauling their own corn to the stable in their Saturday free time were recorded by Phanor Prud'homme in 1860. At Magnolia, the 1858 Walmsley survey shows gardens flanking a 10-acre orchard behind the Big House. The same map indicates a "potato field" located north of the Slave Quarters. A subsurface investigation of Magnolia suggested that the potato field may also have been used as personal garden plots by enslaved people.[318]

The diets of the enslaved varied during season and were based on economic status of their masters. According to an archeological study, the enslaved people of Magnolia had better housing conditions and diets than others in the area. Records indicate that rations included corn meal, pork, molasses, beef, flour, rice, and macaroni, and oysters on occasion. In addition to their regular rations, the enslaved ate locally caught fish and wild game, as well as vegetables from their personal gardens.[319]

Written records of fowl at Bermuda are lacking; however, extant buildings, including the *pigeonniers*, coops, and fattening pens, indicate that birds were kept. There were several advantages to raising chickens: they provided meat and eggs, required little feed, and could be taken "on short notice," therefore reducing the risk of spoiling.[320]

Cane River Plantations

Bermuda/Oakland Plantation

The Prud'hommes continuously expanded their property holdings during the antebellum era. Land was used for farming or timber, but the acquisitions may have been strategic as well. Many

315. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 63. The jujube (*Ziziphus jujube*) originated in India and China and is cultivated for its nutritious fruit, which has spongy, sweet-tasting pulp and is an excellent source of ascorbic acid and carotenoids. It grows well in tropical, subtropical, and temperate regions, and is known to yield well even in marginal growing conditions (Ray, *Breeding Tropical and Subtropical Fruits*, 276). It is also known in the Cane River region as "jube," "zizi," "jujum," and Chinese date. Dustin Fuqua, personal communication, 2018.
316. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 64.
317. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 168.
318. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 70-78; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 24-27.
319. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 19.
320. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 74; Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 82.

planters of the era purchased surplus property as an investment in case of crop failure.[321]

In 1816, Emmanuel Prud'homme's holdings included Sections 104 and 44 of the township, which amounted to 241.79 acres.[322] In 1821, he exchanged property with Benjamin Metoyer, trading land downriver from the Big House and building complex for land on the opposite bank of the river, adjoining Metoyer's property.[323] In 1829, Prud'homme acquired 40 arpents of land on Isle Brevelle. A plat map from that year shows that he owned Sections 40, 44, and 104, for a total of 796.14 acres.[324] In 1831, he purchased Jean Baptiste Rachal's plantation, which included unspecified buildings and 4 arpents frontage along both sides of the river. Emmanuel's son, Phanor Prud'homme, added to the property in 1840 by purchasing 250 arpents on the opposite bank or the river, between Benjamin Metoyer's and Jean Francois Hertzog's properties. Included in the sale were eleven enslaved people. In 1844, Phanor acquired from a succession sale 9 arpents frontage on the right bank. In total, Emmanuel Prud'homme's succession inventory in 1845 listed 1,485 arpents comprising Bermuda.[325] This amounted to 1,800 acres, 800 of which were improved, all purchased from his estate by his son, Phanor Prud'homme.[326] Phanor continued to grow the plantation and by the time of his succession in 1865, the property had reached 2,200 acres (Figure 4-9).[327]

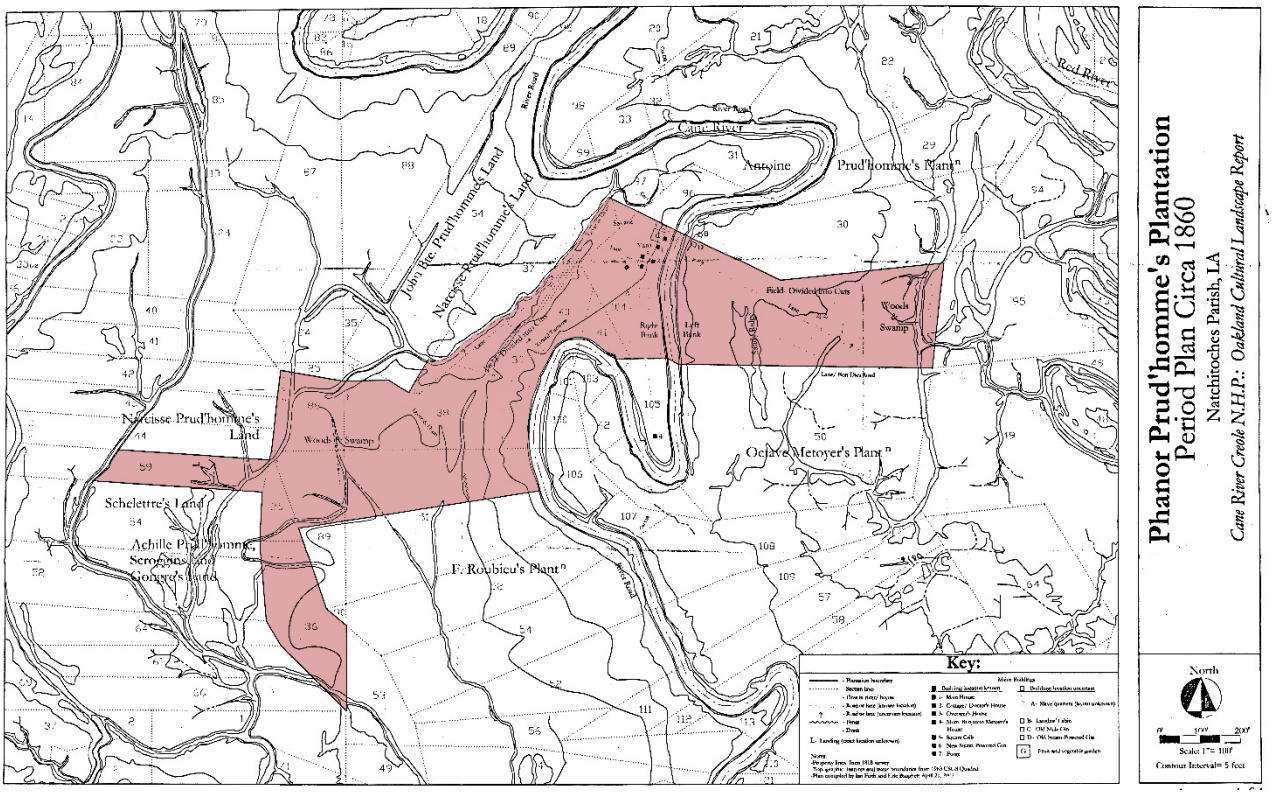


FIGURE 4-9. Map of Phanor Prud'homme's plantation of Bermuda (later Oakland) ca. 1860. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*.

321. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 51.
322. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 17.
323. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 48.
324. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 17.
325. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 48-49.
326. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 19.
327. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 49.

Aside from Bermuda, the Prud'hommes owned a number of additional properties, including a townhouse on the north side of Trudeau Street in Natchitoches. They also owned land in Winn Parish, including 400 arpents on Saline Lake and 800 arpents, or around 400 acres, along Saline Bayou. Plantation records indicate that brothers Phanor and Jean Baptiste Prud'homme shared a *vacherie* near Corsicana in Navarro County, Texas.[328] The family also owned property in the pine forest of the Kisatchie Hills, where they harvested the fast-growing timber and processed it at the sawmill they kept there.[329]

Organization of the Landscape

Bermuda/Oakland Plantation was laid out in relationship to the Cane River, with the overseer's house, the Doctor's/Leveque House, and the Slave/Tenant Quarters aligned north to southwest fronting the road and river. Immediately behind the Big House were a wash house, fattening pens, and chicken coops. Just to the south toward the main road was the carriage house. Within the viewshed stood the Mule Barn, *Pigeonniers*, Carpenter Shop, Wagon Shed, Square Crib for storing corn, Doctor's/Leveque House, another Barn, Corral Shed, and Overseer's House.

Until the 1950s, a plantation bell occupied a central position beside the lane south of the Big House. It was suspended in a tower made of *bois d'arc* poles adjacent to the fence that surrounded the yard, and was variously inside or outside the yard, based on historic photos. Alphonse referred to the bell in November 1865 when he used it to summon workers in the morning.[330]

Further in the distance within the fields stood the 1860 gin mill and Seed House. The Slave/Tenant Quarters buildings stood in a line in proximity to the main public road and were positioned in a stair-step fashion instead of the typical grid pattern seen in many other locations.

During this time, the Cook's House was located west of and behind the Big House, and visible from its veranda. A pond stood a short distance away; family history states that this was where clay was excavated to make the *bousillage* used in the finishing of the walls of the Big House and the excavation pit was turned into a pond.[331]

Agricultural Fields

As described in the 2003 Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report, two-thirds of the cultivated land on cotton plantations was planted in cotton, usually the lighter soils nearer the river, and most of the rest in corn. Some crop rotation was practiced; some plantation records report cotton being planted in "stiff soil," or the heavier soils of higher clay content. Sweet potatoes and other vegetables were planted closer to dwellings, while cowpeas and beans were interplanted with corn or along fences.[332]

Planted fields were enclosed with fencing and subdivided by lanes, turnrows, and drainage ditches into "cuts," described above. The fences, of which there were several miles at Bermuda/Oakland, were either post-and-rail fences or "log" fences. These were likely zig-zag fences made by stacking logs alternatively at angles. These were easy to move and were used where divisions were temporary. Post-and-rail

328. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 49-50.
329. Kathleen Byrd, personal communication.
330. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 134, citing Prud'homme's *Journalier* November 16, 1865.
331. *Bousillage* was made by digging a hole, called a tache, and filling it with layers of earth and green moss, which were soaked with water; sometimes the mix also includes deer hair and lime. Workers known as tacherons used their feet to crush and mix the brew to the consistency of mortar. The finished *bousillage* was applied to a lattice of barreaux or split-wood staves, with pointed ends that serve as support between the structure's upright posts, and boards placed diagonally between them as support. Completed walls were often whitewashed, and in some cases covered in weatherboard
332. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR,* 122.

fences were used where divisions were intended to be permanent.[333]

At Bermuda/Oakland, lanes included the "grand turnrow," as Phanor described the lane to Bayou Brevelle. It provided principal access to cultivated fields on the right hand side of the river. From this turnrow, a network of other turnrows would extend to cuts on either side. The drainage ditches, called "water furrows" by Phanor, were created with plows or dug by hand and more finely divided the cuts.[334]

The cuts at Bermuda were often given very descriptive names. On the right side of the river were the Quarter Cut, Bermuda Cut, Bonhomme Cut, and China Tree Cut. Some were named after what was grown there, such as the Old Potato Cut and the Sugar Cane Cut. Others were named by their locations, such as the "front cut near Grandma's gate" or the "triangular cut between turnrows." Still others were named by the geographical location, such as the Sandy Ridge Cut or Cemetery Cut.[335]

Live Oak Allée

The Prud'homme family recalled that the live oak *allée* that flanks the entrance drive to the Big House was installed in 1826, after the Big House was constructed. The *allée* terminates today at the entrance drive turnaround before the Bottle Garden (Figure 4-10).

Bottle Garden

The Bottle Garden was originally laid out as a boxwood-lined *parterre* sometime between the late 1810s and the late 1820s by Emanuel and Marie Catherine Prud'homme.[336] *Parterre* gardens, with their low plantings and geometric patterns, were designed to be seen from the gallery of the raised house, and reflected a practice not unusual for the time.[337]

After a blight killed the boxwood hedges in the 1830s, bottles that had been collected in the wine cellar were used to replace them as garden edging.[338] It is believed that the idea to do this was Marie Prud'homme's, but the practice of using bottles as garden edging was not uncommon. The family maintained this tradition until the NPS acquired the property, replacing broken bottles with new ones, or older ones from the wine cellar, and maintained the shape of the borders by pushing the bottles back into the ground if erosion pushed them out of place. [339]

Today, the roughly rectangular Bottle Garden contains beds in geometric shapes: rectangles, diamonds, hearts, waves, circles, clovers, and stars, laid out with "a keen sense of symmetry" (Figure 4-11). It has been suggested that the original design was planned around symbols found in a deck of playing cards. Not all of the borders are made with



FIGURE 4-10. Live oak *allée*, installed around 1826, at Oakland Plantation, as seen from the Bottle Garden. The entrance gate stands in the center of the midground. Commonwealth.

333. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR,* 123.
334. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR,* 122.
335. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR,* 123.
336. Neidinger, *Oakland Plantation Bottle Garden*, 2-3.
337. Mrs. J. Alphonse Prud'homme, 1979, 2, quoted in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 44. After the Civil War, the boxwood was replaced with upturned wine bottles, a treatment that was said to be common in the Cane River area, but unusual today.
338. Neidinger, *Oakland Plantation Bottle Garden*, 2, citing Malone, "A Draft Response," 32.
339. Neidinger, *Oakland Plantation Bottle Garden*, 2-4, citing Stewart and Consentino, *Bottles: A Guide*, 25.



FIGURE 4-11. Oakland's Bottle Garden. NPS.

the inverted bottles; the larger beds are bordered in brick or a combination of brick and bottle.[340]

The bottle edging includes wine bottles from Taylor Wine Company, ale and stout beer bottles, salt-glazed stoneware bottles, Anheuser-Busch beer bottles, mineral water bottles, soda water bottles, and bitters bottles. The oldest date to around 1790 and may be artifacts from a home that stood on the site prior to the construction of the Big House.[341]

Except on the Big House side, the Bottle Garden is enclosed with a picket fence and within it, a hedge establishes the edges of the garden. The entrance gate to the Bottle Garden is on its eastern side and a soldier-course brick walkway leads from the gate to the house's porch stairs. The NPS continues to preserve and stabilize the bottles in place.

Orchards and Other Plantings

Orchards were planted at Bermuda shortly before the advent of the Civil War. Phanor Prud'homme recorded in his diary that he directed the planting of pecans, apples, nectarines, and oaks in March 1856. His source for these fruit and ornamental plantings was Affleck's Nursery in Mississippi. Prud'homme continued to make periodic plantings of pecan trees during the early years of the Civil War, but the trees would not have reached productive size and age until after the war.[342] Some groves of pecan and fruit trees once stood outside the Bottle Garden to the north and southwest of the Big House.

Between 1856 and 1861, Phanor Prud'homme also planted *bois d'arc*, likely to function as a fence, as well as sixteen cedar trees and four live oaks. He also directed his gardener to plant "Lion's Paw solid white celery…cabbage, new prickly spinach, Avane's early cabbage…Orange melons…winter squash from Paris."[343]

Water

New plants would have been watered from cisterns located under and to the north of the Big House and other dwellings, and positioned in various locations in the surrounding farm landscape. The clean, potable rainwater was also used for drinking water, for watering livestock, and for cooling machinery in the gin house.

The plantation would have been crossed by fences and drainage ditches. All families had livestock for work and food, and fences were necessary to keep them out of the ornamental gardens of the Big House and from the fields of production. The drainage ditches would have been essential in this low-lying area to prevent crops from rotting in flooded or wet soils.

Buildings at Oakland Plantation

The buildings on Bermuda/Oakland Plantation were added or removed over time as they were needed, and in some cases, earlier buildings were altered to meet current needs. Dwellings during the antebellum period would have included the Big House, Cook's House, East and West *pigeonniers*, Doctor's/Leveque House, doctor's house barn, Square Crib/Barn, north slave/tenant

340. Neidinger, *Oakland Plantation Bottle Garden*, 3-4.
341. Neidinger, *Oakland Plantation Bottle Garden*, 4-17.
342. Prud'homme's Journalier, February 20, 1856, quoted in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 87.
343. Prud'homme's Journalier, February 20, 1856, quoted in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 87.

quarters (ca. 1860), south slave/tenant quarters (ca. 1850s–1860s), and what is now a ruin called "Gabe Nargot's Cabin." There would also have been an overseer's house on the plantation, but its location is not known. The existing Overseer's House was constructed in 1861.

Additional ancillary buildings, such as the Wash House, Fattening Pen, Storage Shed/Corn Crib, Chicken Coop, Setting Pen/Poultry House, Carpenters Shop, Stable/Mule Barn, Privy, Turkey Shed, Wagon Shed, Square Crib Cistern (no date), and doctor's chicken coop, would have been present. Although these existing resources have likely been moved and rebuilt several times since the antebellum period, they likely reflect a form, materials, and approximate location similar to their antebellum conditions.[344]

Big House

Construction on the Big House (LCS 91620) proceeded between 1818 and 1821. It replaced an earlier building that had been much closer to the river, but was lost to changes in the river's course.[345] At the time, the Big House was the largest rural residence of this style in the Mississippi Valley.[346] Following Creole construction fashion, the house was set on brick piers almost a full story above ground (six feet) to take advantage of air circulation, which had a natural cooling effect. It was constructed using French joinery half-timbering with *bousillage* infill. The timber framing was all hand-hewn heart cypress, or the "wood eternal," and the *bousillage* was six inches thick.[347] The rectilinear core of the structure was sheltered by a singular road hip "umbrella roof," clad with cypress wood shakes.[348] The roof extended beyond the walls of the house to shelter a gallery that originally wrapped all four elevations.

When it was first constructed, the house comprised four rooms surrounded by a gallery (Figure 4-12).[349] In the Creole tradition, the house did not have halls; rather, the rooms connected to the gallery with French doors. The "umbrella" hipped roof was pierced by two dormers on the façade and rear slopes. Two chimneys provided a flue for four fireplaces: one in each of the four rooms (Figure 4-13).

The house held this appearance only a short time, with subsequent additions made to the structure in two phases during the 1820s and 1830s. The first phase was the construction of a string of two rooms added to the north elevation (Figure 4-14).[350] The gallery and roof were extended to

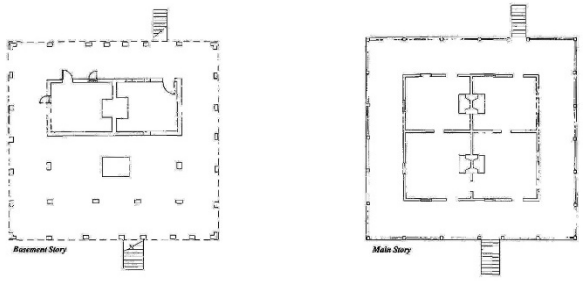


FIGURE 4-12. Oakland Big House floor plans, ca. 1821. NPS.

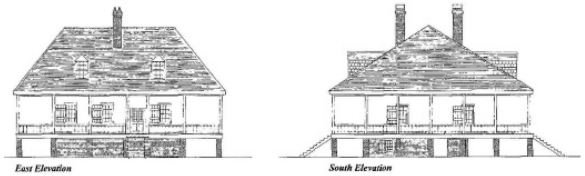


FIGURE 4-13. Oakland Big House elevations, ca. 1821. HABS.

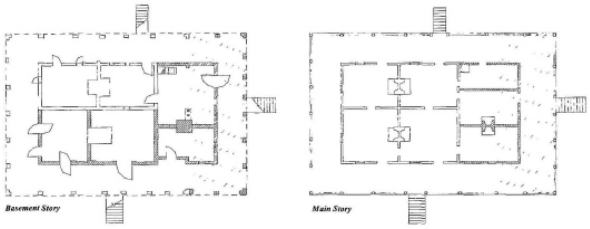


FIGURE 4-14. Oakland Big House plans, ca. 1825. HABS.

344. National Park Service, List of Classified Structures, Cane River Creole National Historical Park, online database.
345. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 44.
346. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 16.
347. McClendon, *Oakland Plantation*, 8-2.
348. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House,* 54.
349. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House,* 44.
350. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House,* 45.

accommodate these rooms, and a third dormer was added to the façade and rear slopes.

A possible use for the additional rooms could have been for the Prud'homme's son, Pierre Phanor, who came of age in 1828. In French Creole culture, bachelors maintained separate quarters from the Big House in what was called a *garçonnière*. Traditionally, the *garçonnière* could be either a detached structure or a room added to the rear of the house. Family tradition has it that the house did have a *garçonnière,* which was removed to become part of the Big House at the Atahoe plantation, across the river.[351]

The second phase of additions was made ca. 1835 to the west elevation of the building (Figure 4-15). This included adding a room behind the earlier rank of three rooms on the building's northwest corner, as well as expanding the two rear rooms of the original house to the west (Figure 4-16). The surrounding gallery was expanded once more to accommodate these rear additions, creating the roof form visible today, where the front slopes of the hipped roof are steeper than the rear. There is also evidence to support that a *cabinet*, or office, may have been present on the west elevation, near the current kitchen wing, and used by Mme. Prud'homme. By 1835, the main body of the house reached its full footprint, except for a kitchen wing that was added later. This is likely the exterior appearance of the house through the Civil War, although there could have been undocumented alterations after the Civil War.[352]

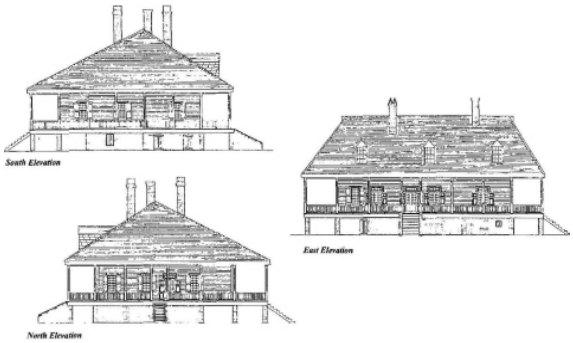


FIGURE 4-15. Oakland Big House elevations, ca. 1835. HABS.

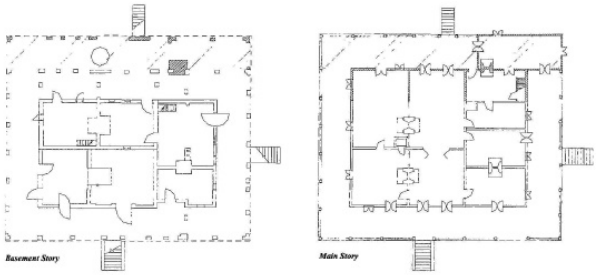


FIGURE 4-16. Oakland Big House plans, ca. 1835. HABS.

The foundation level of the house, although almost a full story high, enclosed only a few rooms. These rooms were accessed by trap doors in the floors above and included a wine cellar and what was traditionally called "mammy's room," accessed from one of the bedrooms.[353] In addition, three cisterns were added adjacent to and under the Big House at various times during its history: Cistern No. 1 (LCS 100738), Cistern No. 2 (LCS 100739), and Cistern No. 3 (LCS 100741). There would have also been a detached kitchen, but its location has not yet been documented.

Bermuda/Oakland's residents would have required use of a privy until installation of indoor plumbing in the twentieth century. It is very likely that a privy would have been located near the Big House, but not so close as to be offensive. Historically, the privy would have had a similar appearance to the present structure (see Chapter 7), although with a single hole in the seat. Additionally, Roesch and Bacot explain that

> Planters and their families could have the luxury of a commode, or commode chair – the *necessaire* of French Creoles – in their rooms. There was a removable pot beneath the carved seat, which was covered by a lid when not in use.[354]

351. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House,* 47.
352. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House,* 47-48. Fricker and Fricker explain that a *cabinet* is a small room set at each end of what is typically an open loggia.
353. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 7.
354. Poesch and Bacot, *Louisiana Buildings*, 149.

If the person was not a member of the planter class, such as an overseer or the plantation doctor, they would have had a chamber pot stored under their bed.

During the antebellum period, the interior of the house had numerous decorative architectural elements. These included an elliptical archway between the salon and dining room, which housed a fanlight and had pilasters and folding doors. In the northern addition, there were two Federal-style wraparound mantles, a hallmark of Creole interiors where the mantle wraps the fireplace, rather than being flush with a wall that encloses the flue. Additional Federal-style elements included door and window surrounds, as well as a chair rail on the gallery. Aside from the chair rail, the gallery columns included lamb's tongue chamfering.[355]

The Prud'hommes furnished the interior of the Big House with French furniture. Their collection included an armoire, commode (dresser), and seven-foot long daybed, all brought to Natchitoches from France by Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme in 1722. In 1821, after the first phase of building was completed, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme and his wife, Marie Catherine Lambre, traveled to France and New Orleans to purchase more furniture. Additional furnishings acquired during the antebellum period included a large, four-poster, king-size bed made by Prudent Mallard in New Orleans around 1830–1835.[356]

While in France, the couple each had a portrait painted; these continue to be displayed in the Big House. The painting of Jean Pierre Emmanuel depicts him holding a cotton boll, symbolizing his success at growing cotton.[357]

Carriage House

This three-bay gable-front Carriage House (LCS 091621) appears to have been framed up with salvaged lumber, so it is difficult to identify its origins to a particular time period; however, it is likely antebellum in origin (Figure 4-17). Its



FIGURE 4-17. Oakland Plantation's Carriage House. Commonwealth.

355. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 5-6. Creole galleries were considered living spaces and often furnished as though they were interior rooms, and therefore may include such decorative elements. For more about Federal style, see www.britannica.com/art/Federal-style.
356. McClendon, *Oakland Plantation*, 8-1. Although some believe the furniture maven's first name was Prudence, it was in fact, Prudent. He was born in 1809 in Sevres, France, and emigrated to New York around 1829, where it is rumored he may have worked with acclaimed cabinet-maker Duncan Phyfe for a time. By 1830, Mallard was in New Orleans; less than a decade later, he and a partner established his *magasin de meubles*, or furniture store. Mallard enjoyed great success, bolstered by the rise of the plantation economy, gaining a reputation for Rococo Revival style furniture. While his furniture carried labels, "Manufactured by P. Mallard," it is likely that Mallard did not make the furniture, since neither the records of his 1855 bankruptcy or 1874 business liquidation included information on any of the large pieces of equipment that would be needed to produce his signature pieces. Research by historian Stephen Harrison revealed that the bulk of objects sold by Mallard were imported either from Europe or the American Northeast (Kovel, "New Details Out on Furniture-maker Prudent Mallard;" Goldberg, "The Prudent Mallard Legend").
357. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 15.

primary framing exhibits examples of French joinery. It has three sets of double doors made from multiple planks clinched with square nails; these may have been reused from another structure because almost all of the clapboards on the carriage house are fastened with later (post-ca. 1880) round head nails. There is also a small shed extension on each side of the center room.

Big House Ancillary Structures

Near the Big House today stands a row of wood-frame ancillary structures that defines the western edge of the yard surrounding the residence and face its west elevation (Figure 4-18). These include the Wash House at the north end, then the Fattening Pen, Storage Shed/Corn Crib, and Chicken Coop/Poultry House, and ending with the Carpenter Shed at the south end. Each of these buildings was likely constructed during the nineteenth century, in part due to the use of square nails throughout. It is believed that most of these buildings were moved to their current locations ca. 1950; it is not known where they were located during the antebellum period.[358]

Wash House

The Wash House (LCS 91630) is a one-story wood-framed structure with a gable roof (see Figure 4-18). The roof is sheathed in corrugated metal, and the exterior walls are sided in clapboard.

Fattening Pen

The Fattening Pen (LCS 91629) is a long, low, pitched, gable roof structure containing three chambers divided by walls of vertical slats (see Figure 4-18). The gable roof is clad in metal and the exterior walls are sheathed with horizontal



FIGURE 4-18. Ancillary structures in the yard of Oakland's Big House, view to the northwest. Left to right: Setting Pen, Chicken Coop, Storage Shed, Fattening Pen, and Wash House. Commonwealth.

358. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 8; National Park Service, List of Classified Structures – Chick Coop, Oakland Plantation, HS-0-14, LSC ID 091627.

wood planks. Three small doors provide access to the structure on the east elevation.

Corn Crib/Storage Shed

The Corn Crib/Storage Shed (LCS 91628) is a small side-gable structure with French joinery framing and horizontal board sheathing (see Figure 4-18). The structure rests on short brick piers.

Chicken Coop

The main Chicken Coop (LCS 91627) has a gable-front roof with large ladder-like perches on the interior (see Figure 4-18). The lower portion of the structure is clad with horizontal flush boards, while the boards on the upper walls are spaced to form horizontal slats. Extending from the west elevation of the coop is a one-story rear lean-to.

Setting Pen

A second smaller coop, or Setting Pen (LCS 91626) is adjacent the large coop (see Figure 4-18). It is similar in construction materials and form, although it lacks the rear lean-to.

Carpenter Shop

The Carpenter Shop (LCS 91624) is positioned immediately north of the farm lane (Figure 4-19). The shop is a one-story rectilinear structure that rests on stacked rocks. The frame is of log construction with half-dovetail notching. The gable roof has its end walls in weatherboard. The roof itself is sheathed with corrugated metal. Extending from the east elevation of the structure is a shed roof supported by simple wood posts. This roof shelters a single leaf, heavy, multi-layer plank door that serves as the entrance to the interior of the shop. Additional fenestration includes a square wall opening with a hinged wood shutter on each of the side elevations. Historically the structure had a side gallery, but this has been replaced by the shed roof structure.[359]

Smokehouse (Stable)

Constructed in the 1820s, the smokehouse would have been one of the ancillary structures near the Big House.[360] Smokehouses were in part necessary because there was no large-scale commercial meat-packing industry in the south during the antebellum. They were used both as a place for curing meat and for storing cured meat. According to historian Michael Vlach, "a meat-filled smokehouse symbolized the self-sufficiency of a plantation. It demonstrated a planter's ability to manage his affairs and adequately provide for his family and his slaves."[361] The appearance of the original smokehouse is unknown. After a fire in 1927, the former smokehouse was converted into a mule barn and stable (Figure 4-20) (LCS 91625).



FIGURE 4-19. Carpenter Shop at Oakland, view to the southeast. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 4-20. Former smokehouse, later converted to mule barn and stable, view to the southwest. Commonwealth.

359. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 23.

360. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 26.

361. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 64.

Pigeonniers

Oakland Plantation's two *pigeonniers* were built ca. 1830–1850. Today, they stand south of the Big House and adjacent to the farm lane, defining the boundary between the domestic sphere and the working, agricultural sphere, including the Slave/Tenant Quarters. This location is typical of Creole plantations; it indicates "prestige and identif[ies] the owner as a member of 'gentry.'"[362]

The *pigeonniers* were constructed to be nearly identical; each was approximately two stories high, with a square footprint and *bousillage* construction on the lower level. Their hipped roofs had wood shingle sheathing and culminated in a decorative spike finial or *épi de faîtage*.[363] Today, small, gabled enclosures added by the NPS at the peaks keep moisture out of the buildings. The façade of each *pigeonnier* faced the other, with the primary fenestration on the east elevation of the West *Pigeonnier* (LCS 91623) (Figure 4-21), and on the west elevation of the East *Pigeonnier* (LCS 91622) (Figure 4-22). The first story of each facade was built with a hinged wood door; the upper level was pierced by a series of small arched openings above a ledge for roosting birds. The East *Pigeonnier* was built slightly taller than the West *Pigeonnier* and constructed with both *bousillage* and French joinery. Additional details included the openings on the north and south elevations, and a wood box that is attached to the south elevation of the East *Pigeonnier*.

Doctor's/Leveque House

Reputedly constructed in the 1830s, although speculation has it as early as the 1820s, the Doctor's/Leveque House (LCS 100629) was likely the first home of newlyweds Phanor and Lise Prud'homme. The young couple are believed to have moved into the house upon their marriage in 1835, then moved to the Big House following the death of Emmanuel Prud'homme on May 13, 1845. Between 1845 and 1860, when Doctor Heulin and his wife were recorded in the census as residents of the building, the house may have also served for some period as a residence for the plantation overseer, particularly given its position between the Big House and slave quarters. The earliest known incarnation of the house consisted of a two-room building with front and back gallery, hipped roof, interior fireplace, and two rooms (Figure 4-23). One of the most interesting aspects of the original core of the building is that all the exterior and interior walls are of *bousillage* construction. Based on framing in the attic, the cottage had a hipped roof, and the extant



FIGURE 4-21. West *Pigeonnier*, view to the west. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 4-22. East *Pigeonnier*, view to the east-northeast. Commonwealth.

362. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 8.
363. The *épi de faîtage* is the decorative roof spike or finial that was placed at the ends of the roof ridge of a hip roof. The spikes in France may be a decorative element with caps of metal or terra cotta added to the crest of the roof. However, in Creole areas of Louisiana, they were typically extended portions of the wooden king posts that support the roof. Edwards and du Ballay de Verton, *A Creole Lexicon*, 94.

chamfered columns in the boxed front gallery indicate that similar columns were present on the open galleries.[364]

The Doctor's/Leveque House was expanded in 1840 with an enclosure to the rear gallery, either by forming a *cabinet* or extending an existing *cabinet* on the southwest corner (Figure 4-24). Between 1840 and 1880, the southwest *cabinet* was expanded beyond the rear gallery and incorporated into the house (Figure 4-25).[365] To accommodate this expansion, the roof was modified from a hip to a side-gable.

A detached structure known to exist based on archeological studies, but non-extant, was located west of the Doctor's/Leveque House; it was most likely erected sometime between 1841 and 1860.[366] The two-room structure had pegged mortise-and-tenon construction, and was built on wood posts

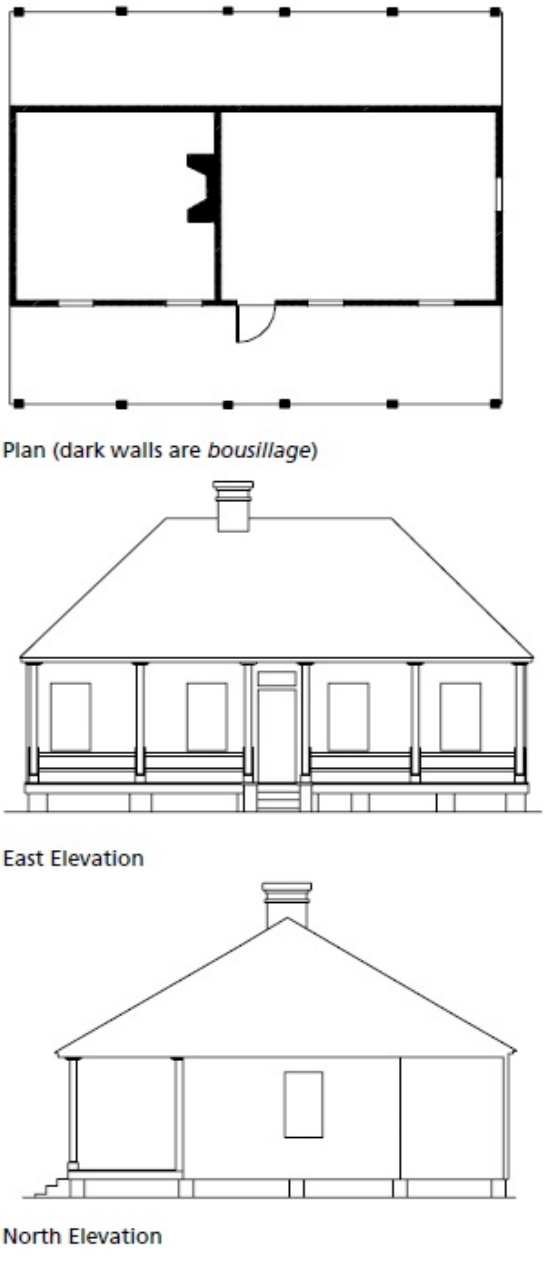


FIGURE 4-23. Doctor's/Leveque House, floor plan and elevation drawings, depicting conditions ca. 1834-1840. Hartrampf, Inc.

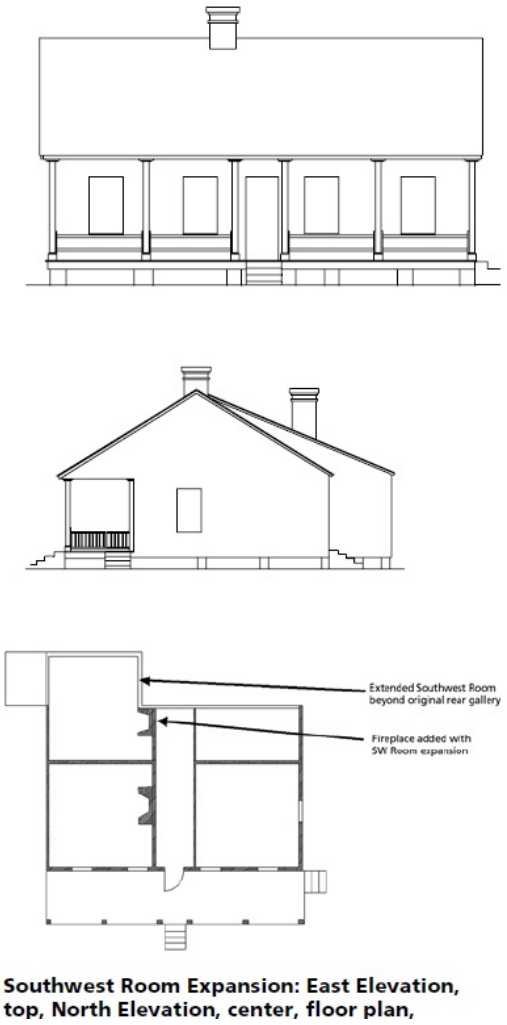


FIGURE 4-24. Doctor's/Leveque House, floor plan *cabinet* expansion and east (top) and north (center) elevations, ca.1840-1880. Hartrampf, Inc.

364. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 9-28; Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 29.

365. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 15, 31.

366. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 32.

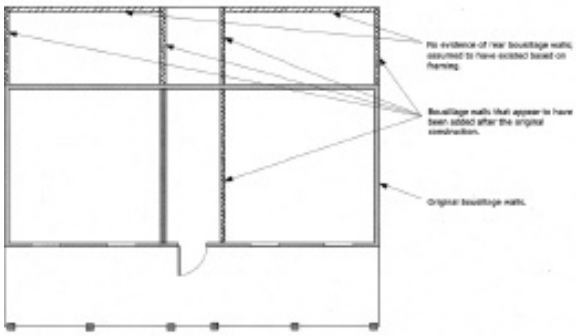


FIGURE 4-25. The Doctor's/Leveque House, floor plan expansion, ca. 1834-1870. Hartrampf, Inc.

and brick piers that rested directly on the ground. The room closest to the house was the kitchen, and the second room was used as a pantry.

Doctor's/Leveque Shed/Privy (Two-Seater)

Like the Big House, the date of construction for the Doctor's/Leveque Shed/Privy (LCS 100632) is unknown (Figure 4-26). However, based on its construction method, *poteaux-sur-solle*, it was likely at the same time as the Doctor's/Leveque House. The Doctor's/Leveque Shed/Privy was placed strategically close to the house, west of the Coop, while far enough away to not be offensive. When the Doctor's/Leveque House was occupied by Phanor and Lise Prud'homme, they would also, like at the Big House, have had use of a commode, or commode chair in their rooms.[367]

The small, roughly square structure was built with a metal-clad side-gable roof and weatherboard siding on its exterior walls. The single door, positioned facing the house, was of vertical wood construction. Inside, there are two holes.

Doctor's/Leveque House Grist Mill Shed

The Doctor's/Leveque House Grist Mill Shed (LCS 100633) is one-half story tall and located immediately north of the privy and west of the Doctor's/Leveque House (see Figure 4-26). The small structure, likely erected around the time of the house, was built using the *poteau-su-solle* technique and surmounted by an asymmetrical metal-clad gable roof with an enclosed room on its north half. The south half of the building comprises an open area under a roof supported by unfinished wood posts. The small structure has wood plank siding and a narrow door on the east elevation.

Doctor's/Leveque Coop

West of the Doctor's/Leveque House stands the small chicken coop (LCS 100631) (Figure 4-27). Constructed in the *poteau-en-terre* method, the structure may have been erected about the same



FIGURE 4-26. Doctor's/Leveque Shed/Privy (l) and Grist Mill Shed (r), located west of the Doctor's/ Leveque House, view to the northwest. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 4-27. Doctor's/Leveque Coop, located west of the Doctor's/Leveque House, view to the northwest. Commonwealth.

367. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 42; Poesch and Bacot, *Louisiana Buildings*, 149.

time as the Doctor's/Leveque House.[368] The one-half-story, wood-framed structure is topped by a shallow shed roof. The exterior is clad in horizontal wood planks, and the roof is sheathed in metal. Doors on the east elevation access the interior and are positioned for easy use from the house, and an open lower wall on the east elevation allows the chickens to move freely. A brooder house or other small livestock enclosure is attached to the south elevation of the coop. This structure is essentially a wood-slat-clad box with hinged doors and a metal roof.

Cook's House

Originally constructed as part of the Big House complex at Oakland, the one-story Cook's House (LCS 91632) had its two-room original core constructed of *bousillage* with French joinery resting on a brick pier foundation (Figure 4-28). It would have also had a chimney stack, but this was removed when the building was moved to its present location in the 1920s. The original core was topped by a tall gable roof, which is extant. Exterior cladding included clapboard siding and standing seam metal sheathing the roof, also extant. The porch screening, likely added during the 1920s, stretches between vertical posts that rest atop knee walls. The enclosed wrap-around gallery porch with a half-hipped roof was also added in the 1920s when the house was moved to its current location.

Square Crib

The Square Crib (LCS 91633) is positioned near the center of the building complex at Oakland, west of the residential buildings and toward the agricultural portion of the property (Figure 4-29). The two-story structure has a rectilinear footprint and a steeply pitched asymmetrical gable-on-hip roof. The Square Crib was constructed of hand-hewn cypress logs between 1820 and 1830. Two different types of logs are used in construction, implying that the barn was altered over time.[369] The cypress logs are V-notched at the corners and Roman numerals from I to VII are carved on the first seven. Corrugated metal sheathes the roof and wood shingles clad the gable ends. Open sections on the north, and part of the west, elevations reveal wood post construction. The remaining part of the west elevation and the entire south elevation are clad in horizontal wood planks. Wood slats sheath the east elevation.

Jug Cistern

The enormous, partially buried, brick Jug Cistern (LCS 091634) was installed adjacent to the Square



FIGURE 4-28. Cook's House (moved), view to the southwest. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 4-29. Square Crib with jug cistern, view to the west-northwest. Commonwealth.

368. *Poteaux en terre* is believed to be the earliest method of vertical construction used in French America. The method consists of close-set vertical posts tamped into a trench. The spaces between the posts would be filled with *bousillage*, clay, stones, or mortar, or covered with planks. Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood," 47.
369. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 25.

Crib during the mid-nineteenth century and used for water storage (see Figure 4-29).[370] Its upper portion protrudes from the earth in a brick dome with a stuccoed neck.

Overseer's House

Although there was likely a residence on the Oakland Plantation for the overseer, its location, construction materials and methods, and design are unknown. See Chapter 5 for information on the present structure, which was constructed in 1861.[371]

Slave/Tenant Quarters

During the antebellum period, many modest, one-room, *bousillage*-constructed quarters were built to house enslaved workers at Oakland. They were sited on both sides of the river, some on the bank opposite the Big House and some "in the yard" on the house-side. The quarters also extended along the river for approximately one-quarter mile south of the main plantation complex.[372] During the years of high cotton production, the late 1850s and 1860–1861, many cabins were torn down or rebuilt."[373] After emancipation, the remaining buildings housed tenant workers.

Enslaved domestic servants lived in a "cabin in yard," as referenced in journal entries, which are distinctive from the "quarters," where presumably enslaved agricultural workers resided. Domestic servants' cabins were of better construction than the quarters; for example, an 1862 journal entry references putting up a brick wall in the "servant house."[374] These cabins also housed tenant workers after the end of the Civil War.

The quarters not only functioned as domiciles for enslaved workers, but, according to Malone, as

> the seat of internal governance. Here slave community leaders met to discuss common problems and to devise appropriate strategies. Courtship and marriage generally took place here. Here workers used their free time for domestic production – of foodstuffs, furniture, clothing tools, and toys for their own use.[375]

Within the quarters area, one of the best cabins, usually at the head of the first row, would be occupied by a driver and his family.[376]

There are two extant Slave/Tenant Quarters at Oakland, located south of the main building complex (Figure 4-30). Each of the cabins is placed near the road and angled to front toward the roadway. The North Slave/Tenant Quarters (LCS 91638) was built ca. 1860 and the South Slave/Tenant Quarters (LCS 91639) in the 1850s or early 1860s.[377] The nearly identical cabins are located at the south end of the plantation complex. Each one-story structure has a rectilinear footprint and rests on a foundation of brick piers. The core of each cabin has a side-gable roof; the one-room



FIGURE 4-30. One of two extant former slave/tenant quarters that extended south of the complex along the river, view to the south. Commonwealth.

370. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 10.
371. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 26.
372. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 11.
373. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 56.
374. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 56.
375. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 58-59.
376. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 59.
377. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland*, 26, 28.

living space is increased by a rear shed-roof addition comprised of one additional room on the South Quarters and two additional rooms on the North Quarters. Additionally, there is a shed-roof open porch on the facade of each house. Limited fenestration includes a door positioned at the center for the façade and rear elevation, and windows in either four-over-four wood sashes or smaller four-light sashes.

Gabe Nargot's Cabin

The archeological site, Gabe Nargot's Cabin (LCS 100655), comprises the ruins of a third cabin for enslaved persons on Oakland Plantation. All that remains of the structure are some of the materials that indicate its size and orientation (Figure 4-31). The building was located west of the North Slave/Tenant Quarters. The cabin's resident, Gabe Nargot, was born after the end of the Civil War and worked on the plantation as a cotton gin engineer.[378]

Archeological investigations of the cabin in 1998 revealed six brick piers at the cabin site. In addition, surface stains discovered through excavation revealed that *bousillage* had been used in the cabin's construction. Gabe Nargot's cabin measurements match exactly those of the relocated cook's cabin on the plantation.[379]



FIGURE 4-31. Brick pier remains of Gabe Nargot's Cabin, looking south. Commonwealth.

Slave Hospital

At one time there was a building dedicated entirely to maintaining the health of Oakland's enslaved population. The precise location of the hospital is unknown, beyond the vague "in the field between [the doctor's] home and the Main House."[380] The date of construction of the building is also unknown, but it was at least present by the 1850s, when plantation records indicate that "Celeste and Nanette were midwives and nurses in charge of the plantation hospital."[381]

Cotton Gins and Press

The term "cotton gin" has a dual meaning on plantations. In general usage, "cotton gin" refers to the cotton-processing facility as a whole, including the ginning machine, cotton press, buildings that housed said machinery and raw materials, and the supporting machinery, including machines that powered the gin and presses, cisterns, and systems of transportation.[382] Specifically, cotton gin could also refer to the machine itself, which was used to separate cotton fibers from the seeds using combs mounted on revolving cylinders, also called a "gin stand."

The earliest known cotton gin at Oakland was constructed on the left bank of the river, opposite the Big House, sometime before 1836. By 1850, there were two gins on the property, one on each side of the river, which facilitated ginning on both sides of the river without having to haul the raw material from one side to the other. These gins were powered by mules until ca. 1854, when at least one of the gins, likely the one on the opposite

378. Miller and Keel, *Gabe Nargot's Cabin*.
379. There were two methods used to place the posts upright in the ground: the first involves placing each post individually into holes dug 2-3 feet apart and 2-3 feet deep, while the second involves a trench where the posts are turned on end and supported by earth, stone, bones, or other debris. Miller and Keel *Gabe Nargot's Cabin*.
380. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 22.
381. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74.
382. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 20.

side of the river from the Big House, was converted to steam.[383]

In 1857, Phanor Prud'homme installed a "Pratt gin" (Figure 4-32). A type of gin stand, a Pratt gin could be powered by either mule/horse or steam. The Pratt gin at Oakland is believed to have been installed in the gin barn on the opposite side of the river from the Big House. As of 1859, the two gin operations were valued at $1,500 for the "mill on the side of the house" and $2,000 for the "mill on the opposite side of the house." That same year, construction began on a new gin complex, which became the second gin complex on the same side of the river as the Big House. By 1860, the Prud'hommes had three gins, one across the river and two on the side of the Big House, with the Pratt gin located south of the Overseer's House.[384]

The new gin complex, erected in 1859–1861, included a gin barn, seed house, and engine building to house the steam engine and its boiler. Between the gin barn and engine building was a cistern that collected water to power the steam engine. The gin barn housed both the gin stands, including the Pratt gin, and the indoor press, which had been moved from the gin complex on the opposite side of the river.

Oakland Plantation also used bale presses to compress the processed cotton into shippable bales. The Prud'hommes had a mule and horse-powered press by the late 1830s.[385] The press itself was likely a wooden screw press, held in a free-standing structure adjacent to the gin building (Figure 4-33). Historian Michael Vlach described how a press such as the Prud'hommes would have looked and operated:

> A cotton press could stand as much as forty feet tall. Its sturdy timber frame supported a large, threaded wooden shaft more than a foot in diameter over a boxlike form in which bales were shaped. From the top of the screw, two long beams stretched outward and downward almost to the ground like arms. Mules harnessed to these beams or 'levers' as they were sometimes called, walked in a circular path, turning the screw and thereby compressing the loose cotton lint into a bale weighing between four and six hundred

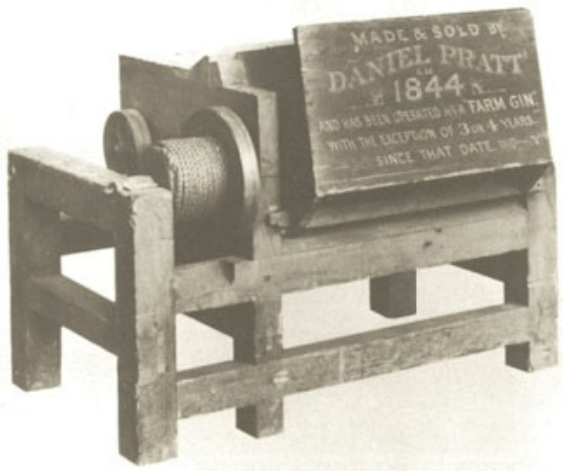
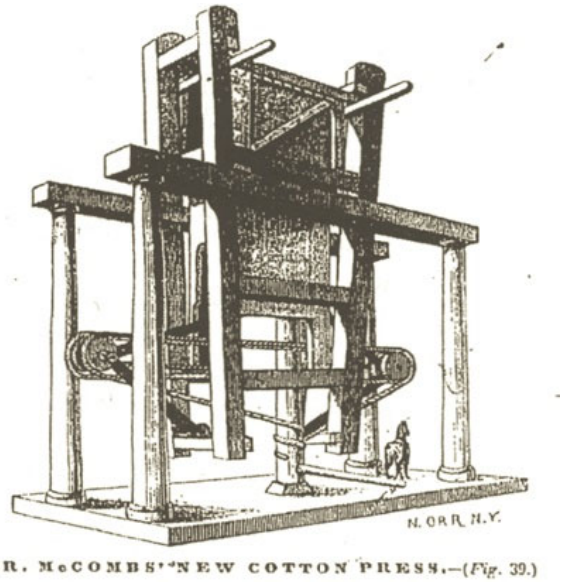


FIGURE 4-32. Pratt's farm gin, ca. 1844. Oakland Gin HSR (Bale o' Cotton by Britton).



MR. McCOMBS' NEW COTTON PRESS.—(*Fig.* 39.)

FIGURE 4-33. Phanor Prud'homme installed an indoor press like this at Oakland in the 1850s. Oakland Gin HSR (*The Southern Cultivator*, July 1850).

383. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 20-21.
384. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 17-22; Kathleen Byrd, personal communication.
385. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 21.

> pounds. Up until the 1830s, slaves had packed cotton into bags by stamping on it with their feet or by tamping it with wooden poles. When the screwpress was introduced in the 1840s, two men, a boy, and a pair of mules could do the same job in a single day.[386]

Sometime between 1850 and 1854, Phanor Prud'homme installed an indoor iron screw box press that replaced one of the former wood screw presses. A new gin barn was erected to house both the ginning machine and indoor press. The indoor machinery allowed work to continue through all types of weather. The wooden press at one of his other gins was replaced in 1857 after having been worn out.[387] Neither the cotton gin nor the press is extant.

Magnolia Plantation

In the second decade of the nineteenth century, the LeComtes substantially increased their property holdings, enabling Ambrose LeComte II to establish Magnolia Plantation. At the end of the decade, in 1819, an economic panic resulted in bank failures and foreclosed mortgages; the price of both agricultural and manufactured products dropped. Prosperity did not resume until 1824.[388]

The price drop enabled Ambrose LeComte II to acquire properties that adjoined his father's (Jean Baptiste LeComte I) land grant on the Cane River. It was likely that this "systematic campaign" was undertaken to ensure that the family was best able to meet the need for large land holdings required for cotton's profitability. [389] Ambrose LeComte II served as agent when the family purchased properties on the east bank of the Cane River in April 1820 from Gasparite LaCour, Louis Belloni and Jacques Vercher, and L. Gallien. The younger LeComte also purchased property from Barthelemy LaCour in 1824, from Nanet Larnadier in 1825, and from Louis Gallien in 1826.[390]

Le Comte family continued to expand their holdings by purchasing land on the east bank of the Cane River that would eventually become part of Magnolia. This included the estate of Athanase Brosset and Celest Baudoin. The LeComtes bought the Barthelemy LaCour Plantation in 1833; in 1834, they bought land on both sides of the Cane River from Jean Baptiste LaCour. Finally, in 1835, Ambrose LeComte II bought property on both sides of the Cane River from Gasparite LaCour. The LaCour property included "houses, outhouses cotton gin, and other buildings thereon," and is largely the part of Magnolia Plantation that is now within Cane River Creole National Historical Park.[391] The 1835 purchase marks the date that Magnolia Plantation was established.

After 1835, the LeComtes continued to expand their holdings. Ambrose II and Julia LeComte established their main residence at Magnolia, but they also owned Shallow Lake Plantation, also on the Cane River, and were partial owners of Vienna Plantation, located 7 miles outside Natchitoches. As of 1845, the land comprising the Magnolia Plantation consisted of a total of 11,182 acres, with 11,047 acres on the left bank of the river and 135 acres on the right bank.[392]

Magnolia Plantation expanded again in 1852, when the LeComte's daughter, Atala, married

386. Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 123-124.
387. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 17-21.
388. "Panic of 1819."
389. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 12.
390. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 9.
391. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 9.
392. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 25-28. It would not have been uncommon to work both sides of the river. The home was typically built on higher ground or in a location that provided better transport. While the assemblage of slave cabins associated with present-day Magnolia were in proximity to the plantation home and outbuildings, many plantations transported slaves in groups by wagon each morning and could easily have brought them over on a temporary bridge constructed during the growing season or in flat boats. The slave buildings located at present-day Magnolia would not necessarily have been the only structures where workers lived. There could have been auxiliary structures out closer to the fields.

Matthew Hertzog, who was associated with Ferry Plantation, located north of Magnolia.[393] The marriage merged the two plantations, but LeComte only gifted the new couple 40 percent of Magnolia, while retaining 60 percent himself.[394] By 1860, Ambrose II owned 7,835 acres of land, 2,240 of which were improved, valued at $190,915.[395]

Organization of the Landscape

Magnolia's major organizational feature from the onset was the Cane River. In 1858, surveyor G. S. Walmsley drew an annotated plat map of Magnolia Plantation, illustrating its extents and structures present at the time (Figure 4-34).

Walmsley's map provides important detail about the location and number of structures, fields, and gardens at Magnolia. The Big House sat within its own precinct with buildings associated with the support of the family nearby, an area typically called the "curtilage."[396] The curtilage of Magnolia was separated from the rest of the plantation, particularly the agricultural precinct, by distance, trees, plantings, and fences. A stable stood just to the west of the house within the area.

To the southeast of the Big House precinct stood the buildings and associated landscapes of the working plantation. A smith's shop, a sawmill, hospital, smoke house, bell tower, mill, nursery,



FIGURE 4-34. G.S. Walmsley's 1858 plat map of Magnolia Plantation. CARI.

393. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 15.
394. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 28.
395. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 14.
396. The curtilage is that space around a house that is habitually used for domestic activities. It includes a driveway, gardens, work yards and other areas and is not necessarily be separated by a fence. "Curtilage."

stable, corn cribs, gin barn, cotton press, and twenty-four slave quarters laid out in a perfect grid to the east. The quarters had small enclosed yards and most had cisterns. Outhouses were located to the rear and east. While most plantations' quarters buildings were constructed of wood, those at Magnolia were built with brick, an architectural decision that elevated their importance as worker's cabins. Only the most successful plantations used brick for their quarters complexes.

There has been less research done about the detailed appearance of the landscape around Magnolia's main house in comparison to Oakland's. A double live oak *allée* is known to have been planted on either side of the road leading to the Big House prior to 1858 because it is present on the Walmsley Map. Live oaks were also planted along a road near the blacksmith shop that led to the bayou and in a row in front of the slave hospital. These live oaks survive to the present day.

Ornamental gardens lay on either side of the house, starting at the front edge of the of the house and its gallery. To the rear and southeast of the Big House was a large, 10-acre orchard. As today, a garden house may have stood at the edge of the southwest garden within the boundary of the orchard. A stable stood just to the west of the house within the curtilage. At the rear of the Big House, Walmsley drew two small structures that were probably raised cisterns.

Walmsley's map shows nearby fields labeled "clover lot," "potatoes field," and pasture, with "patches of timber." The rest of the fields are labeled by size, with no associated crops or pasture. To the northeast is a field with a "Weather House."[397]

It is probable that there would have been many more fencerows, ditches, and fields within Magnolia's landscape during the antebellum period than are indicated in Walmsley's plan. These elements would have increased the legibility of the landscape, as it would have been apparent that certain areas were segregated for livestock, while fields were planted and would have been fenced to protect them from roaming livestock.

The agricultural landscape at Magnolia, like that at Oakland, was subdivided into cuts, which were recorded by Walmsley. With few exceptions, the Magnolia cuts were numbered rather than named. Only one, the "Potatoe Field," was named. As suggested in the 2006 Magnolia CLR, the use of numbers rather than names "gives an impression of industrial efficiency rather than attachment to the land." A few cuts were named after their location, including "the levy cut," likely referring to the field on the river levee, and others referred as "on front below," referring to its position relative to the Big House.[398]

Buildings at Magnolia Plantation

The buildings at Magnolia were oriented toward the Cane River, following its curve (see Figure 4-34). Only 19 acres of the Magnolia Plantation are contained within the Cane River Creole National Historical Park. Outside the park limits are the Big House, privy, corn crib, and fattening pen (chicken coop), among other historic resources; descriptions for these resources rely on the national historic landmark documentation for Magnolia.[399] Within the park are the *Pigeonnier*, Blacksmith Shop, Corn Crib, Slave Hospital (Overseer's House), Slave Cabins, and Cotton Gin.

397. Weather houses were structures where the working population went during thunderstorms in the summer and to warm up on cold winter days. They typically were furnished with a fireplace and a table and chairs, and workers either ate in this structure or under trees within or on the edges of fields.
398. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation CLR*, 88-89.
399. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 4-10.

Outside the NPS Boundary

Big House

There are two possible narratives for the original Big House at Magnolia. Family tradition holds that Ambrose LeComte II married Julia Buard in 1827, and in the 1830s began construction on the house, completing it sometime in the 1830s. The second narrative suggests that the house was not constructed until after the death of Julia Buard in 1845 and Ambrose LeComte II's marriage to his second wife, Lise Victorie Desiree Sompayrac, in 1846, dating the house to ca. 1846 to 1851.[400] Under either scenario, a series of letters indicates that Ambrose II and Lise LeComte resided in their townhouse in Natchitoches ca. 1851, while a house was under construction at Magnolia.

The original main house was set back within the property on the north side of the curtilage, at the location of the current Big House. The building was a traditional French Creole house with large galleries and a high brick pier foundation.[401]

Privy

The extant privy, constructed in the mid-nineteenth century behind and north of the Big House, was a two-hole facility (Figure 4-35).[402] The mortise-and-tenon framed structure was surmounted by a gable roof, which is extant. The exterior was clad in clapboard, with louvered vents cut into the gable ends.

Fattening Pen (Chicken Coop)

Constructed in the mid-nineteenth century, the extant fattening pen, also used as a chicken coop, was located north of the Big House (Figure 4-36).[403] The small structure was designed with a long and low form comprised of four separate pens, each with its own door on the southeast side. The structure was surmounted by a steep gable roof. The exterior was formed by wood slats, except on the rear, which was covered with flush planks.

Cook's House

A small residence at Magnolia, commonly referred to as the "Cook's House," was located at the terminus of a row of live oaks that extend northeast from the river, starting near the *pigeonnier* (Figure 4-37). The one-story extant cook's house was designed with a rectilinear footprint and a gable roof that extended to shelter a gallery across the west-facing façade. Interior details that suggest the building was erected in the nineteenth century include wide plank flooring and a Federal-style mantle.[404]

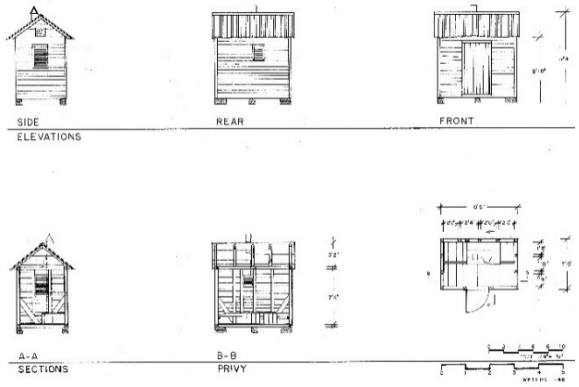


FIGURE 4-35. Magnolia Plantation Big House privy. HABS.

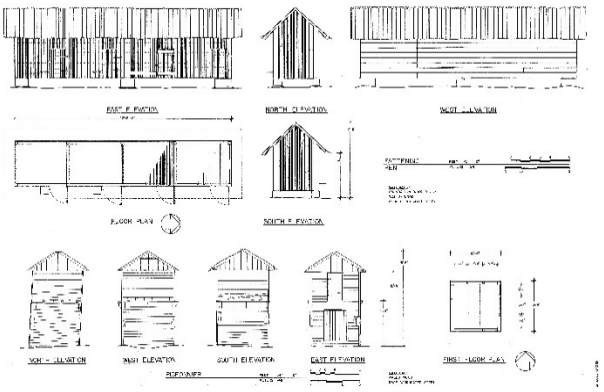


FIGURE 4-36. Magnolia Plantation fattening pen (chicken coop). HABS.

400. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 9; Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 7; and Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation*, 9.
401. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 7.
402. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 7.
403. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 8.
404. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 8

Other associated structures located outside the NPS boundary are a garage/chicken coop, another fattening shed, a large shed, and a constructed levee. Dates of their construction are not known.



FIGURE 4-37. Cook's house at Magnolia, view to the southeast. Commonwealth.

Inside the NPS Boundary

Pigeonnier

The *Pigeonnier* (LCS 091560) was constructed ca. 1840–1855, and is the only known *pigeonnier* to be at Magnolia (Figure 4-38). Historically, the structure was located between the Slave Hospital (Overseer's House) and the Slave Cabins, and was moved sometime after 1858 (see Figure 4-34).[405]

Today, the *Pigeonnier* stands northeast of the Blacksmith Shop. The wood-framed two-story structure, made with both French joinery and pegged joinery, has a square footprint and a pyramidal hipped roof.[406] The exterior of the building is clad with clapboard siding and the roof is sheathed in metal. The second story of the structure is pierced by a string of four arched openings and perches on the north, south, and west elevations. The east elevation has wood doors on both stories.

Blacksmith Shop

The Blacksmith Shop (LCS 091559) appears to be in its original location, per the Walmsley survey, and was likely constructed in the 1840s (Figure 4-39).[407] The building stands parallel to the road, just south of the current position of the *Pigeonnier*. The *bousillage*-constructed Blacksmith Shop has a rectilinear footprint that is surmounted by a metal-clad hipped roof. The structure has a one-story gallery with a half-hipped roof supported by wood posts on the north, east, and south elevations. A shed-roof wood-framed addition is on the west elevation.



FIGURE 4-38. Antebellum *Pigeonnier* at Magnolia, view to the northwest. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 4-39. Blacksmith's Shop, view to the northeast. Commonwealth.

405. Family legend has it that, when Fanny and Matthew divided the plantation, she acquired some of the family pigeons, but they kept returning to the pigeonnier at Magnolia. Hunter, *Magnolia Plantation: A Family Farm*, 39.

406. National Park Service, *Magnolia Plantation Site Map*; Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 4; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 25.

407. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 27.

Corn Crib

Magnolia Plantation also has the remains of a simple log Corn Crib (LCS 100497). It was constructed around 1850 and was moved by Matthew J. Hertzog from elsewhere on the plantation to its current location, south of the Blacksmith Shop, at an unknown date (Figure 4-40).[408] The square structure is less than one story tall and is constructed of logs and secured with saddle notching. As a crib, there is no chinking between logs, which would have allowed for air movement. The structure is in ruinous condition.



FIGURE 4-40. Remains of the antebellum Corn Crib at Magnolia Plantation. Commonwealth.

Slave Hospital (Overseer's House)

The hospital for the enslaved at Magnolia (LCS 091558, listed by later name of Overseer's House) was built sometime in the 1840s and is located between the Slave Cabins and the Big House (Figure 4-41). There are several theories for what the Slave Hospital looked like when first constructed: the most probable configuration is a T-plan of wood frame and *bousillage*-constructed rooms that had a long sick ward room with a gallery on the west, east, and south elevations, and a bank of three rooms, or *cabinets*, extending across the north elevation (Figure 4-42). There is evidence in some of the window frames that the hospital-era windows may have been protected by square wood bars turned at 45-degrees to form a diamond design.[409]

The one-story building today has a rectilinear footprint that is expanded by two ells on the north elevation. It rests on tall brick piers and is surmounted by a metal-sheathed, steeply pitched, hipped roof pierced by three brick chimney stacks. A gallery extends across the east and south elevations. The exterior of the building is sheathed in clapboard. Three entrances are positioned on the east and south elevations within the gallery, and each features a transom. Windows are six-over-six wood sashes with operable shutters.



FIGURE 4-41. Slave Hospital/Overseer's House, view to the north. Commonwealth.

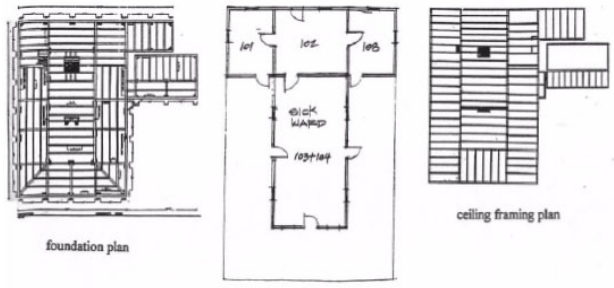


FIGURE 4-42. Probable original floor plan of the slave hospital. Hartrampf and Pyburn.

Slave Cabins

Historically, Magnolia Plantation had seventy quarters for enslaved workers, of which forty-six

408. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 28.

409. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 17-68.

were wood-framed and twenty-four brick.[410] The brick quarters (Slave Cabins 1-8, LCS 09156 - LCS 091569) were erected ca. 1845. Archeological excavation reveals that the "slave village" was laid out on a grid southwest of the Slave Hospital (Overseer's House), and consisted of four buildings across and six down for a total of twenty-four (Figure 4-43).[411]

Each brick quarter had a rectilinear footprint with a side-gable, parapeted roof (Figure 4-44). The two-room quarters had a central party wall and a shared fireplace. One building would house two enslaved families, one in each room.[412] Originally, window and door openings were unglazed, sealed simply with wood shutters.



FIGURE 4-43. Slave Cabin complex, view to the northeast. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 4-44. Slave Cabin 1, view to the northeast. Commonwealth.

Slave Cabin 1 (LCS 91562) has a cistern that has been recently repaired and connected to the roof drain for that building (see Figure 4-44). Slave Cabins 3, 4, and 7 also have cisterns (LCS 091643).

Adjacent to Slave Cabin 5 once stood two privies. Constructed of salvaged wood with flat roofs and wood panel entrance doors on their west sides, the privies were eventually fitted out with modern toilet and sink fixtures. These were removed in the 1990s.

Cotton Gin

The present cotton gin complex at Magnolia was likely constructed in the 1850s. It is at least the second on the plantation, perhaps even the second in the same general location (Figure 4-45). The barn and equipment that comprise the Cotton Gin (LCS 91561) stand at the southern end of the building complex, just north of an agricultural field and farm lane. The two-story timber-framed barn was built with mortise-and-tenon joinery.[413] It has a rectilinear footprint and is oriented perpendicular to Cane River by its steeply pitched side-gable roof. The roof overhangs broadly on the side elevations. While it is currently sheathed in metal, it was likely originally covered in wood shingles. The north overhanging roof was supported by wood posts. The southern overhang also had additional support from posts, now made



FIGURE 4-45. Cotton Gin barn complex, view to the northwest. Commonwealth.

410. National Park Service, *Magnolia Plantation Site Map*.
411. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 8.
412. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 8.
413. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 26-27.

of metal anchored in concrete as a result of recent modifications. A gable dormer was positioned off-center on both side roof slopes, and two ventilators installed near the ridge on the east end of the building. The wood-framed structure was supported on brick piers, with broad lap siding sheathing the exterior walls. Each of the five bays along the north and south elevations was furnished with a hinged wood door, which are extant. The dormers and second-story gable ends had wall openings with hinged wood doors, also extant.

The interior of the Cotton Gin barn has undergone the most change, which was needed to accommodate the ever-evolving method of ginning and pressing cotton. The interior is believed to have been divided into three major sections, each to accommodate a different cotton processing component. The east end of the barn held the cotton gin on the second floor, the west end still houses the a nineteenth-century wood screw press utilized to form cotton bales (Figure 4-46 and 4-47). At the center of the barn was the lint room, where the cleaned cotton lint was placed before being pressed into bales. Framing in the barn suggests that there may have been an earlier cotton press present in the east end of the building.

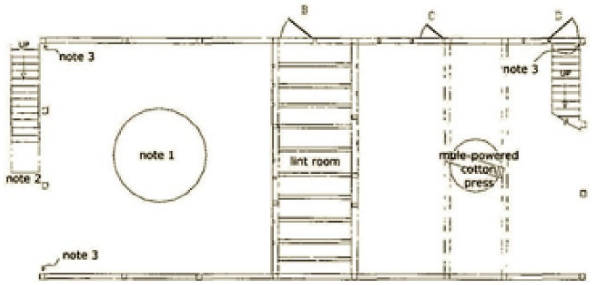


FIGURE 4-46. 1860 conjectural floor plan of Magnolia Gin Barn. Magnolia Plantation Gin Barn HSR.

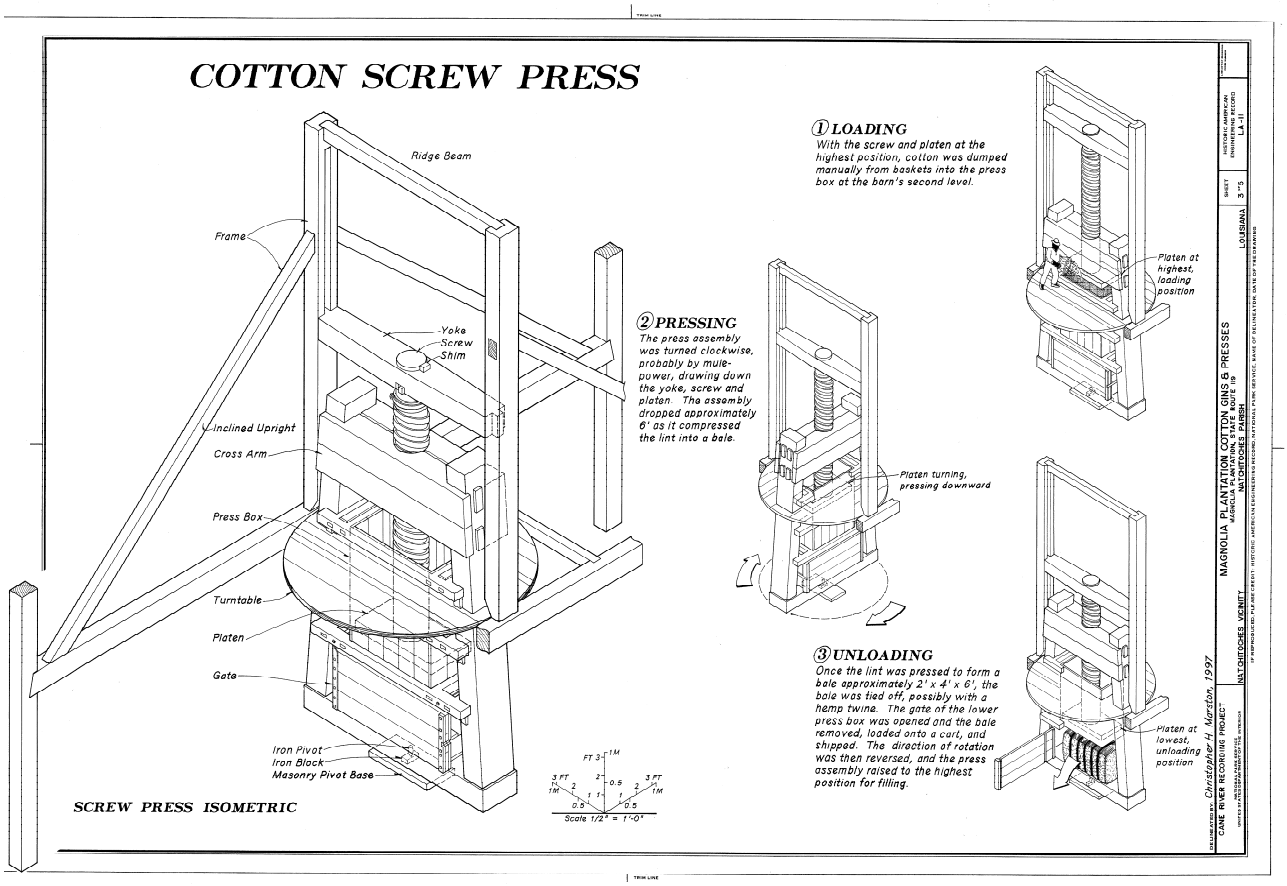


FIGURE 4-47. HAER drawing of Magnolia Plantation's Steam & Box Press, or Cotton Press, No. LA-11. Library of Congress.

The screw-type cotton press was prevalent from 1810 until ca. 1840–1860, when the power screw press was developed. The box, which directly pressed the cotton, was connected to the base of the screw. The screw, which was turned in a clockwise direction, lacks the typical "buzzards," or wings that extend down from the top of most presses and form the link to the mules that rotated the press.[414] The extant Steam & Box Press (LCS 1131688) (called the Cotton Press in HAER, No. LA-11) is one of only two known examples of an enclosed wood-screw cotton press existing today. Constructed of massive cypress timbers, it is structurally integrated into the frame of the building.

Unlike most of the screw presses in operation in the nineteenth century, the press at Magnolia is considered to have been one of the better examples, with its screw and box mechanisms far more finely made than the typical screws that featured "rudely chiseled out" screws. The Magnolia Wood Cotton Screw Press (LCS 1131652) is "nearly perfect in its helix shape." The box itself may be a later replacement to the screw, based on comparison to the only other extant press of this type, located in Lubbock, Texas, which was constructed in 1874.[415]

The Cotton Gin barn has a 15-foot-diameter brick cistern (Cotton Gin Cistern, LCS 91644) adjacent to its northeast corner (see Figure 4-45).

Stable

The stable was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century of heavy timber that was pegged together (Figure 4-48). Structurally, it comprises a large two-story central frame crib surrounded by single-story sheds that functioned as animal holding pens. A wide, transverse corridor running north-south was furnished with a large, open-work, slated gate at each end. The hip roof ridge runs east-west with a gable at each end.

Originally, almost all of the siding and the interior dividing walls between the pens consisted of horizontal slats spaced about three inches apart. The heavy studs were cut and chiseled out to accommodate these slats. Some of this work has been lost and some has been replaced by board and batten siding. Many of the pens retain their feeding troughs. The stable has square nails throughout, including the board and batten siding and many of the feeding troughs.[416]

Missing Buildings and Structures

Several buildings or structures indicated on the Walmsley map no longer exist on the plantation (see Figure 4-34). These include a "Nursery" near the Slave Cabins; a building called an "Agency," which has an unclear use, but may have been an office; the plantation bell and tower; a washhouse; a smokehouse; some garden houses; and a sawmill, which would have been needed to help build the many buildings erected between 1825 and 1845, and may have been among the first buildings added to the property after it was purchased by Ambrose LeComte.[417]



FIGURE 4-48. Stable at Magnolia Plantation dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Commonwealth.

414. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 27-30; Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 9.
415. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 27-30; Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 9.
416. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 9.
417. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 26-27.

Chapter 5: Civil War (1861–1865)

Introduction

The 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln initiated a series of events that would forever change the lives of all people in the United States. Within a matter of weeks, the nation would be spilt and its two sides at war. Confident in their own abilities, each side thought the war would be over quickly, but instead, it dragged on for over four years, from April 12, 1861, to May 9, 1865.

Lincoln's Emancipation Act of 1862 and its implementation, starting in 1863, caused further turmoil in the South, permanently altering social relationships and cultural patterns, and leading to an economic crisis from which the South never completely recovered. These events had a significant impact on the lives of people living in the Cane River region.

People

The Civil War affected all classes of people in the Cane River region. The planter class sought to maintain its way of life and supported the Confederacy; free Creoles of color struggled to maintain their place in an increasingly racially divisive society; and the enslaved hoped for emancipation. By the end of the four-year war, life along *La Cote Joyeuse* had drastically changed.

White Creoles

With the outbreak of the war, the differences between white Americans and Creoles were overlooked as free people of Natchitoches Parish united in their attempts to protect the Southern way of life. Local accounts during the Civil War revealed that every long-standing Creole family served the Confederacy in some way. The younger generation went off to war, willing to give their lives to preserve the South they knew, while the older generation strove to keep the home front functioning.

Both of Phanor Prud'homme's two sons enlisted in the Confederate army. His eldest, Alphonse, had been working as a civil engineer for the Mississippi and Pacific Railroad prior to enlisting. He joined a local volunteer unit, called the Pelican Rangers (see "Pelican Rangers" below). When the war broke out, the younger Prud'homme son, Emmanuel, returned to Natchitoches from Georgetown College in Washington, DC. Once home, he joined the 26th Louisiana Regiment under the command of Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton at Vicksburg, Mississippi. The 26th Louisiana was nearly entirely comprised of Creole men. [1]

When the Civil War officially started, Alphonse left the Pelican Rangers and enlisted in Company G, 3rd Louisiana Infantry, serving under Captain Octave Metoyer (Figure 5-1). Company G was nearly evenly split between Creoles and Americans (and perhaps some of Irish and German descent), an indicator of the social changes that had occurred in northern Louisiana during the Antebellum period.

One of Alphonse's first experiences in battle was at Oak Hill (or Wilson's Creek), Missouri, in August

1. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 26; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 23-25.

1861.[2] There, he lost his friend, Placide Bossier, who was also the step-son to Ambrose LeComte II. In a letter to his father, Alphonse said "I could not stay to see him die… I cut a large lock of his hair… I have also his prayer book." In battle, he praised his brother-in-law, Colonel Winter Wood Breazeale, saying he was "as cool as a cucumber, cautioning his men constantly to be steady."[3]

Alphonse served as orderly sergeant in his company at the Battle of Elkhorn Tavern, March 7, 1862, where he was wounded, then captured.[4] He escaped after ten days and rejoined his unit before being discharged briefly for his wounds. Later that summer, Alphonse and Colonel Breazeale organized a cavalry battalion of five companies, which became part of the Second Louisiana Regiment of Cavalry.[5] It was while serving with this unit at the Battle of Irish Bend (or Nerson's Woods or Franklin) on April 14, 1864, that Alphonse again sustained injuries. After his second injury, Alphonse was discharged from the army in July and returned to Bermuda/Oakland.[6]



FIGURE 5-1. Alphonse Prud'homme in his post-Civil War United Confederate Veterans uniform. CARI.

Alphonse's brother, Emmanuel, fighting in the 26th Louisiana, was captured and became a prisoner of war when Vicksburg was surrendered on July 4, 1863. Following his parole, Emmanuel returned to active service with the Confederate Army and eventually achieved the rank of Orderly Sergeant by the end of the war.[7]

In addition to sending his sons away to war, Phanor Prud'homme also saw his overseer, Seneca Pace, join the military ranks. Pace joined the Prud'homme Guards, where he served as a lieutenant.[8] Letters exchanged between Phanor and Pace reveal the closeness between the family and their former overseer. Phanor often sent Pace supplies and kept him informed on the health of his ailing father. After the war, Pace's wages are listed in Phanor Prud'homme's succession, but he

2. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 48. The Confederates usually named battles by the nearest settlement, while the Union Army named battles by nearby natural features.
3. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 27.
4. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 26. Orderly sergeants, or "orderlies," were "soldiers selected on account of their intelligence, experience, and soldierly bearing, to attend on generals, commanding officers, officers of the day, and staff officers, to carry orders, messages, &c. They may be taken from the guard daily or put on permanently while the duty lasts: in the latter case they are reported on daily duty and are excused from all other duty that would interfere with their duty as orderlies." Kautz, *The 1865 Customs of Service*.
5. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 48; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 26.
6. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 48.
7. Hall, *The Story of the 26th*, 27; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 51; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 26.
8. The Prud'homme or "Prudhomme" Guards was the moniker for Company G, one of the eight companies of the 26th Louisiana Regiment. The guard groups, comprised of volunteers, were often named after the place they came from, the county, an important local person, or even a quality of the group, such as the "Iverson Invincibles" of Georgia. Rogers, "The Confederate Nation Reflected."

does not appear to have been paid as an overseer after 1865.[9]

With at least one of his overseers serving in the military, Phanor spent much of the war managing the plantation. As local liaison to the Confederate government, Phanor was required to travel throughout the state, but when home, he raised provisions for both the military and friends and family. Records of supplies he sent the men listed such items as boots and other provisions. In March 1863, he recorded sending Alphonse "a case containing 2 sides of ribs, 2 hams, 2 jowls, 12 half bottles of white wine, cakes, letter paper, and one small keg of lard"; to Emmanuel, he sent "a barrel containing 4 hams, 4 jowls, [and] 2 large sides."[10]

Although neither Ambrose LeComte II nor Matthew Hertzog served in the Confederate military, they both supported the effort on the home front and had family members who served. Matthew Hertzog's brother, Emile Toussaint Hertzog, joined the Natchitoches Rebels of the 18th Louisiana infantry in 1861. Emile and another member of the Hertzog family were killed in the group's first major skirmish on March 1, 1862. Matthew's other brother, Henry, and a relative named Fred, served in the Orleans Guards.[11]

Other family members who served included men of the Buard family, who were in the Prud'homme Guards. There was also a small group from Natchitoches known as the "LeComte Guards," which implies they were funded by Ambrose LeComte II. The LeComte Guards were formed in April 1863 under the command of Captain W. M. Levy. The Hertzogs formed two companies of guards from Creoles of color from Isle Brevelle. The first was a cavalry squadron led by Henry Hertzog and was known as the Augustin Guards. The second was a group of infantrymen known as Monette's Guards, organized by a third Hertzog brother, Hypolite, along with other planters.[12]

During the war, Elisa LeComte, who was engaged to Alphonse Prud'homme, frequently wrote him letters, expressing her concern for his return. Among her other writings were many diary entries that recorded life during the war, including social occasions, details on who enlisted and where, and personal feelings. One entry in June 1863 addressed her fears for her fiancé, "He might never return to me. Oh, may God help him through all."[13]

As the war approached Cane River, the LeComtes/Hertzogs took shelter away from the plantation, likely in their Natchitoches townhouse. Fortunately for them, no one but the overseer, a Mr. Miller, and perhaps some servants, were at the plantation in late April 1864 when Union troops camped in their yard, held a two-day skirmish, and burned the main house.[14]

Alphonse Prud'homme was injured a second time in April 1863 and once again returned to Bermuda/Oakland to recover. He returned to active duty in June of that year and remained with his unit, participating in several additional battles before being relieved of his duties in July 1864. His record indicates his discharge was in part due to his wounds, but also to enable him to fulfill the role of enrolling officer for Natchitoches Parish. Elisa LeComte's concerns for her fiancé's safety were at last put to rest upon his return, and the couple married in September 1864.[15]

Alphonse and Elisa's marriage contract included part of the estate of her mother, Julia Buard LeComte, while Alphonse brought portions of

9. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 99-101.
10. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 31.
11. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 98.
12. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 42; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 98.
13. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 53; Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 25.
14. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 26.
15. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 26, 37.

estates from both his mother, Lise Prud'homme, and his late sister, Emma.[16] The marriage contract also mentioned a slave named Thomas, even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made the year before.[17] The first member of the next generation of Prud'hommes, Pierre Phanor II, was born to Alphonse and Elisa in 1865.[18] Returning to the plantation full-time, Alphonse began assisting his father with the huge task of keeping everything running smoothly. It is also likely that Alphonse took the lead on most of the activities, given his father's failing health.

The youngest Prud'homme daughter, Henriette (known as Harriet in later years), married less than a year after Alphonse and just months after the end of the Civil War in April. Her groom was Dr. Blount Baker Breazeale, the younger brother of Winter Wood Breazeale, who was married to the eldest Prud'homme sister, Adeline.[19] Like Alphonse, Henriette's marriage contract included interests from both Lise's and Emma's estates, and her spouse received one-twelfth of the Breazeale Plantation, located above Natchitoches.

Phanor Prud'homme just barely survived the war; he had carried the burden of operating the huge plantation while his sons and overseer were off fighting the war, as well as serving as the local government liaison. There are two versions of what happened to Phanor at the end of the war. One is that, exhausted, Phanor retreated to Natchitoches, where he stayed in the townhouse of the LeComte family and eventually died. The most often repeated story is that he was captured by the Union and forced to march to Natchitoches.[20] The story has it that, on the way, he collapsed and was left on the side of the road, only to be found later by family members and taken to the LeComte family townhouse; there he remained for his last few months. Phanor passed away on October 12, 1865, just a few months after the Civil War had ended.[21]

Although there is no record of Ambrose LeComte having served in the military during the Civil War, he likely gave financial contributions and was thus obligated to swear allegiance to the Union after the end of the war. In seeking a pardon, during August 1865, Ambrose was required to sign an oath of amnesty, in which he swore he would,

> faithfully defend the Constitution of the United states and the Union of States thereunder…and faithfully support all Laws and Proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion, with reference to the emancipation of slaves.[22]

It is likely that the Prud'hommes were also required to sign such a document.

Creoles of Color

Most Creoles of color publicly supported the Confederacy, but many were internally torn on the issue and often harbored Union sympathies.[23] The heightened racial tensions removed any status and respect they had previously received from their white counterparts. Those Creoles of color who openly resisted the Confederacy were met with a challenge to their citizenship and could be treated as if they were slaves, instead of enjoying their status as free. At least five free men of Isle Brevelle who opposed the Confederacy were removed and forced into work camps alongside slaves. A member of the Dupré family wrote his wife from a labor camp, saying,

16. Further investigation is needed to determine if these parcels include what is now Oakland or Magnolia.
17. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 37.
18. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 27.
19. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 38.
20. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 52-53.
21. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 38; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 52-53.
22. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 27-28.
23. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 86.

> We are [now] slaves… The negros are treated better than we are. We are obliged to do the hardest kind of work and the negro looks on.[24]

The Creoles of color seemed to have little power in resisting this treatment.

Some Creoles of color, however, attempted to serve in the Confederate military, although Louisiana did not officially conscript free people of color, nor did it allow them to volunteer in the white militia groups. This did not stop Creoles of color from organizing themselves with the blessing of the white community. The volunteer regiments in Natchitoches Parish were led by Henry and Hypolite Hertzog, brothers of Matthew Hertzog of Magnolia Plantation. Henry led a cavalry squadron known as the Augustin Guards, and Hypolite led a squadron known as Monette's Guards. The volunteers were well-received by the people of Natchitoches, where the police jury provided $600

> to defray the expenses of the volunteers, and their families, composing the company of the free colored persons of the parish, going to New Orleans for the defence [sic] of that city.[25]

Unfortunately, despite their best intentions, the two squadrons did not arrive in time to defend the city before it was taken by the Union.[26]

Like their white Creole neighbors, many of the Creoles of color endured losses during the Red River Campaign, from March to May 1864, including burned cotton and gin houses. Local accounts indicate that the damage would have been more severe were it not for one Creole of color, Charles B. Morin.[27] Morin led the federal troops on an alternate route through Isle Brevelle, which diverted them from the main road, thus preventing destruction to much of their community.[28]

Enslaved African Americans

Enslaved families were uprooted and separated during the war. Male slaves were often forced to work in the Confederacy's iron works, on roads, or on levees, often miles away from their families. The Prud'homme and LeComte slaves were sent to work locally on fortifications of the Red River (see Labor) instead of being sent to more remote locations. In some cases, plantation owners seeking to protect their property sent their slaves to Texas, where it was believed they could not be confiscated.[29]

Everything changed for the enslaved of the Cane River area when, in September 1862, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and it went into effect on January 1, 1863.[30] As the Union Army approached, as historian Joe Gray Taylor describes, "had the Federal campaigns in Louisiana been planned to bring the opportunity for freedom to as many slaves as possible, they would not have been greatly different."[31] As they moved along, the Union freed many slaves and employed them as workers, which was strategically beneficial. From the Union standpoint, every slave working on defenses, or on the home front, enabled a white man to enter the firing lines; essentially, when the Union freed one slave, it was the equivalent of taking two men from the Confederacy.[32]

As Union forces approached, slaves began to slow their work. One cotton planter complained that, as the Union grew closer, his slaves became "impudent and worked less and less."[33] This was likely compounded by knowledge of the

24. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 260.
25. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 42.
26. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 233-235.
27. Note that the name,"Morin," evolved to become the contemporary name of the same family, "Moran."
28. Dollar, "The Red River Campaign," 426.
29. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 88-89.
30. "10 Facts about the Emancipation Proclamation."
31. Taylor, "Slavery in Louisiana," 28.
32. Brennan, *A Blacksmith's Son*, 8-9.
33. Taylor, "Slavery in Louisiana," 28.

emancipation, which motivated some newly freed workers to move off plantations.

At Magnolia, there were those who risked escaping to their freedom in the war-torn state. When found, those runaways were advertised in local newspapers, such as those listed below for slaves owned by Matthew Hertzog and Ambrose LeComte II:

> DETAINED in the Parish jail of Avoyelles, the runaway negro boy Anderson. He says he belongs to Mathieu [sic] Hertzog of the Parish of Natchitoches. Said slave is aged about 21 years measures 5 feet 4 inches high.
>
> The owner is hereby notified to claim his property according to law.
>
> Parish of Avoyelles, 10th Jan. 1863.
> DORA GUILLOT, Jailor,[34]

and

> DETAINED in the Parish jail of Avoyelles, the runaway negro boy ARNOLD. He says he belongs to Ambroise Lecompte [sic] of the Parish of Natchitoches. Said slave 20 years old and is 5 feet 9 inches high.
>
> The owner is hereby notified to claim his property according to law.
>
> Parish of Avoyelles, 10th Jan. 1863.
>
> DORA GUILLOT, Jailor.[35]

The ad was placed, oddly enough, after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect.

In spring of 1864, when federal troops retreated through Natchitoches Parish, some of the Prud'homme' slaves chose to "leave with the Yankees."[36] Phanor Prud'homme recorded that "12 men-8 negresses- [and] 12 children [were] out of the field," having left the plantation.[37]

One Union officer noted the large number of former slaves that escaped with them from Natchitoches Parish to Alexandria, saying:

> Some were mounted on mules, some had rigged up old mule-carts, and filled them with bags of clothes, iron pots, and babies. … One group impressed itself very vividly on the mind of the present writer. A woman with an immense bundle on her head, was leading a mule with a rope halter, walking with as stately a tread as ever did Cleopatra. Astride of the mule were two little children, the foremost one holding on to a large bundle, the other clasping his companion's waist. The children were neatly dressed, the long fringe on their straw hats shading their faces, whilst their eyes were steadily fixed.[38]

The freedmen followed the Union despite not knowing what the future held for them.

Some freedmen found themselves in Union contraband camps, where there was no guarantee of food, clean water, clothing, or shelter; mortality rates were high. Although exact numbers of African Americans who spent at least part of the war period in these camps are not known, an estimate developed by the Freedmen and Southern Society Project suggests as many as half a million, around 12–15 percent of the enslaved population, when the war ended in 1865. Most contraband camps in Louisiana were located along the Mississippi River, at Kenners, Paw Paw Island, Young's Point, Milliken Bend, Goodrich Landing, Hurricane, Camp Parapet, and New Orleans, as well as across the river in Mississippi, in Natchez.[39]

While some freedmen labored in the camps, others entered service in the Union Army (Figure 5-2).[40] In 1862, Congress revised the Militia Act of 1792,

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34. "Detained…"
35. "Detained…"
36. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 28.
37. National Park Service, *The Helaire Family.*
38. Dollar, "The Red River Campaign," 429.
39. "Louisiana"; Manning, "Contraband Camps."
40. Baker, *Homeless, Friendless, and Penniless*, 51. Contraband was a term used during the Civil War to refer to runaway slaves. Attaching themselves to Union troops, they established camps called "contraband camps." Shades of Gray and Blue.

allowing men "of African descent" to serve in Louisiana; after that, over 78,000 blacks enlisted, almost one-third of the young black male population statewide. The army was the first taste of equality many of these black servicemen had experienced; they ate the same food as whites, wore the same uniform, had the same weapons, and shared the same burden.

William Smith, of Jean Prud'homme's (Phanor's older brother) plantation, was one of those freedmen who joined the Union Army's 99th Regiment of Infantry in Alexandria.[41] Smith may have been inspired by the Corps d'Afrique, who were black Union soldiers serving in the Red River Campaign as engineers. He and approximately 100 other former slaves left Jean Prud'homme's plantation with the Union. Once he reached Alexandria around April 25, 1864, Smith met General Nathaniel Banks and enlisted, serving in the 99th as an engineer. One of his first projects was to assist in the construction of "Bailey's Dam" across the Red River to raise the water level so that Union ships could pass over the rapids on the drought-stricken waterway. After the dam released the ships, the company traveled southward. Smith became ill; drinkable water was scarce, and he had been forced to drink "bayou water," resulting in developing what Smith called "pleurisy," but was likely dysentery based on his symptoms. While in retreat and riding in an ambulance, Smith was attacked by Confederate soldiers. Fearing for his life, as often black troops were executed by Confederate soldiers, Smith said he had received his uniform after waiting on the captain's table. The soldiers allowed him to rest at a nearby farm before returning him to Jean Prud'homme's plantation, where he remained a slave the rest of the war.[42]

Some slaves chose to remain on the plantation rather than escaping to a contraband camp or enlisting in the army. Based on a series of Works Progress Administration interviews, one of the primary reasons to remain on the plantation was to maintain the family unit and connections with close friends. This may have been a particularly strong motivator for slaves of Bermuda and Magnolia, where familial relationships dating back to the colonial era were well-established. Some slaves chose to remain because they were afraid they could not find work elsewhere, which was the case for some who eventually returned to their home plantations.[43] A common narrative was that slaves who stayed behind did so because they were loyal to the slaveholding family. Prud'homme



FIGURE 5-2. *Corps D'Afrique*. USCT Chronicle.

41. Brennan, *Planter's Son*; Brennan, *Blacksmith's Son*, 7-11.
42. Brennan, *Blacksmith's Son*, 9-16.
43. Baker, *Homeless, Friendless, and Penniless*, 50-51.

family tradition holds that there was a mutual level of respect and loyalty between the family and their slaves. Haynie claims that Phanor, specifically, was "quite paternalistic."[44]

One Union soldier, when passing through Natchitoches on April 2, 1864, noted that:

> We are getting into the country where there are more negroes than there has been and they think they are surely delivered from bondage. They are our only friends. . . . They seem to be willing to divide the last mouthful with the soldiers. . . They are perfectly delighted with the musik [sic] and some of them will dance as long as they can hear it.[45]

Having established a bond, many of the enslaved found their freedom by following their Union protectors.

It is reputed that the enslaved at both Bermuda and Magnolia plantations protected their master's furnishings from the Union troops. At Bermuda, family tradition holds that as the Army approached, loyal enslaved workers moved the Prud'homme's furniture out of the main house to safety. Additionally, it is claimed that they successfully pleaded with Federal troops to not burn the Prud'hommes' residence, saving it from destruction. At Magnolia, although the house was lost to fire, family legend has it that an ornate plantation clock was removed by "a faithful servant" from the building for safekeeping prior to the fire.[46]

Enslaved workers who chose to remain on the plantation negotiated labor contracts with plantation owners after the war, but in Louisiana, reorganization of labor started early, between 1862 and 1864, as a localized event that occurred whenever the Federal troops entered a community. Federal authorities attempted to send the freedmen back to work the fields, and to some extent succeeded, but some planters complained that they did not return to work. As early as 1863, planters in the New Orleans area began petitioning General Banks to return their former slaves. Banks agreed and instituted an early form of sharecropping, where the freedmen worked under military supervision for a share of the crop. The policy seems to have only taken effect in southern Louisiana, along the Mississippi, below Baton Rouge and along Bayou Lafourche.[47]

Lifeways

There are few recorded events or activities associated with the health, education, or social aspects of life at Bermuda and Magnolia during the Civil War. The war and activities surrounding it, likely consumed everyone to the point they had little time for themselves, or their enslaved workers. One historian points out, "[a]fter 1861, few planters had time or inclination to keep detailed records concerning their labor forces." Even less detail was kept regarding enslaved people: where "[s]cattered records [that] can be retrieved and pieced together, however, . . . reveal[ed] black communities that were severely dislocated by the war."[48]

Health

As the Civil War progressed, citizens on the home front would have found it challenging to maintain their personal health. Union blockades meant that not only could the South not export produce to England and France, it was also more challenging to import not only luxury goods but medicines as well.[49]

By 1860, a Dr. Heulin was residing in the Doctor's/Leveque House with his wife. During the war years, a Dr. Lahye replaced him. These doctors would have been responsible for the health of all the residents of the plantation, from

44. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 52.
45. DeCuir, *Cane River Rebels,* 51.
46. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26-28; Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 26.
47. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 102; Taylor, "Slavery in Louisiana," 29.
48. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 88-89.
49. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24.

owner to enslaved. Their presence was likely, at least in part, the reason that when Alphonse Prud'homme was injured in the war, he could return to the plantation to recuperate.[50]

In the fall season of 1861, the slaves at Bermuda were overtaken by a typhoid fever epidemic. Dozens of slaves were taken ill and several died. The fever, which could last two to three weeks, was easily passed from one person to another through food, water, or feces. Among the victims was one of the enslaved nurses.[51]

The constant shortage of food from the predations of the war was an even more pervasive threat than disease. In the Cane River area, planters grew an increased amount of provisions to sustain both themselves *and* the Confederacy.[52]

As mentioned above, as the war was nearing a close, Phanor Prud'homme, having carried the burden of operating the huge plantation and possibly suffering capture and mistreatment by Union troops, was taken, exhausted, to the LeComte's Natchitoches townhouse. There he stayed only a short time; he died there on October 12, 1865, only five months after the war's end.[53]

Religion

During the Civil War, the many religious denominations across Louisiana felt obligated to provide soldiers with spiritual guidance and solace. Some ministers and pastors even enlisted and took part in actual combat. Others were sponsored by their denominations as missionaries. From Louisiana, approximately sixteen missionary chaplains were sent to minister to the soldiers, including Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Catholic priests. The missionaries relied on their churches for food and shelter because they were unable to accept payment or provisions directly from the government. Although challenging at times, the advantage of serving as a missionary chaplain was the freedom to move about, coming and going with the various regiments as one was called.[54]

Most chaplains serving the Confederacy, however, were commissioned by the government to accompany the military units. In Louisiana, there were thirty-one commissioned chaplains, who were overwhelmingly Catholic. Catholic chaplains, unlike the Protestants, were less concerned with preaching to the troops and more focused on administering the sacraments, including "hearing confessions, distributing Holy Communion, administering Extreme Unction, and directing retreats and instruction classes."[55]

War-time chaplains provided a link between soldiers and their families. Father Pierre Dicharry served as a chaplain from Natchitoches, likely ministering to the Third Louisiana Infantry. Among the collections of the Diocese of Natchitoches is a photo of Father Dicharry with the following note on the back of the image:

> Father Dicharry, who was with Placide Bossier when he was killed in battle. Phanon [sic] Prudhomme [sic] cut a lock of Placide's hair and gave it to Father with his prayer book to take home.[56]

Although the recollections mention "Phanon," it was Alphonse Prud'homme who collected the lock of his friend's hair.

On the home front, Cane River area families would have continued to worship in their religious traditions much as they did before the war. Parishioners both Catholic and Protestant would have prayed for their loved ones in service and their cause in the war. The enslaved may have hoped and prayed for a positive outcome for themselves in the uncertain future after emancipation.

50. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 19-20.
51. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 82.
52. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 27.
53. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 52-53.
54. Romeo, "Louisiana Clergy," 215-222.
55. Romeo, "Louisiana Clergy," 215-222.
56. Romeo, "Louisiana Clergy," 217.

Education

The education of many of Cane River's planter-class youth was interrupted by the events of the war. Emmanuel Prud'homme left his classes at Georgetown College in Washington, DC, at outbreak of the conflict. Likewise, his sister Henriette was forced to return home from her schooling in New Orleans.[57] On April 5, 1864, just weeks before the *Cote Joyeuse* was set ablaze during the Red River Campaign, Elise LeComte wrote that her instructor stopped teaching lessons, and she had to sit in on classes of her peers: "Miss Long takes no more scholars. Attended to Elecy's and Mimi's class."[58]

Shortly after the war ended, on March 3, 1865, the federal government established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or as it became known, the "Freedmen's Bureau."[59] One of the missions of the Freedmen's Bureau was the education of formerly enslaved children, so Bureau schools were established in the South beginning that same year.

The Freedmen's Bureau divided each of the rebel states into districts, with local sub-districts, to best manage their work. Natchitoches Parish was in the Fourth District, which also included Avoyelles, Winn, Sabine, and Rapides parishes. The Fourth District had two officers stationed in the town of Natchitoches, including the District Sub-Assistant Commissioner and an agent who was responsible for both Natchitoches and Sabine Parishes. The first agent sent to Natchitoches was Aaron Walker, who in September 1865 noted that "[w]hoever goes here will not only have to teach the rudiments of language, but teach the children English," as many slaves had spoken French for generations. Later that month Walker opened a school in two rooms in an unspecified house, officially establishing the first Freedmen's Bureau school in Natchitoches. In its first month the school had two teachers, a Mrs. Mansoni and a Mr. Miller, who taught ninety students. By mid-October, Agent Walker moved the school into a four-room former white school in Natchitoches, which had been offered rent-free by Matthew Becken, chairman of the local school committee.[60]

Much of the white population of Louisiana was appalled by the idea of public education of freedmen. They resented the activities of the Freedmen's Bureau, both across the South and in Natchitoches, as an affront to their established way of life. In addition, many of the white families, including the planter class, could no longer afford private education for their children and there were few public schools established outside of New Orleans. Those whites perceived that the former slaves, who they believed could not be educated, were receiving better resources than their own children. The Freedmen's Bureau school in Natchitoches faced additional opposition from the Catholic Church, which believed that "such institutions tended to spread secular or even Protestant ideas."[61]

The Freedmen's Bureau schools met numerous challenges due to the lack of funding. In October 1865, both teachers of the Bureau school in Natchitoches wrote that their school needed basic supplies, including firewood, new windows, and teaching materials. These issues were in addition to the lack of funding for teachers' salaries. Because they did not receive their promised pay, Mr. Miller resigned on December 1, and Ms. Mansoni resigned by the end of the year. The school closed at the end of the year, but reopened in 1866, entering the Lincoln era with a new plan for management.[62]

Social and Recreational Life

At the dawn of the Civil War, social life in the Cane River area appears to have initially continued as usual; however, as the fighting progressed, many young white men enlisted in service, and the social

57. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 48; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 22.
58. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 25.
59. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, xiii.
60. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, xiv-4.
61. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, xv-5.
62. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, 9-15.

and recreational aspects of daily life along the river gradually changed. The diary of Elisa LeComte included notes about the numerous friends and family members who had enlisted during the early years of the war. As the war dragged on, her writings grew increasingly emotional, missing Alphonse Prud'homme (who was courting her) and the other men at war. On April 5, 1864 she wrote to Alphonse:

> Alas since you have left me, I am perfectly wretched and at times unconscious of myself. Three years ago this day- how happy for both- do you not remember- the events of that 5th April '61, are engraved and are still fresh to memory. I was so happy then… Spent the day knitting.[63]

Because of the Union blockade, those on the home front could not get the merchandise and products, such as soap, candles, and cloth, that they could once have bought in stores or ordered. The people of Cane River had to find innovative ways to make these items themselves. In 1863, Phanor Prud'homme ordered candle molds and several hands-on manuals, including *The Manufacture of Chemical Products*, *The Soap Manufacturers Manual*, *The Dyer's Manual*, and *Summary of Arts and Manufacturers*. Spinning and weaving were especially important, and Phanor organized and helped supply spinners and weavers on his own plantation, as well as throughout the parish. In the summer of 1863, the Confederate government authorized the distribution of carders for carding cotton and wool, of which the Prud'hommes took advantage.[64]

Cane River residents took opportunities for fun when it could be found, which did not necessarily preclude socializing with the Union Army. A LeComte/Hertzog story states that Magnolia's overseer had gambled with the Union troops as they camped on the property, which may have led to arson at the Big House when the overseer refused to pay his debts.[65]

The biggest social event during the war for both the Prud'homme and LeComte families was the marriage of Alphonse Prud'homme and Elise LeComte. In July 1864, Lieutenant Alphonse Prud'homme was mustered out of the army due to his poorly healed injuries, and his return home allowed him to court Ambrose LeComte's twenty-four-year-old daughter, Elise. The couple married on September 6, 1864. Despite the war and the resulting hardships, they had a "proper wedding," perhaps at the LeComte's townhouse, since the Big House at Magnolia was in ruins.[66]

As part of their wedding celebration, the newlyweds had a "splendid cake, a rich bouquet, and a finely wrought miniature Confederate flag."[67] The *Natchitoches Times* reported:

> We could hardly realize as we beheld the superb cake that destitution or want ever scowled upon our happy land. We were immediately carried back, in dreamy imagination, to the happy times of yore, ere the foul feet of the invader had left an impress on our soil.[68]

Weddings seemed to provide a relief, however short, to the sorrows of the war.

Another important wedding that occurred in August 1865 was that of Henriette Prud'homme and Blount Breazeale. Three weeks later, Alphonse and Elise Prud'homme celebrated the birth of their first child, Pierre Phanor Prud'homme II.[69]

Although social occasions celebrated by the planters were recorded, there are few such records

63. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 24.
64. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 32-33.
65. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 19.
66. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26-27.
67. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 27; Deblieux Collection 5-D-3, Folder 262, Cammie G. Henry Research Center.
68. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 37.
69. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 27; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 38. Note: this last name is spelled variously as Brazzeale, Brazzealle, and Brezeale.

of the social and recreational activities of enslaved people during the Civil War. At the dawn of the war, life was likely similar to what it was in the antebellum period. On New Year's Day, 1861, an overseer at Bermuda noted in his journal:

> Holleday [*sic*] with hands Gave Ball last nite Dance all nite to Day all Day plenty of Neighbors Negros good conduct not angryword [*sic*] no braggin [*sic*] of last year crop.[70]

The next day he noted "Ball Brake at Day Dance all nite Negros willing to give it up good conduct."[71]

As the war progressed, these recreational and social activities may have waned, particularly as many slave families were uprooted and separated. Enslaved men were often forced to work on the Confederacy's defense facilities, which required being sent far from home. However, this may not have been the case locally, as the Prud'hommes' and LeComtes' slaves were sent to work relatively nearby on fortifications of the Red River.[72]

Occupations

During the Civil War, many planter class men and their overseers served in the military, leaving the property owners to manage their farm, as well as support the war effort at home. Enslaved people continued much as they had before the war until emancipation, when they were thrust into a new situation, having to negotiate employment contracts for their work.

At Bermuda/Oakland Plantation, both of Phanor and Lise Prud'homme's sons, Alphonse and Emmanuel, enlisted in the Confederate army. As discussed above, Alphonse was enlisted in Company G, 3rd Louisiana Infantry, and served as orderly sergeant. Emmanuel Prud'homme joined the 26th Louisiana Regiment, Company G, and, like his brother, eventually achieved the rank of orderly sergeant by the end of the war. Bermuda's overseer, Seneca Pace, also enlisted, joining the Prud'homme Guards, where he served as a lieutenant.

After Pace left Bermuda, Phanor Prud'homme attempted to hire a replacement, but none of his hires were permanent. A Mr. Phelps worked as the overseer from May to October 1862. In December, Phanor hired P. T. McNeely, who was dismissed the following August. The tenures of subsequent overseers were equally short-lived; it could have been that they, too, enlisted. The experience at Bermuda Plantation resembles that of other plantations across the South, where there was "an acute shortage of slave managers… during the war."[73]

Because of the shortage, Phanor spent much of the war managing the plantation himself, while also serving as local liaison to the Confederate government. In the liaison role, he was responsible for recording cotton subscriptions from area planters under the "produce loan" system of sales and bonds. Phanor's duties took him off the plantation several times, traveling to Baton Rouge in 1861 and both Opelousas and Shreveport in 1863.[74]

At Magnolia, Ambrose LeComte II and Matthew Hertzog continued in their previous positions and supported their close friends and family who served in the war. As the fighting approached Cane River in 1864, the entire family took shelter in their Natchitoches townhouses, leaving the overseer to manage the plantation. There were two possible overseers during the war, W. S. Campbell and a Mr. Miller. Documentation from an 1862 letter indicates that Campbell was responsible for animals on the *vacherie,* as well as the construction of a new chapel. Mr. Miller was reputedly the

70. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 81.
71. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 81.
72. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 89.
73. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24; Scarborough, *The Overseer,* 142.
74. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 28.

overseer present at Magnolia in April 1864, when Union troops camped on the property.[75]

The slaves of Bermuda and Magnolia plantations continued in their assigned roles throughout the war, sometimes being sent away by their owners to protect their "property" or to assist with Confederate fortifications. Their status remained unchanged until emancipation in January 1863. On June 5, 1865, local Union commander Lieutenant Colonel S. G. Van Anda instructed the freed slaves to remain on "the premises to which they belong," and encouraged their former owners to employ the freedmen on their plantations.[76]

Following the war, the Prud'hommes—and presumably the LeComtes/Hertzogs—were able to retain some of their pre-war workforce. Plantation owners were required by the Freemen's Bureau to establish contracts with the newly freed slaves to continue working on the plantation. Understandably, records are sparse to nonexistent in the immediate aftermath of the war.[77] Among the known Bermuda slaves who were retained under contract included Solomon Wilson, a carpenter; Solomon Williams, a blacksmith; Helaire, a driver; and Helaire's wife, Felis, a washerwoman. Wages in the initial contracts ranged from six to ten dollars a month for three classes of males, and from five to eight dollars a month for females.[78]

It is likely the employment contracts in Natchitoches Parish were negotiated after June 11, 1865, when Major General F. J. Herron of the Western Division of Louisiana reinforced an earlier command that "all freedmen remain with their former masters until the harvest was finished." In July 1865, Phanor Prud'homme wrote to his sister Adeline, regarding the new work arrangements, that

> [a]ll of mine who did not leave with the Yankees in the spring of 1864 are still with me and continue to work. I had to make a contract with them in the presence of an officer… to finish the crop of this year… I give them the care that I had always given them when they were slaves, I dress them, and I give them each 10 bushels of corn.[79]

Not only did he have to provide for his workers, but Prud'homme also had to continue to provide for the five elderly freedmen and forty-six black children under twelve who could not work. By the end of the war, new regulations allowed the workers to provide food for themselves. Looking forward to the work for the next year, Phanor noted in the letter to his sister that

> I will try to manage with mine to take part of the crop… If I have to pay them every three months… I do not think I shall keep many.[80]

Prud'homme also expressed his concern with the newly implemented system, "how can we make them work, if we don't have compulsory measures?"[81]

Politics and Government

In the late 1850s, the political climate in antebellum America was in turmoil, with slave-dependent southern states and abolitionist-minded northern states going head-to-head over the issue. The conflict boiled over with the election of Abraham Lincoln to president in 1860. Lincoln's vision to prohibit expansion of slavery into newly formed states was perceived by the South as an affront to their way of life, and a threat to abolishment of the whole institution. On

75. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 23-26.
76. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 45.
77. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 27.
78. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 68; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 74; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 91-102; National Park Service, *The Helaire Family.*
79. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 102-104.
80. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 104.
81. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 104.

December 20, 1860, South Carolina was the first state to secede from the United States, sowing the seeds of war. Louisiana was not long to follow, and on January 26, 1861, it became the sixth state to secede and join the Confederate States of America. In doing so, Louisiana troops seized the federal arsenal at Baton Rouge. The new president was inaugurated in March, and on April 12, Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter, effectively starting the Civil War.[82]

Secession did not come easily in Louisiana, which "appeared to be the most firmly attached to the Union" of the Southern states in 1860.[83] This was largely because New Orleans, which was the South's largest and most diverse city, had strong economic ties to the upper Mississippi Valley and eastern ports, and many of the city's business elites had northern connections. There was also a large immigrant population, particularly the Irish and Germans, who were also not in favor of secession.

Secession support was strongest in the cotton-growing parishes along the Mississippi and Red Rivers, but even those areas saw some resistance, mainly from yeoman farmers. In Cloutierville, near Magnolia, there were several well-known planters who belonged to the Whig Party; they believed in maintaining both the Union and slavery institution. Among them was Dr. S. O. Scruggs, the physician who frequently treated Magnolia slaves. He was the founder of the Cloutierville Union Club in 1861.[84] Unfortunately for Scruggs, his Union sympathies would not save his property from destruction during the Red River Campaign.

Louisianans held an election on January 7, 1861, for delegates to a state convention, which resulted in a pro-secessionist majority. The delegates met on January 23, 1861, and immediately pushed secession through, making Governor Moore the chief executive of "the Independent State of Louisiana."[85]

After secession, Louisiana was swiftly thrust into the Civil War. Many policies and regulations enacted by the state and Confederacy impacted the lives of those serving in the military and those trying to survive on the home front. At the dawn of the war, enthusiasm was high, but into its second year, after significant losses, support began to wane. Subsequent legislative acts voted into law by the Confederate Congress that tried to curb the effects on the army of diminished zeal were met with opposition by the people of Louisiana.

By spring 1862, the one-year term of those who enlisted at the beginning of the war was ending. Fearful of depleting their forces, the Confederacy passed the Conscription Act on April 16, 1862, through which every able-bodied white man between eighteen and thirty-five was subject to being drafted into military service for a three-year term. The act also allowed men to volunteer for three years and hire substitutes who were not of conscript age. Exemptions to conscription were granted to those in vital occupations, such as teaching, pharmacy, ministry, salt making, and manufacturing army supplies, so those careers became popular. The Conscription Act was unpopular across the South, with the least palatable aspects being the paid stand-in, which poor farmers could not afford. Unlike the Prud'hommes, LeComtes, and Hertzogs, who were fighting for their traditions as members of the planter class, the slaveless yeoman farmers grew bitter in the fight. Many of them later deserted, not wanting to die for a way of life that never benefited them.[86]

Another unpopular law was the Impressment Act that was passed in March 1863. The law dictated that produce be sold at a "reasonable price,"

82. Brennan, *Planter's Son*.
83. Dew, "Who Won the Secession Election," 27.
84. Dew, "Who Won the Secession Election," 27; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 86; Dollar, "Red River Campaign," 427.
85. Dew, "Who Won the Secession Election," 27-30.
86. Taylor, "Discontent," 254-255, 260.

resulting in price fixing below market rate. This was likely a direct result of the food shortages and the Confederacy's difficulty acquiring rations because they were unable to compete in the food market. Farmers were further annoyed by taxation enacted in April 1863 that collected one-tenth of their produce.[87]

Policies with the greatest impact on the Cane River area pertained to cotton. In 1861, cotton trade with the Union was forbidden by the Confederacy, although illegal trading was rampant. Louisiana Governor Moore asked that the law be obeyed, saying that

> There cannot be a war for arms and a peace for trade between two people at the same time… We cannot barter our produce for theirs… Trading with the enemy is prohibited under all circumstances.[88]

The governor followed this in 1862 with an additional proclamation that ordered

> …the destruction of all cotton within the limits of Louisiana that is in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy.[89]

The governor's directives were implemented in Natchitoches in April 1864, when the Union Army began its advance through the parish to capture Shreveport. By the end of the campaign, the *Natchitoches Union* newspaper accounted $5,000,000 worth of burned cotton.[90]

One of the most impactful policies enacted by the Federal government during the war resulted from the Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect on January 1, 1863.[91] For some Cane River-area enslaved, however, emancipation was not fully realized until the Red River Campaign of 1864, when Union troops retreated through the area. At Bermuda, and presumably at Magnolia as well, some newly emancipated chose to follow the Union and escape, while others stayed behind.

Between 1861 and 1864, the federal government also enacted the Confiscation Acts, a series of laws pertaining to seizure of property. One such act, passed March 12, 1863, allowed the Secretary of the Treasury to appoint special agents to collect "captured and abandoned property" owned by rebels in Union-held areas, and to either appropriate that property for public use or sell to a person in a "loyal state," with the proceeds going to the government. Property seized was generally owned by the upper-class elite. The act also made provisions for property owners who had remained loyal to the Union. It is entirely possible that planters in Natchitoches Parish could have fallen victim to such policies, but the most prevalent area affected was in Union-held New Orleans.[92]

Military

As mentioned above, within a matter of weeks after the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln, the nation would be spilt and its two sides at war. Lincoln's vision to prohibit expansion of slavery into newly formed states was perceived by the South as an affront to their way of life. Starting with South Carolina, Southern states began to secede from the United States and form the Confederate States of America. Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861; on April 12, Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter, effectively starting the war, which lasted until May 9, 1865.

The Confederate States of America elected Jefferson Davis as their new president. Davis' first act was to call for more troops to defend the new nation. Thomas O. Moore, Governor of Louisiana, answered his request by asking for 5,000 volunteers.[93] Both Prud'homme sons, Alphonse

87. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 312; Taylor, "Discontent," 255-256.
88. Taylor, "Discontent," 256.
89. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 25.
90. Taylor, "Discontent," 256.
91. "10 Facts about the Emancipation Proclamation."
92. Weber, "The Seizure and Confiscation of Confederate Property"; Randall, "Captured and Abandoned Property," 66.
93. Brennan, *Planter's Son*.

and Emmanuel, responded to the call, entering different volunteer units.

Pelican Rangers

One of the first local military units to form in the area was the Pelican Rangers. Established in 1861, the Rangers comprised men from the Natchitoches area. Alphonse Prud'homme enlisted in Company H of the Rangers, entering as a private. Even as a lowly private, as a member of the planter class, he was unable to leave the comforts of home: Alphonse brought with him into war his domestic slave, who was charged with tending his campsite and cooking his meals. Alphonse's cousin, Lestan Prud'homme; his brother-in-law, Captain Winter Wood Breazeale; and his future brother-in-law, Winter's younger brother, Baker Blount Breazeale, also signed up. Before leaving town, the unit gathered for a special service at the cathedral, followed by speeches, and then departed for New Orleans on May 1, 1861.[94]

The Rangers reached the city in June, where the Natchitoches Company was divided into two groups: Pelican Rangers No. 1 and Pelican Rangers No. 2. When combined with other infantry units, they formed the 3rd Regiment of the Louisiana Infantry. Pelican Rangers No. 1 comprised Company G of the Regiment. From New Orleans, the rangers departed on steam boats for Camp Poteau, Little Rock, Arkansas.[95]

By August 1861, the infantry was encamped near Springfield, Missouri. At that point Alphonse was listed as an orderly sergeant, which made him responsible for organizing the company's daily operations and supervising the non-commissioned officers. As mentioned above, on August 10, the infantry engaged in the first major battle west of the Mississippi, the Battle of Oak Hills, as it was known by the Confederates, or the Battle of Wilson's Creek by the Union.[96]

The massive battle was a victory for the Confederacy; Alphonse was recorded by his Lieutenant-Colonel as having "cheered and acted with coolness."[97] Both sides suffered substantial losses, with over 2,300 causalities. One of the major Union losses was of General Nathanial Lyon, who was the first Union general to die in the Civil War.[98]

In September and October 1861, Alphonse was listed as "sick at hospital" at Camp Jackson, in northwest Arkansas. He was likely ill with a camp disease caused by the close quarters, poor sanitation, and primitive medication. Alphonse was back on the job in November, when the 3rd Infantry went into its winter quarters at Cross Hollow, Arkansas. The unit remained encamped until February 1862.[99]

On March 7, 1862, the 3rd Infantry fought in the battle at Pea Ridge (or Elkhorn Tavern), in Benton County, Arkansas. This was the second major battle Alphonse Prud'homme fought. The Confederates were led by Maj. General Earl van Dorn in a three-day battle, but did not fare well this time. While fighting near Leetown, Arkansas, the divisional commander, Brigadier General Benjamin McCullogh, was killed and the brigade and regimental commanders were captured. Alphonse was injured with a shrapnel wound to his left thigh and was among those captured. Ten days later, Alphonse escaped and return to his unit, but he was so badly wounded that the Army discharged him on March 20, 1862. Alphonse spent the rest of the spring and into the summer recuperating at Bermuda/Oakland.[100]

Later in the summer of 1862, recovered from his injuries, Alphonse Prud'homme worked with

94. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 26; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 23; Brennan, *Planter's Son*.
95. Brennan, *Planter's Son*; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 23.
96. Brennan, *Planter's Son.*
97. Brennan, *Planter's Son*.
98. Harper, "Nathaniel Lyon."
99. Brennan, *Planter's Son*.
100. Brennan, *Planter's Son*; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 23.

Captain Winter Wood Breazeale to recruit a battalion of five companies of cavalry. The cavalry, collectively known as the Partisan Rangers, included three units from Natchitoches: Companies B, C, and D. Company C was known as Prud'homme's or Isle Brevelle Rangers. On July 28, 1862, Alphonse was commissioned as a first lieutenant and adjunct of the Partisan Rangers and reentered the war.[101]

In September 1862, the Rangers moved south to Opelousas, Louisiana. Upon their arrival, the companies were reorganized as the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry under the leadership of Col. W. G. Vincent, Lieutenant Col. James McWaters, and Maj. Winter Breazeale, with Alphonse Prud'homme as adjutant.[102]

The 2nd Louisiana spent the next seventeen months fighting in southern Louisiana. Their campaign concentrated on the rivers and bayous, and on fighting with gunboats, transport steamboats, barges, cavalry, artillery, and infantry. On the prairies of southwest Louisiana, they conducted operations against the troublesome "jayhawkers," or Union sympathizers. In the fall of 1862, they successfully prevented the Union forces from further encroachment on Bayou Teche.[103]

The success of the 2nd Louisiana changed when, on April 14, 1863, the unit engaged in a fierce battle at Irish Bend (also known as Nerson's Woods or Franklin), in St. Mary's Parish. At the end, the Union was victorious, opening the way for Union occupation of western Louisiana. The battle left Alphonse severely wounded in the thigh for a second time and forced his second return home to recuperate.[104]

Like his brother, Emmanuel Prud'homme also joined the military at the outbreak of war. The younger Prud'homme enlisted in the 26th Louisiana Regiment of Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton's Army at Vicksburg, Mississippi. He was part of Company G, also known as the Prud'homme Guards, under the command Captain Octave Metoyer. The muster roll in 1862 indicated that Emmanuel served as fourth corporal alongside Bermuda's overseer Seneca Pace, who served as second (and later first) lieutenant. The regiment had ten companies, comprising 900 men total. According to his memoir, Colonel Winchester Hall believed that because Creoles were raised Roman Catholic, "subordination to 'the powers that be' was the earliest lesson of their childhood; hence they were easily governed."[105]

In May 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant's armies converged on Vicksburg, the last step necessary for the Union to gain full control of the Mississippi River. On May 22, Grant's armies initiated a siege of the city, which lasted six weeks before Lieutenant General Pemberton surrendered on July 4, 1862. The following day, Port Hudson fell to the Union, resulting in effectively splitting the Confederacy in half. Among those Confederates who surrendered at Vicksburg was Emmanuel Prud'homme, although he was soon paroled and rejoined the Confederate Army. By August 31, 1862, Emmanuel had been promoted to third corporal, then to first (orderly) sergeant by January 1864. Emmanuel continued serving in the army until the end of the war.[106]

Like the Prud'hommes, members of the LeComte/Hertzog families also served in the war. Emile Toussaint Hertzog joined the Natchitoches Rebels of the 18th Louisiana Infantry in 1861. Matthew's other brother, Henry, served in the Orleans Guards. Members of the Buard family served with the Prud'homme Guards. Additionally, the LeComte's funded a small

101. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24.
102. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24.
103. Brennan, *Planter's Son.*
104. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24.
105. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24; Cormier, "26th Regiment Volunteer Infantry"; Hall, *The Story of the 26th,* 15-17, 200, 202.
106. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24-25; Hall, *The Story of the 26th,* 202, 206; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 51.

Natchitoches group known as the LeComte Guards.[107]

The LeComte Guards were organized in April 1861, under the direction of Captain William M. Levy, 1st Lieutenant R. E. Burke, 2nd Lieutenant J. F. Scarborough, and 3rd Lieutenant S. B. Robinson. On April 27, 1861, the command included 107 men, who departed Natchitoches on the steamer *Rapides* to join the Second Louisiana Infantry. Captain Levy, who had been the editor of the *Natchitoches Chronicle*, was promoted to colonel of the infantry. By the time the regiment was organized at Camp Walker in New Orleans, it had grown to include 1,013 men.[108]

The 2nd Louisiana Infantry was sent to Virginia to construct earthwork fortifications for various towns. While in Virginia, they were attacked on April 16, 1862, at Dam No. 1, Lee's Mill, but successfully pushed the Union back. Over the next year, the 2nd Louisiana saw fighting at Malvern Hill (Poindexter's Farm), where "the colonel and major both fell," as well as at Harper's Ferry and Sharpsburg (Antietam). The 2nd Louisiana was also part of a combined regiment that captured 1,000 Union prisoners at the Battle of Winchester (Opequon) in 1863, participated in the attack on Culp's Hill during the Battle of Gettysburg, and was overrun at Spotsylvania Court House on May 12, 1864. At the end of the war, the 2nd Louisiana was present at Appomattox Court House for the Confederate surrender; at the time, only three officers, and forty-one men of the 2nd Louisiana were present to sign paroles.[109]

Red River Campaign

The Red River Campaign brought the Union Army through the Red River/Cane River area. The campaign, which lasted from March through May of 1864, directly affected many people in Natchitoches, bringing the war literally to the doorsteps of Oakland and Magnolia plantations.

By May 1863, Federal troops occupied Alexandria, Louisiana, which had become the temporary state capital after the fall of New Orleans, forcing a second relocation, this time to Shreveport. The following year, the Union forces directed their attention to northern Louisiana with the desire to capture the new capital and gain control of the northern part of the state. The Union also wanted northern Louisiana's cotton to supply Northern textile mills. If successful, the Union hoped to establish a non-slave cotton culture with Northern workers.[110]

The Union army had amassed 45,000 troops at Alexandria in the spring of 1864, but needed rain to raise the Red River to make it navigable into the untouched cotton country to the north. Until this point, the northern Louisiana plantations had retained large amounts of cotton, stored in warehouses, because it had been prevented from reaching market by the Union blockade of Confederate ports. In the Natchitoches area alone, there were over 12,000 bales of cotton awaiting transportation.[111]

Upon learning of the planned advance of the Union, the Confederacy implemented the governor's two-year-old proclamation that ordered "the destruction of all cotton within the limits of Louisiana that is in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy"; thus, the burning commenced. A burning squad from Alphonse Prud'homme's own cavalry was active in the Natchitoches area. Under the leadership of Second Lieutenant F. L. Grappe, the squad was ordered to "burn all the cotton they could find."[112]

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107. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 98.
108. DeCuir, *Cane River Rebels*, 17; Bergeron, Jr., *Guide to Confederate Military,* 75.
109. Bergeron, Jr., *Guide to Confederate Military,* 75-76.
110. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24; DeCuir, *Rebels on the Red,* 2; Mueller et al., *Cultural Resources Survey of the Red River Waterway*, 128.
111. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 25.
112. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 25; Brennan, *Planter's Son.*

Union leader Major General Nathaniel Banks moved his armies out of Alexandria in late March 1864, and Admiral Porter began the ascent up the Red River with the Union gunboats (Figure 5-3).[113] By then, the banks of the Cane River were already ablaze with burning cotton. The cotton continued to burn into early April as the Union regiment drew near. The leader of the Confederate burning squadron, Second Lieutenant Grappe, recalled:

> From the 24-Mile Ferry [below Cloutierville] up to the Town of Natchitoches, it looked like everything was on fire, every plantation had fire and smoke. Cotton was burning. Cotton gins and gin houses were burning. And it seemed to be a retreat of 24 miles through the fire and smoke of burning cotton and cotton houses and even when we arrived at Natchitoches, there was cotton burning on the opposite bank of the river."[114]

Although the Confederacy sought to prevent the Union from obtaining their cotton, it appears the Union had planned to destroy much of the privately owned cotton anyway. The official Federal orders were issued in late March 1964:

> In relation to cotton gins where there are but small lots of cotton and not enough time to remove this, the cotton, will not be fired, but in all such cases every effort should be made to roll the cotton out. But where there is cotton in any quantity in gin-houses, and no opportunity to remove it, it must be burned. . .You will also refrain from burning where the gin houses connect with dwellings or other expansive range of buildings.[115]

On April 2, a skirmish at Crump's Corner should have been an indicator to the Union of things to come. Although the Union cavalry had 5,000 troops to the approximately 1,500 members of the Confederate units, the results of the encounter were inconclusive. Afterwards, Union general Albert Lee reportedly was "struck by the ferocity of the attack," something he speculated meant that the resistance was stiffening—an indicator that a major battle was near.[116]

The following day, the Union successfully captured the small river port town of Grand Ecore.[117] Until that point, the Union infantry had marched on roads that paralleled the river and were protected by Navy gunboats. Leaving Grand Ecore, though, the shortest and most viable route to Shreveport veered west away from the river.[118] Led by Banks, the Union regiment turned toward Shreveport, leaving the security of the Navy presence behind (Figure 5-4).

The infantry reached DeSoto Parish not long after they left Grand Ecore and skirmished at Wilson's Farm and Tenmile Bayou. After waiting four days for the river to rise, on April 7, Union Admiral David D. Porter began ascending the Red River; however, because of the shallow depth of the river, he had to leave six of the fleet's largest gunboats anchored at Grand Ecore. Accompanying the fleet were supplies, munitions, and a division of 2,500 men under the command of Brigadier General T.



FIGURE 5-3. Lithograph, "Banks' Army, Crossing the Cane River." Library of Congress.

113. Joiner and Vetter, "The Union Naval Expedition," 443.
114. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 25.
115. Testimony of F. L. Grappe in Charles C. Bertrand v. United States, Case #345, French and American Claims commission, microfilm, p. 33, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Watson Memorial Library, Northwestern State University of Louisiana; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 25-26.
116. DeCuir, *Rebels on the Red*, 47.
117. DeCuir, *Rebels on the Red*, 6.
118. Joiner and Vetter, "The Union Naval Expedition," 443-444.

Kilby Smith, who were to guard the unarmed vessels and back up Banks' forces.[119]

The Battle of Sabine Crossroads (Mansfield) occurred the following day, on April 8. There, Banks was "soundly defeated" by the Confederate Army under the command of General Richard Taylor. Meanwhile Porter's fleet continued to move upriver, dealing with obstacles, such as shallow water and debris, some of which was

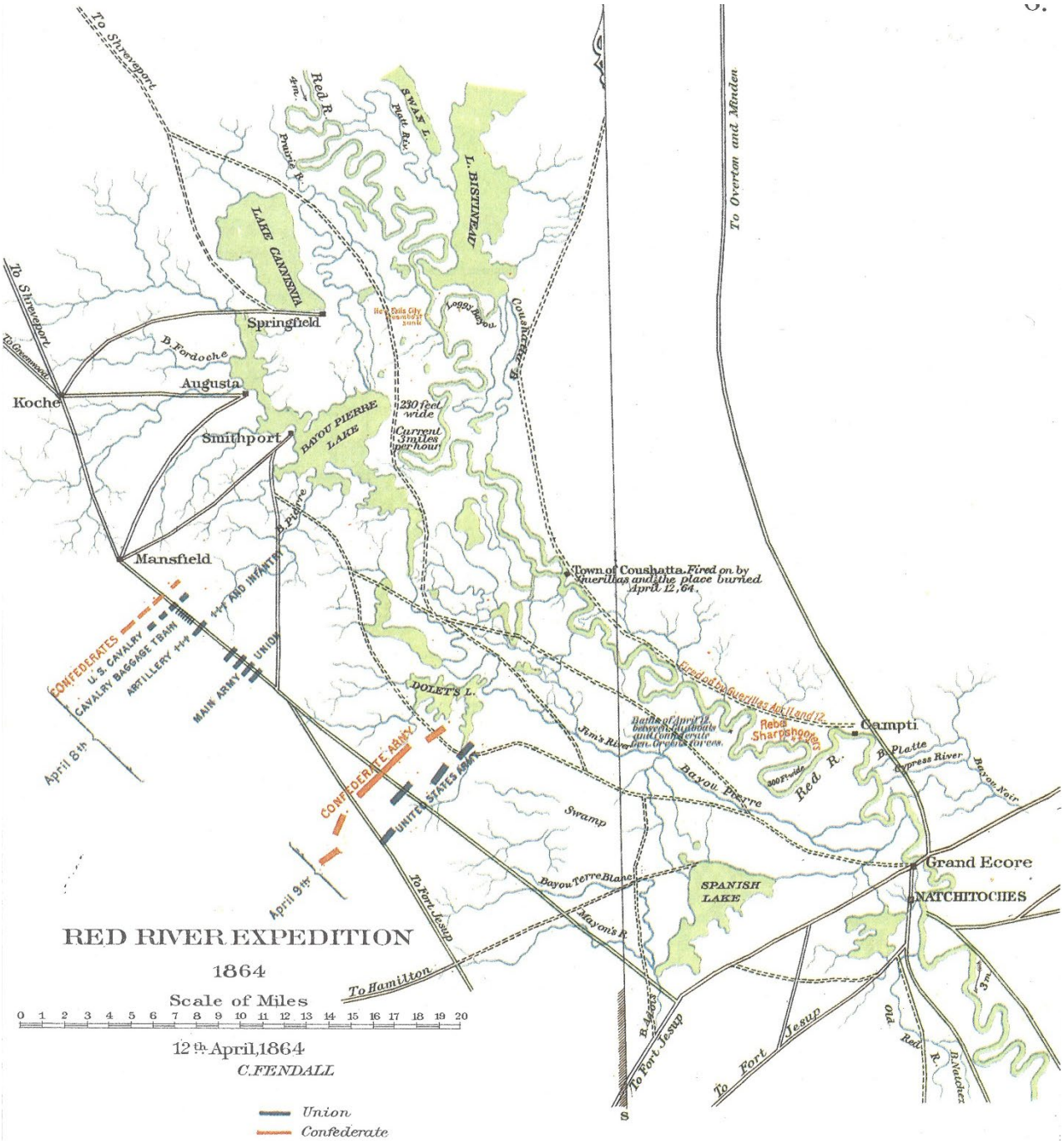


FIGURE 5-4. Map depicting the Red River Campaign, including the Battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill. *The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*.

119. DeCuir, *Rebels on the Red*, 6; Joiner and Vetter, "The Union Naval Expedition," 444.

placed by the Confederate forces. By April 9, the naval fleet had received word of Banks' defeat and began their return, meeting the same obstacles and damaging some of their vessels. Banks' regiment began a hasty retreat after their defeat at Mansfield, only to meet Confederate forces once more on April 9, where they engaged in the Battle of Pleasant Hill in Sabine Parish.[120]

There, the Union was further defeated and retreated so quickly it was described as a "great state of stampede."[121] On April 11, Porter's fleet ran aground at Blair's Landing, west of Pleasant Hill, where they were confronted by Confederate regiments. After a battle, the fleet continued its trek to Grand Ecore, with all the vessels finally safely docked there by April 15.[122]

The infantry's retreat officially began on April 21, leaving south from Natchitoches.[123] The Union's movement was described as a "frantic. . .relentless 30-hour long forced march" that took troops down Cane River. During the march, the troops executed "widespread looting and burning of civilian property including the entire town of Grand Ecore." One Confederate General recalled that "for many miles every dwelling house, every Negro cabin, every cotton gin, every corn crib, and even chicken houses have been burned to the ground."[124] A local woman recalled similar events, saying "houses, gins, mills, barns and fences were burned, Negros all carried off, horses, cattle, every living thing driven away or killed."[125]

The Union forces clearly wanted to retreat as quickly as possible, but the low water level of the Red River prevented the gun boats from passing over treacherous rapids. To solve the problem without abandoning or destroying the fleet, the army began constructing Bailey's Dam (designed by Joseph Bailey) to raise the water level (Figure 5-5).

Much of the labor was carried out by African American soldiers of the Union Army's 99th Regiment of Infantry, some of whom were formerly enslaved. As mentioned above, among those soldiers working on the dam was Natchitoches' William Smith, who had been enslaved on Jean Prud'homme's plantation. The first dam was only partially successful, with a temporary plug giving way on May 9, forcing the quick removal of four ships before the pool beyond the dam was completely emptied. Repairs

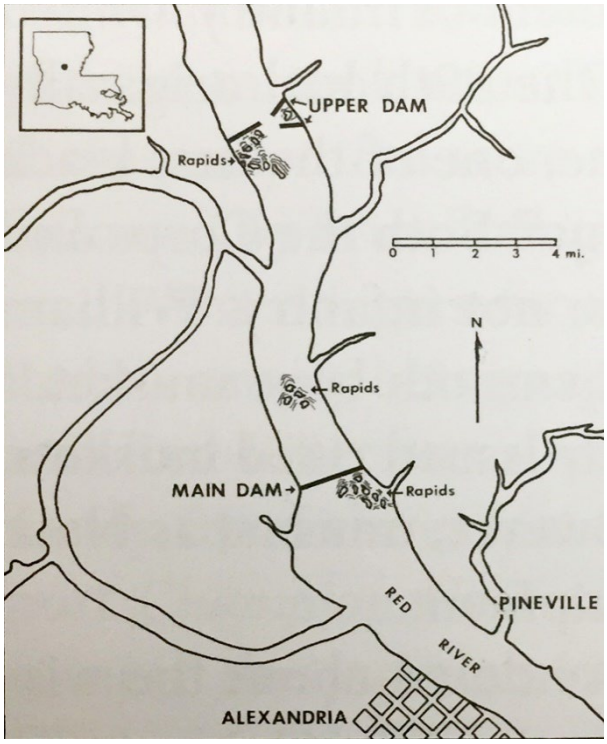


FIGURE 5-5. Map showing the location of Bailey's Dam in relation to Alexandria during the Civil War. The main dam was the first of the two constructed that together comprised "Bailey's Dam." The upper dam was the second built. Brennan, *Blacksmith's Son*.

120. Mueller et al., *Cultural Resources Survey of the Red River Waterway*, 128; Joiner and Vetter, "The Union Naval Expedition," 445; DeCuir, *Rebels on the Red*, 6.
121. Mueller et al., *Cultural Resources Survey of the Red River Waterway*, 128.
122. Joiner and Vetter, "The Union Naval Expedition," 448-449.
123. Joiner and Vetter, "The Union Naval Expedition," 450.
124. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26.
125. Mueller et al., *Cultural Resources Survey of the Red River Waterway*, 128.

on the dam began immediately, and a second dam was constructed upstream to relieve the pressure on the main dam. This proved to be successful, and between May 11 and May 13, the ships were able to pass through.[126]

Bermuda/Oakland and Magnolia plantations stood in the path of the Union Army's destructive retreat between April 22 and 24, and both experienced great losses. As with the other Cane River planters, the Prud'hommes cotton was burned, either by Phanor Prud'homme in compliance with the governor's orders or by the Union Army. The Prud'hommes lost between 900 and 1,000 bales, valued at of tens of thousands of dollars—over a half-million by modern standards.[127] Although the Union forces had been directed to damage product, not production ability, they nevertheless also burned the Prud'homme's large, steam-powered gin.[128] The main house and many of the Prud'homme's personal items were spared, but family tradition states that the portrait of Lise Prud'homme in the parlor was slashed by Union soldiers.[129]

At least three family legends suggest reasons that the Oakland Big House was spared from destruction. The first claims that loyal slaves moved all the furniture out of the house prior to the soldiers' arrival, and then pleaded with the soldiers to not ignite the building. The second legend claims that Phanor was ill and bedridden (he died the following year), and therefore the house was not destroyed. The third is that Phanor defied General Banks' troops with a shotgun and successfully protected his home.[130]

After the campaign moved through the area, Alphonse was formerly discharged with a surgeon's certificate, as he had not fully recovered from his injury at Irish Bend. On May 26, 1865, the cavalry was surrendered by a representative of Confederate General E. Kirby Smith. In the surrender, Alphonse, who had remained in Natchitoches, was listed as a prisoner of war. He signed his formal parole at Natchitoches on June 5, 1865, officially ending his involvement in the war.[131]

Although their losses from the war were large, with roughly two-thirds of the estate's value lost at the end of the war, in many ways the Prud'hommes fared better than many of their neighbors. Phanor Prud'homme died in 1865, shortly after the war ended; his succession records report that the main house and its furnishings were intact, as were most of the outbuildings and their farm equipment, including wagons, a buggy, and a carriage. Although their cotton was gone, they still retained some agricultural products, including "a surprising amount of livestock" and 4,000 bushels of corn.[132]

Because of the war, the Prud'hommes lost a tremendous portion of the overall estate with the emancipation of slaves, which had previously been listed in the US census as personal property. In addition, their real estate values were reduced to half of the 1860 levels. Despite these losses, Phanor's estate was still quite substantial at $45,986.76. Despite the family's many debts, the Prud'hommes had resources that would have "been the envy of most Southern farmers."[133]

Magnolia's losses were much greater, at least in a personal sense. Once Union troops reached Magnolia, they camped in the yard of the main house and carried out a two-day skirmish with the 21st Texas Regiment in an area described as

126. Brennan, *Blacksmith's Son*, 14.
127. Brennan, *Blacksmith's Son*, 14; Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 25-26.
128. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 36.
129. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26.
130. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26; Association of Natchitoches Women, *Natchitoches*, 46; Gross and Daley, *Old Houses*, 141; Seebold, *Old Louisiana Plantation Homes*, 366.
131. Brennan, *Planter's Son.*
132. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 28.
133. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 28.

"behind" the slave quarters.[134] On approximately April 23, 1864, the Union set fire to the main house and the "agency" building. In addition, one family legend states that Union soldiers killed Mr. Miller, the overseer, and then buried him under the front steps of the main house.[135] Two other family legends vary on the tale of the overseer's death: one suggests that it was in retaliation of unpaid gambling debts that also resulted in the burning of the house; a second claims that Miller was shot while valiantly defending the house.[136] Either way, when the family returned to the property, both their house and overseer were lost.

Transportation

By the time the Civil War began, the Cane River had been long-established as the primary means of moving goods and people within the region, with feeder roads radiating away from the Cane River into plantations and farms located along and in proximity to the river.[137] Property owners with riverfront property continued to use rafts, barges, and shallow-draft steamships to transport their goods to markets in New Orleans, where the goods were loaded onto larger vessels for the journey to the rapidly expanding textile mills of New England and to existing markets throughout Europe (Figure 5-6).[138]

The network of roads that had already developed along each bank of the Cane River was still the primary means for horses, carriages, and wagons to move goods to the banks of the river, for traveling between plantations, and for travel to Natchitoches to conduct business, attend church, and socialize.[139]

Both the Prud'homme and LeComte families owned property in Natchitoches, which they used when they had to conduct banking or attend services at church. The journey from the outlying properties took many hours, so it was logical for them to have a place to gather, relax, dress, and to overnight when they came to Natchitoches for work or social events.

The network of railroads that was critical to economic growth in the US came very late to the Cane River region, arriving only after the close of the Civil War. At this time, movement of goods by wagon was slow, roads were of inferior quality and not well-maintained, and water continued as the primary means to transport goods and people.

The only railroad connection in the region before the war was the Vicksburg, Shreveport, and Texas Railroad, which was constructed in 1852 to provide service out of Shreveport. Planters would sometimes transport cotton up the Red River to Shreveport, where it was transferred to rail lines headed for Vicksburg and then loaded back onto boats to head down the Mississippi River to New Orleans.[140]

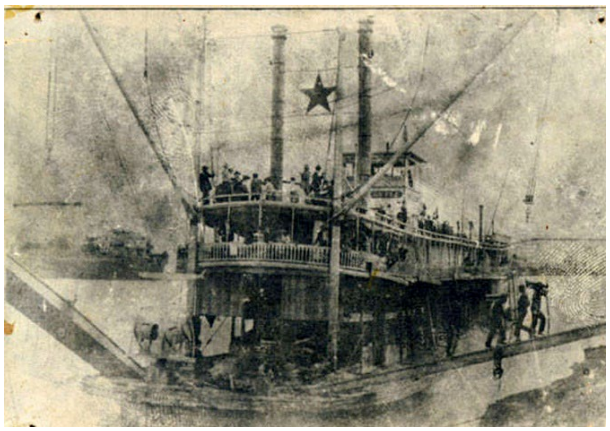


FIGURE 5-6. Historic photograph of a steamboat on the Cane River in Natchitoches. Cammie G. Henry Research Center.

134. Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 42-43; Dollar, "The Red River Campaign," 427; Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 26.
135. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 11; Miller, "Slavery and its Aftermath," 43.
136. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 26.
137. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 22, 43.
138. Kniffen and Hilliard, 22-23, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 22.
139. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation CLR*, 86, 137.
140. R.A.B. February 25, 1860, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 76.

Many plantations throughout Louisiana had small-gauge railroads that were used to transport goods and supplies from their cotton gins to rivers for further transshipment. These railroads were constructed by individual owners at their expense. Seneca Pace notes that a railroad was completed at the mill at Bermuda in February of 1860. This rail line would have been the small-gauge type, not a commercial-grade rail line that tied into the larger rail lines between Shreveport and Vicksburg.[141]

Boundaries

At the time of the Civil War, a pattern of fencerows and gates would have been in use to define areas of land use and to keep animals out of cultivated areas. It seems unlikely that there would have been major changes to these organizational divisions during the war. As at any property, maintenance was ongoing, and records note that repairs were made throughout the years.[142]

Use of Natural Features

In late February 1864, "all hands were sent to cut trees and throw them in the *Rigolet de Bon Dieu* to try to block passage by an invading force."[143] Previous efforts to keep waterways open for commerce were now reversed to try and keep US forces from using the rivers to transport soldiers and machinery.

Plantations

During and immediately after the Civil War, some plantations were seized by the Union troops when they were perceived to be abandoned, or won in battle.[144] This was not the case for either Oakland or Magnolia plantation. There is also no record that either property was reduced in size due to the cost of the war.

Managing the plantations proved challenging during the war. They were simply too large and valuable to go without oversight. In the past, often the owner, his sons, and likely an overseer could be in residence, but, with the pressures of war, this was not always possible, and some plantations lacked leadership.

One of the greatest concerns for the plantation owner was how to keep enslaved workers from leaving the plantations. They were a vital part of the successful operation and their departure reduced the profitability of the plantation. If runaways were an issue before, they continued during the war, only in greater numbers. These workers left by the "one and twos, by tens and twenties, and sometimes by the hundreds."[145]

On the other hand, some of the plantation owners sent their enslaved workers off-site for tasks such as building fortifications, making salt, herding cattle, and driving wagons.[146] In December 1862, Natchitoches Parish planters sent some of their "hands" to construct "the fortifications on the Red River."[147]

Livestock and Crops

Southerners suffered from widescale food shortages during the war. This was due, in part, to the Union forces targeting salt-producing facilities in the South early in the war, resulting in shortages of the salt that was used to cure both food and leather.[148] Additionally, the troops passing through were known to take whatever food they needed to keep marching and often killed or confiscated livestock, most often pigs, which were especially portable.[149] Due to the shortage of pork resulting

141. R.A.B. February 25, 1860, in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 76.
142. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 81-82, 120.
143. R.A.B. Feb. 29, 1864. In Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 103.
144. Randall, "Captured and Abandoned Property," 66.
145. Taylor, "Slavery in Louisiana," 275.
146. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 28.
147 . "Correct List," *Natchitoches Union*, December 11, 1862, 1.
148. Rick Beard, "The Salt Wars," *The New York Times*, December 26, 2013.
149. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 88.

from this activity, pickled "blue" beef and fresh beef made its way into the Southern diet.[150] Despite the war's hardships, the Prud'hommes were able to retain a large amount of livestock and supplies, including the cattle from their *vacherie*.[151] In 1861, the overseer at Bermuda noted that there were 114 "swamp cattle" at hand, forty-four of which were oxen. The swamp was located near the pasture at Bermuda.[152]

The shortage of both salt and pork was also felt in the loss of bacon and other types of salt-cured pork. In 1862, bacon rations for Confederate soldiers were cut to half a pound daily, and by 1863, to one-third a pound.[153] Despite the pork shortage in the larger region, Bermuda managed to keep its hogs. In November 1862, Phanor Prud'homme recorded thirty-seven pigs marked, and in 1863, he referred to the "pigs' savanna" in some of his notes, implying that they were free range at least part of the year. Possibly in preparation of shortages, Phanor Prud'homme erected four fattening pens for pigs in 1862 and set aside fifty-five pigs to fatten. From January through March 1863, he recorded slaughtering hogs "for the house" and for the slaves. As of March, the total number of pigs killed to feed slaves was fifty-one, their average weight about 216 pounds.[154]

Horses continued to be raised at Bermuda/ Oakland, Magnolia, and their associated *vacheries* in Texas. In 1861, Prud'homme's plantation journal noted giving horses, among other necessities, to "Antoine Prud'homme for his cavalry company," including "two horses, Ball Tyger and a horse from Texas."[155] In 1862, he recorded "separating out the blooded mares and cutting the tails off the others to be turned loose in the cornfield." Later that year, the diary reported having marked fillies of his own, and at the end of the year, separating colts to wean them.[156]

Phanor Prud'homme's succession inventory shows a separate category of horses, called "Blooded Stock, which he owned in partnership with A. LeComte." This represented the twelve Prud'homme/ LeComte racehorses that had gained respect across the state. Their most valuable horse was named Uncle Jeff, who was listed in the inventory as nine years old and valued at $750.[157]

Because of the cost effectiveness of mules, which ate less than horses, they continued to be a popular addition to most plantations. Unlike most southern planters, Phanor Prud'homme attempted breeding mules at Bermuda. In 1863, his journal noted "put 4 mares in Deer Lot with the Jack-to try him."[158] Given that this was during the Civil War, it is possible that mule breeding was out of necessity, rather than part of a trial farming endeavor.

Even through the war, cotton retained its important role on the plantations. Cotton export was one of the ways the South participated in the world economy and the Confederacy believed it would be the key to their legitimacy. When the war broke out in 1861, the Confederacy adopted a self-imposed embargo on exporting cotton, believing that it would create a "cotton famine" and force foreign states to recognize the Confederacy as a new nation. This plan backfired, as the cotton crop of 1860 had been so large that foreign nations did not immediately require additional imported cotton. By August 1861, a South Carolina merchant had run the blockade and began trading cotton with England for war supplies and civilian goods. Foreign traders who were capable of

150. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 314.
151. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 38; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 70.
152. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 70.
153. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 313-314.
154. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 54-74.
155. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 28.
156. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 70.
157. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 71.
158. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 70.

running the Union port blockade supplied the South throughout the war.[159]

Although the "cotton famine" failed, the Confederacy leveraged cotton as a source of income. In the summer of 1861, the Confederate Treasury Department asked planters to pledge to loan the government a portion of their cotton sales that fall. Many of the planters subscribed to the "Produce Loan"; however, the Union blockades made it difficult to sell the crop. The Confederate government issued loan bonds for the cotton, which remained in the hands of the planters but belonged to the government. The valuable commodity became necessary to secure loans from Europe.[160]

Despite the ongoing war, cotton continued to link the North and South economically. It was technically Confederate policy to deprive the Union of cotton; however, it remained legal to import goods from the North.[161] In spite of the law prohibiting trade with the North, during the war, the South shipped over 900,000 bales to Northern states, which needed the raw material for their textile mills. The trades were made possible in part by blockade running and federally sanctioned trade. In the Mississippi Valley, Northern merchants followed in the path of the Union army, trading saltpork and textiles for cotton. One Northern journalist commented: "We chastised the Rebels with one hand, while we fed and clothed them with the other."[162]

In July 1861, Congress embargoed any trade with the Confederacy, except when sanctioned by President Lincoln and regulated by the Treasury Department. The loophole proved too beneficial to the Confederacy, and in July 1864, Congress revoked the President's authority to grant licenses to private dealers. A new rule required that Southerners trade only with the Treasury Department, which would purchase cotton for three-quarters of its value. In that same month, President Lincoln issued an Executive Order that allowed Southern sellers to buy Northern goods for one-third of the value of their cotton. Throughout this, the South begrudgingly allowed trade to continue with the North. However, confusion in these policies led to illegal trade in Union-held cities throughout the war.[163]

President Lincoln announced a plan to blockade southern ports in April 1861.[164] In Louisiana, New Orleans served as the major port of cotton export, with small boats getting by the Union blockade until April 1862, when Union gunboats entered the Mississippi and cut off Confederate ties to New Orleans altogether.[165] In Natchitoches, a convention of planters was held on January 6, 1862, to discuss the cotton crop for the upcoming year, predicting that the blockade was going to cause challenges getting the crop to market. Ambrose LeComte II of Magnolia Plantation served as vice president of the convention. It was noted that in previous years, the cotton was shipped from seaports to foreign markets; with the blockade, however, the planters still had their full 1861 crop stored on their farms. The convention realized that if they were to grow cotton in 1862 and the blockade continued, once it was finally lifted (which they believed would happen in 1863), the value would be so depreciated from overstock that the financial consequences would be devastating. The convention resolved that "no planter… should plant or raise more than five bales of cotton of 500 lbs each, in 1862, unless the blockade is raised before the first of March next."[166]

On April 30, 1862, after New Orleans had been seized, the committee met again, with Ambrose LeComte in attendance. The committee made several requests of area planters, including asking

159. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 312
160. Gentry, "White Gold," 303.
161. Gentry, "White Gold," 303.
162. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 313.
163. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 313.
164. Browning, "The Union Blockade."
165. Gentry, "White Gold," 311.
166. "Planters, Convention," *Natchitoches Union*, January 9, 1862, 1.

them to destroy or move the cotton grown along the Red River to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy.[167] The May 15, 1862, edition of the *Natchitoches Union* printed a statement issued by the Confederate secretary of war declaring that, because New Orleans had been seized, planters must burn their cotton and tobacco to "prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy."[168] The committee also authorized that timber be cut and prepared to obstruct and fortify the river.

In 1863, the Confederate government began to move cotton trades west to the Sabine River, where it could enter Texas and be traded with Mexico; nearly all the cotton grown south of Alexandria was shipped this way. During the Red River Campaign, the Confederate Cotton Bureau directed that all cotton in the area be moved at least 10 miles from the river, or be burned. Confederate soldiers burned fields of cotton across the region and retreated to Shreveport.[169]

In 1865, cotton prices, at forty-one cents per pound, were over double those in 1863. The Prud'hommes were fortunate to have one working gin, which enabled them to plant a crop that produced twenty-one bales by the end of the season.[170]

As the largest cotton grower in the parish, Ambrose LeComte II naturally wanted a voice in the local fate of the cash crop. However, by 1863, he recognized that the blockade had made it impossible for planters to get their cotton to market. Following the path of many other southern planters and encouraged by the Confederacy to raise provisions instead of just cash crops, both the LeComtes and Hertzogs decided to divert their attention to growing corn and other produce that could supply the Confederate Army.[171] Eventually, subsistence farming became a "mainstay" at Magnolia.[172]

"King Cotton" gave way to "King Corn" on some plantations, with a single laborer able to grow up to 8 acres of cotton in a season, compared to 30 acres of corn.[173] To maximize productivity, peas, a legume species that captures and holds nitrogen, were often planted alongside corn. Corn production at Bermuda skyrocketed during the war years, with Prud'homme recording 18,520 bushels of corn grown in 1862, an amount that is more than double the 7,000 bushels grown in 1860.[174] The increased production paid off, as by the end of the war when many families had lost everything, the Prud'hommes still had 4,000 bushels of corn.[175]

While cotton and corn were the primary crops of Magnolia and Oakland during the Civil War period, other crops were also cultivated. In 1863, Prud'homme planted rice near "the lake," and the following year he transplanted pecan and oak trees along his fence and planted grapevines. In 1862–1863, his notes also mention planting sugarcane. Crop variety was not all that drew Prud'homme's attention; he was also interested in productivity. At different times, he tested guano fertilizer on a cabbage field and used droppings cleaned from the *pigeonniers* as a corn fertilizer.[176]

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167. "Public Meeting," *Natchitoches Union,* May 8, 1862, 2.
168. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 33.
169. Gentry, "White Gold," 304-307. The Cotton Bureau was founded because of US blockades of Southern ports, effectively ending exports to Europe, the South's largest market. Through the Cotton Bureau, cotton was purchased by the Confederate government and either warehoused, used to produce fabric to clothe the military, or even sold to northern industrialists to fund the war effort. Robertson, *The Red River Campaign,* 68.
170. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 26.
171. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 18; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 56.
172. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 20.
173. Otto, "The Civil War and Southern Agriculture," 314.
174. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 59.
175. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 39.
176. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 53-66.

Cane River Plantations

Oakland Plantation

With both of his sons enlisted in the Confederate forces, Phanor Prud'homme was left to manage the plantation on his own. Even his trusted overseer, Seneca Pace, had left the plantation to enlist in the army. Prud'homme sought additional assistance from overseers during the war, but none lasted long.[177]

In December 1862, Natchitoches Parish planters sent some of their "hands" to construct "the fortifications on the Red River."[178] Prud'homme is credited with providing three workers at the initial call, then sending slaves three additional times: three in March, six in November, and two the following May.[179]

With the concerns about having sufficient foodstuffs and supplies to last the war, Phanor was among those who were able to assist with the salt shortage. As a stock holder in a salt company at Lake Bistineau, Prud'homme sent five slaves and supplies, including a wagon, an ox team, an extra yoke, two scoops and two spades, and three large kettles to "La Saline," Saline Bayou in Winn Parish.[180]

Planters took various measures to keep their slaves from escaping or being taken by the Union. In May 1862, Prud'homme recorded having "2 loads of planks put along Bayou Congo to put up Shanties in case the Yankees trouble our Negros." In 1863, Prud'homme wrote to his *vacherie* manager in Corsicana, Texas, that he was sending livestock, and that the manager should look for "lodging for 40 to 50 Negros."[181] Although he made plans to move slaves, in the end none were sent to Texas.[182]

As mentioned above, in the spring of 1864, as the Red River Campaign retreated through the area, some of the Prud'homme's slaves chose to "leave with the Yankees." However, some of the slaves remained on the plantation, and family tradition holds that the loyal slaves moved the furniture out of the main house and successfully pleaded with Federal troops to not burn the Prud'hommes' residence.[183] Those who remained, or returned, negotiated contracts with Phanor Prud'homme I for their labor in 1865.

Organization of the Landscape

Big House

Phanor Prud'homme noted in his journal in 1861 that he planted pecans "to the right of the yard" and in the cabbage patch, where he marked them with two pickets, perhaps intending to transplant them later.[184] He also noted that he planted plums and apricots, and pruned roses in the *parterre* garden in front of the house.[185] In 1862, he wrote in his journal that "the rose trees by the stairs" were pruned and that scuppernongs were planted at the base of the lilacs in the yard.[186] In early 1864, he had put up a fence, pulled up some *bois d'arc*, manured both the vegetable and *parterre* gardens with cow dung, and planted and transplanted ornamentals and vegetables.[187]

Agricultural landscape

While many of the activities in the agricultural landscape have been mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is important to reiterate the changing ephemeral landscape of Bermuda/Oakland in a temporal narrative. For decades, plantings had

177. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 24.
178. "Correct List," *Natchitoches Union*, December 11, 1862, 1.
179. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 35.
180. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 31-32.
181. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 36.
182. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 88.
183. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 28.
184. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 91, citing Prud'homme's *Journalier*, Mar. 7, 1861, April 25, 1861.
185. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 91. The *parterre* garden would later become the Bottle Garden.
186. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 92, citing Prud'homme's *Journalier*, Feb. 14, 1862.
187. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 102.

been driven by the price of cotton. Now, these same landscapes responded on a yearly basis to the need for survival and the requirement to provide troops with food and clothing as they fought in faraway places throughout the south.

Even with the outbreak of the Civil War, records indicate continuing agricultural activity at the plantation, reporting that "new ground was being cleared for cultivation, and young mules were being broken in for work." A seed house was added to the new gin complex and work began on a new home for Seneca Pace." [188]

Plantings in the spring of 1861 included Irish potatoes, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, corn, millet, watermelon, pumpkins, "flour corn," "flint corn," cowpeas, and cotton, which was a mix of "Lecomte," "Petit Gulf," and Egyptian seed. These plantings were a typical mix of commercial and subsistence field crops designed for sale and survival as the war broke out. The cotton crop was much reduced due to insect damage, and the final harvest was half of the previous year. Additionally, trade with the US was prohibited, so the normal markets in the northern textile mills were blocked.[189]

In 1862, many of the same activities continued. Enslaved workers cleaned the fields, plowed, ditched, fenced, hauled wood, and continued to gin and press cotton. A new cabin for the plantation carpenter, Solomon, was built within the plantation yard, and the yards surrounding Seneca Pace's new house and the Doctor's/Leveque House were fenced.[190]

The radical shift in the crops grown at the plantation was complete by 1863. No cotton was planted, temporarily ending decades of reliance on the crop. Instead, Prud'homme planted corn and sugarcane, even though sugarcane was notoriously difficult to raise as far north as the Cane River region. Instead of shipping the remaining stored cotton from previous years to textile mills in the northeast and overseas, Prud'homme employed local weavers to produce cotton cloth for the war effort.[191]

At the end of April and in early May in 1863, workers, including the overseer, and their families left the plantation and went upland into the "Pine Woods," probably in Kisatchie, while the Prud'homme family moved to their house in Natchitoches. In late May, a semblance of normalcy resumed as workers returned to plant peas and hoe corn. In early June, the Prud'hommes returned to the plantation and their overseer brought his family back down from the uplands. In mid-June, a temporary bridge across Cane River was constructed so that wagons could haul corn across to the grist mill. Some of the cotton in storage was sold in Shreveport, probably to the Confederate Cotton Bureau.[192]

In September and October of 1863, corn was harvested, and there was so much to store that some of the excess was taken to the sawmill in Kisatchie for storage. Plantation workers also harvested rice, barley, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, peas, and pumpkins. Poaching remained a problem and watchmen were posted at night throughout important areas of the plantation. Stock animals were requisitioned for the war effort and enslaved workers were sent to construct riverine fortifications near Alexandria.[193]

In the spring of 1864, men cut cordwood, women shucked corn, and all participated in butchering hogs. As soon as weather allowed, workers plowed and planted corn, sugarcane, and rice. In March, Union forces approached the area and planters

188. R.A.B. Jan. 22-24, 1861 and R.A.B. Jan. 17, 1861, Mar. 14, 1861, quoted in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 90.
189. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 90.
190. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 65-92.
191. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 38.
192. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 98-99. While the existence of temporary bridges is noted in R.A.B. journals, their locations are not, nor are they shown on maps.
193. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 100.

burned their stores of cotton to prevent them from being seized. The Union Army occupied the land surrounding Bermuda/Oakland and pillaged the house.[194]

Initially, thirty-six enslaved workers left with Union forces and joined the war effort. In the following weeks, many more workers left and took valuable implements and tools with them. Writing to his sister in France in 1865, reflecting on the previous year, Phanor wrote: "My magnificent cotton mill with its steam engine is burned. I have left four bales of cotton, my house, my stores, my camp and my land." Oddly, he writes: "I still have all my blacks with me, they work as in the past." Firth and Turner postulate that he "seems to have understated the number of slaves who had departed without his permission."[195] That fall, Phanor Prud'homme recorded that he had recovered ninety-seven head of cattle from the surrounding woods, and additionally purchased twenty-five head in December. He assigned duties to the remaining workers and distributed clothes and shoes, trying to return the plantation to a degree of normalcy. As the inevitable surrender of the secessionist forces in the South grew more likely, Prud'homme attempted to protect his property and assets. He removed the front fence on the property to save it from being pillaged. He planted many of the items produced in previous years and reintroduced cotton into the landscape.[196]

Buildings at Oakland Plantation

Overseer's House

The Overseer's House (LCS 091636) was erected at Oakland Plantation in 1861 at the south end of the complex, south of the historic farm road and north of the tenant quarters (Figure 5-7). The square, one-story residence was built in the Creole tradition on a brick pier foundation with some Greek Revival decorative elements, including an entablature and plank columns with capitals extending across the gallery. The building was surmounted by a hipped roof that encompassed the main rooms, rear cabinet, and loggia (since infilled), and a gallery that spans the façade. The two central rooms were constructed of *bousillage*, and the north bank of rooms—once part of the gallery—were wood-framed. The roof, likely wood shingle originally, is today sheathed in metal and pierced by a chimney near its south side. The exterior was originally clad in wood clapboards, which were later covered with rolled asphalt siding. Fenestration included French doors and simpler wood doors on the façade, as well as six-over-six wood windows.[197]

The rectangular Overseer's House Cistern (LCS 091637), assumed to have been constructed at the same time as the house, stands adjacent. It is made of brick parged with concrete.

Slave Hospital

Writings on the plantation make it clear that the slave hospital was still standing and in use for at least part of this period. One of the victims of the typhoid fever epidemic on the plantation was the hospital nurse, who died on October 1, 1861.[198]



FIGURE 5-7. Oakland's Overseer's House, looking northwest. Commonwealth.

194. R.A.B. January 8, 1864, quoted in Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 102.
195. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR*, 104-105.
196. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 106-107, citing Prud'homme's *Journalier,* September 26, 1864 and March 21, 1865.
197. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 10.
198. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 83.

The Doctor's/Leveque House

The Doctor's/Leveque House continued to be used as a residence for various individuals associated with the Prud'homme family. Dr. Heulin, who probably moved into the house in the late 1850s, remained there until the war started. By 1862, however, records indicate that the cottage was rented to Dr. Lahaye for $100 a month plus $12 a month for a "negress." [199]

Other Structures

Although other structures were added to the Oakland Plantation building complex during the Civil War years, these were, for the most part, temporary, with no record of their location beyond what has been gleaned through archeological investigations. The Prud'hommes lost their "old gin near the river," which held all their cotton waiting to be taken to market.[200]

The records of modifications for other buildings on the plantation include a note in the plantation journal in March 1862 that states "Severin & Joseph putting up brick wall in the Servant house." This was the only reference to a brick wall, although there was mention made in 1862 of a brickyard and kiln on the property. Malone speculates that the brickyard and kiln would have been small since most of their bricks were purchased, although she does concede that the plantation had a full-time brick mason onsite.[201]

Magnolia Plantation

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the LeComte/Hertzogs were recorded as owning more slaves and producing more cotton than any other family in Natchitoches Parish. The family owned 235 slaves, but the census reflects enslaved workers from all the family holdings, not just Magnolia. By the end of the war, just as at Bermuda/Oakland, the amount of cotton planted was greatly reduced. Vegetables and grains, such as corn, were raised to be sold to the Confederate government, and livestock for meat was also sold to the Confederacy.[202]

As the Red River Campaign neared Magnolia, the LeComte/Hertzogs left their rural plantations and sought the safety of their townhouses, leaving their overseers in charge. Perhaps because the overseers were the only management on the property, there is little historical data available on the activities on the plantations or the slaves during the Civil War. Although many of the Magnolia slaves were sent to Texas, those who remained behind were sent to assist with the construction of fortifications in the region. Records indicate that LeComte provided six slaves and Hertzog provided one slave to this effort.[203] Magnolia's Big House was burned by the Union around April 23, 1864, leaving only a shell of the original structure and its supporting brick foundation piers.[204]

Organization of the Landscape

There may have been damage to landscape features immediately surrounding the Magnolia Big House when it burned. Otherwise, it appears that the overall organization of the landscape of the plantation remained basically unchanged.

Buildings at Magnolia Plantation

The biggest change to the property was the loss of the Big House to fire around April 23, 1864, when the Union troops retreated after the Red River Campaign.[205] Otherwise, with the property owners away for most of the war years, changes to the antebellum buildings on the plantation are not known because they were not recorded.

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199. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 21-22.
200. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 23.
201. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 58-59. Note: if there was a servant's house with a brick wall, it is no longer standing.
202. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 19-20.
203. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 35.
204. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 20
205. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 7.

Chapter 6: Reconstruction and Recovery (1866–ca. 1899)

Introduction

The period between 1866 and ca. 1899 saw massive change in the South through the post-Civil War reconstruction and recovery of the Confederate states. Changes included new labor laws, the new system of sharecropping, African Americans' entrance into state politics through the activities of the Republican Party, and early efforts towards improving African American education and civil rights.

Reconstruction of the Confederacy lasted from 1863, when Lincoln made his Emancipation Proclamation, to 1877, when federal troops finally pulled out of the South. Under Lincoln's Reconstruction plan, Southerners had to pledge loyalty to the Union and free their slaves. To enforce this, Lincoln appointed military governors throughout the Confederacy. After Andrew Johnson replaced the slain Lincoln in 1865, he began to allow the Confederate states to hold elections. Republicans won large majorities in elections the following year and passed laws denying former leaders of the rebellion suffrage and right to hold office. Male former slaves had been given the right to vote in 1863 and many went on to win elected offices in 1866.

After Reconstruction officially ended in 1877, white Southern Democrats set out to reverse gains made by African Americans during those years. The racial segregation laws created by these new leaders became known under the umbrella term, "Jim Crow."

Reconstruction

Following Lincoln's death, his vice president, Andrew Johnson, became the seventeenth president of the United States. With his rise to power, Johnson scrapped Lincoln's Reconstruction plan and enacted his own version, which provided general amnesty for citizens of the former Confederate states, with some exceptions. Johnson's Reconstruction also required each state to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, and repudiate Confederate war debts.[1] Johnson moved quickly to implement his plan while Congress was on recess, but some members, particularly the Radical Republicans, declared it too lenient. When Congress returned in December 1865, most refused to recognize the newly elected Southern representatives. Republican members went on to introduce, and present to Johnson for signature, the Freedmen's Bureau Act and the Civil Rights Act. Johnson immediately vetoed both acts.[2]

On March 3, 1865, just over a month prior to his death, Lincoln signed off on the first Freedmen's Bureau Act, providing for the establishment of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or more commonly known, the Freedmen's Bureau. Charged with supervising and managing all matters relating to refugees and freed slaves, and the lands abandoned or seized during the Civil

1. Kennedy, *Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction*.

2. Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana,* 151.

War, the organization operated in former Confederate states, border states, and Washington, DC (Figure 6-1).[3] Early activities of the Freedmen's Bureau included oversight of the abandoned lands, but its primary mission was to provide relief and assistance to the freedmen, enabling them to become more self-sufficient. The 1865 Freedmen's Bureau Act, however, only proposed relief and assistance for one year after the end of the war. In 1866, Congress proposed, passed, and finally received Johnson's signature on the Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1866, which extended the program another two years.[4]

Among the activities of the Freedmen's Bureau was the oversight of labor contracts between the former slaveholders and freedmen, assisting in the establishment of schools, administering justice, helping freedmen locate land, and assisting those blacks who had served in the army with claims for back pay, bounty payments, and pensions.[5] In Natchitoches Parish, the bureau focused on overseeing the negotiation of contracts between the freedmen and their employers, such as the Prud'hommes and Hertzogs, and establishing schools for African Americans.

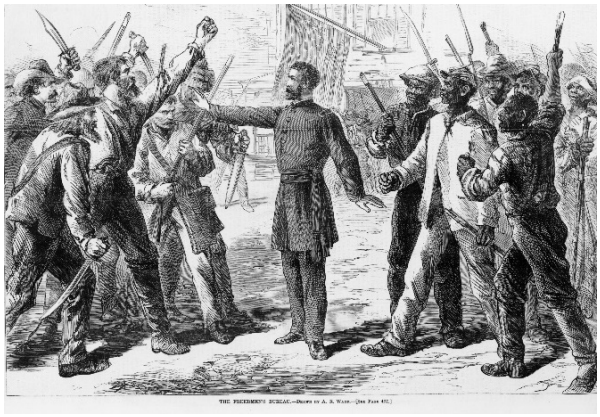


FIGURE 6-1. Engraving by Alfred R. Waugh, printed in *Harper's Weekly*, illustrating the role of the Freedmen's Bureau in mitigating conflict between newly-freed enslaved workers and white farmers. Library of Congress.

Meanwhile, Congress continued work on the final legislation, and in 1867, adopted the series of bills called the Reconstruction Acts, overriding Johnson's veto. According to the new laws, former Confederate states could be readmitted into the Union if they:

- established five districts subject to the military authority of the United States, commanded by an officer of the US Army appointed by the President;
- framed a new constitution in a convention composed of delegates elected by votes without distinction of color or race, except such as had been disfranchised for participation in rebellion or for felony;
- had the newly framed constitution approved by the majority of voters and by Congress; and
- adopted the Fourteenth Amendment.

In 1870, Congress added the Fifteenth Amendment to ensure African American males the vote.

Resistance to Reconstruction among the many white southerners led to the organization of groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the White League, which were formed to terrorize black citizens for exercising their right to vote, run for public office, or serve on a jury. In response, Congress passed a series of Enforcement Acts, or "Force Acts," in 1870–1871, which were intended to end violence and empower President Johnson to use military force to protect African Americans.

Louisiana was readmitted to the Union in 1868; however, Reconstruction in the state continued for another nine years, ending officially in 1877 upon the election of the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, as US President. The election results were initially disputed, with some

3. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), *Records of the Field Offices for the State of Louisiana*, 3.
4. U.S. Senate, "Freedmen's Bureau Acts of 1865 and 1866."
5. NARA, *Records of the Field Offices for the State of Louisiana*, 5.

arguing that the Democratic candidate, Samuel J. Tilden, had won. A compromise was finally reached and the Democrats conceded to the Republicans. In exchange, Democrats were allowed to recover their governments in the three remaining Union-occupied states, Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana. The mostly Democratic state convention created a new state constitution, ratified by voters in 1879 to return Louisiana to "home rule," in which white Democrats controlled most state and local jurisdictions.[6]

"Jim Crow"

After restoring home rule, the white Democrats set out to reverse gains made by African Americans during Reconstruction. The racial segregation laws created by these new leaders became known under the umbrella term "Jim Crow." The name originated in an 1832 minstrel act in which white actor Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice performed as a caricature of a clumsy, dimwitted black slave (Figure 6-2).[7] Another theory suggests that the term was popularized because of its less than complimentary comparison of the color of African American skin and the similarity to crows.[8]



FIGURE 6-2. Lithograph depicting black-face entertainer, Thomas D. Rice, dressed as the character, "Jim Crow." Library of Congress.

The term made its way to New York, and by 1841, the term "Jim Crow" was used in Massachusetts to apply to railroad cars set apart for use by African Americans. The term itself became affixed to the segregation laws of the former Confederate states to the point that, in North Carolina and Maryland, indexed laws related to the separating of races in public spaces were filed under "J." Eventually, this terminology became part of the popular lexicon, with "Jim Crow" used as shorthand to describe a concept in which one group of people function on a basis of inequality in a social system, resulting in a social stratification and segregation of that group of people.[9] It was the Jim Crow laws that allowed bathrooms in gas stations, in Natchitoches and beyond, to be labeled "Men," "Women," and "Colored," as Ned Sublette noted in his article on the *Good Darkey*.[10]

Because of the Jim Crow segregation laws of Natchitoches, an unofficial African American business area, called by some the "Ape Yard," was established in the city. According to the Louisiana Regional Folklife Program, this area comprised the block of Horn Street just west of Front Street.[11] Within this black business district was a barbershop, blacksmith shop, shoeshine stand, and several small marketplaces.

People

American and Creole

In the aftermath of the Civil War, perceptions of ethnicity began to change. White Creole power in

6. Louisiana State Museum, "The Cabildo" and "Reconstruction I."
7. Andrews, "Was Jim Crow a Real Person?".
8. Smythe, "The Concept of 'Jim Crow'," 45-46.
9. Smythe, "The Concept of 'Jim Crow'," 45-46.
10. Sublette, "The Good Darkey," 100.
11. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 39.

the area eroded in the aftermath of the Civil War, so they embraced the one thing that continued—in their own eyes—to make them superior to the newly freed slaves: their "whiteness." To accentuate their racial purity, the white Creole community started to perpetrate a belief that they only had the white blood of France or Spain in their veins. By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the belief in Creole purity and past cultural superiority had gained a stronghold.[12]

As white Creoles became more closely affiliated with Anglo-Americans, the French language also became less dominant in everyday use. French gradually disappeared from the local newspapers, in part due to Louisiana Act 80 of 1872, which made legal and judicial advertisements in French illegal in Natchitoches Parish, and required that all notifications be published in English.[13] It is unclear why this Act was proposed, although it may have been in response to the growing number of English-only speakers.

It was not easy for many white Creoles to embrace "Americanism." In 1878, Mother Hyacinth LeConniat, a missionary nun from France who had worked in rural Louisiana for over two decades, wrote home about her struggle with English:

> The Bishop is of French origin, but he is an American in spirit and in heart. So, he has recommended that we speak English, pray in English, etc. He gave all his talks . . .in English. I understand the language, but do not have the same facility in speaking it. Bishop Martin [the former bishop] never recommended us to speak this language. He loves the Creoles, or the descendants of the French. Bishop LeRoy loves the Americans, or the descendants of the English.[14]

Nonetheless, as white Creole society merged slowly into white, southern America and adopted English as their primary language, they retained their Catholic religion, taste in food, social practices, and other cultural traits.[15]

Oakland Plantation Family

With the death of their father, Pierre Phanor Prud'homme, on October 12, 1865, brothers Jacques Alphonse and Pierre Emmanuel inherited Bermuda Plantation. The brothers, along with their wives and children, all lived on Bermuda until their financial situation began to improve. In 1867, the two brothers agreed to divide the Bermuda holdings, with the land east of the Cane River forming Pierre Emmanuel's new Atahoe Plantation, and the portion west of the river remaining in the hands of Jacques Alphonse. Jacques Alphonse renamed his portion of the plantation "Oakland," in recognition of the live oak *allée* planted in 1826.[16]

On Oakland Plantation, the Prud'homme family comprised Jacques Alphonse; his wife, Elisa LeComte Prud'homme; and their eight children: Pierre Phanor (b. September 18, 1865), Jules LeComte (b. June 26, 1867), Edward Carrington (b. July 12, 1869), Marie Cora (b. October 20, 1871), Marie Atala "Lallah" (b. September 25, 1875), Julia Eleanore (B. February 15, 1878), Marie Maie (b. June 7, 1880), and Marie Noelie (b. December 26, 1883).[17]

Although Pierre Emmanuel and his sister, Henriette, had moved away from the family seat at Oakland, they and Jacques Alphonse continued to remain close. Henriette married Dr. Blount Baker Brazeale in 1865 and moved to the town of Natchitoches. The couple had five children, but found it challenging to feed their family due to the shortages both during the war and during the struggles of Reconstruction. On several occasions Henriette wrote to her brothers to see if they had vegetables from their plantations to share. Then, in 1873, Pierre Emanuel's house at Ataho Plantation was lost to fire, but was subsequently reconstructed using materials donated by his

12. Elbe, "Creole in Louisiana," 47-48.
13. An Act, *The New Orleans Republican*, August 16, 1872, 6.
14. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 45.
15. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 48.
16. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation NHL*; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 59.
17. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 152-153.

brother Jacques from Oakland Plantation. These materials included the whole of the *garçonnière* that had originally formed a wing of the Big House.[18]

Magnolia Plantation Family

After the war, Matthew Herzog, husband of Ambrose LeComte II's daughter, Atala, acted as the plantation overseer for his father-in-law, enabling Ambrose to turn his attention elsewhere. Among his projects, Ambrose sponsored the construction of a building in Natchitoches at the corner of St. Denis and Front Street, to be called the LeComte Building. The building was erected, beginning in 1873, for the sum of $1,850. However, Ambrose did not ignore his plantation: in 1873, he contracted with Willie Brown, presumably a local builder, for the construction of six cisterns at Magnolia.[19]

In 1883, Ambrose passed away, leaving the plantation to Atala and Matthew.[20] The couple had owned a 40-percent interest in the plantation since their marriage, but with their inheritance, they gained full control. At the time of Ambrose's death, his property was inventoried at $134,000, although this does not take into consideration the monies he dispersed prior to his death from the estate of his first wife, and Atala's mother, Julia Buard.[21]

The last will and testament left by Ambrose LeComte II provided that his second wife, Dèsirée Sompayrac, could continue to "occupy the town house, the yard, garden, kitchen and stables, the furniture, and all other appurtenances, during her lifetime, and without bond." In addition to the town house, Mrs. LeComte received a store and its grounds, and a second store at the corner of Front and Trudeau streets. Ambrose's will stipulated that after all his remaining debts left were paid, his remaining estate was to be divided equally amongst his children, Laura, Atala, Cora, and Eliza. Ambrose appointed his wife and sons-in-law, Alphonse Prud'homme and Matthew Hertzog, to serve as executors of the will.[22]

A second document left by Ambrose LeComte II indicated that his wife also should receive a third store, located at the corner of Front and St. Denis Streets, which is likely the building constructed based on the 1873 contract mentioned above. The descendants of Ambrose and Julia Buard LeComte memorialized their parents by purchasing stained glass windows for the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Natchitoches.[23]

Matthew's wife, Atala Hertzog, died in 1897. Her obituary called her kind and considerate, and remarked that she was "noted for her deeds of unobtrusive charity, and her firm religious belief and the attention she bestowed on matters pertaining thereto."[24]

Creoles of Color

The close of the Civil War saw monumental changes in the lives of the free Creoles of color. Emancipation of the enslaved meant that now all Americans were free, changing the distinction between people from enslaved vs. free to black vs. white. That "one drop" of Negro blood resulted in the person being classified as black was even more important now than it had been during the antebellum era.[25]

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, Creoles of color had been reduced to the same second-class status, including enduring the same economic

18. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 58. A *garçonnière,* or bachelor's apartment, was the quarters used by the male members of a Creole family; the one at Oakland had originally been a wing of the Big House. When sons of the family reached their teens, they moved to the *garçonnière*, which could also be used to house visiting men.
19. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 29.
20. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 12.
21. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 30.
22. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 30.
23. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 30-31.
24. "Death of Mrs. Atala Hertzog," *The Time-Democrat* (New Orleans), November 7, 1897, 11.
25. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 47.

hardships, as the former slaves.[26] In spite of this circumstance, the Creoles of color continued to maintain a tightly knit community, which in Natchitoches Parish, centered on the St. Augustine Church founded by Augustin Metoyer, or in Cloutierville, centered on the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church.

Unlike most of the white Creoles, the Creoles of color proudly held on to the characteristics that separated them from others of their race. Celebrated differences included their use of the French language; their culture, education, and religion; and their mixed African, French, Spanish, and Native American heritage.[27] The Creoles of color often lived in the same neighborhoods as other Creoles of color and attended the same schools and churches.

In dealing with the aftereffects of the Civil War, Creoles of color took great care to protect their differences from others with African descent. This included parents sending their children to one of the fifteen or sixteen schools in New Orleans that were exclusive to the Creoles of color community. This was much preferable to sending their children to one of the new public schools that were springing up for formerly enslaved children.[28]

African Americans

Only around 10 percent of the African Americans in Natchitoches Parish left the plantations after emancipation in 1863, with the others remaining on or near the plantations that were familiar to them. On June 5, 1865, Lt. Col. Salne Gattshall Van Anda, local commander of Union forces, instructed the freed slaves to remain on "the premises to which they belong" and encouraged the planters to employ the newly freed individuals.[29] When it came time to sign contracts with the employees, the Freedmen's Bureau assisted with the process.

Among the families that remained at Oakland Plantation to labor under contract were those of Solomon Wilson, a carpenter; Solomon Williams, a blacksmith; and the Helaires, whose family was associated with the plantation from near its beginning into the 1960s.[30] The Nagot family, including Derzilin and his wife Marie, also remained at Oakland and raised their children there. In fact, even as young men, the Nagot sons, Gabe, Janvier, Severin, and Dersilin, Jr., all remained in close proximity to Oakland, even as they moved out of their parents' home and began families of their own.[31]

At Oakland Plantation, Phanor Prud'homme worked with the Freedmen's Bureau to negotiate contracts with formerly enslaved workers for their services to return the plantation to normal operation.[32] With Phanor's death in the fall of 1865, settlement of the contract and new negotiations for another year of service fell to his son, Alphonse.

Lifeways

Reconstruction brought a tremendous number of changes to the lives of all people in the area. For the formerly enslaved African Americans, shelter, food, and medical assistance were no longer provided for free by the plantation owners. For the white plantation owners, the loss of their slaves meant they had to enter into labor contracts with workers. Many, like the Prud'hommes and Hertzogs, were able to continue to employ their former slaves, but others in the planter class lost their workers and, eventually, their homes, with

26. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 45.
27. Eble, "Creole in Louisiana," 48.
28. Brasseaux, Fontenot, and Obre, *Creoles of Color*, 113.
29. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 23; Andreas "Biography: Van Anda, S. G."; Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 45.
30. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 113-115.
31. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 55; Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 25. Note: this last name is spelled variously, "Nagot" and "Nargot."
32. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 28.

the economic downturn in the years after the end of the war.

Health

In June 1866, Dr. Joseph Leveque was hired as Oakland Plantation's doctor, and his wife and small daughter, Lucie, moved into the Cottage. The doctor would remain on the plantation for the next twenty-seven years, until his death in 1893. During his years on the plantation, Dr. Leveque tended to the Prud'homme family and farm laborers. At one point, to facilitate seeing patients, he even modified a portion of the Cottage for meeting with and treating patients. The hiring of Leveque may have been due to the loss of the plantation hospital that had stood in the field between the house and the Big House.[33]

Religion

In 1878, an article in *The People's Vindicator* about Natchitoches noted that the town had three churches that served the white community of the parish, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and First United Methodist Church, "the latter in course of construction."[34] The First Baptist Church was organized in Natchitoches in 1879, with their permanent church constructed much later.[35] Additional churches of the same denominations, as well as Baptist, were also scattered throughout the parish.

Shortly after the end of the Civil War, Natchitoches Parish was visited by Rev. Rayford Blunt, who helped establish the African American First Baptist Church on Second Street in the town. The church also provided classes for African American students. In addition, Blount is credited with developing several other churches in the parish before becoming a state legislator.[36]

Other early African American churches in the parish included Asbury United Methodist Church, an African Methodist Episcopal Church, and St. Andrew Baptist Church. The Asbury United Methodist Church was constructed by freed African Americans in 1867 as the first Methodist church in Natchitoches. The construction was financed by the Methodist Episcopal Society in New York. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is located on the northern end of Melrose Plantation, facing St. Andrew Baptist Church. Congregants of the two churches, generally descendants of the enslaved persons at Melrose Plantation, often held services together.[37]

In addition to ministering to the souls of the parish, the church members continued to care for their places of worship. In 1880, the bell at St. Francis Cathedral, Alexandria, was broken beyond repair. After efforts by the ladies of the Catholic congregation, they were finally able to raise sufficient funds to have the bell replaced. There was great hope that the new bell would be installed in time for the Christmas celebrations; however, it was delayed in Grand Ecore, where it was stranded due to the impassable swamp between there and Natchitoches. Although missing Christmas day, the bell was transported by a team provided by Mr. A. H. LeComte and arrived on January 4, 1881. The new bell, cast by Clinton H. Menleey, Bell Co., Troy, New York, carries the inscription:

PRESENTED TO
ST. FRANCIS CATHEDRAL BY THE
CITIZENS AND THE CATHOLIC
AID SOCIETY OF NATCHITOCHES,
NATCHITOCHES, LA.
CHRISTMAS, 1880.

33. In Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 23, Dr. Leveque has the first name James, but in Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, Leveque's first name is given as Joseph. For consistency within this document, he is referenced as Joseph.
34. "Out Town and Parish," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), May 15, 1878, 3.
35. Joyous Coast Foundation, *Images of America: Natchitoches*, 73.
36. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 58.
37. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 60-63.

Beneath the inscription is the Bible quote, "glory to God on high and peace on earth to men of good will."[38]

Education

After being forced to close in 1865, the Freedmen's School was able to reopen in Natchitoches on February 5, 1866. The school revised its financial plan that charged $1.50 per month per pupil for town schools, while county or plantation schools were to be maintained by a 5-percent tax on the incomes of freedmen workers. Since the Freedman's Bureau also oversaw the labor contracts for most workers, the tax was assumed to be easily enforced. However, these taxpayers strongly objected, and the program was eventually modified to eliminate taxing those workers who did not have children. So strong were the objections by workers before the modifications could be made that when possible, plantation owners would avoid including the education tax provision in their contracts.[39]

Four plantation owners were willing to aid in the establishment of schools for African American children under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau: Hypolite Hertzog of Melrose Plantation; a Mrs. L. Brumley of Golden Mill Plantation, located 22 miles south of Natchitoches on the right bank of the Cane River; the owner of Bucheraux Plantation, located 8 miles from Natchitoches on Spanish Lake; and the owner of Tauzin Plantation, located on Tauzin Island. Most of these plantation schools were able to open within a few months, with the exception of the one at Bucheraux Plantation, but this was replaced by Stone Plantation, located 24 miles from Natchitoches. Hertzog's plantation school at Melrose would not admit children from any other plantation, even though he had initially reported that students from three other plantations would be welcomed at the school. One of the reasons was that the single teacher available could not easily handle the large number of students generated by the Hertzog plantation. It was also likely that Hertzog changed his mind due to the cost involved, and he eventually closed his plantation's school.

Funding and staffing the freedmen's schools continued to challenge the bureau; in 1866, it was reported that the students that year may not have obtained all the supplies they were promised, and many went without qualified teachers. That year, those teachers who did work, as those who preceded them, had to fight for their pay. The school year ended with the former Freedmen's Bureau representative for Natchitoches Parish, a Lt. Henderson, being dismissed from his position and put under investigation for "extorting money from planters by annulling contracts made by his predecessor."

The path towards establishing schools for African Americans did not improve over the next few years, and churches stepped in to try and fill the gap. On November 28, 1866, an order of Catholic nuns called the Ladies of Sacred Heart announced that it would open a day school "for the benefit of young colored girls whether Catholic or not." The establishment of the school would, they thought, meet two goals: to keep the schools from "becoming instruments of the Republican Party," and, by operating under the auspices of the Catholic Church, they would not "spread secular or even Protestant ideas."

Heavy losses due to flooding and crop failures in late 1866 and into 1867 left almost no funding for schools because people in the town were poor and rural education was based on a tax percentage. Reports filed with the state government gave no accounting for the number of schools or students in Natchitoches Parish, making it safe to assume that schools had closed. In 1868, the rumor of "forty acres and a mule" started by a Baptist preacher in New Orleans swept through the community of freedmen of Natchitoches Parish, making them reluctant to sign contracts as

38. "The New Bell." *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), January 8, 1881, 6.

39. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, 15. Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section came from this source, 15-96.

laborers, and holding out for the rumored independence. Eventually, this rumor, which suggested that the US government would furnish freedmen with land to make their own crops, was squelched and contracts began to be signed, putting people back to work. By February 1868, reports from Natchitoches and Sabine Parishes, covered by the same Bureau representative, indicated that the Bureau would be able to establish fifteen or sixteen schools, in addition to the three that had survived despite the improvised means of the planters.

In the end, while the lack of financial support was challenging, it was the political pressures of the time that ended the Freedmen Bureau's education efforts. Members of the Democratic Party, fearing their loss of influence and control of politics of the area, sought to suppress the rights of the newly freed individuals. Democrats, the traditional political party of the old South, were also concerned that as the freedmen received more education, there was a greater chance they would be indoctrinated by the Republican Party. Violence erupted between the two parties in the fall of 1868, including attacks on several African Americans and the death of an African American teacher.

The final report on the Freedmen's Bureau schools in Natchitoches Parish was made in November 1868 by Bureau agent E. H. Hosner. Even though the schools were in the process of closing, Hosner indicated that, overall, there had been progress in establishing schools. When Hosner first arrived for his assignment in Winn, Sabine, and Natchitoches parishes, there were only four Freedmen's Bureau schools listed in the three-parish area, with three located in Natchitoches Parish. In 1868, Hosner reported ten schools, with a total enrollment of 342 students, and 327 paying tuition.

Reconstruction ended in with the Compromise of 1877 and the withdrawal of federal troops from the former Confederate states.[40] In 1878, the town of Natchitoches boasted three "handsome school buildings" for the white students and numerous private and public schools in the town. Additionally, there were over forty public schools sustained in the parish using the public-school fund. With ten schools formerly operating under the control of the Freedmen's Bureau placed under local control in 1877, the African American community recognized that "the importance of a good common school education is not to be overlooked." In the local white schools, the newspaper reported some difficulty in securing the services of competent instructors, but they firmly believed that "in a short time all difficulties now attending our public schools will be overcome."[41] Although it would be some time before the African American schools could be reinstated, a number of black parents promised to support schools through subscription, but there were not enough to support the number of students in need.

Higher education was available for the white residents from Oakland and Magnolia Plantations. Dr. Leveque's son, Joseph, Jr., attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The Prud'homme family chose Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana, for the education of a few of its members. From Magnolia, Ambrose J. Hertzog, son of Matthew and Atala Hertzog, received an A. B. from Notre Dame in 1876; a Bachelor of Laws from University of Louisiana in Baton Rouge; and a Master of Arts from Notre Dame in 1886. His sister, Frances "Fanny" Hertzog, earned a degree from the Academic Department of Notre Dame in 1889. Fanny also received a Crown of Honor for politeness, neatness, order, amiability, and correct deportment.[42]

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40. For more about the Compromise of 1877, see "Politics and Government," below.
41. "Our Town and Parish," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), May 15, 1878, 3.
42. "Natchitoches in the Schools," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), October 22, 1881, 5; *The Notre Dame Scholastic* (Notre Dame, Indiana), June 29, 1889, 547, 681, and 720. The A.B. probably stands for Bachelor of Arts

Social and Recreational Life

While the Civil War dramatically impacted the social lives of most of *La Cote Joyeuse*, the end of the war saw a return to sociability, although less extravagant. Social columns in the newspapers continued to report the activities of clubs, such as the Catholic Aid Society, which met regularly at the residence of Mrs. A. LeComte. Presumably this was the town residence rather than at Magnolia Plantation, since meetings were often held immediately following church services. Social columns also reported visits by those who had moved from Natchitoches or were simply in from the family plantation. For example, on January 8, 1881, *The People's Vindicator* reported that "Mrs. Mathew Hertzog and her little daughter Fannie have been in town for some time, stopping at her father's. Mrs. Hertzog is a great favorite and is always welcomed by many friends."[43]

In 1879, there was a report of a gathering of about 125 ladies and gentlemen for a picnic on the banks of the Cane River. The day-long event culminated at the home of Dr. Leveque at Oakland Plantation, who invited the band and many of those making their way home to stop and visit, showing hospitality "which only the cultivated and refined know how so well to extend."[44] Picnics were a popular pastime, and the plantation families employed their house servants to cook for the events and, when fishing was among the activities, clean the day's catch.[45]

Newspapers recount baseball games, featuring teams with names like the "Acmes" and the "298." In one article, the reporter admonished players, saying "this popular National game is attracting much interest on the part of our citizens, and our amateur clubs would do well to practice more than they do, as the scores exhibit a wide margin for decided improvement."[46] Baseball games were often hosted by the plantation owners. The Hertzogs of Magnolia were known to host horse racing and baseball games on their property, with area residents either participating or watching the fun. Other amusements included quilting bees, fishing, hunting, swimming, and gambling.[47]

Another newspaper story noted that "[h]orse racing has revived. On Saturday last we had tests of speed for small sums."[48] Two years later, on December 11, 1880, *The People's Vindicator* announced that horse racing was prohibited on public roads within the parish. The article reported that any person or persons violating the new ordinance would be charged with a misdemeanor, and upon their conviction, charged a fine of not less than ten nor more than twenty-five dollars. Those who defaulted on their payment would be imprisoned in the parish jail for not less than three nor more than ten days.[49]

Despite its restrictions, horse racing remained legal. In 1898, a local planning committee reported that "great preparations are being made for the Tournament. Horse racing, fencing, sparring, minstrel show, band music, etc., will be some of the entertainments. Everybody invited."[50]

Near the end of the 1800s, the number of parties hosted had almost returned to their pre-Civil War number. For example, a newspaper account of the "New Year Hop" of Thursday, January 3, 1895, held in the Alexandria Opera House, reported that thirty couples enjoyed the evening. Among the celebrants was Miss Lalah Prud'homme (daughter of Jacques Alphonse and Eliza Prud'homme) of

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(B.A.) degree, which are sometimes abbreviated as "A.B." to stand for the Latin term, "artium baccalaureus."

43. "Society Notes," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), January 8, 1881, 5.
44. "Pic-Nic," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), July 19, 1879, 3.
45. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 16.
46. Base Ball. *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), September 20, 1879, 3.
47. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 24
48. "Local Gleanings," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), November 23, 1878, 3.
49. "Horse Racing," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), December 11, 1880, 1.
50. "Announcement," *The Natchitoches Populist*, October 7, 1898, 2. The CARI museum collection contains a backdrop for a minstrel show that was found at Oakland Plantation.

Natchitoches. The party, described as a "scene of gayety and loveliness," included a Grand March rendered by the Alexandria String Band, and included waltzing, followed by midnight refreshments and more dancing until the "gray of early dawn gave evidence of the approach of another day." [51]

Occupations

Planters

After the Civil War, many plantation owners continued to use the title "planter," but took on a more active role in the management of their operations. For example, there is evidence that Matthew Hertzog did not, at least initially, use an overseer at Magnolia Plantation, but conducted the work himself. [52] At Oakland, the two sons, Jacques Alphonse and Pierre Emmanuel, returned from war only to find their father, Pierre Phanor Prud'homme, gravely ill. Although their father attempted the first of the labor negotiations with freed former slaves, he died late in 1865, leaving his eldest son, Jacques Alphonse, to take over negotiations in 1866. [53]

Eventually, likely due to their role as managers of their respective properties, both Alphonse Prud'homme and Matthew Hertzog assumed the operation of their plantation stores.

Overseers

While many of the surrounding plantations continued to use overseers after the close of the Civil War, the 1870 census indicates that at Magnolia, the only male living in the vicinity listed as "farmer," rather than "laborer," was Matthew Hertzog. In the rest of the census records for that year, overseers tended to list their occupation as "farm manager" or "overseer." [54] This suggests that Hertzog was carrying out the direct management of the plantation himself, without the aid of an overseer.

With the emancipation of the slaves, the entire method of operation of the plantation was forced to change. Overseers may still have been present, but they were typically limited to those locations with hired day laborers rather than sharecroppers.

Plantation Doctor

Dr. Joseph Leveque, as mentioned above, served as the plantation doctor at Oakland Plantation after the Civil War. Dr. Leveque had served in several Confederate military units, including the Co. H, 4th Louisiana Infantry, with which he fought at the Battle of Shiloh. He resigned from this unit in 1862 to become the surgeon for the Co. F, 4th Louisiana Infantry, and later, the surgeon for the 8th Louisiana Calvary. [55] Following the war, he left his own plantation, which was threatened by continued high water, and moved with his wife, Marie Therese Kirkland, to Oakland, where he would work the rest of his life. The Leveque family eventually included children Lucie and Joseph, Jr. On June 17, 1880, Lucie married Lambre Prud'homme at her father's house. [56] The marriage was short-lived—Lambre died in 1893—but it did produce a daughter, June. [57]

In 1890, tired of living on the plantation, Mrs. Leveque moved herself, her children, and her granddaughter to New Orleans, never to return. In New Orleans, Lucie became an actress, using the stage name "Roda Camerine." Joseph, Jr. was described in his December 31, 1911, obituary as an "editor and comic opera librettist." [58]

Dr. Leveque remained on Oakland Plantation, where he continued to care for the infirmed. In December 1893, there was a chimney fire in the

51. "The New Year Hop," *The Louisiana Democrat* (Alexandria), January 9, 1895, 3.
52. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 12.
53. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 28.
54. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 23.
55. "Jean-Lundington-Wallstead-Rice, "Dr. Joseph Augustus Leveque."
56. "Married." *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), June 26, 1880, 2.
57. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 23; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 70.
58. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 71; Nickles, "Joseph Mark Leveque."

Big House. Dr. Leveque assisted with the bucket brigade, carrying water from the grounds, up the stairs, across the gallery, and to the cedar shake roof of the building. The fire was successfully extinguished, but the following day, he was found dead in his cottage, less than a month from his sixty-second birthday.[59]

Hired Laborers, Sharecroppers, and Tenant Farmers

Freed African American workers were employed at Oakland and Magnolia as hired laborers, sharecroppers, or tenant farmers. Upon emancipation, some newly freed workers left the plantations, while others came seeking family or work. Those hiring themselves out for work were given contracts with help from the Freedmen's Bureau. The Freedmen's Bureau contract system began in 1866 and required plantations to hire their workers under annual contracts, which began each year on January 4 and required twenty-two to twenty-five days of work per month, for which the laborer received wages ranging between four and ten dollars. At Oakland Plantation, the Prud'homme contract also included shelter and some food, as they had done prior to the Civil War.[60]

The Freedmen's Bureau helped to negotiate the contracts, but discontent caused many laborers not to renew their contracts in 1867 and 1868, finding that it was not a sufficient improvement over the former slave system. One worker, Derzilin Nagot, who worked in the surviving Gin Complex on Oakland Plantation, signed his first contract in 1866 and another contract in 1867. Then, in 1868, his labor arrangements began to shift from simple paid wages to labor for a share of the crop, marking the beginning of sharecropping at Oakland Plantation.[61]

Sharecropping differed from the earlier wage system in that the landlord provided the land and seed, while the worker supplied the labor, and in some cases the equipment, to raise a crop. Instead of earning wages based on a day's labor, the sharecropper earned a portion of the crop that was shared with the property owner. Differing agreements, established at the beginning of the season, would impact the sharecropper's earnings. One popular method, known as "half shares" or "half-hands," required the worker to provide only the labor, with the landlord furnishing the land, materials, and equipment. In this system, the landlord received half of the crop raised by the worker. If the workers could provide their own equipment, such as mules and plows, they could enter into a "quarter-share" arrangement, with the landlord taking only one-quarter of the total crop raised.[62]

Those who became sharecroppers typically lived within walking distance of their allotted farmland. This was particularly true for those working on "half-shares" because they had to go to the landlords in the morning to get mules for plowing and return them again at the end of the day. Ginning records at Oakland Plantation revealed that many of the former Oakland slaves were working as laborers or sharecroppers there or at one of the surrounding plantations.[63]

Similarly, at Magnolia, former slaves were initially hired as gang laborers, later known as day laborers, and eventually, arrangements were made to lease portions of the plantations to the workers as tenants. Most tenants were sharecroppers, working under an agreement to share a certain portion of their crop with the plantation owner. Sharecroppers and day laborers were furnished with homes and gardens, but were "required to

59. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 71; Jean-Lundington-Wallstead-Rice, "Dr. Joseph Augustus Leveque."
60. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 113-115; Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex,* 23-24.
61. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 11; Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 114-115.
62. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 24.
63. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 25.

own a cow and mule and raise a crop of vegetables to supply their own tables."[64]

Some tenant farmers owned a mule and had their own equipment, eliminating the need to rent them from the farmer. These tenant farmers could arrange for either an all-cash rental or a mix of cash payments and crops in exchange for the land they worked and a place to live. Frequently, tenant farmers could plant a vegetable garden and keep a milk cow and chickens, further reducing their dependence on the property owner.[65]

Sharecroppers were no longer the responsibility of the plantation owners beyond the contracts that established their working relationships. Because of this, sharecroppers no longer received a food supply, clothing, or any of the materials needed to fulfil their contracts with the property owner. To address this issue, some plantations, including both Oakland and Magnolia, established plantation stores. These stores were owned and managed by the plantation owners, carried a huge variety of goods, and typically allowed the sharecroppers to charge purchases against their future earnings. The disadvantage to the stores was that prices were often inflated.[66]

In addition to the use of credit, many of the plantation stores established use of special scrip redeemable only in the store where it was issued. Both Oakland Plantation and Magnolia Plantation stores had scrip made for their customers to use in the store. Oakland's scrip consisted of silver tokens with little diamonds cut out of their centers.[67] In contrast, Magnolia's scrip was bronze and had wavy edges. Within CARI's collections are examples of the scrip used at Magnolia Plantation, including an ornate token with wavy edges that is embossed with a value at the center and surrounded by the words "GOOD FOR [value] IN MERCHANDISE" (Figure 6-3).[68]

Politics and Government

When Congress reconvened in December 1865, they expressed their concerns about the South's reluctance to abolish slavery, the refusal of Southern states to grant voting rights to black men, the fact that the former rebels could easily be elected to a leadership role in state of federal government, and the enactment of the Black Codes, which were similar to those that existed during slavery.[69]

In the fall of 1866, the U.S. election added several Republicans to Congress, which empowered Congress to develop a reconstruction plan for the South that would humiliate President Johnson, and address some of the news of oppression by



FIGURE 6-3. Example of scrip from the Magnolia Plantation Store. NPS.

64. Slaves' work was typically either considered "gang" or "task" labor, definitions that carried over to the freedmen workers. In gang labor, the workers labored in carefully defined groups—often segregated by age and sex—under the close supervision of the overseer or foreman. Under the task system, workers were assigned a project to be completed within a given period of time. Laborers felt they had more latitude in their efforts, but given the time constraints, the strongest among the group often had to aid the younger or weaker members of the crew. Berlin and Morgan, "Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life," 14-15; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 20.
65. Reonas, "Sharecropping."
66. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 13.
67. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 158.
68. CARI Collection, Numbers 31617–31619.
69. Kennedy, *Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction*.

Democrats of the freedmen and their white allies reported in the daily newspapers. [70]

The Reconstruction Acts passed by Congress in the spring of 1867 required five steps for readmittance of the former Confederate states into the Union:

- divide the state into military districts subject to the military authority of the US Army and under the command of an officer appointed by the president; [71]
- frame a new state constitution in a convention composed of delegates elected by votes without distinction of color or race, except such as had been disfranchised for participation in rebellion or for felony;
- gain approval of the new constitution by the majority of voters and by Congress;
- adopt the Fourteenth Amendment; and
- make civil government provisional and subject to modification or removal by the Federal government.

Representation in Congress was denied until the states met the requirements. [72]

Concerned that the terms would be considered too drastic, within a few weeks after the first act passed, Congress passed a more strenuous act, adding a sixth step to the Reconstruction process. This required that each military district commander register persons of undoubled loyalty who were qualified to vote, and then proceed to carry out the provisions of the preceding act. [73]

The Fourteenth Amendment was passed by Congress on June 13, 1866, and ratified on July 9, 1868. The amendment extended liberties and rights to former slaves. [74] The major provision of the amendment was to grant citizenship to "[a]ll persons born or naturalized in the United States," including former enslaved people. Additionally, it included a provision that no state could "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any persona within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." In 1869, the Fifteenth Amendment was passed by Congress and ratified on February 3, 1870. It granted African American men the right to vote. [75]

Natchitoches Parish experienced a tremendous amount of political unrest during this period, in part due to forced Reconstruction, but aggravated by the perception among many whites that northern Republicans were trying to indoctrinate newly freed African Americans. It was believed by some that these changes would reduce the power and influence of the long-standing Democratic Party, and would, local whites feared, lead to the placement of their supposed inferiors into positions of power. With elections coming in November 1868, outbursts of violence became more common. A report sent to the Freedmen's Bureau detailed some of the actions in the parish:

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70. Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana*, 180. President Andrew Johnson was a Union Democrat, a tailor by trade, who was taught to read by his wife. While Johnson always had honesty of purpose and logical reasoning behind his actions, he also had a certain coarseness and lack of good taste that often ruined his influence with the ruling faction in Congress. Although Johnson was raised in the South, he considered what he called "southern aristocrats" to be guilty of treason in bringing on the war. In fact, he was opposed to the mild terms General Grant received from General Lee at the surrender at Appomattox. Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana*, 100.
71. Tennessee had ratified the 13th Amendment in 1865, thereby avoiding being included in the military districts. Fertig, *The Secession and Reconstruction of Tennessee,* 65.
72. Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana*, 182-183.
73. Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana*, 183; Keith*, The Colfax Massacre*, 54.
74. The National Archives, *Teaching with Documents*, 40.
75. The National Archives, *The Milestone Documents*, 61-63.

> The following outrages are reported as committed by reason of political differences. Viz R. L. Faulkner [former Bureau teacher at the Allen school] and Anderson West c [colored] were taken to woods and severely whipped lives threatened. Alfred Hazen c killed. Dunn [?] Lyle c life attempted – Randall Lyle c shot and wounded – Benjiman [*sic*] Watson, Joe Smith, Thomas Alexander all (colored) lives threatened. Many freedmen complain of being compelled to vote under compulsion, of unjust settlement for wages due, and in division of crops. State they are fearfull [*sic*] of personal violence – Various other complaints of injustice of whites are made. The feeling between races politically is bad.[76]

Similar reports continued over the next weeks. In early November 1868, James Cromie, an Irish immigrant who fought with the Union during the Civil War, sat on the Republican State Central Committee, and published *Red River News*, wrote the state assistant commissioner a detailed letter about the Natchitoches area's violent events.[77] His emotional description conveys the terror being felt across the region:

> Again in the 5th Ward they murdered on Monday night the president of our Club in that ward and destroyed all our tickets, took the chairman of the commission out of his home after looting him of his registration papers and all our tickets as well as burning his school books as he was a teacher, and robbing him of his private property – Blindfolded him and took him to the woods when he promised to vote the Democratic [ticket] and resign the office of Police Juror or they would hang him – beat him nearly to death.
>
> On the Saturday week [before?] the action, R. L. Faulkner, colored Police Juror of the 5th Ward came to town and I had him take tickets to the 9th as well as his own. He got a young man to take the tickets to Pleasant Hill to a party there for distribution he was not on the road and being a stranger they took him off his horse after resistance and took his tickets from him put a rope about his neck and tied him up when nearly dead they took him down and because he would not tell hung him up again when he told them he got the tickets from Mr. Faulkner.
>
> That night they visited Faulkner and would have killed him but for one of the party when they near[ly] beat him to death and after robbing him of everything and telling him what they would do to me, they left him and went to Alfred Huzen [*sic*] made his wife give his registration papers and tickets and because he would not come out went to set fire to his house when sooner than see all his family destroyed he told his wife he would go out as he knew they would kill him any how and he would rather die than see all his family slaughtered. He went out and they killed and immediately butchered him.
>
> This man's only crime was that he was an Exhorter in the Methodist Church a teacher established by Mr. Hayward and under the supervision of the Rev. [L. Hucman?] and President of the Grant and Colfax Club of Ward Five.[78]

These actions occurred despite the three new amendments prohibiting states from disenfranchising voters "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."[79]

In many states, organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and the White League terrorized black citizens for exercising their right to vote, run for public office, or serve on a jury. In response, Congress passed a series of Enforcement Acts, or "Force Acts," between 1870 and 1871. They were intended to end violence and empower President Johnson to use military force to protect African Americans. The first of these acts, passed in May 1870, prohibited people from banding together or going "in disguise upon the public highways, or upon the premises of another" with the intention of violating citizens' constitutional rights.[80] When this did not resolve the issue, in December 1870, Senator Oliver H. P. T. Morton, an Indiana

76. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau,* 91-92.
77. "Local Intelligence," *New Orleans Republican*, August 10, 1870, 5.
78. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Bureau,* 92-93.
79. United States Senate, *Landmark Legislation*.
80. United States Senate, *Landmark Legislation*.

Republican, introduced a resolution requesting President Johnson to communicate any information about certain incidents of threatened resistance to the execution of the laws of the United States. Two additional enforcement acts were passed in 1871. The Second Force Act, which became law in February, placed national election administration under federal control and empowered federal judges and US Marshals to supervise local polling places. The Third Force Act, passed in April, empowered the president to use federal armed forces to combat those who conspired to deny equal protection of the laws and to suspend *habeas corpus*, if necessary, to enforce the act.[81]

While the national stage dominated the news in the years following the Civil War, notable political and governmental actions also occurred at both the state and local level. In Louisiana, Natchitoches was incorporated as a city in 1872 by Louisiana Act 93.[82] The act was signed by Orlando H. Brewster, Speaker of the House; Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, Lt. Governor and President of the Senate; and Henry Clay Warmoth, Governor (Figures 6-4 and 6-5).

Pinchback was born in Macon, Georgia, and was the son of a white Mississippi planter and a freed slave. After serving in various roles in the military during the Civil War, he became active in Republican Party politics in Louisiana, serving as a delegate to the Republican State Convention in 1867 and the Constitutional Convention in 1868. In 1871, after the death of then-Lt. Governor Oscar Dunn, Pinchback, who was president of the Senate, assumed his role. Between December 9, 1872, and January 13, 1873, then-Governor Warmoth became embroiled in impeachment proceedings. Once Warmoth was impeached, Pinchback replaced him, becoming the first African American governor of a US state. Although his term was just thirty-five days long, Pinchback



FIGURE 6-4. Photograph of Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, Louisiana's lieutenant governor in 1872. Library of Congress.

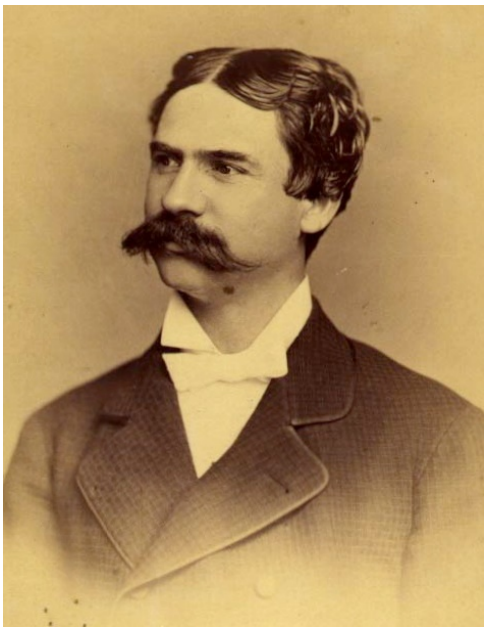


FIGURE 6-5. Photograph of Henry Clay Warmoth, Louisiana's governor in 1872. University of North Carolina.

81. *Habeas corpus* is a writ requiring a person to be brought before a judge or court, especially for investigation of a restraint of a person's liberty, and is used as a protection against illegal imprisonment. United States Senate, *Landmark Legislation*.
82. Laws of the State of Louisiana, *New Orleans Republican*, July 12, 1874, 6.

signed ten acts of Legislature into law during his short tenure.[83]

The term of Governor Warmoth is considered to epitomize Louisiana political corruption during Reconstruction. The Republican Warmoth was elected governor in 1868 at the age of twenty-six. As candidate and then governor, Warmoth speculated in state bonds and treasury notes, profited from part ownership in a newspaper that held the contract for state printing, and created the State Returning Board to supervise election returns.[84] The board had the power to disqualify votes from a precinct thought to be tainted, a favorite method of Radical Republicans to maintain power over conservative Democrats.[85]

After his election, Warmoth, who supported voting rights for African Americans, prevented other civil rights provisions from being included in the 1868 Constitution, including a public accommodations bill introduced by Louisiana Representative Robert H. Isabelle that favored African Americans.[86] However, it was his role in the 1872 election that allied his faction of the Republican Party with the Democrats, ensuring the election of Democratic and Liberal Republican candidate Jon McEnery as governor over Radical Republican candidate William Kellogg. Because of McEnery's election victory, members of the state house sought and won Warmoth's impeachment; however, he was never brought to trial.[87]

Warmoth's corruption was the tip of the iceberg in post-Civil War Louisiana. Political unrest ran rampant across the state, particularly over the dual issues of the rights of the African Americans and political power. Perhaps the best-known instance of violence between the races, the "Colfax Massacre" as it became known, occurred just over 30 miles southeast of Natchitoches and about 15 miles from Magnolia Plantation (Figure 6-6). Tensions erupted on Easter Sunday in 1873, when one African American man and one white man, both of whom claimed the title of "Grant Parish Sheriff," came to blows. They were joined by a large contingent of African Americans occupying the courthouse, who were attacked by a group of 165 whites on horseback. The African Americans were outmanned and certainly lacked the weaponry of the white fighters, who had in their possession a small cannon. At the end of the battle, the cypress shingles of the courthouse roof were set on fire. As the blacks fled the burning building, they were either killed by the white fighters or captured as prisoners.[88] Reports of how many died in the battle vary, some claiming 150 African Americans dead, one white man dead, and one white man wounded, or "sixty-five negroes… found dead near the court-house [and] [t]hirty known to have been taken prisoners are said to have been shot after surrender and thrown into the river."[89] The Colfax Massacre and the resulting trial dominated the press and conversation of Louisiana and beyond for the coming years.

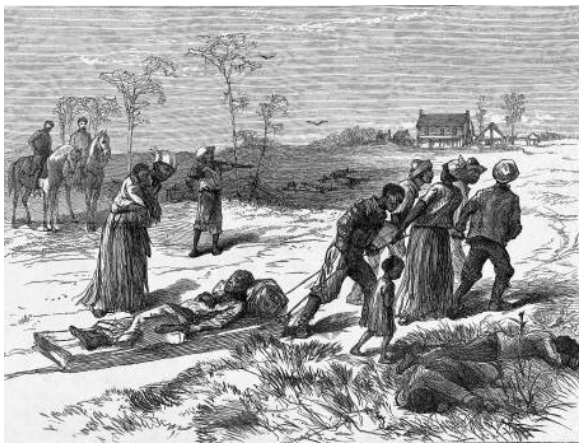


FIGURE 6-6. Lithograph showing the aftermath of the Colfax Massacre in 1873. *Harper's Weekly.*

83. Louisiana Department of State, *Pickney Benton Stewart Pinchback 1872-73*.
84. Louisiana Department of State, *Louisiana Governors 1861-1877*.
85. Louisiana Department of State, *Louisiana Governors 1861-1877*.
86. Lyons, *Statesmanship and Reconstruction*, 212.
87. Louisiana Department of State, *Louisiana Governors 1861-1877*.
88. Keith, *The Colfax Massacre*, 97-104.
89. "The Colfax Troubles," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), April 28, 1873, 1; "The Colfax Troubles," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), April 18, 1873, 1.

During the following year, Louisianans made efforts to address what were perceived as wrong and ill-considered actions in the legislature, along with returning the state to a more conservative, i.e., Democratic Party-led, position. The Democratic Committee of Seventy, a group in New Orleans, was appointed to organize resistance to Governor Kellogg, a Republican who had won his office in 1873.[90] In Natchitoches, a similar committee was formed in August 1874; its president was W. W. Breazeale; vice-presidents, J. E. Keegan and J. Alphonse Prud'homme; and secretaries, E. E. Lemee, R. W. Taylor.[91]

In *The People's Vindicator*, the Natchitoches committee clearly stated their goal, which was to redeem

> Louisiana from the corrupt usurpation which oppresses the State, and only be affected by the united action of all our people who oppose the supremacy of the ignorant and vicious, and desire the restoration of our State government to the control and management of the virtuous and intelligent of the community.[92]

The committee firmly believed that this change could "only be effected by the white people of the State earnestly uniting and pledging their efforts towards the election of competent white men, of proper intellectual qualifications and undoubted integrity, to offices executive, legislative, judicial, and parochial." The committee did not intend to strip African Americans of all their rights, but declared that

> we are firmly convinced of [their] incapacity to perform the duties of legislators and to fill the important offices, executive and ministerial, which are necessary in the enforcement of laws and management of public affairs; and we believe that the prosperity and improvement of the colored people themselves, will be promoted by the restoration of the government and of those offices to their more intelligent, experienced and competent white fellow citizens.[93]

The committee continued by stating that they would represent the people of Natchitoches Parish who were "opposed to radicalism and its ascendancy in Louisiana." Their purposes would be fulfilled through "harmonious union and concert of the conservative elements of the people of Louisiana." These efforts would counteract the "present condition of our State. . .attributable to the banding together of the colored race, under the management and leadership of bad white men, without identity of interest or true sympathy with our people."[94]

The committee avowed that "[s]tate government, in all its departments, and the parochial governments, should be restored to the hands and control of the honest, intelligent white citizens of Louisiana." The committee was not seeking a race war, affirming that they "earnestly desire that all people of our State, may live together peaceably, under just and equitable laws and government." However,

> while we are willing to accord all their legal rights to the colored people and uphold them in their proper enjoyment, we deny their capacity or ability to legislate for the true interests of the State and of all her citizens, and we will not submit to the domination and bad government of the ignorant masses influenced by hate and prejudice; who are the easy dupes and willing tools of vicious leaders; and in the resistance to such tyranny, we shall in duty to our country, ourselves, our families, and to civilization and humanity, use all the means with which nature and nature's God have endowed us, to protect ourselves from its baneful effect.[95]

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90. Lonn, *Reconstruction in Louisiana*, 227.
91. "Parish Convention," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), August 22, 1874, 3.
92. "Parish Convention," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), August 22, 1874, 3.
93. "Parish Convention," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), August 22, 1874, 3.
94. "Parish Convention," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), August 22, 1874, 3.
95. "Parish Convention," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), August 22, 1874, 3.

After naming their delegates for a statewide convention, the Natchitoches committee ended the announcement, claiming that

> the issue involved is intelligence and virtue, on the one hand, and ignorance and vice on the other, and we are, therefore, constrained to classify those white men who support and affiliate with the radical negro domination as enemies to the white race and to the prosperity of the commonwealth, and they should be discountenanced and denounced by all good citizens as unworthy their confidence and respect.[96]

This action set the stage for a variety of organizations to actively oppose any gains by African Americans.

The statewide White League, which was a leader in Louisiana's white supremacy movement, sought recognition as early as February 1874 at that year's Mardi Gras celebrations. White League membership would grow in the coming years to include many of the most illustrious names in the state. Leeanna Keith notes in her book, *The Colfax Massacre*, that "around the state, militants set aside their cloaks and hoods to advocate openly for white man's government and home rule."[97]

In addition to these organizations, supportive newspapers, such as *The Caucasian* (Alexandria) (1874–1875) and the *People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches) (1874–1883), were launched to share news of the movement with like-minded individuals. The first issue of *The Caucasian*, which openly advocated for the Democratic Party, promised "no security, no peace, and no prosperity for Louisiana" until "the superiority of the Caucasian over the African, in all affairs pertaining to government is acknowledged and established."[98]

Following the 1876 election of Rutherford B. Hayes as US president, the returns of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina, the only three states that still had Republican Reconstruction-era governments, were widely disputed. To calm the political waters in Washington, members of the Senate, House, and Supreme Court formed an electoral commission, which by a narrow margin affirmed Hayes as president. This action so angered some members of the House of Representatives that they threatened a filibuster to prevent Hayes' inauguration. A small group of men, representing both major political parties, adjourned to the Wormley's Hotel in Washington, where they struck the deal known as the Compromise of 1877. In the end, Hayes was inaugurated in March of that year and subsequently ordered all federal troops to withdraw from the South, enabling the Democrats to consolidate control over the region.[99]

In Natchitoches, Democrats acted swiftly to eliminate any remaining Republican influence by driving out ten of its most infuential local Republican leaders. Most importantly, however, they wanted to get rid of African American leader Alfred Raford (Rayford) Blunt (Blount). Blunt, a Baptist minister, was the most politically powerful African American in the region (Figure 6-7). Throughout most of the Reconstruction period, Blunt had served in the Louisiana legislature, first as representative between 1870 and 1872, and then as senator from 1874 to 1877. He also served as president of the local school board and organized and taught in the first public school in Natchitoches. Further, he owned the *Natchitoches Republican* newspaper, as well as two houses, several town lots, and 120 acres of farmland.[100]

From his position of power, Blunt regularly warned black residents of Natchitoches Parish that if the Democrats returned to power, it would mean a return to slavery. The local Democratic

96. "Parish Convention," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), August 22, 1874, 3.
97. Keith, *The Colfax Massacre*, 147.
98. Keith, *The Colfax Massacre*, 147.
99. Peskin, "Was There a Compromise of 1877?" 63-75.
100. Unless otherwise noted, the following information is from Fairclough, "Alfred Raford Blunt."



FIGURE 6-7. Photograph of Alfred Raford (Rayford) Blunt (Blount). Louisiana Regional Folklife Program.

Party tried to silence him, with little success; one ploy was to destroy his political reputation by denigrating his moral character, saying that he was living with a woman to whom he was not married. Another charged him with keeping half the salary of another teacher in his school. In 1874, the Democrats, in the guise of the "Tax-Reform Association," demanded the resignation of Blunt and other Republican officials, threatening them with mob violence, after which Blunt went into hiding for about a month. Despite the attempts of the Democrats to suppress the Republicans, the latter party won again in 1876 and Blunt kept his senate seat.

Fearing that the Republican Party was "bent on aggression," the local Democratic Party branch, led by Milton Joseph Cunningham, sought to oust them from Natchitoches. Cunningham claimed that on the morning of September 21, 1878, "150 armed Negroes in a line of battle" had marched on Natchitoches with the intention of capturing the town, laying it to waste, and killing the leading Democrats. He boasted that it was only the prompt and entirely unpremeditated action by the whites that thwarted the insurrection.

Republican Party witnesses claimed that the Democrats had carefully planned the attack, with the aim of destroying the Republican Party. Members of both parties, however, agreed that Cunningham led a large party of whites to the home of Senator Blunt, with the intention of placing him under arrest. When Cunningham and his party arrived, they took Mrs. Blunt into custody. After she was safely away from the house, Blunt surrendered on the condition that he would be given safe conduct to the jail. Cunningham agreed, but demanded that upon his surrender, Blunt leave the parish and "desist from politics at once." Blunt, who feared for his life, complied, leaving quickly for New Orleans. In addition, every other prominent Republican, white or black, was rounded up and expelled from the Parish.

The actions of the Democrats left the Republicans unable to nominate a ticket or even mount a campaign in 1878. Republicans claimed that on election day, the Democrats so intimidated the black voters that the "about 1,000 of them voted the Democratic ticket. The result was Democrats 2,811, Republicans 0."

When the story of the Democratic Party's actions in Natchitoches reached Congress, the Senate realized that Republican survival in the South was threatened and sent an investigative committee to New Orleans. Testimony was taken from a dozen witnesses, including Cunningham, who testified that the expulsion of the Republicans had nothing to do with party politics. Instead, he claimed, he and other citizens of Natchitoches were "simply protecting their town from an angry black mob whose hatred of white people had been whipped up by Republican incendiaries."

The investigation resulted in U.S. Attorney Albert H. Leonard indicting forty-eight Natchitoches Democrats for violation of federal election laws and voter intimidation. Louisiana courts, however, followed an earlier precedent in which white defendants in racial incidents were not convicted. By the time the trial was over, the first of twelve Natchitoches defendants were acquitted. The judge then reluctantly halted the proceedings, and let the rest of the defendants walk free. Among

them were Milton J. Cunningham, Mat (sic) Hertzog, and Alphonse Prud'homme.[101]

Transportation

The Cane River facilitated transport of goods and people from the surrounding area downriver to Alexandria and the national social milieu of New Orleans, and upriver to Natchitoches, the parish seat and center of cultural activities in the parish. Cane River plantations used the river system to transport harvested crops, timber, and other goods to and from trade centers, such as New Orleans.[102]

One major change that occurred during this era was the permanent clearance of the enormous logjam above Natchitoches on the Red River. There had been periodic attempts to clear it, and they were temporarily successful, but often, the "Great Raft" would begin to reappear and open navigation would end again. Success in clearing the Great Raft was finally realized by the US Army Corps of Engineers, which was authorized by Congress to take on the project in 1871. The Corps had a new tool never used on the Great Raft previously: nitroglycerin. The Corps blew up the multiple log jams that comprised the Great Raft, and, using steam-powered machines, dredged the channel, created reservoirs, and built dams along the river (Figure 6-8). By the end of 1873, the river had been cleared for good.[103]

In addition to river transport, the people of the Cane River region also relied on the grid of roadways that lined the river and extended into the plantations and communities located along it; this system of roads was mostly in place at the time of Reconstruction and industrialization. Travel and transport were still problematic on roads constructed primarily of dirt and some gravel; when rainfall was heavy, which often was in the summer, roads became difficult and sometimes impassable.[104]

Larger Landscape Environment

With the end of slavery, plantation owners were required by the Freedman's Bureau to employ their former slaves under contract. Astute landowners also continued the transformation of their labor force from one primarily composed of free labor to one that depended on livestock, and later technological machinery—commodities that they could control and that were less expensive than paid labor.[105]

While the Hertzog/LeComtes and the Prud'hommes still retained ownership of their large landholdings, their management changed, as was the trend throughout the agrarian South. Tenancy and sharecropping became the new organizational labor force of large landholdings. Land was divided into smaller units that an individual family could cultivate, harvest, and share either a portion of the crop or a portion of the profits.



FIGURE 6-8. "Scenes of the great Red River raft." Photograph showing the steam snag boat, US AID, clearing logjam in the Red River, Louisiana, taken in 1873 by R.B. Talfor. Library of Congress.

101. Fairclough, "Alfred Raford Blunt"; "The Natchitoches Cases, Trail Opened in the U.S. Circuit Court," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), February 25, 1879, 3.
102. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland Plantation*, 15.
103. "History of the Great Raft."
104. Firth and Turner, *Oakland Plantation CLR,* 78, 83, 112.
105. Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 178-179, 269-70, 409-412; Mazoyer and Roudart, *A history of world agriculture*, 355-357, 364-366.

In addition, or as an alternative, to tenancy and sharecropping, landowners cultivated with stock animals and mechanized implements. This allowed them to increase the scale of production and create larger rows within larger fields to increase efficiency. The use of gang and sulky plows, steam tractors, and spring-tooth harrows for seedbed preparation, along with the invention of barbed wire, all coalesced during a period when there was increasing demand for the products of farm production, and improved technology created efficiencies of scale requiring less and less paid labor.[106]

Plantations

Although both Oakland and Magnolia plantations lost baled cotton, farm and garden crops, and slaves as a result of the Civil War, as well as Magnolia's Big House to a Union-set fire, both plantations remained under their original ownership and were essentially unchanged in size.

Livestock and Crops

In 1860, cotton production on Oakland Plantation was more than 600 bales. This changed dramatically in the years after the Civil War, however, in part due to changes in the labor system, but also to flooding and caterpillar infestations. In 1866 and 1868, the Prud'hommes produced more than 100 bales of cotton, but in 1867, they only had seven bales, due to the severe flooding in the area. The number of bales gradually increased, but production continued to be unpredictable. In 1870, Oakland produced a total of 133 bales of cotton, but in 1878, the plantation produced just twelve bales.[107]

Because the crops typically served as collateral for seed purchases and laborer wages, farmers were often forced to seek other sources from which to borrow, or had to go into debt in order to purchase supplies.[108] The debt was especially hard for sharecroppers, who had few assets and no safety net. Many left the area to attempt independent homesteading instead of remaining in the cycle of sharecropping.

One of the ways the Cane River plantations addressed the small cotton crops was to adopt a new ginning system. Between 1883 and 1885, Robert S. Munger invented a new pneumatic ginning system through which

> seed cotton was drawn out of wagons or compartments within the gin barn and conveyed to a separator mounted above the gin stands. The cotton then dropped to a conveyor belt that distributed it to feeders above each stand. Using this method, several gin stands could be linked, resulting in a series of gins to which cotton could be continually flowed. All the gins were connected to a common flue. The cotton that had been separated from its seeds, known as lint, was then blown through the flue to a condenser. The condenser consisted of a screen drum against which the cotton was collected, forming a batt, while dust and fine particles were blown out of the building through chimney stacks passing through the roof. The separated seed were blown through another flue to seed house for storage. The lint slid along a slanting chute from the condenser to the press.[109]

The Munger system was used along with other innovations, such as the double press box, to produce bales of cotton faster and reduced the number of laborers required. Because the cotton could be baled faster using these tools, the Prud'hommes were able to take in cotton from surrounding plantations, thereby earning a fee from other farmers for the work. Although the exact date that the Prud'hommes installed the system at Oakland is not known, it was likely in place by 1890.[110] The Hertzogs also installed a Munger gin system.[111]

106. Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 178-180.
107. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex,* 24
108. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store,* 13.
109. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex,* 24.
110. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex,* 24.
111. Magnolia Plantation Cotton Gins and Presses, HAER No. LA-11

Other labor-saving methods for cotton production were introduced to Oakland Plantation after the Civil War. For example, rather than emptying sacks into a wagon, the cotton was dumped on a ten-by-ten burlap sheet that was rolled, tied, and turned over to protect it from rain until it could be taken to the gin. Between six and eight of these bundles made one bale. Special wagons picked up the cotton, each holding enough cotton to make three bales. The wagons were divided into compartments, with a section assigned to an individual worker, enabling the Prud'hommes to track the production of each sharecropper. The process, which did not demand that a wagon be waiting in the field to collect the cotton as soon as it was picked, resulted in reduced production costs.[112]

Even with the irregular local cotton production, there was great pride in the agricultural efforts of Natchitoches Parish. In 1878, *The People's Vindicator* promoted the area, writing:

> As a home for an agricultural population this section has few to equal it, certainly none superior, and all such would meet with a hearty and generous welcome. We desire, and especially invite mechanics, agriculturalists and capitalists from the North to come among us, "to obey the laws, forget all prejudices, work hard" and to aid us in building up our town and parish and bringing prosperity within our gates. To all such we say, COME! We have the HOMES to exchange for your brain and muscle.[113]

The same issue of the newspaper reported that "we hear very cheering news from our farmer friends throughout the parish." They continued to note that the acreage devoted to corn was greater than the previous year, suggesting greater prosperity. The article explained further, for the out-of-town reader, that

> [t]he soil around town is alluvial, and is as rich as any in the world, while it is inexhaustible. Farmers raise cotton, corn, oats, sugar cane, rice (highland), grasses, tobacco; and our climate makes this section congenial for the yield of grains of all kinds. As a stock country this is unsurpassed. Our winters are mild, never beginning before the early part of December, and rarely continuing later than the last part of February. Much attention has been given, within the last two years, to the improving and rearing of cattle, horses, sheep and hogs, and within a short time this section will successfully complete with any in the Union in them.[114]

As *The People's Vindicator* indicated, there were also improvements in the livestock production. An advertisement carried in the local papers suggested one means of improving stock through breeding:

> Improve Your Stock, The fine thoroughbred Short Horn Durham Bull, Andover, will stand a limited season at Oakland Plantation (Bermuda, P. O. Natchitoches Parish) at Ten Dollars the Season. Pasturage free. Prudent care will be taken of stock, but I will not be responsible for accidents….J. Alf. Prudhomme.[115]

This advertisement shows that plantation owners continue to diversify their income source through a combination of sales and services.

Cane River Plantations

Oakland Plantation

With the death of Phanor in 1865, Jacques Alphonse and Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme became the owners of Bermuda Plantation.[116] As mentioned above, the plantation was divided between brothers Alphonse and Pierre Emmanuel, creating Oakland Plantation west of Cane River under the ownership of Alphonse, and Atahoe to the east of the river under Pierre.

112. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex,* 24.
113. "Our Town and Parish," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), May 15, 1878, 3.
114. "Our Town and Parish," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), May 15, 1878, 3.
115. "Improve Your Stock," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), May 4, 1878.
116. Brennan, *Planter's Son*.

The 1870 census records list the occupations of both Alphonse and his brother Emmanuel as "farmer." Alphonse claimed real estate at $9,000 and personal property worth $11,428, while Emmanuel claimed real estate valued at $8,000 and personal property of $2,500. Despite the challenging years over the next decade, by 1880, the census indicated that Alphonse, who by then was the sole owner of Oakland, claimed a 300-acre "farm" valued at $7,000.[117]

Organization of the Landscape

Changes in the landscape at Oakland followed a pattern similar to that at other properties within the state, the region, and the entire cotton-producing South. Life that had centered around family life in the main house shifted to management and control of credit and supplies centered on the plantation store.[118]

The new system of capitalism that followed emancipation was characterized by joint agreements between large landowners and the formerly enslaved and tenants who worked the land in exchange for a share of the crop or a share of its profits. Control and management of agreements was accomplished from the plantation store, instead of the overseer's house and quarter house of the gang leader. The store became the center of plantation life after the war throughout the South, especially in the cotton belt that ran through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and central Louisiana.[119]

The main changes in the landscape related to the segregation of individual parcels for tenancy and sharecropping, and circulation patterns that developed around the plantation store. By the end of the Civil War, the new gin complex was in place and the suite of buildings that supported the work of the plantation had long been in existence.

The death of Phanor Prud'homme at the end of the war (1865) did not substantially affect the organization of the landscape at Bermuda, with one notable exception. What had been a larger complex with land on both sides of the river was divided in 1867, when Jacques Alphonse Prud'homme and Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme divided Bermuda into the side to the west of Cane River, renamed Oakland, and the side to the east, which became Atahoe Plantation.[120] However, there was already a gin complex on the east side of the river, so Pierre did not need to move raw cotton across Cane River in order to gin and bale his agricultural output.

In the 1890s, the Prud'homme family installed a tennis court at the plantation. Haynie states that the courts at Oakland were in "the front lawn," likely in the same location as the grass tennis courts that today lie north of the *allée* of oak trees.[121]

In 1891, the Bermuda community organized a tennis club. Members listed on the 1891 roster were:

> E. G. Lawton M.D. (Pres.), Valsin Lambre (V.Pres.), Cora Prud'homme (Treas.), Lise Prud'homme (Secretary), Edward C. Prud'homme, Phanor Prud'homme, Felix Prud'homme, James Prud'homme, Wilmer Breazeale, J. Alphonse Prud'homme, Placide Prud'homme, Lambre Prud'homme, Aihaud Pr'homme, Ovide Prud'homme, Sidney Cloutier, Edgar Cloutier, W.W. Breazeale, Jr., Water Breazeale, Alain Metoyer, Octave Lambre, Emanuel Buard, B.B. Breazeale M.D., P.E. Prud'homme.[122]

Haynie states that "Tennis continued to be played at Oakland for the next two generations," so this recreational practice likely continued into the 1920s or 1930s.[123]

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117. Breedlove, "Bermuda/Oakland Plantation," 43-46.
118. Gamble, "Plantation Architecture in Alabama."
119. Gamble, "Plantation Architecture in Alabama."
120. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland Plantation*, 19.
121. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland Plantation*, 125.
122. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland Plantation,* 125.
123. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland Plantation,* 125.

There is little archival information related to changes in the landscape close to the main house at Oakland. By the time of the close of the Civil War, most buildings were in place. The old cotton gin burned in 1864, but the Gin Complex constructed in 1859–1861 survived the war, remaining in place.

Buildings at Oakland Plantation

Changes to buildings at Oakland Plantation included alterations to the Big House, and the addition of a plantation store, a new barn, and a seed house. Some of the smaller ancillary structures, such as the coops, settling house, and hog houses, were likely rebuilt during this period, but there is no clear evidence that this occurred, or where these buildings would have been placed.

Big House

Alterations to the Big House during this period may have begun with the marriage of Alphonse and Elisa and were made over a fifteen-year period. A new kitchen was attached to the rear of the building and a connecting breezeway was constructed. About the same time, Alphonse added an office to the rear of the house, off the south end of the gallery. This addition may have contained a bathroom, as well, although it may have been part of a later remodel.[124]

A *garçonniére* was likely attached on either the rear of the Big House or on the northwest or southwest corner of the house. Family legend has it that this structure was removed around 1873 and moved to Atahoe after their main house burned.[125]

It could have been about this time that the "stranger's room" was added to the north leg of the gallery. The room, which did not provide access to the interior of the house, was meant to provide lodging for non-family travelers who spent the night on the plantation. Later in the century, as concerns with abolitionists and other less friendly visitors rose, the room was likely shared less often and the practice of having such a space eventually fell out of practice.[126]

In keeping with popular practice of the time and to accommodate Mrs. Prud'homme's desire to relocate the primary entry into the house away from the French doors that led into her parlor, a central hallway was added. Space was created by reconfiguring the wall along the south side of three rooms, enabling the family to install a formal entrance at the east end. The French doors on the east wall of Mrs. Prud'homme's parlor were replaced with the present floor-to-ceiling, triple-hung windows.[127]

In addition to the construction of new rooms, it was during the post-Civil War period that the primary use of some of the existing rooms changed. With the change in status of the former slaves, it is very likely that the servants' room in the basement was not used at all after the war.[128]

Further, around this time, cypress palings (or vertical posts) were added around the north, west, and south elevations of the foundation. Only the foundation at the front of the house was left exposed below the gallery. Access to the basement level was provided by gates on each side of the building.[129]

Cottage/Doctor's House

The Cottage/Doctor's Cottage also underwent a number of alterations during this period. Sometime prior to 1880, the southwest corner room of the building was expanded beyond the rear *cabinet*, necessitating the reconfiguration of the roof from its original hip form to the current gable form. Other changes included the construction of a detached kitchen west of the house. The kitchen may have been constructed as

124. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Big House*, 46-52. Presumably there was originally a detached kitchen, but it has not been documented.
125. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Big House*, 48-49.
126. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Big House*, 53.
127. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Big House*, 53.
128. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Big House*, 52.
129. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Big House*, 52.

early as 1860, given that two doctors occupied the cottage prior to the arrival of Dr. Leveque.[130]

The cottage was enlarged two additional times before the end of the century, beginning with the enclosure of the Doctor's Office ca. 1870. The Doctor's Office was located in the small room at the south end of the front gallery and was created by Dr. Leveque with permission from the Prud'homme family. The room included three cabinets of shelves on the north wall that extended from floor to ceiling; they held the doctor's medical equipment and supplies. Patients entered the small office through a door in the south wall, and a door in the west wall provided access into the main building.[131]

The second addition was the construction of two rooms at the north end of the original cottage to accommodate Dr. Leveque's daughter, Lucie, and her new husband, August Lambre Prud'homme. The 23-foot addition, including the house and gallery, retained the gable roof and added a third fireplace placed between the original *bousillage* north wall and the east room addition. Additional modifications included boxing the front columns and altering the original two-rail balustrade across the front gallery to a picket-style railing. Two new cisterns were added to the complex, one west of the cottage and a second to the north.[132]



FIGURE 6-9. Doctor's/Leveque Barn, ca. 1870, at Oakland Plantation, looking northwest. Commonwealth.

In 1890, Lucie Prud'homme, her daughter, mother, and brother, left Oakland Plantation for New Orleans, where they remained until after the death of both Dr. Leveque and Lambre Prud'homme. Following the doctor's death, the cottage returned to use by the Prud'homme family.[133]

Doctor's/Leveque Barn

The Doctor's/Leveque Barn (LCS 100630) at Oakland is located southwest of the doctor's house, adjacent to the historic farm lane (Figure 6-9). The one-and-one-half-story, wood-framed building was constructed ca. 1870, has a rectilinear footprint, and has a gable roof oriented perpendicular to the main road. The barn has a one-story, half-hipped-roof enclosure that wraps the north, west, and south elevations. The enclosure deck is supported by wood posts and is partially enclosed by woven wire.[134]

Plantation Store/Post Office

After the Civil War, stores were constructed on plantations across the South to allow sharecroppers to make purchases using credit against their harvest or a crop-lien system. Owners ceased to oversee work in the fields, but instead tracked production through contracts and ledgers documenting the work of tenants and sharecroppers.[135] Plantation stores quickly became hubs of activity for surrounding communities. One source noted that "the postbellum rural merchant was all things to his community…it was the market place, banking and credit source, recreational center, public forum, and news exchange."[136]

Cotton continued as the dominant cash crop throughout the South. Cotton production was easy to monitor from a sales standpoint and was impossible to convert to food; therefore, "tenants

130. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 31-32.
131. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 31-32.
132. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 33-34.
133. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 34.
134. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 10.
135. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland Plantation*, 21-22.
136. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 11-12.

could not eat those potential profits."[137] Tenants were forced to sell their cotton through the gin or landowner, which further strengthened the hold of the owner on his tenants and made the workers dependent on him for supplies and capital.

At Oakland, sharecropping began in 1868, and construction of the plantation store likely soon followed. The earliest evidence of the store includes licenses issued to Alphonse Prud'homme in June 1873. The first was a retail merchant license issued on June 3, 1873, by the State of Louisiana and Natchitoches Parish. An Internal Revenue Service-issued license was issued four weeks later, on June 30, to sell tobacco and liquor, two of the most popular items in the store.[138] A series of ledgers that begin that same year further corroborate 1873 as the year the store opened.



FIGURE 6-10. Tintype photograph of the Oakland Plantation Store in 1878, viewed from the east. CARI.



FIGURE 6-11. 1907 photograph showing the Oakland Plantation Store, remodeled to extend the gable roof in the front. CARI.

Oakland's plantation store was constructed southeast of the main house, facing the road and Cane River. As first constructed, the store was a simple, front-gable, wood-frame building with a shed roof porch (Figure 6-10). The front door was centered within the porch and flanked by six-over-six windows. The exterior was whitewashed and featured bright red trim. Extensive research and analysis suggest that the Prud'hommes enlarged the building multiple times between 1880 and 1900.[139] The earliest additions occurred around 1880, when they expanded the core of the building to the rear (west) to add the office, and extended the attic front-gable roof, replacing the original shed-roof of the porch (Figure 6-11). They added a small shed to the north elevation around 1885. In 1890, they added a rear room to the shed to create an apartment for Jules "Uncle Buddy" Prud'homme, who served as the store manager from about 1893 until his death in 1916.[140] Uncle Buddy was the second store manager, assuming the role after August Lambre Prud'homme, who Alphonse hired around 1878.[141] It was Lambre who married Dr. Leveque's daughter, Lucy, and died in 1893.

The surviving ledgers document the products carried at the Prud'homme store. In 1873, the store carried staples such as salt pork, flour, rice, sugar, coffee, and lard, but also, as the liquor and tobacco licenses attest, whiskey and tobacco. Candy, cheese, crackers, sardines, salt, pepper, and molasses were also offered, along with hardware,

137. Fitzgerald, *Every farm a factory*, 13.
138. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 15-28.
139. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store,* 31
140. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store,* 17.
141. August Lambre Prud'homme went by "Lambre" and was the brother of diarist Pierre Lestan Prud'homme. Lambre's parents were Jacque Lestan Prud'homme and Marie Eliza Lambre.

cookware, and sewing fabric. Further, the store sold coal oil and kerosene in bottles and five-gallon cans. Among specialty items were sherry, salmon, and oysters; other nonessentials could also be ordered.[142]

After the railroad was built through the area, the variety of goods in the store expanded even further. Fresh produce, especially apples and oranges, along with canned goods, made their way to store shelves. Prud'homme contracted with a wholesale grocer in New Orleans who was also able to provide claret and lobster on order. By the 1880s, the store also offered personal hygiene items, including cologne, Castile soap, toothbrushes, and first aid supplies. By the end of the century, many country stores, perhaps even the Prud'hommes', added luxury items to their wares, such as cuckoo clocks, chromolithographs, and stereoscopes.[143]

Today, the rectilinear, one-and-one-half-story, wood-framed Plantation Store/Post Office at Oakland (LCS 91617) has a front-gable roof with shed-roof additions that extend the full length of the north and south elevations and terminate in a half-hipped roof on their rear (west) elevations (Figure 6-12). Two open porches further expand the building footprint. The front-gable roof and the shed roof of the south component both extend to shelter a large porch on the facade. A shed-roof porch is centered on the rear of the building. The structure rests on brick piers. Its roof is sheathed in metal, likely added after 1899, and pierced by two ventilators on the ridge. A brick chimney stack is centered on the west elevation.



FIGURE 6-13. Oakland Plantation Store/Post Office, viewed from the south. Commonwealth.

The exterior walls of the Plantation Store are clad in clapboard siding. Paired entry doors with a transom are centered on the façade; secondary entrances are on the façade shed-roofed additions and centered on the rear elevation. Windows are six-over-six wood sashes flanked by operable shutters. A smaller window, sealed by shutters, pierces the gable end. The store's concrete-parged cistern (LCS 91618) stands at the front of the building and catches rainwater from the roof by a gutter pipe (Figure 6-13). The water is accessed using a metal pump.



FIGURE 6-12. Oakland Plantation Store Cistern. Commonwealth.

Gin Barn/Seed House Complex

Most of the structures associated with the cotton industry at Oakland are no longer extant, with one exception: the cotton Seed House (LCS 91706), located west of the Slave/Tenant Quarters (Figure 6-14). The seed house was completed ca. 1860–1861 as part of the Gin Complex and was used to store the seed gathered during the ginning process. The complex included the gin barn, the engine building, and the Seed House, as well as a cistern.[144] Inside the gin barn was a gin stand, indoor iron screw press, and box bale press. The adjacent engine building housed the boiler and

142. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store,* 17.
143. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store,* 18.
144. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 9.



FIGURE 6-14. Oakland Plantation cotton Seed House, looking southeast. Commonwealth.

steam engine that powered the machinery in the gin barn.

Originally smaller than its present size, the original Seed House was later expanded by an addition on its west side to accommodate changes in the milling process and the installation of the "Munger system." This new pneumatic system reorganized traditional milling and eliminated as much of the hand labor as possible. The Munger system drew the seed cotton out of wagons or storage compartments within the barn and conveyed it to a compartment mounted above the separator. At this point, the cotton would drop down to a conveyor belt that would distribute the cotton to a series of linked gins connected to a common flue. Once the cotton and the seed were separated, the lint was blown through the flue to a condenser that formed a batt while the dust and fine particles were blown out of chimney stacks in the roof.[145]

Today, the rectangular, one-story, timber-framed building has a gable roof sheathed in metal and an exterior covered in clapboard. Entrances to the building on the gable ends are sheltered by pent roofs and openings on the side elevations are sheltered by awnings supported by struts. Inside, the floor of the Seed House slopes away from the center to aid in seed distribution across the floor and to ease the shoveling of seed into wagons from the north and south sides of the building. The west side addition of the building includes a seed chute, which would have connected to the Munger system's seed handling pipe.[146]

In the area of the former gin complex are two sets of gin machinery pedestals with anchoring bolts and other hardware (LCS 100731). These date from the 1800s to 1900s.

Slave Hospital

The slave hospital, which was referenced simply as "Hospital" after the Civil War, was demolished several years after the end of the conflict. It appears to have at least survived the war because it was indicated in a list of locations where the succession sale for Phanor Prud'homme's estate was held in 1868. A written list of items purchased included "Pigeon House & Hospital," which Malone speculates meant the two structures were located in close proximity.[147] The hospital was certainly dismantled prior to 1893, when Dr. Leveque died, since he modified a portion of his residence to use as an office for "for meeting and treating patients, possibly in response to the removal of the plantation hospital."[148]

Corral Shed and Corral

The Corral Shed (LCS 091635), which is located near the Overseer's House and adjacent to a corral, is a small, gable-fronted, wood-frame shed, apparently used for storage (Figure 6-15). It has plank walls attached with round nails, which indicate a date after around 1880, and a metal roof. Around 40 percent of the building's fabric has since been replaced. The corral encircles a large pasture and consists of a 45-foot-long livestock chute and a 48-foot-by-50-foot fenced area for livestock. There are several openings and gates within the corral fence, as well as a chute, utilized when providing medical care to gather the animals in a single row. The shed stands at one corner of the corral.

145. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 28-29.
146. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 10, 17, 29.
147. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 122.
148. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 23.



FIGURE 6-15. Corral Shed standing at the corner of the corral at Oakland. Commonwealth.

Magnolia Plantation

The finances of the LeComte and Hertzog families of Magnolia Plantation, like others in the region, were negatively impacted by the war. The value of their Cane River holdings dropped from its pre-war height of $251,000 to $64,000 by the close of the war. The patriarch of the family, Ambrose LeComte II, lived well beyond the end of the Civil War, until 1883. After living with his second wife in Natchitoches for most of the years after the Civil War, he died, leaving Magnolia Plantation to his daughter Atala and her husband Matthew Hertzog, although a portion of the estate was auctioned in 1887.[149]

Organization of the Landscape

Changes in the landscape at Magnolia followed a pattern similar to that at Oakland, as well as the region, the state, and the rest of the cotton-producing South. Life centered on the management and control of credit and supplies that was now focused on the plantation store.[150]

Magnolia's store was constructed at approximately the same time as Oakland's, within a few years following the war, in 1873. Changes in land organization reflecting the new tenant and sharecropper system are hard to detect in the landscape today. Fences by their very nature do not persist and were not retained as landholdings were consolidated to accommodate increased mechanization. Maps of Magnolia do not include the kind of detail that would reflect smaller tenant and sharecropper boundaries, but if they exist for any property, this would prove a valuable resource for studies of the post-bellum era.

Buildings at Magnolia Plantation

Beginning in the 1890s, Atala and Matthew Hertzog began the process of reconstructing Magnolia's Big House, which had been destroyed by a fire set by Union troops in 1864. A new dwelling was erected on the foundation of the original house and made use of some of the brick from demolished slave cabins. The Hertzogs moved from the former Slave Hospital (later known as the Overseer's House), where they had lived since the Big House was destroyed, into the new house in early 1897, less than a year before Atala's death. After the Hertzog family moved into the new Big House, their residence for the last three decades was converted into the Overseer's House, making it the third major use for the building.[151]

The Hertzogs also modified the Gin Barn around the extant screw press and constructed the Magnolia Plantation Store. Both buildings are described below.

Gin Barn

Around 1870, the Hertzogs modified the Gin Barn to add a steam engine to power the cotton gin and fit the extant screw press. A Chapley-brand steam engine and an Eclipse-brand gin stand and condenser are both recorded as being in the Gin Barn at the time of Ambrose LeComte II's succession in 1883.

In 1895, Matthew Hertzog purchased parts for an Eagle–brand gin and transitioned the plantation to system ginning, comparable to the Munger system used at Oakland Plantation. A device called the "cotton distributor," which delivered cotton to the

149. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 29; Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 20.

150. Gamble, "Plantation Architecture in Alabama."

151. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House*, 12.

gin stands, was also patented by Munger. The two associated gin stands were patented by Washington Ellis in 1889.[152] This steam-powered mechanical system of pneumatic tubes, conveyor belts, and mechanical tamping eliminated the need for handwork in cotton ginning and pressing. The gin, located on the second floor of the structure, has a belt drive system on the first floor to power the machinery (Figure 6-16). A double box press allowed the continuous production of cotton bales simultaneously with the ginning process (see Figure 4-47).

A seed house (no longer extant) was also erected on the riverbank and was associated with the Gin Barn around this time. It is not known when the seed house was removed. In addition, a machinery pedestal that dates to around the 1870s is located near the Gin Barn (LCS 100736).

Plantation Store

Like Oakland, Magnolia established a plantation store to serve the plantation's tenant farmers. The store at Magnolia was constructed ca. 1873.[153] Only two years later, a December fire that originated in a defective chimney flue resulted in extensive damage to the store. Matthew Hertzog was able to save his safe and papers, but the merchandise was a complete loss.[154] The store was rebuilt, although the precise date of completion is not known. It would have been prior to 1883, because the Magnolia Historic American Building Survey (HABS) references a record from that year that mentions the store (Figures 6-17 and 6-18).[155]



FIGURE 6-16. Belt-driven cotton gin system housed within Magnolia's Gin Barn. Commonwealth.

Matthew and Atala Hertzog developed the store into a prosperous business. It stocked medicine, food, clothing, and plantation supplies. In addition to its merchandise, the store provided a meeting place, and the porch was often the location of dice or card games among the workers.[156]

The rebuilt store is located on the roadside, facing slightly southwest towards Cane River. The one-and-one-half-story, wood-framed building has a rectilinear footprint and rests on a brick pier foundation. It has a front-gable roof, which is expanded by shed-roof additions on the north and south elevations. The front gable projects forward on the façade and shelters an open porch; a wood deck spans the width of the façade. A second shed-roof porch is on the rear elevation. Although its original roof was covered in cedar shakes, the roof of the store is currently sheathed in metal, and the exterior walls are clad in clapboard.[157] The upper



FIGURE 6-17. Magnolia Plantation Store, looking north. Commonwealth.

152. Fricker and Fricker, *Magnolia Plantation*, 9-10; Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 30-36.
153. National Park Service, "Magnolia Plantation Site Map."
154. "Loss by Fire," *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), December 28, 1876, 2.
155. Historic American Building Survey, Addendum to Magnolia Plantation, HABS LA-1193, 5.
156. Keel et al., Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia, 20.
157. Ali A. Miri, *Historic Structure Assessment Report, General Store, Magnolia Plantation* (Atlanta GA: National Park Service, Southeast Support Office, 1997), 37.

portion of the northern shed-roof component on the façade is ventilated by wood slats. Paired wood doors are centered on the façade at the entry and are flanked by six-over-six wood sash windows with paired operable shutters. A window opening is sealed by shutters on the façade gable. Smaller wood doors provide access to the shed-roof components. A secondary entrance is sheltered by the porch on the rear of the building.

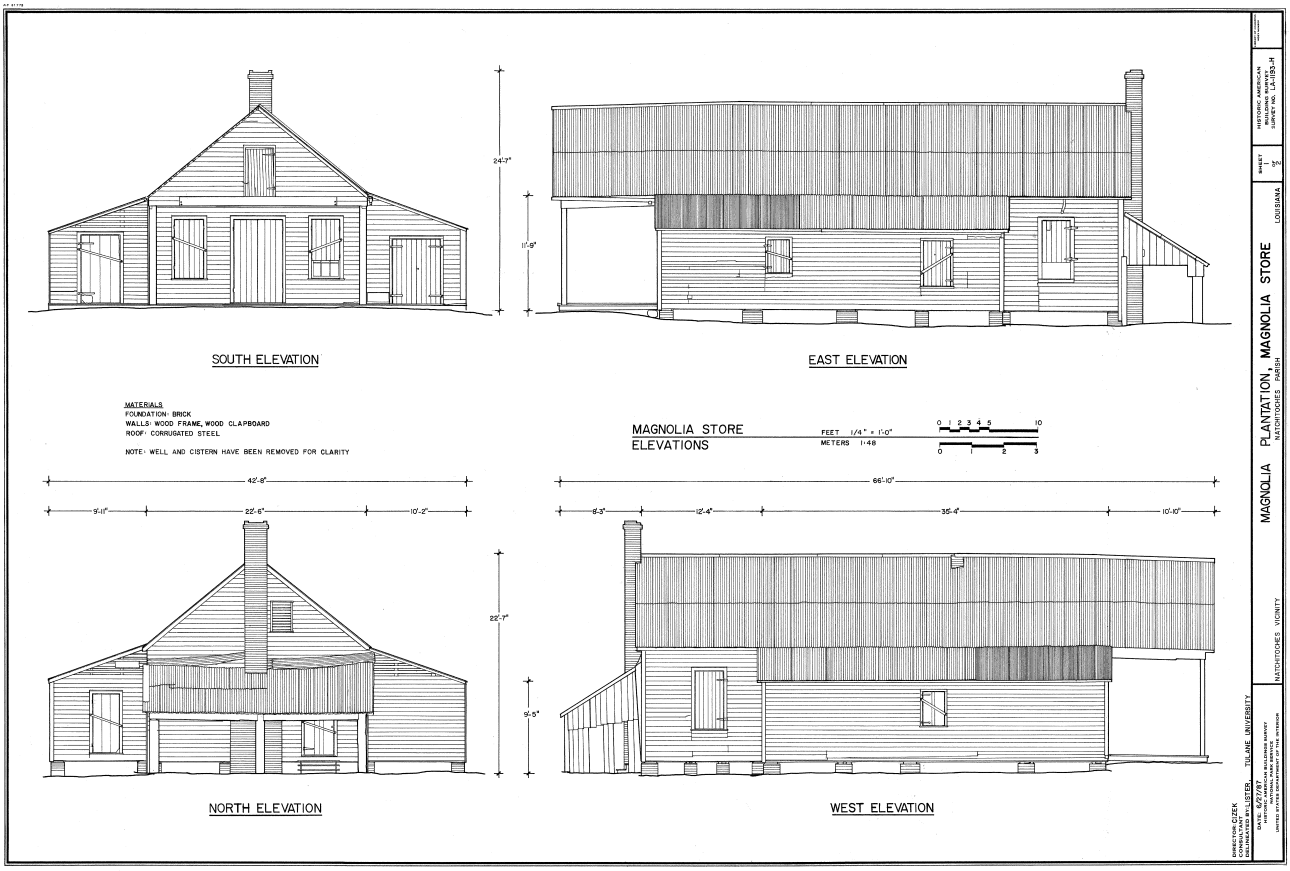


FIGURE 6-18. HABS drawings of Magnolia Plantation Store. HABS.

Chapter 7: Early Twentieth Century (WWI & WWII) (ca. 1900–1945)

Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century brought changes faster and more far-reaching than any other time in the history of the Cane River. Cotton lost its role as king, and in fact, agricultural areas fell into a severe economic depression almost a full decade before the rest of the country entered the Great Depression. There was not one, but two world wars, and the aftermath of each saw many of the region's young people move away to seek better opportunities in cities and industrial centers. Even transportation changed forever, with the damming of an oxbow in the Cane River to create Cane River Lake beginning in the first years of the decade, and then the construction of the iron bridge across the river at Bermuda in 1912.

Telephones, electricity, automobiles, and other forms of mechanization would each play a role in forever changing life on the *La Côté Joyeux*. Other far-reaching changes included the societal changes, such as women's suffrage, which was ratified as the Nineteenth Amendment to the Bill of Rights in 1920.

Creole identity did not vanish during this period, but the status of having pure French or Spanish blood lessened in importance as the United States entered a nationalistic phase during first World War I and then several decades later, during World War II. In 1914, an article in the *Madison Journal*, from Tallulah, Louisiana, quoted Louisiana state representative Albert Estopinal—himself a Creole—who said,

> within the last thirty years there has been a widespread adoption of what may be called up-to-date American ways of thinking by the Creoles. There are those still left, however, who adhere to the old traditional of our blood, for we are proud of our French and Spanish ancestry.[1]

The word "Creole" continued to spread through the popular national lexicon, often in the form of a descriptor for cooking styles and types of food, and names for everything from ships and sports teams.

People

White Creoles

Oakland Plantation Family

Jacques Alphonse Prud'homme died on February 16, 1919, at the age of eighty years and ten months. The *Natchitoches Times* wrote of his death: "…and thus passed one of the most highly honored citizens of this parish. He took a prominent part in all public and patriotic movements for many years." After the funeral, held in Natchitoches, area residents gathered in the Amuzu Theatre to "give some expression of regret at the loss of this good citizen." Prud'homme was lauded as

> everything that the expression of "Southern Gentleman" implies; he was wealthy, but

1. "Out-of-Ordinary People," *The Madison Journal* (Tallulah, La.), July 25, 1914, 2.

> without ostentation and show; highly intellectual but without conceit; he was kindly, courteous and gentle; he had all the Christian virtues himself and yet was most tolerant of the faults and weaknesses of others.[2]

Alphonse and Eliza Prud'homme's second son, Jules Lecomte, had preceded his father in death by three years. Born in 1867 and affectionately known as "Uncle Buddy," Jules died on October 5, 1916, at the age of forty-nine. He had managed the plantation store for years and lived alone in a room that had been added to the rear of the building. Jules, who had never married, was described in the local newspaper as having a "quiet reserved nature."[3]

With the death of his father, Pierre Phanor Prud'homme, who was the eldest surviving son of the family, inherited Oakland Plantation. Upon his graduation from University of Notre Dame, Phanor returned to Oakland to continue farming and running the store in place of his brother. Drafted into the army just prior to his father's death, Pierre Phanor was in Paris at the time, and was unable to assume full management of the plantation until his return.[4]

Pierre Phanor married Marie Laure Cloutier on February 3, 1891. The couple went on to have nine children, two of whom died as infants, and one, Louise Vivian, who died at age six. The remaining children of Pierre Phanor and Marie Laure were James Alphonse (b. December 28, 1896), Elisa Elizabeth (b. December 12, 1900), Marie Adele (b. March 3, 1903), Pierre Phanor (b. January 26, 1909), Marie Lucie (b. May 25, 1911), and Louis Donald (b. August 30, 1913). The son, Pierre Phanor, carried not only his father's name, but that of his elder brother, who had died on February 28, 1908, when he was only 11 days old.[5]

Phanor's mother, Elisa LeComte Prud'homme, died just a month short of her eighty-third birthday in October 1923.[6] Over the next few decades, several of Phanor's siblings also passed away, including Julia Eleanor in 1933 and Edward Carrington in 1941. Phanor Prud'homme died on May 21, 1948, and was buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Natchitoches.[7]

Like the generations before, Phanor's eldest son, James Alphonse Prud'homme, inherited Oakland Plantation. James Alphonse, or Alphonse II, had married Rosalie Lucile Keator on August 9, 1924, in Webster Groves, St. Louis, Missouri. The couple, who moved to Oakland Plantation, went on to have four children: James Alphonse III (b. 1927), Kenneth Andrew (b. 1929), Mayo Keator (b. 1932), and Rose Vivian (b. 1934).[8]

During World War II, Rosalie Keator Prud'homme's parents also came to live at Oakland. Her father, Mayo Sands Keator (1869–1955), was a retired civil engineer who had worked for years on the railroads and was also fascinated by new technology. As an inventor, he converted Uncle Buddy's room in the back of the plantation store into his new workshop, where he spent hours working on his projects. He made lamps, a telescope, a photo enlarger (out of a coffee pot), and a perpetual-motion machine.[9] It was through "Grandpa" Keator and his brother, Charles Keator, who lived at Campti, that the first telephones were installed at Oakland. Although the exact date the Oakland telephones were installed is unknown, the Cane River area had telephones by 1906. The Oakland telephones also had a local "intercom" system that connected the office in the store to the Big House and to the Doctor's Cottage.[10]

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2. "General J. Alphonse Prudhomme," *The Natchitoches Times*, February 21, 1919, 5.
3. "Died," *The Natchitoches Times*, October 6, 1916, 7.
4. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 89.
5. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 156-157.
6. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 38.
7. Finch, "Pierre Phanor Prudhomme, II."
8. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 156-158.
9. Many of Grandpa Keator's inventions are part of the CARI collections, including CARI-111 and CARI-36.
10. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 19-20.

Magnolia Plantation Family

Atala LeComte Hertzog died in 1897, and Matthew Hertzog died in 1903.[11] Prior to their deaths, the couple consolidated their plantation ownership from the shared arrangement established by Ambrose LeComte to entirely under the ownership of Atala and Matthew. The consolidation of ownership eased passing the property by the Hertzogs to their own children, Ambrose J. and Frances "Fanny."

On May 21, 1903, *The Times* (Shreveport) reported that Matthew Hertzog was "quite ill at his Magnolia plantation on Cane river."[12] The following week, the same paper reported that he died on May 26, 1903, and was buried the following evening, and that surviving him were his two children, Ambrose Hertzog and Mrs. Fanny Chopin, both of Derry.[13]

Although the 1903 newspaper notice regarding Matthew's death identified his daughter as Fanny Hertzog, she had married Lamy Chopin on October 12, 1893, and would have been known as Fanny Chopin.[14] The couple had two children, Matthew Hertzog Chopin (b. 1897) and Lamy Chopin (b. 1900). Lamy Sr.'s brother, Oscar, was married to Katherine O'Flaherty, better known as Kate Chopin, who was widely recognized as a leading author of her time.[15] Lamy Chopin, Sr., died on April 11, 1910, and his widow, Fanny, remarried on August 31, 1911.[16] Fannie's second husband was James P. Guillot of Cloutierville in Natchitoches Parish.[17]

Fannie Chopin-Guillot's brother, Ambrose J. Hertzog, graduated in 1876 from Notre Dame University and went on to attend Tulane University in New Orleans, where he later graduated with a degree in law. He became a member of the law firm of Hunter, Mosely and Hertzog in Alexandria, where he practiced until shortly before his father's death; at that time, he returned home to manage Magnolia Plantation.[18] In 1892, while living in Alexandria, Ambrose married Sarah (Sallie) Hunter at the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.[19] The couple had five children, Marie Louise (b. March 31, 1893), Marie Atala (b. February 11, 1895), Matthew (b. May 11, 1897), Sarah (Sally) (b. July 16, 1899), and Ambrose John (b. November 20, 1907).[20]

Ambrose J. Hertzog died in January 1921 at the age of 64. [21] The obituary for Ambrose noted that he was "a man of noble character and number[s] his friends by the legion. He was a lawyer of ability and after giving up his profession to manage his plantation, he demonstrated his wonderful ability in that line of endeavor." His son, Matthew, assumed management of Magnolia following his father's death.

Three years after assuming the management of Magnolia planation, Matthew Hertzog married Elanor Lydia Compton, a descendant to the Baillio-Compton family who owned the Kent Plantation House in Alexandria.[22]

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11. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 37.
12. "At Natchitoches," *The Times* (Shreveport), May 21, 1903, 2.
13. "Natchitoches," *The Times* (Shreveport), May 27, 1903, 2.
14. Ancestry.com, Louisiana Marriages, 1718-1925, Lamy Chopin.
15. Pattee, *A History of American Literature*, 364.
16. Finch, "Frances 'Fannie' Hertzog Chopin."
17. "Social and Personal," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria, La.), August 30, 1911, 5.
18. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 44.
19. "Social and Personal," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria, La.), August 18, 1892, 4.
20. Holly, "Matthew Hertzog."
21. "Died," *The Natchitoches Times*, January 14, 1921, 1.
22. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 48; Kent Plantation House is the plantation home constructed by Pierre Baillio II, 1796–1800. Like the Prud'hommes and LeComte/ Hertzog family, Baillio was a successful Creole family. The property was sold in 1842 to Robert C. Hynson, who renamed the plantation after his birthplace in Kent County, Maryland ("Tour," Kent Plantation House).

Creoles of Color

Most of the Creoles of color who lived near the plantations were sharecroppers or tenant farmers. In 1912, at Oakland Plantation, they included

> Frank, John, Edward, and Felix Helaire; Augustus Lewis; Collins Page; Julio Jean Baptiste; Ignacias Jean Baptiste (whose last name was later recorded as Batise or Batiste); Eviriste Dorcino, J. B. Edmonds (Bacquie), Sr.; Neville Jones; Emanuel Roques, Delina Roques; Anthony Roques; Amogee Roques; Eugene Metoyer; Alcee Metoyer; Clay LaCour; and Charles Jones.[23]

Other Creole descendants of Oakland slaves were working on other plantations in the area. These included Henry Moses, who was working for Joseph Cloutier; Caesar Petit and Simon Toussaint, working for Lestant Prud'homme; and Darziline and Seraphine Nargot and Bob Dorcino, working for P. Albert Prud'homme.[24]

Groups of Creoles of color were established in some of the larger towns, including Alexandria and Shreveport, or further away in Texas and in northern industrial towns, including Chicago and Detroit. In their new homes, Creoles of color created enclaves that preserved the Creole culture.[25]

African Americans

The white plantation owners enjoyed close relationships with the African American community, particularly those who worked as house servants. The Prud'hommes, like most of the Cane River plantation owners, continued to hire African Americans to cook, clean, and watch over their children. Alphonse Prud'homme II shared with his granddaughter, Catherine Adeline "Cappy," several recollections of those who worked on the plantation during his childhood, and listed family servants named Manuel, Charles, and Lee, although he could not recall last names. Among the stories shared by Alphonse II was his fond recollection of his young nurse, who was nicknamed "Nig." Nig was little more than a child herself, and was very protective of Alphonse (or Phonsie as he was known at the time), even attempting to save him by trying to hit a goat that had jumped through the fence into the area where they were playing. Unfortunately, Nig's attempt went astray, and instead she hit Phonsie on the nose, leaving a permanent knot.[26]

Documentation has not yet been found regarding the relationships between the white owners of Magnolia and the African Americans who worked at the plantation. The WPA visited Magnolia in the 1930s and reported that

> tenants on the Magnolia Plantation are nearly all mulattos and attend school at either Cloutierville or Ilse Breville [*sic*].[27]

The "mulattos" observed at Magnolia may have also been Creoles of color. It is notable that school attendance was observed and commented on during this period of racial segregation.

Both Creole of color and African American communities, even decades after Reconstruction ended, continued to struggle to acquire the basic rights they had been promised. Among these was the ability to register to vote and then to successfully be able to cast their ballots. One of the leaders in this effort was Dr. E. A. Johnson, who was considered a pillar of the African American community in Natchitoches and went on to become the NAACP state president in the late 1940s.[28]

The separation between Creoles of color and African Americans continued. In the early twentieth century this was facilitated, in part, by

23. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 109-110.
24. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 109-110.
25. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 276.
26. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 108.
27. United States Works Progress Administration, "Magnolia Plantation," 2.
28. Rasmussen, "Dr. E.A. Johnson and Mrs. Crittie Johnson, First Offices."

the "paper bag test." The concept of judging a person on their skin color was not new—in early instances, one might determine which slave to purchase based on a perceived difference in ability or stamina based on the darkness of their skin.[29] In the twentieth century this practice was used to assign or exclude privilege or advantages. For example, if a person's skin was lighter than a brown paper bag, they were given access to clubs and other entertainment venues, but prohibited entry if darker.[30]

This practice was alluded to in the recollections of a young man about his first visit to St. Anthony Catholic Church in Natchitoches in 1945. After attending services in the morning, he wrote to his mother about the church founded to serve the religious needs of Catholic people of color. He wrote, "there's a man who stands at the door and he check your hair and your color, and I just did make it in."[31] The reference to checking hair may have been to the practice of running a comb through a person's hair. To pass the test, the comb had to move smoothly through straight hair.[32]

Lifeways

The dawning of the new century saw the entry of the Cane River area into the age of mechanization and electrification. Exciting new changes to Natchitoches Parish in the 1920s, particularly for those who could afford it, included radio and automobiles. Changes there reflected those seen nationwide. By 1929, over ten million people in the US had radio receivers, many of whom were rural dwellers who had never been as well-connected with the larger world. By the 1930s, lifestyle changes included family gatherings around the radio to listen to the news, broadcast comedies, or musical entertainment. Even broadcasted sports events and crop reports had their place in daily activities. By the late 1930s, motion pictures had further narrowed the gap between rural and urban dwellers, with both being shaped by the same mass culture.[33]

After World War I, the automobile, which had been introduced to the Cane River area as early as 1910 when Phanor Prud'homme purchased his Model T, became more and more commonplace in the area.[34] By the mid-1920s, the automobile was more affordable, and many of the planter families purchased their first cars.[35] Evidence of car ownership is seen in the surviving garages at both Oakland and Magnolia Plantations. At Magnolia, one of the old chicken coops near the Big House was converted into a garage by adding a large door to the north elevation.

In the late 1930s, rural electrification, made possible through the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (REA), finally made its way to Cane River, resulting in even greater advantages for area residents.[36] Among the many changes were the rewiring of the nineteenth-century lighting fixtures to use electricity at Oakland's Big House, the addition of a Coca-Cola refrigeration bin at the Prud'homme store, and the installation of electric pumps for hot water at the Big House at Oakland.[37] Electricity was installed in the Big House at Magnolia in the 1930s and in the quarters about a decade later, in the 1940s.[38] Records of the Valley Electric Membership Corporation (VEMCO) indicate that the tenant cabins that once lined LA-119, which passes in front of the plantation, did not receive electricity until the early 1950s.[39]

These changes led to a growing awareness of the loss of traditional lifeways in the Cane River area.

29. Kerr, "The Paper Bag Principle," 273.
30. Brasseaux, Fontenot, and Obre, *Creoles of Color*, 113.
31. Rasmussen, "St. Anthony Catholic Church."
32. Brasseaux Fontenot, and Obre, *Creoles of Color*, 113.
33. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 140.
34. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 36.
35. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 140
36. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 18.
37. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, xvii, 56; Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 39.
38. Crespi, *A Brief Ethnography,* 44.
39. Fuqua, "An Unlikely Paper Trail."

In the twentieth century, the old plantation that had flourished under the ownership of Creole of color Louis Metoyer, but had been lost by his grandson Théopile Louis due to debts in 1847, was purchased by a young white planter named John Hampton Henry. Henry devoted his time to the development of the plantation, which he renamed Melrose, while his wife, formerly known as Carmelite Leudivine Garret, set out to restore the property to its once stately position.[40] "Miss Cammie," as Mrs. Henry was affectionately known, was an overseer's daughter who had been raised in South Louisiana and was fascinated by the Cane River's French heritage. She convinced members of the remaining community to use their skills to restore the Isle's buildings on "peasants pay"—not for Miss Cammie's sake, but because they still regarded the house, in their hearts, as the family home (Figure 7-2). She would exchange groceries for paintings or furniture from the family, who agreed, since it meant the family heirlooms were being preserved in "their" house.

Over time these collections grew to include items from beyond the former Metoyer plantation. Miss Cammie collected parish courthouse records and more. In the 1930s, the plantation served as a mecca for writers, painters, and others interested in the arts. During this time, Mrs. Henry invited Francois Mignon to help her organize some of her collections and assist with the many guests. The collection had grown to more than seven thousand books and manuscripts, and 256 scrapbooks filled with photographs, clippings, and other ephemera.[41]



FIGURE 7-1. Cammie Henry posed at the looms set up to display historic crafts. Melrose Plantation.

Cammie Henry died on Melrose Plantation on November 17, 1948.[42] After the sale of her home, her collections were donated to Northwestern State University and named the Melrose Collection. Today, this collection is the largest in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, housed in the Watson Memorial Library at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches.

Miss Cammie also started an art colony at Melrose Plantation that became one of the most popular in the South. Notable attendees included author William Faulkner; Lyle Saxon, a writer and journalist for *The Times-Picayune*; and William Spratling, a silver designer and artist.[43] Famed artist Clementine Hunter, who worked as a cook at Melrose, began to paint in the late 1940s, presumably while Cammie Henry was still alive (see Chapter 8 for more information).

Health

While few plantations had their own doctors during the early decades of the twentieth century, the increasing ease of travel made it more feasible to seek medical intervention when it was needed. Additionally, the plantation stores at Oakland and Magnolia were stocked with a variety of medications. But this did not mean the community was without medical challenges. In 1905, the newspapers were filled with articles on yellow fever and the resulting quarantines.[44] In most years, newspapers carried a number of articles recommending pest eradication to prevent

40. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 276.
41. Gutman, "Cammie Henry."
42. "Mrs. Henry, 77, of Melrose, Dies at Natchitoches," *Weekly Town Talk* (Alexandria), November 20, 1948.
43. National Park Service, "Yucca (Melrose) Plantation."
44. "Yellow Fever Reported Yesterday by Natchitoches Health Officer," *The Times* (Shreveport), September 17, 1905, 1.

malaria. In 1922, there was also great concern about how to fight tuberculosis.[45]

A variety of health issues were reported in *The Natchitoches Times* in September 1921. The paper announced that doctors were passing out free hookworm medicine, that vaccinations against typhoid fever were available, and that a mobilization plan was being implemented to reduce the threat of malaria. The plan recommended, for example, adding oil to ditches and ponds to destroy the breeding sites for the mosquitoes that would hatch the following spring. A *Natchitoches Times* article from September 1921 also promoted good water drainage, clearing water sources of vegetation, and exposing water surfaces to sunshine. Better yet, the article recommended, farmers should stock standing ponds with minnows to eat the mosquitoes and their eggs.[46]

When deaths did occur, funeral practices varied between the white and African American communities. White families typically held funerals in a church, with a gathering or "wake" held afterwards to celebrate the deceased and comfort their family. Local African Americans, as described by Alphonse Prud'homme II, "had a 'sitting-up' or wake that was held in the home of the deceased on the night of the death, and they would bury the individual the following day." This statement was corroborated and expanded upon by Harry Jackson, an African American living in Natchitoches. Jackson explained that after a person died, his or her body was kept in the house. Jackson further explained that

> they would call, and the undertaker would come, and he would embalm you lying there in your house. Then after they embalm you, you got to stay there. They wake [the body] that night, and it wouldn't be moved until that next day when it was carried to the graveyard.[47]

Another difference was in the presentation of the body and the chants performed during the wake. Prud'homme noted that the deceased African American person was usually laid out on a sheet over a board at the wake. Those attending the wake had a "sing-song" like chant that they sang over the body. In another journal entry, Alphonse II's uncle, Edward Carrington Prud'homme, described the death and funeral of a former worker, Augustus Johnson, in March 1910:

> Gus Johnson (St. Ormy) a wandering Negro died late yesterday evening at JB Edmonds (Bacquie's) cabbin [sic] – This negro was born and raised here but was always wandering. He is reported owing many people. [N]egros kep[t] up a continual howl all last night over the body. Funeral at 3 pm this aft. [G]ood size crowd in attendance.[48]

In both the white and African American communities, funerals provided an occasion for community members to gather.

Religion

Religion continued to play a major role in the Cane River region. Many in the white community continued to practice Catholicism, although other churches became more prevalent. The Baptist church grew tremendously, with efforts to organize their large number in the parish undertaken in 1912.[49]

The Catholic Church continued to have a strong position in the community and in the personal lives of the Prud'hommes and Hertzogs. For example, in 1910, Sallie Hertzog installed a private chapel in the ell at the rear of the house.[50] The selected room is thought to have once been the bedroom of her father-in-law, Matthew Hertzog. Having a chapel close by was very important to Sallie, who was in poor health and unable to attend mass in Cloutierville or any other nearby Catholic

45. "Health Letters," *The Natchitoches Times*, March 24, 1922, 1.
46. "Notes from our Parish Health Unit," *The Natchitoches Times*, September 9, 1921.
47. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 76.
48. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 107.
49. "Parish Baptist Association," *The Times* (Shreveport), August 20, 1912, 2.
50. "Social and Personal," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria, La.), August 18, 1892, 4.

church. Priests became frequent visitors to the plantation to offer mass.[51]

In Bermuda, the St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Chapel was constructed on land donated by Mrs. Charles Cloutier (nee Marie Adeline Prud'homme, the younger sister of Alphonse Prud'homme). It was consecrated and held its first mass on Monday, May 17, 1909.[52] A newspaper article describing the ceremony noted that the chapel was "a very neat one and the pride of every catholic in the neighborhood."[53] The ceremonies were carried out by Rev. Bishop Van de Ven, in attendance by Father Jeroid of Isle Brevelle and Father Van de Guard of Cloutierville, and were attended by seventy-five area Catholics. Father Jeroid was scheduled to hold services in the new chapel twice a month, "much to the delight of all interested."[54]

The church was mentioned frequently in the journals and diaries of family members. Edward Carrington Prud'homme wrote in his journal on September 24, 1913:

> First communion at St. Charles Chapel today. Priest from Alexandria assisted Father Schlosen. Seven first communicants (one boy and six girls). Good crowd in attendance. Priests were entertained at church—basket picnic style. All report a very pleasant time.[55]

The chapel is now owned by St. Augustine and has been given over for use to the St. Augustine Historical Society.[56]

The differences between the churches of the white and the African American communities could be quite dramatic. Instead of the calm and often subdued practices of the local white Catholic and Methodist churches, the African American churches were lively. In addition, in contrast with the career ministers of the white churches, leaders of the African American churches filled multiple roles as ministers, orators, and politicians, with the church playing a central role in the African American community (Figure 7-2). The church leaders included not only the pastors, but also the deacons, who Teal noted were "instrumental in proving the backbone or social change in the black community."[57]

Among one of the most interesting aspects of the African American church was their use of the Cane River to carry out baptisms. In 1906, an entry in Edward Carrington Prud'homme's journal noted that "Negroes had big church today and baptizing – Regular Circus."[58] In 1921, the Derry Baptist Church, presumably St. Andrew Baptist Church, wrote in *The Natchitoches Times* that they had just closed a two-week meeting led by Reverend Strother, who was assisted by Reverend Dodge. The event culminated with twenty-five joining the church, with all but two being baptized in the Cane River, as was witnessed by several hundred people.[59]



FIGURE 7-2. African Methodist Episcopal Church located close to Magnolia Plantation in the 1930s. Louisiana Digital Library.

51. Crespi, *A Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation*, 43, 58; Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 45.
52. "St. Charles Catholic Chapel."
53. "Bermuda," *The Natchitoches Times*, May 21, 1909, 5.
54. "Bermuda.," *The Natchitoches Times,* May 2, 1909, 5.
55. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 135.
56. "St. Charles Catholic Chapel."
57. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 58-62.
58. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 130
59. "Cloutierville and Derry," *The Natchitoches Times*, September 16, 1921, 1.

Education

The Prud'homme tradition of providing children with a Catholic education continued into the early twentieth century. In the early part of the century, the children attended school on the Murray Lambre place, along with children from other plantations. The school was described by Alphonse II as a one-room schoolhouse where all grades were taught. School lasted nine months, with classes held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with the start time accommodating those who had to walk a long distance to get to the schoolhouse. The Prud'homme children were able to ride horseback to school, using horses known as "Old Sailor" and "Little May."[60]

Conditions improved for white students who lived in the parish and attended public schools, with a total of three brick and seventy-nine frame schools for whites in the parish for the school year of 1913–1914.[61] The 5,390 white students enrolled in Natchitoches schools attended an average of 148 days, at an average expenditure per child of $1.50 per month (based on enrollment rather than attendance).[62]

However, the 1914 State Superintendent report indicated that African American children attended on average only sixty-seven days of school in the parish, with a total enrolment of 2,720 students, including 1,110 males and 1,610 females. The number of African American students in the parish was considerably lower than the white students, as was the average monthly expenditure for each black child based on enrollment: just $0.67 per student per month. There was also no record of how many schools there were for the African American students, or what kind of equipment they had available.[63]

Public education in Natchitoches Parish was the key subject of the school board proceedings of February 19, 1915. According to the minutes, the board discussed teachers' salaries, better plans for operating "negro schools," incidentals for public schools, plans for appropriating general funds, and summer schools. The minutes noted

> that we encourage the consolidation of negro schools wherever convenient and that a definite appropriation be made in the budget for negro schools in order to increase the efficiency of the teachers and provide better equipment and better system in general.[64]

It is clear that some attempts were made to improve the education of African American children; however, conditions remained very unequal.

Despite the state of public education for blacks in the parish, good schools were not entirely limited to the white community in Natchitoches. In 1910, Professor J. W. Thomas arrived from Baton Rouge to form the Lincoln Institute for African American children. The school, unlike other schools for African Americans, was initially supported entirely by the students' parents and eventually gained financial support through the Rosenwald funds. Rosenwald Schools were created by Julius Rosenwald, an executive in the Sears Roebuck Company, who directed much of his philanthropic efforts to improving the quality of education for African Americans in the early twentieth-century South. Unfortunately, due to problems with long-term financing, the school was deeded to the Natchitoches Parish School Board in 1919, who maintained it as a public school for the African American community. For the older students, there were training school opportunities, including the Natchitoches Parish Training School Trade and Industrial Project.[65]

While public schools were being made available for the children of Natchitoches parish, the plantation owners' children continued to enjoy extensive educations in distant locations. Both

60. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 105-106.
61. Louisiana State Department of Education (LSDE), *Public School Statistics*, 90.
62. LSDE, *Public School Statistics*, 86.
63. LSDE, *Public School Statistics*, 176-182.
64. "School Board Proceedings," *The Natchitoches Times*, February 19, 1915, 1.
65. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 79-80.

Ambrose and Fannie Hertzog graduated from University of Notre Dame.[66] However, Fanny's son, Matt Hertzog Chopin, chose a school slightly closer. In 1917, the Alexandria newspaper, *Town Talk,* reported that "Mrs. Fannie Guillot, of Derry, is en route home from Mobile where she attended commencement exercises at Spring Hill, whence her son, Mr. Hertzog Chopin, was graduated this week."[67] Spring Hill College was founded in 1830 and is the oldest Catholic college in the Southeast, the third oldest Jesuit college in the United States, and the fifth oldest Catholic college in the United States.[68]

Catholic schools were not the only ones favored by the Cane River families. In 1918, a notice in the local newspaper reported that "The following men leave for Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge on August 15th, Mathew Hertzog, Derry; Alphonse Prudhomme, Bermuda."[69]

In 1884, the State Normal College in Natchitoches was founded on the site of the old convent that had housed the Religious of the Sacred Heart earlier in the century.[70] The school changed its name to Louisiana State Normal College in 1921, and less than a decade later it was described as the tenth largest teaching college in the United States, with an enrollment of nearly 2,000 students.[71] At the time, it boasted of training nearly three-fourths of the elementary school teachers in the state. Over the next two decades the school continued to expand further by developing an increasingly diverse program. As a result, a popular amendment to the state constitution was passed in 1944, changing the name again to Northwestern State College of Louisiana.[72]

Social and Recreational Life

The people of the Cane River area, including Natchitoches and both Oakland and Magnolia Plantations, have always been very social, perhaps in part due to the isolation of the agrarian life. As travel became easier, the isolation lessened, but there were always traditional times to gather, including for weddings and funerals, and both civic and religious holidays.

One of the newest holidays celebrated in the region was related to the African American emancipation. Edward Carrington Prud'homme, on June 19, 1907, wrote in his journal, "Lot of Negroes loafing. Say they are taking 19th Emancipation day and then they are needed in crop."[73] This holiday, which began in 1865, is better known as "Juneteenth" and celebrates the day Union soldiers led by Major General Gordon Granger landed at Galveston, Texas, with the news that the war had ended and the enslaved were now free. This was actually two-and-one-half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which had become law on January 1, 1863. The holiday spread slowly, but in 1898, in Houston, Texas, a park was established and dedicated as Emancipation Park to host the local celebration.[74] This was almost a decade before the Natchitoches celebration.

People also gathered casually at the stores on Oakland and Magnolia plantations (Figure 7-3). The Oakland store served as a gathering place for both the white and African American residents of Bermuda, due in part to its role as the local post office. The store served as the post office between the 1880s and 1919, then again between 1924 and about 1967.[75]

66. "Notre Dame University," *Notre Dame Scholastic* (May 10, 1879), 546; (June 29, 1889), 720.
67. "Social and Personal," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria, La.), June 21, 1917, 2.
68. Spring Hill College, "History of Spring Hill College."
69. "Boys Leave Aug. 14th. And 15th," *The Natchitoches Times*, August 16, 1918, 1.
70. LeBreton, *Northwestern State University*, 6.
71. "Trails Across Natchitoches," *The Times* (Shreveport), October 26, 1928, 28.
72. LeBreton, *Northwestern State University*, 193.
73. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 131.
74. "History of Juneteenth."
75. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 155.

More formal gatherings were often held, particularly by the white members of the community, in the form of social clubs. Local newspapers regularly carried updates, such as "Mrs. J. Alphonse Prudhomme entertained the Social Club on Wednesday afternoon. Sixteen games of euchre were enjoyed, after which a tempting lunch was served."[76] Men were not excluded from these gatherings, but they tended to belong to nationally known organizations such as the Knights of Columbus and the Freemasons. The Prince Hall Order of the Freemasons, the African American Freemasons' temple, was established by John G. Lewis, Sr. in 1903, but did not have a permanent space.[77]

In addition to social or benevolent organization gatherings, baseball games, fishing, picnics, and hunting expeditions at the family camp in Kisatchie Hills were all regular activities enjoyed by the Prud'homme family. Horse racing continued to be a local favorite pastime (Figure 7-4). On March 5, 1921, just three months after his father's passing, Matthew Hertzog made his first entry in his family's "Turf Book."[78] He went on to record a number of victories for races in the book, which had been used by the family for the previous seventy-four years since the first entries were made.



FIGURE 7-3. Gathering at the Magnolia Store in 1940. *Slavery and Its Aftermath*.

In 1912, after the completion of the new steel truss bridge across the Cane River at Bermuda, the location became a favorite place for swimming (Figure 7-5). Marcile Prud'homme Harmon recalled swimming off the bridge as a teenager growing up in the area. One of her favorite recollections was how she and her girlfriends would scramble to the top of the iron structure and dive in. "My cousin, Marie Cloutier, she was the real daredevil," Mrs. Harmon recalled. "She'd get up as high as she could on those graters (sic) that go across and she'd dive in from there."[79]



FIGURE 7-4. Pierce Rachal with Matthew Hertzog's racehorses in 1939. *Slavery and Its Aftermath*.



FIGURE 7-5. Steel truss Bermuda Bridge (left) constructed in 1912 across the road from Oakland Plantation. Vehicular traffic was later rerouted to the concrete bridge shown in the foreground, constructed in 1982. Commonwealth.

76. "Bermuda," *The Natchitoches Times*, February 19, 1915, 1.
77. Amistad Research Center, "M. W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge."
78. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 46.
79. Des Jardins, "Bermuda Bridge," 50-51.

The church was also a center for social activities.[80] In addition to the regular services, church meetings were held regularly and typically included special speakers, such as Dr. W. Y. Quisenberry, the State Baptist Evangelist, who made two presentations in December 1907. The first special service was entitled "The Home of the Saved"; that evening, he spoke again, for men only, on "The Home of the Unsaved."[81] Musical concerts, fundraisers to benefit different programs in the churches, and of course, programing around religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas were also popular social activities held at churches.

Family parties went on despite world events. Even though World War I had begun in Europe in August 1914, it did little to disrupt the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Phanor and Elisa LeComte Prud'homme. An elaborate party was held to commemorate the occasion at Oakland on September 4, 1914. Guests arrived from around the state for the party, which was catered by a New Orleans firm that also provided an orchestra.[82]

By the late 1930s, rural dwellers were just as enamored with movies as their urban compatriots. Cane River residents of all races recalled seeing movies in Derry and in bars along the river into the 1940s.[83]

Occupations

Planters/Farmers and Overseers/Farm Managers

As technology progressed on the plantations, the owner or planter often took on the role of overseer or farm manager. In 1910, Pierre Phanor Prud'homme is listed in the census as a manager of a farm.[84] Similarly, the 1900 census records Matthew Hertzog as "Farmer" and his son, Ambrose, as "Manager."[85] The 1930 census indicated that "Matt" Hertzog was a "Farmer" on a "general farm."[86]

In both the 1900 and 1930 censuses, Neuville Prud'homme was listed as "farm manager" and as a boarder at the Magnolia Big House.[87] Magnolia Plantation appears to have also had an overseer who managed the day-to-day field operations. The 1940 US Census suggests that Henry Gallien was the overseer that year because of the position of his name in the census as head of the first family listed after the Hertzogs.[88] His placement in the census also suggests that the family occupied the Overseer's House at Magnolia. Henry's son, Leslie, was also listed in the 1940 census as a twenty-four-year-old farm laborer; he would go on to serve as the overseer at Magnolia after his father. Other overseers between 1893 and the mid-1950s included Edmond Delacorda, F. M. Rouget, Telese Rachal, and Floyd Thompson.[89] Unfortunately, there are no records with the precise dates of the service of the other men. The beginning date for the list of overseers is based on the day the Hertzog family was finally able to move into the restored Big House, turning their temporary residence into the Overseer's House.

Following Leslie Gallien, Telese Rachal and his wife occupied the Overseer's House, presumably during the time Telese served as the overseer. Based on recollections by Betty Hertzog, daughter of Matthew Hertzog II and his wife, Lydia Compton Hertzog, the Rachals lived in the Overseer's House for a year, but never hooked up

80. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 147.
81. "Local and Personal," *The Natchitoches Times*, December 20, 1907, 3.
82. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 36.
83. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 140.
84. *Thirteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium, Louisiana.*
85. *Twelfth Census of the United States, State Compendium, Louisiana.*
86. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium, Louisiana.*
87. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 14.
88. *Sixteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium, Louisiana.*
89. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 14-15.

the hot water heater that had been installed in 1948.[90]

At Oakland, the overseer duties were held for at least two generations in the early twentieth century by members of the Metoyer family, the last to serve in that position at the plantation. René (or Rainey) Metoyer was born in 1870, but probably did not assume his duties as overseer until the twentieth century. Rainey died in 1946, and it was likely before this that his son, Leo Louis Metoyer, Sr., assumed the role of overseer. Leo was born in 1912 and lived until the 1990s, working for at least a portion of his life as Oakland's overseer. Both generations of the Metoyers lived in the Overseer's House at Oakland.[91]

Tenant Farmers, Hired Laborers, and Sharecroppers

Tenant farming was a way of life for many families in the early twentieth century. The Great Depression, beginning in 1929, hit tenant farmers particularly hard because they simply lacked the resources to get them through tough financial times. Lawrence Helaire, former tenant farmer at Oakland, recalled that "a lot of them left their crops and just moved." He told a story about one such farmer, who abandoned his farm and left for California with "only a changing and shoes," but when he reached California, it was only to find that the situation was no different there, so he returned to the Cane River region.[92]

Tenants who did stay on the farm often sought additional tasks that could be done for day wages. While this was common before the Depression, even more people were interested in taking on these tasks as they battled their own financial hardships. For example, tenant farmer Emile Llorance also worked at the Oakland gin and was responsible for sharpening 160 gin saws in one day in 1928. Additional Oakland Plantation tenant farmers with other jobs included John Helaire, who worked in the flower garden (bottle garden); Bob Medlow, who did occasional blacksmithing; and Charley Helaire, who hauled wood for the Oakland gin and installed a press in the Oakland gin. Felix Helaire worked at the press, the Oakland gin, and on the bridge, drove wagons, and repaired the pigeon houses, in addition to his usual farming, butchering, and ferry operations.[93]

During the Depression, the Hertzog family was able to keep the tenants and other workers employed. The Hertzogs housed the day laborers in the brick quarters (Slave Cabins #1–8).[94] The day laborers would garden in the area and make modifications to the quarters themselves. As originally constructed, these buildings consisted of two chambers, without an interior connection, but the day laborers installed doors between the two interior chambers, perhaps to provide space for extended families or to more easily divide the sleeping area from the main living quarters. Day laborers at Magnolia were sometimes able to improve their living circumstances by moving out of the quarters to other areas of the plantation. Some of the workers were known to occupy former Hertzog family homes, and others had wooden houses located in a line north of the Big House.[95]

As World War II began, the old plantation system, even as it was modified with tenancy and sharecropping, was crumbling. Lawrence Helaire, who had been one of the Prud'hommes' long-time tenants recalled that "[w]e had to go somewhere we could find something to do and make some

90. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 14.
91. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 158-159; Blackwell, "Leo L. Metoyer." Leo Sr.'s daughter, Mary Sue Metoyer, and his son, Leo Jr., are CARI VIPs and help with interpretation during the Fall Tour of Homes, providing tours of the Overseer's House. Dustin Fuqua, email to Laura Knott, 2018.
92. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 147.
93. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 147-148.
94. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15.
95. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 48.

money." In 1949, Lawrence and his wife were among the first of the Prud'homme tenants to leave Oakland, beginning an exodus from the plantation that would take almost a decade to complete.[96]

Plantation Store/Post Master

Mayo Prud'homme, James Alphonse II (Phonsie)'s third son, recalled that

> As a kid, we used to work in the store and help our dad, as did my son in later years when he was just a young lad. He talks about helping Paw-Paw at the store. We had dry rice (bulk rice), sugar, coffee…flour and corn meal and so forth. Just all kinds of medications and stuff…We had the sales in there. Of course, in our time we had electricity, [and] we had electric scales but prior to that they had the old balance arm scales, cane fishing poles, cotton picking bags, clothes – the big old pink flannel bloomers that women used to wear, shirts without collars for celluloid collars. We had the collars in there also and the cuff, high button-up shoes for women, reading glasses, dyes, bric-a-brac…you-name it.
>
> …Not only that, my dad was the postmaster at Bermuda…He was the postmaster there for over fifty years… It was all incorporated right in the store, and it was actually the only commissary [in the area] that had a calling card – that being the post office, because people would have to there every day to get their mail (the ones that did not have delivery on the routes.[97]

Most of the people who used the plantation store bought their goods on credit. Both Oakland Plantation and Magnolia Plantation stores continued to use the scrip made for their customers to use in the stores (see Chapter 6).

Mayo described the store as one big room, with small anterooms on either side. These anterooms were for storage, largely dry storage for crops like the pecans that had been locally harvested and sold before they were picked up by the larger distributing company. The room on the north side of the store was used to store petroleum products, including a drum of Larsol, a cleaning fluid, as well as a kerosene pump attached to a drum of kerosene and an oil pump attached to an oil drum. In the back, at the center of the building, was the store office, with a window that opened into the store. The counters in the store formed a U shape around the room, with customers standing in the center and the staff behind the counters. When the post office was operational, it was located in the back. Mayo described the post office as being located in a "very small alcove area, probably ten feet by fifteen feet." Inside the room, there was a big box, about four feet by three feet with pigeon holes that were only accessible from one side. They would sort the mail alphabetically, so it was available when someone came for their deliveries.[98]

The only heat in the Oakland plantation store was supplied by a fireplace in the back office. After electrification, the store also had running water. The pump also supplied lake water to the house for bathing and dishwashing, but occupants continued to get their drinking water from the cistern that caught rainwater off the roof after the spring rains.[99]

Although there is less information available on the plantation store at Magnolia, the 1910 US census records reveal that store was operated by Felix Cloutier, who also boarded with the Hertzogs.[100]

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96. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 182. Lawrence Helaire is a descendent of Helario, noted in Chapter 4.
97. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 156.
98. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 157-159.
99. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 159.
100. *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 – Natchitoches Ward 9, Population*, 6.

Politics and Government

In 1915, James Guillot, second husband of Fannie Hertzog Chopin, ran for state representative to fill the position created by the death of his friend, Joseph C. Henry. Guillot did not run unchallenged, and in fact, the race was fiercely contested. In addition to Guillot, another planter, Paul M. Potts, and Victor L. Roy, president of the State Normal School, were also on the ballot. Before the election, the *Caldwell Watchman* noted that Guillot charged President Roy with "political inconsistency and with using his position to further the political ends of local factions."[101] In the end, Potts narrowly defeated Guillot.[102] However, that was not the end of Guillot's political aspirations, because he ran for, and won, the same seat in 1920.[103]

Around the same time, the Natchitoches Equal Suffrage Club began to meet regularly, starting in 1914 when it was suggested for the coming New Year's Day, to let conversation "slide over the weather chestnut and talk about woman suffrage."[104] The conversation got more serious over the next few years; in 1918 the club announced that

> [a]ll members are urged to be present as important business will be transacted…The Club has gone on record as eager to spend all its power and intelligence to bring about this needed reform in the franchise of our commonwealth and it needs the full and hearty cooperation of not only its members but of all friends of women, children and humanity. Members, do not miss this meeting and remember that friend are always welcome, so bring them with you.[105]

By May 17, 1918, the club was urging all members to march in the Red Cross Parade and Rally. The call for marchers went on "whether they march with the club, Red Cross Units, or other organizations to wear white dresses with a yellow scarf over the shoulders (suffrage colors)."[106] In August 1920, the newspaper announced that the club, which had adjourned for the summer, called a special meeting to celebrate the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment by the Tennessee Legislature.[107] With the win, in October 1920, the club met one last time to formally disband.[108]

Military

During the first half of the twentieth century, the US was involved in two major wars. The first, World War I, took place between 1914 and 1918, with active American involvement between 1917 and 1918. The second, World War II, took place between 1939 and 1945, with American involvement between 1941 and 1945. Both conflicts had lasting effects on the society, economy, and culture of the Cane River region.

World War I

Although World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, the US was not drawn into the conflict until April 1917, when war was declared on Germany. Like others across the country, Alphonse Prud'homme II was anxious to join the military and serve his country. On June 14, 1918, *The Natchitoches Times* printed a list of names whose draft registration cards were being held by the local board. On this list was "James Alphonse Prudhomme, Bermuda (white) and Mathew Hertog [sic], Derry (white)."[109] Serving as a "doughboy," or US infantryman during World War I, Alphonse II was stationed in France, where

101. "Told in a Few Lines," *The Caldwell Watchman* (Columbia, La.), January 22, 1915, 1.
102. "Paul M. Potts Wins," *Weekly Town Talk* (Alexandria, La.), January 23, 1915, 4.
103. Poynter, *Membership*, 166.
104. "Hints for New Year's Day," *The Natchitoches Times*, December 25, 1914, 8.
105. "Suffrage Club," *The Natchitoches Times*, October 11, 1918, 7.
106. "Equal Suffrage Club Meets," *The Natchitoches Times*, May 17, 1918, 2.
107. "Suffrage Club Meets," *The Natchitoches Times*, August 27, 1920, 2.
108. "Equal Suffrage Club," *The Natchitoches Times*, October 8, 1920, 5.
109. "Local Board Natchitoches Parish, La.," *Natchitoches Times*, June 14, 1918.

he remained after Armistice Day in November 1918. He was still in Paris when he received word that his grandfather had died in February 1919.[110]

Natchitoches Parish lost several men who died during the war. Soldiers who died in battle, from wounds, or in accidents while serving included Gordon L. Peters, Natchitoches; Joe Shepard, Natchitoches; Frank C. Williams, Derry; and Archie L. Cookfield, Bermuda.[111]

After the start of World War I, domestic markets increased their demand, making cotton and grain very profitable for the Cane River farmers. The first impact of the war on Louisiana was the economic panic that occurred in the late summer and into the fall of 1914, which raised the prices of cotton to as high as 43 cents a pound by 1919.[112] The following year, the price of cotton fell dramatically, resulting in a collapse of the South's entire cotton-based agricultural economy.[113]

The community rallied to support the war effort, with the Red Cross Chapter of Natchitoches Parish declared a permanent organization in June 1917. Newspaper articles reported that the "work at headquarters has begun in earnest. The work on surgical supplies is done in the morning from nine to twelve. The work on the Hospital supplies is done in the afternoon between five and seven. All members are urged to help in the work."[114]

World War II

The US was actively involved in World War II between 1941 and 1945. During this period, the military established several large facilities in Louisiana to carry out maneuvers, including several in Rapides Parish and one in Vernon Parish. These facilities were used beginning in 1940 for Army training drills, collectively known as the Louisiana Maneuvers.[115]

In September 1940, after World War II was underway in Europe, the US Army carried out practice maneuvers, which were particularly important in training the nation's generals, including Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton, and Omar Bradley.[116] In May 1940, 66,000 troops, divided into two opposing forces, were deployed for practice maneuvers in northwest Louisiana. While this was a serious training exercise, the local residents would come out to observe the "war games," lying on the banks of the Cane River and watch the planes overhead.[117]

In September 1940, the war games were held very near Oakland Plantation. As the Blue Army, led by General Patton, approached the Bermuda Bridge (see Transportation section of this chapter, below), they heard the firing of light artillery from the nearby woods.[118] The battle raged on for about thirty minutes with the Blue Army firing blanks, setting up smoke screens, and bringing in a howitzer to defend against what they thought was a large Red Army force. Eventually an umpire (an



FIGURE 7-6. Alphonse, Kenneth, and Mayo Prud'homme, and dog, Skippy. US Army, Courtesy of the Prud'homme family.

110. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 36; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 152.
111. Haulsee, Howe, and Doyle, *Soldiers of the Great War* , 419-422.
112. Reonas, "World War I."
113. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 37.
114. "The Red Cross Chapter of Natchitoches Parish," *The Natchitoches Times*, June 1, 1917, 1.
115. Reonas, "World War I."
116. National Park Service, *"World War II – The Louisiana Maneuvers."*
117. Isbell, "The Battle of the Bayous."
118. Isbell, "The Battle of the Bayous."

impartial Army officer who observed and determined a victor) came to investigate. What they discovered was the "enemy" holding up their 500-car convoy was three of the Prud'homme boys, Alphonse (12), Kenneth (12), and Mayo (9), who were excitedly reloading their new carbide-gas, foot-long, toy cannon (Figure 7-6). At their discovery, an officer crossed to bridge and entered the plantation store exclaiming "Mr. Prud'homme, you have to stop your boys. They are holding up the U.S. Army."[119]

The Prud'homme boys' battle at Bermuda Bridge has been recounted a number of times since that day and was featured on the Paul Harvey "Rest of the Story" radio program. It was the Paul Harvey story where the Prud'homme participants in the battle learned that it was General Patton that they "bested."[120]

Transportation

Rivers and Roads

Cane River

For almost 80 years, barges, flat boats, and shallow-draft steamboats had traversed Cane River in front of Oakland and Magnolia, but this transport method was risky due to frequent low water above the Red River Rapids, which then required laborious overland transportation to points north, including Oakland.[121]

Cane River was dammed at the northern and southern ends of what would become Cane River Lake in the early 1900s. Two dams were constructed on the northern end and one on the southern end. A spillway was constructed in the southern dam and was replaced with its current structure by the Louisiana Department of Public Works in 1947 and completed on July 8, 1949.[122]

Early efforts to use the lake as a local and state amenity were recorded by writers for the WPA in their *Louisiana State Guide*:

> In 1912 the State made it a game and fish preserve, and since 1915 it has been regularly stocked from the Federal Fish Hatchery. . . . Boats and guides can be obtained at fishing camps along the shore."[123]

The lake was also used for irrigation by area farmers.

After the Cane River was dammed, working boats no longer ferried goods further downstream for transshipment to Alexandria and on to New Orleans. At the same time, the introduction of motorized cars and trucks to the area reduced reliance on water transportation and increased the use of public roads to transport goods to market, and for people to easily visit neighbors, family, and to attend social events in Natchitoches. Freight transportation relied on motorized trucks, which utilized existing roadways along the river, into the interiors of plantations, into the parish, up to Natchitoches, and beyond to the larger cities.[124]

Bermuda Bridge

In July 1911, the Police Jury voted to construct a bridge over Cane River in Ward 9 of Natchitoches Parish, at a point on the river near Bermuda. The precise site and plans for the bridge needed to be approved by the US War Department, which had already provided specifications for the bridge.[125] The Police Jury had allocated $1,250 for the bridge construction. In March 1912, the Police Jury received a report that the bridge had been completed by the Austin Brothers construction company on March 7, 1912. The report also noted

119. Des Jardins, "Bermuda Bridge," 50.
120. Robertson, "Remembering the Battle of Bermuda Bridge."
121. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 15-16.
122. Yeldell, "Cane River Lake," 5.
123. WPA Workers of the Writers' Program, *Louisiana*.
124. In 1982, the Cane River Waterway District and its overseeing Commission were formed to manage the everyday operations of the waterway. Yeldell, "Cane River Lake," 7.
125. "Proceeding of the Police Jury, Monday, July 3, 1911," *The Natchitoches Times*, July 14, 1911, 1.

that although the project was to be completed in 1911, the delay was at no fault of the contractor, so the penalty of $10.00 per day in damages for missing their deadline was waived.[126] It was then resolved that the President of the Police Jury, P. E. Prud'homme, and a Mr. Dismukes were authorized to seek an audit of the Good Roads Funds to determine the amount of compensation for the work.[127]

In 1985, a life-long resident of Bermuda, Voisan Hilaire, recalled the construction of the bridge. He watched the effort from the side of the river because his father was among the workers. Hilaire said,

> They were Mr. Ed and Mr. Winn and Mr. Jim and Mr. Bigman and my daddy Frank Helaire and Felix Helaire and George Helaire, all them was my uncle (sic). They raised up around here right there to the foot of Bermuda bridge….When they started this bridge, Cane River was just about four feet wide, a few years later, a dam was built and the river flourished. But in 1912, the lack of rushing waters made putting in pylons easier.[128]

The bridge had come in pieces, so once the pylons were completed, the construction crew had to erect the trusses to support the deck. Hilaire noted that there "wasn't a white man on the bridge then. All black men built that bridge."[129]

The completion of the bridge in 1912 allowed the Prud'hommes to easily drive automobiles and trucks to either side of Cane River and increased the amount of traffic in the area. It also increased the number of people visiting the store and post office at Oakland.

Railway

While railways had changed the commercial nature of agriculture and passenger service throughout the country beginning in the 1830s, the Cane River region was late in attracting the large investments of capital that rail service required. The area did not see rail service until well after the end of Reconstruction. Among the early railroads established in Natchitoches Parish was the Natchitoches Railroad, established in 1887. By 1898, it was operating as the Natchitoches & Red River Valley Railway, which lasted until 1901, when it was incorporated into the larger Texas and Pacific Railway.[130]

One of the stops on the 32-mile-long railroad line, which stretched from the City of Natchitoches to Grand Encore, was the Brevelle Station.[131] Oral tradition by the members of the Prud'homme family states that Alphonse I constructed the wood-frame Brevelle Station depot. Alphonse II recalled that "Grandpa Alphonse had built a place there, so they put a side track there [to] pick up cotton, or anything that had to be shipped."[132]

The depot continued to serve as a stop on the Texas and Pacific Railroad until it was destroyed in a fire on June 22, 1914.[133] On September 14, 1915, the Texas & Pacific Railway Company petitioned the Railroad Commission for

126. "Police Jury Proceedings," *The Natchitoches Times*, March 15, 1912, 4.
127. "P.E." was Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme, cousin to the Oakland Plantation Prud'hommes. The Good Roads program was a nationwide effort to improve the roads, first for bicyclists, and as more people purchased automobiles, for the motoring community. Cole-Jett, *Goody! A Road*.
128. Des Jardins, "Bermuda Bridge," 51.
129. Des Jardins, "Bermuda Bridge," 51.
130. The American Association of General Passenger and Ticket Agents, *The Official Guide*, 875; Busby, *Biographical Directory*, 90; Railroad Collectibles, "Natchitoches and Red River Railway."
131. "Texas & Pacific Acquires Thirty Miles of Roadway," *Weekly Town Talk*, March 30, 1901, 4; Rand McNally and Company, *Louisiana*.
132. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 161.
133. Railroad Commission of Louisiana, *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Railroad Commission of Louisiana*, 139-140.

permission to discontinue service to the Brevelle Station.

It was not until 1927 that the Texas and Pacific Railway constructed its still-extant depot in Natchitoches to service its spur to the city. The spur that connected Natchitoches to the main rail trunk had existed since at least 1903, according to the official Texas & Pacific map.[134] However, neither Magnolia nor Oakland took advantage of railroad spur connections to facilitate transport of their goods to market, instead relying on road transport to transshipment points on the rail line or into the city of Natchitoches. Even though less efficient than direct connections to the railroad, this was still much quicker and easier than transporting goods on the Cane River.

Plantations

Perhaps the biggest change that came to the Cane River area between 1900 and 1945 was the arrival of electricity at the plantations. In northwest Louisiana, the federal Rural Electrification Agency (REA) constructed a total of 400 miles of power lines in Red River, Natchitoches, Grant, and Rapides parishes, and extended them later to Sabine and Avoyelles parishes.[135] In July, when the newspaper carried the news that electrification was coming, it also announced they had 1,700 customers with plans to have power in their homes by the next Christmas. The local firm, Electric Valley Membership Corporation, was operated by president and board chairman, John H. Henry, of Melrose Plantation. The firms developed by the REA planned to purchase power from private or municipal plants under contract bids, and then distribute it through their systems to residences, but not commercial or manufacturing enterprises. The article mentioned some of the historic plantations of the region and the benefits they would see from REA:

> The Prudhomme (sic) place at Bermuda and similar homes about which are woven many of the traditions of old Louisiana, will replace present expensive, inefficient storage battery home lighting plants with modern generated electricity. To such as these, the cost of power per month for all purposes is expected to run about $10 a month compared with $50 to $60 with the present gas engine operated storage batteries.[136]

Although an exact date for the electrification of either Oakland or Magnolia plantation is unknown, they were able to enjoy the benefits from the REA in Cane River by around 1936 or 1937.[137] While electrification made it to Magnolia by 1938, Matthew Hertzog II reported that it only covered a portion of the plantation.[138]

Livestock and Crops

Cotton

The first few years of the twentieth century were dominated by the devastating effects of the boll weevil. The first news about the destructive insect came from Texas in the late nineteenth century, with similar reports coming from Louisiana by 1904.[139] The infestation would reach all the way to Georgia and into the Carolinas by the end of World War I. Edward Carrington Prud'homme wrote about the crop at a Mr. Cobb's property, saying,

> Felix Prud'homme out to inspect Cobb's crop of cotton – to note damage of Boll weevils. They found many weevils and some large bolls damaged. In fact, don't see a chance of Mr. Cobb making much of a crop.[140]

The devastation on more than one property brought the farm to ruin, but the Prud'hommes,

134. Texas and Pacific Railway, "Map."
135. "Six Northwest Louisiana Parishes Soon will have Benefits of Electrification," *The Times* (Shreveport), July 25, 1937, 21.
136. "Six Northwest Louisiana Parishes," The Times (Shreveport), 21.
137. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 18.
138. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15.
139. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 34.
140. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 130.

who always strove to stay abreast of the latest agricultural advances, were able to minimize their losses. In fact, Alphonse Prud'homme's cotton won awards at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, held in St. Louis in 1904.[141] Following the win at the Jamestown Exposition held in Norfolk, Virginia, from April 26 to December 1, 1907, the Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk* announced the news:

> NATCHITOCHES PLEASED
>
> Whole Parish Proud of Mead Awarded to Gen. Prudhomme.
>
> The people here are much pleased over the award of a gold medal to General J. Alphonse Prudhomme of this parish by the Jamestown Exposition for the best cotton, out of the many exhibits of the staple displayed.
> This is not only an honor to the parish of Natchitoches, but to the entire state of Louisiana.[142]

Cotton remained the primary focus of most in the Cane River region into the twentieth century (Figure 7-7). In 1910, the local newspaper reported, "Bermuda. . .cotton is being picked and ginned rapidly. A fine crop is being made."[143] A few years later, the private journal of Edward Carrington Prud'homme, included the entry "ginning today – yard crowded with wagons."[144]

World War I resulted in an increased domestic demand for cotton and grains, but at the same time, the production costs were increasing. Plus, there were new competitors: the foreign cotton growers finally had production that exceeded 10,000,000 bales, and the war effort research launched the development of synthetic fabrics. Despite these challenges, in 1919, the Cane River plantations enjoyed a banner year of production. That year, cotton prices peaked at forty-three cents a pound before leveling off at an average of thirty-five cents per pound. Although cotton farmers were confident that this was a new trend that would last into the future, the boom collapsed the very next year. Overproduction, foreign competition, the development of synthetic fibers, boll weevil infestation, and retaliation to US tariff policies resulted in a steep decline in cotton demand and prices. The combined forces meant that the cotton planters of the South faced ruin, particularly in contrast to the apparent success enjoyed by almost every other sector of US production. It was only the textile industry and agriculture that were left behind during the boom from 1920–1929.[145]

When Phanor II assumed control of the plantation after his father's death in 1919—although his estate records listed a variety of plows, cultivators, and hand tools—as soon as possible, he replaced the old steam engine at the gin with a diesel engine, finally updating farming practices that had been in place since the Civil War.[146] In 1929, Phanor II recorded in his equipment ledger a Dixie Corn and



FIGURE 7-7. Prud'hommes standing next to a bale of cotton in 1905. Oakland Gin Complex HSR, courtesy of Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Henley Hunter collection.

141. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 35.
142. "Natchitoches Pleased," *Weekly Town Talk* (Alexandria), November 30, 1907, 1.
143. "Bermuda News," *The Natchitoches Times*, September 9, 1910, 7.
144. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 135.
145. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 138-139.
146. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 37

Cotton Planter, purchased for $23.99, and an Avery Queen Cultivator at $51.00.

Mechanization occurred at other farms, too. Also in 1929, Felix Helaire purchased an Avery Queen Cultivator for $62.00. Helaire's cultivator was likely purchased from the Oakland Plantation store, illustrating the mark-up on their merchandise.[147]

In the 1930s, cotton prices dropped, first to nine cents per pound, and continued to fall from there. The cost of supplies also fell, but not as dramatically as the cotton. The emigration of many knowledgeable cotton workers further impacted cotton production. Those who returned to the area during the Depression, hoping to find their old jobs again, often discovered that their positions were no longer available, or, in the worst-case scenario, the farm had been foreclosed. Advice to reduce cotton production was counterintuitive to farmers struggling to make ends meet, and they continued to attempt to raise even more cotton than in the past. As a result, huge cotton crops produced in 1930 and 1931 further pushed the price of cotton down to five cents per pound. It was not until after the implementation of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which required farmers to cut back on production, that the downward price trend began to reverse. However, the New Deal did not come without costs. Farmers were required to plow under one-fourth of their crops or be penalized. As the tenant farmers and their mules plowed under their cotton crops, they were, in fact, "plowing under an old way of life."[148] A decade later, about 1941, the last cotton was ginned at Oakland Plantation.[149]

During the 1930s and into the 1940s, mechanization of agriculture slowly made its way into the South. Initially it was not widespread, although some of the larger farms purchased tractors to lower their production costs. The cost of a tractor was so high that many of the farmers initially attached their old mule-drawn equipment to the new machines, adding pieces made specifically for the it as money would allow for the purchase. In 1939, only about 8 percent of the farmers had tractors, with most of Louisiana operating much as they had since the 1880s, with one or two-mule farms on less than 30 acres. [150]

Crops planted in the 1940s show diversification away from cotton. Phanor II's accounts record crops of corn and peas in March and sweet potatoes in May. He also listed the crops of each sharecropper for 1942, with meticulous records of cotton, corn, soybeans, and sugar cane planted by all tenants and workers, and noted when they commenced replanting and "chopping out" the crops. He also tracked which vegetables were planted in the "truck patch and house garden." For the truck patch, he noted Irish potatoes, early sweet corn, cucumbers, squash, and okra. In the garden, he reported planting late February crops, including "beets, spinach, mustard [greens], lettuce, carrots, followed in March by waxbeans, roquet [*sic*], dill, sweet peas, large wakefield [*sic*] cabbage"; in April, he noted planting ninety-eight tomato plants, more radishes, lettuce, greens, wax beans, butter beans, and a row of musk melons.[151] Similar records were kept by Phanor II until 1947, the year before his death.

Mayo Prud'homme, James Alphonse II third son, noted in an interview that crops were used as a line of credit, with the debt settled after the harvest. Mayo recalled that in 1941, "the store lost just about everything it sold because the crop was absolutely doomed."[152]

Things changed dramatically during World War II, when Louisiana's agriculture was reinvigorated by the need to feed and clothe the nation's armed

147. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 149.
148. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 140-141.
149. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 65.
150. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 141.
151. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 149-150.
152. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 156.

service. Domestically, the demand for cotton was great, but this did not hold true internationally. Eventually, the US government was able to lift price supports, and cotton prices increased to twenty cents a pound, returning prosperity to the Cane River plantations.[153]

Despite the return of cotton's profitability, the labor drain continued. More and more individuals left the region for either the military or jobs in distant communities. In fact, Louisiana experienced the greatest decline in the number of African American farmers in the South. Cotton continued to be a primary crop but was joined by alternative crops, such as peanuts and soybeans, which had been proven to improve, rather than deplete, the soil. Livestock holdings also increased during the war to assist in meeting the nationwide demands.[154]

Livestock

Both plantations managed livestock to diversify their operations to hedge against crop failures, like those caused by pest infestations that could change their fortunes in a single season. At Oakland, after Phanor II took over in 1919, livestock included thirty-five head of mules and colts, fifty-two head of common cattle, six head of "graded cows," one common bull, one "graded bull," six old steers, eight calves, twenty hogs, and thirty-two head of common sheep, but no horses.[155] The 1910 Ford Model-T had been replaced with a 1917 Chandler; other, more old-fashioned, plantation equipment included four old wagons, one old surrey, and one buggy, still used regularly for transportation.[156]

The Hertzogs of Magnolia maintained a small flock of sheep, which not only aided in maintaining the lawns around the Big House but also kept the family fed. The plantation also had pigeons and geese, as well as larger stock, including cattle that were auctioned from the plantation twice annually. The active breeding program of prizewinning thoroughbred horses, ponies, and mules continued on as well.[157]

During the early twentieth century, both Oakland and Magnolia plantations constructed "dipping vats" to treat livestock against ticks (Dipping Vat, Oakland Plantation, LCS 100654 and Dipping Vat, Magnolia Plantation, LCS 100500). The late nineteenth century had seen a growing problem with tick infestation, particularly among cattle. These "cattle ticks" transmitted to cattle a disease called, variously, "Texas fever," "Texas cattle fever," or "Spanish fever," a generally fatal condition caused by parasites that affected the spleen.[158]

Southern cattle had developed a tolerance for the condition, but when shipped north and mixed with cattle from elsewhere, they passed the disease along to the more vulnerable animals. For some time, southern cattle were banned from northern markets; desperate Southern ranchers turned to the federal government for help and the program for tick eradication was started.

With support from state extension programs, the federal government instituted a treatment process that consisted of running cattle down through a vat, usually constructed in the ground, filled with the "standard arsenical solution." The solution until 1940 was a mix of sodium carbonate, arsenic trioxide, pine tar, and water, generally with about 0.18 percent arsenic. The vats were generally around 4–5 feet deep and had a concrete dripping pad at the end to drain the drippings back into the vat. This would be done about every three weeks until it could be shown that the ticks had been

153. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 177.
154. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 177-178; "Farming in the 1940s."
155. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 144. "Graded" livestock is of a higher quality than "common" stock.
156. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 37
157. Crespi, *A Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation*, 35.
158. Haygood, "Texas Fever."

eradicated. The program lasted until around 1961.[159]

Cane River Plantations

Oakland Plantation

In the twentieth century, the number of people who resided on Oakland Plantation varied widely from decade to decade. While day laborers remained in some of the quarters, there were also tenant farmers in others. The former Doctor's Cottage became a favorite home for family members, too. By 1910, Pierre Phanor Prud'homme II and his family had moved to the Cottage.[160] Just a few years later, Edward Prud'homme occupied the Cottage, based on his journal note "covering kitchen Old House (Leveques) where I now reside – needed badly."[161]

Following the death of his father in 1919, Phanor received "'the old homestead,' the gin, the dwelling occupied by my son Edward [now referred to as the Cottage], and adjoining lands."[162] By 1920, census records indicate that Edward had left the Cottage, which was then occupied by Phanor and his family, while his mother and sister Julia, remained in the Big House.[163]

On June 10, 1925, Elise Elizabeth Prud'homme married Wilber Guy Cloutier, and the pair moved into the former Doctor's Cottage. By this time, Phanor had moved his family into the Big House. Between 1925 and 1930, the newlyweds made several updates to the Cottage, including adding indoor plumbing and constructing a bathroom south of the building to replace the outhouse. The couple lived there until building their own house on land owned by Guy.[164]

The Doctor's Cottage did not stand empty for long. In 1932, Elsie's sister, Adele, who had married her cousin, Jesse Emmett Brett, moved there (Figure 7-8). In 1941, the couple purchased the Cottage from the Prud'hommes and occupied it for about thirteen years.[165] They sometimes rented out the southern bedrooms to cousins, some who were rural school teachers.

Despite their apparent wealth, the Prud'homme family had to "make do" during the Depression. They raised their own beef, pork, and poultry; collected produce from their large garden; and got milk from a small herd of dairy cows. As the Depression deepened, the family added sheep and goats to their livestock, for both their fleece and

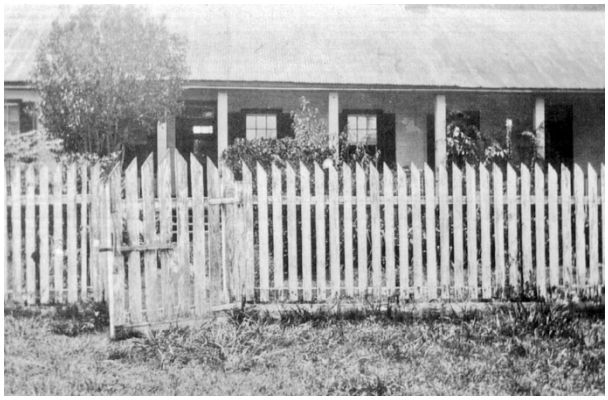


FIGURE 7-8. The Cottage at Oakland in 1938. CARI.

159. Dalrymple, "The Dipping Vat"; Clark, "Dipping Vat Removal."
160. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 24
161. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 109.
162. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 148-149.
163. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 24.
164. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 25.
165. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 25.

their meat. What they did not consume at the plantation was sold.[166]

Organization of the Landscape

The landscape of pleasure and production that surrounded Oakland began to change during this period, a trend that was occurring throughout the south. Owners of former plantations were adapting new uses into the landscape. For example, outside of Charleston in the former areas of rice production, landowners converted their agricultural lands to hunting preserves to generate revenue and retain the lands that had been in their families for a century and longer. Lands in south Georgia that had been farmed for decades were converted to quail preserves, and northern industrialists constructed large antebellum revival estates in what had formerly been cotton production lands.[167]

Modes of recreation that existed at Oakland responded to these national trends. Family members and guests continued to play on the tennis courts that were built on the property in the 1890s. In the 1920s, the Cook's House was converted to a rented fishing camp for sports-fishermen; the family constructed at least one, if not several more, of these cabins close to the Cook's House for addition rental income. The pond that had been formed in the early 1800s from the excavation of clay for *bousillage* served as a minnow pond. The catalpa trees (*Catalpa bignonioides*) that were planted nearby were important not only for their fragrant spring blossoms, but for the fat worms that lived in them, valued as fish bait.[168]

The Prud'hommes would have continued to maintain their pecan orchards and expand them into other areas. The change from cotton fields to pecan orchards allowed the family to raise a cash-producing crop that require less labor. Pecans are harvested once a year in the fall, and the upkeep of the fields underneath the trees can often be accomplished by allowing livestock to roam the orchard. Then as the nut crop begins to fall, the cattle or horses can be moved to other pasture to preserve the seasonal crop.[169]

Some fields would have also been given up for cattle pasturage. The cattle dipping vat at Oakland was located about 200 feet directly west of the Square Crib.

A notable feature in the landscape that may date from this period is the Turnstile Gate (LCS 1019908). The gate features a gateway framework, pedestrian barrier, central spire, and masonry base.

Buildings

After years of war and financial setbacks, in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, the family finally had sufficient funds to take on some much-needed renovations at Oakland Plantation. Around 1910, the last major addition was made to the plantation store. The Cane River area finally received telephone service in 1906, with the Prud'homme family among the first to enjoy its benefits.[170]

Due to the mechanization of the farm, some existing buildings were renovated to store the new equipment. An unforeseen change was the relocation of the South *Pigeonnier*, which had to be moved about the width of the structure to the

166. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 145.
167. McCash and McCash, *The Jekyll Island Club*, 3; Griswold and Weller, *The Golden Age of American Gardens*, 160, 168-169, 171.
168. The catalpa worm is the larval stage of the hawk moth (*Ceratomia catalpa*). According to local tradition, DDT-based pesticides adversely impacted the population. Dustin Fuqua, email to Laura Knott, 2018.
169. Washburn and Crane, "Orchard Management and Cost of Pecan Production."
170. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 20.

south to allow for the larger mechanized equipment to pass by.[171]

Big House

When the old LeComte townhouse in Natchitoches was demolished in 1901, the Prud'hommes rescued the slate roof to replace the old cypress shingles on the Big House. This was the first time the shingles had been updated on the building since its construction.[172] Other changes at the Big House in the first half of the twentieth century included the installation of acetylene gas lighting, enclosure of a portion of the porch off the kitchen wing, and construction, then removal, of a water tank used to house liquid batteries needed for electricity before rural electrification made its way to the plantation in 1936 (Figure 7-9).[173] In the early 1920s, the Big House had hot and cold running water in the indoor bathrooms that had already been installed. One bathroom was installed in the "office" extension off the west side of the master bedroom and the other in the subdivided room near the kitchen.[174]

In the 1930s, the Prud'hommes had a door added between the Strangers Room and the main portion of the Big House. This marked the first time the room was accessible from the main residence.[175]

Plantation Store

The final major changes were made to the Oakland Plantation Store (LCS 091617) ca. 1910 (Figure 7-10). This included an addition that covered the entire south elevation and utilized wire nails in its construction, which were in general use by the 1900s.[176] Further investigation of the addition indicates that it has a continuous hand-hewn sill, which may have been salvaged from another building.[177]

There was a "bath room," which did not include running water, added to the west end of Uncle Buddy's room in the early 1900s. It was not until the 1930s that running water was added to the building, so it likely contained a pitcher, wash basin, and chamber pot or "slop jar."[178]

The rooms on the south side of the store were added at different times, but all were added during the early twentieth century. Examination of the construction materials suggests that like the slate added to the Big House roof, some of the materials may have been recycled from the demolished Lecomte townhouse in Natchitoches.[179]



FIGURE 7-9. The Oakland Big House ca. 1940. State Library of Louisiana.



FIGURE 7-10. Oakland Plantation Store, 1930. CARI.

171. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 164.
172. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 36.
173. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 151.
174. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 55.
175. Jones, *Oakland Plantation Big House*, 55.
176. Fricker and Fricker, *Oakland Plantation*, 7.
177. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 35.
178. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 36.
179. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 37-38



FIGURE 7-11. Gas pumps installed at the Oakland Plantation Store in the 1950s. Commonwealth.

About 1920, the "visible pump" gas pump was added to the front of the store. Prior to the pump installation, gas was shipped to the store in gas cans. The pump was in place until around 1950, when Alphonse Prud'homme purchased a new car that required high-octane gas. This prompted the replacement of the original pump with a new double pump, one for regular and one for the required high-octane gasoline, that was still in place in the early twenty-first century (Figure 7-11).[180]

It was also in the early twentieth century that a telephone booth was installed in the southeast office in the store. In the mid-1930s, the store was wired for electricity. Since the store was used only during the daylight hours, lighting was minimal. However, it enabled the store to add the Coca-Cola refrigeration bin in the front of the store. The addition of electricity also enabled the installation of an electrical pump to be installed in Uncle Buddy's old dressing room.[181]

Sharecroppers Quarters/Tenants Quarters

Historically utilized as slave cabins, the exterior walls of were clad in "Insulbrick" or siding in the early century.[182]

Gin Barn

By the early 1940s, the Prud'homme family was dealing with the end of the functioning cotton gin on the plantation. Earlier in the twentieth century, the traditional power engine for the gin was replaced by a diesel-powered, single-cylinder, Fairbanks-Morris engine. This must have taken place in the 1920s, when the cistern that provided water to the former steam engine was taken out and replaced with an oil burner diesel engine. By "1941 or 1942" the gin was closed completely, and the last crop of cotton was ginned on the plantation. [183] The gin equipment was removed and the gin bar demolished at a later date.

Doctor's/Leveque House

In the twentieth century, the Doctor's/Leveque House was utilized as a residence by a number of Prud'homme family members. References to changes made in the dwelling include a 1914 entry by Edward Carrington Prud'homme in his journal that they were "covering kitchen of Old House (Leveques) where I now reside – needed badly." The next major change occurred between 1925 and 1929, when a bath and plumbing (cold water only) was added to the residence by Guy and Elise Cloutier, who were the residents at that time. Outside the house, a photograph from 1938 shows the house with a picket fence similar to the one at the Big House and a corrugated metal roof (see Figure 8).[184]

180. Jones, *Prud'homme Store*, 38.
181. Jones, *Prud'homme Store*, 38-39.
182. Insulbrick is the brand name for a sheathing material that, while not brick, generally gives the appearance of brick coursing. The material is fiberboard that has been coated with tar and a brick or stone pattern created using a granular material, similar to asphalt shingles. The product was invented in the first half of the twentieth century.
183. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 154.
184. Hartrampf and Pyburn, The Cottage, 17.

Wagon Shed

Southwest of the Big House and north of the Cattle Dipping Vat stands the Wagon Shed (LCS 91640) (Figure 7-12). Although its precise construction date is not available, based on construction materials, it was built in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Wagon Shed is the westernmost extant structure on the Oakland Plantation. It consists of five rows of posts that support a gable roof. The roof consists of a gable-roofed structure, with a vertical wood door piercing the horizontal sheathing of the east gable face. Currently, the roof is sheathed with metal, much of which is rusted. There are visible rafter tails under the overhanging eaves. The shed has no exterior walls, leaving the wagons and other equipment stored inside visible.

Privy ("4-Holer")

The Privy (LCS 091641) at Oakland was constructed ca. 1900. It is a one-story, rectilinear, wood-frame structure that rests on shallow brick piers (Figure 7-13). Earlier privies would have been similarly constructed and located near the house, as is today's privy, which stands immediately north of the Big House; this may not be the original site.[185] The building has a gable roof that is sheathed in metal and has exterior walls clad in clapboard. A hinged wood door positioned off-center on the east elevation allows access to the interior. Inside, it has an enclosed bench with three seats, a small single seat, one doorway, and a small opening for a window cut into the weatherboard siding.



FIGURE 7-12. Oakland Wagon Shed. Commonwealth.

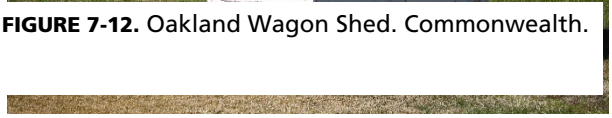


FIGURE 7-13. Oakland Privy, viewed from the southeast. Commonwealth.

185. Miller and Wood, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Oakland Plantation*, 28.

Turkey Shed

The Turkey Shed (LCS 91631) stands north of the Big House and east of the present privy (Figure 7-14). It was likely constructed in the early nineteenth century in a different location, but as with the chicken coop, was moved to its present site ca. 1950. The Turkey Shed is one-story high with a gable roof. The exterior walls are clad in weatherboard and the roof is sheathed in metal. Paired hinged doors are centered on the east gable end.

Cook's House/Fish Camp

Because the economic depression hit agricultural regions about a decade before the rest of the country, the Prud'hommes at Oakland Plantation established a fishing camp to generate some additional income. The camp was created in the 1920s by moving the old Cook's House from its original location near the Big House to its current location at the north end of the building complex. Lawrence Helaire remembers there may have been as many as four small camp houses in the same area at one time (Figure 7-15).



FIGURE 7-15. View of the Oakland fishing camp after a rare snowfall, undated. CARI.

Vivian Prud'homme, the youngest daughter of James Alphonse II and Rosalie Prud'homme, recalled that the camp houses had enclosed screened porches and had whitewashed exterior walls. Inside, the buildings were furnished with iron bedsteads, wardrobes, chairs, and handmade tin-lined iceboxes.[186] One of the iceboxes remains in the single remaining camp house. When the camp was established, the chimney stacks on the relocated cabin were removed and an enclosed wrap-around gallery porch with a half-hipped roof was added. It was also likely at this time that the porches were screened.

Mule Barn

After the fire in 1927 damaged the plantation's smokehouse, it was converted into a mule barn. The converted wood-framed, rectilinear structure rests on a brick foundation. The steeply pitched gable-on-hip roof was sheathed in corrugated metal with clapboard cladding the gable ends. The exterior of the barn was clad in board-and-batten siding, except for a corn crib exposed on the east elevation, which was clad in wood slats. An aisle extended north-south, off center within the barn. Hinged wood doors provided access to the interior of the structure.

Magnolia Plantation

Matthew Hertzog died in 1903, leaving the bulk of his estate, including Magnolia Plantation, to his children, Ambrose and Fanny. Both were married, with families of their own, so the brother and sister divided the plantation. Ambrose received the portions known as Ferry Plantation, Henry Hertzog Plantation, and a track known as the Hertzog Point Place, along with 600 acres, or the "upper part" of Magnolia Plantation, including the area that would eventually become part of the park.

Fanny took ownership of the "lower part," another 600 acres of Magnolia Plantation. This section was bounded by the Cane River in the front and by the land "formerly of Mrs. Kate Chopin," and "Shallow Lake Plantation" on the right bank, which Matthew Hertzog had acquired from Elise LeComte Prud'homme on January 2, 1902. Shortly after this division took place, Fanny sold Ambrose another 60 acres to adjust the property lines to the line represented by a plank fence surrounding the gin house.[187]

After the plantation was split, Fanny claimed half the pigeons in the *pigeonnier*. Although the transfer of the birds was made successfully, it was ultimately frustrating because all of the pigeons immediately flew back to their home on Magnolia.[188]

Organization of the Landscape

The WPA visited the plantation in 1936 and described it as

> A picturesque plantation place [that] derived its name from the magnolia trees which surround it....The original slave quarters, built of handmade bricks, have been preserved and are in good condition. The stocks in which slaves were punished may still be seen. There is a plantation store and cotton gin. Crops raised are chiefly cotton, corn, potatoes and sugar cane.[189]

The stocks, which were ankle stocks, are preserved by the Hertzog Family at Magnolia's big house (Figure 7-16). The WPA report does not

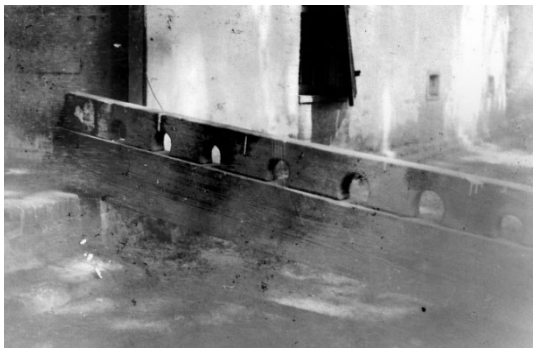


FIGURE 7-16. Ankle stocks preserved by the Hertzog family at Magnolia. Cammie G. Henry Research Center.

186. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 146-147.
187. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 39.
188. Hunter, *Magnolia Family Farm*, 39.
189. United States Works Progress Administration, "Magnolia Plantation," 2.

mention the cattle dipping vat that was installed in the 1930s at Magnolia. It was constructed only about 150 feet east of the Slave Cabins.

An aerial photograph from 1941shows a dirt track extending from the main road just south of the Plantation Store towards the Slave/Tenant Quarters, cutting diagonally across a fenced field to a point between Quarters 2 and 3 (Figure 7-17). Another dirt track extended from it to a spot between Quarters 1 and 2. The main track then angled south between the quarters towards another field. Other dirt tracks and paths extended from this one and criss-crossed the area around the quarters buildings.

There are many fencing systems throughout the plantation that are listed as potentially contributing to the historical significance of Magnolia. These include one named system, the Mule Lot Corral, which dates to the 1930s, and the rest of the fences and gates, which date to a range of periods in the plantation's history.

Mule Lot Corral

Located east of the Magnolia Store is a corral constructed of railroad crossties. The Mule Lot Corral (LCS 1131630) was constructed about 1900 and reused railroad ties to construct the fenced corral utilized for the Hertzog's mules (Figure 7-18). The overall length of the fence is approximately 90 feet.

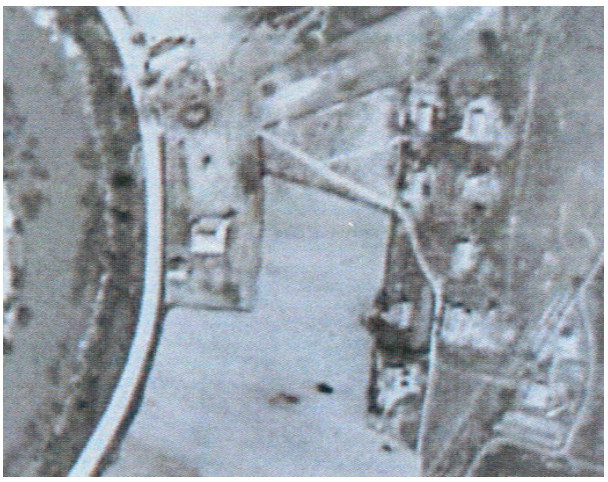


FIGURE 7-17. Aerial photograph of Magnolia Plantation, dated 1941. CARI.

Fences and Gates

There are two types of fences and gates (LCS 113606) utilized on the Magnolia Plantation. These fences, which were likely installed about 1900, includes both wood post and board fences and post and wire fencing along Highway 119 and near the Magnolia Store (Figure 7-19). The gates, which provide access to the grounds for both pedestrians and vehicles, are metal swing gates.

Buildings

There were few new buildings added to the Magnolia Plantation after 1900, with the exception of utility sheds or barns. Some buildings were removed due to obsolescence or damage, and in some cases, altered to make way for new technology. In the 1920s, a bathroom was added to the Overseers House, which also had new added



FIGURE 7-18. The Mule Lot Corral, made of railroad ties. Commonwealth.



FIGURE 7-19. View of a pipe gate at Magnolia, with post-and-board fencing on the left and board and wire fencing on the right. Commonwealth.

dormers around 1930; they were removed by the 1950s (Figure 7-20).[190]

The changes in transportation discussed above affected decisions about the need for and maintenance of buildings at Magnolia. In 1917, the former stables and carriage house near the Big House were demolished.[191] Stables were typically located a certain distance from houses to segregate odors related to horses. Without the need for horse-drawn carriages and with the wide adoption of the automobile, there was no longer any reason to keep these buildings in proximity to the main house and they were torn down. Automobiles would have been parked closer to the house. In fact, the chicken coop at the Big House was converted into a garage by adding a large opening on its north elevation.[192]

In January 1939, a devastating tornado ripped through Magnolia, demolishing the house where Neuville Prud'homme was living and the engine room of the gin barn. It also damaged six of the eight remaining former Slave Cabin/Quarters (Figure 7-21).[193]



FIGURE 7-20. Magnolia's Overseers' House, late 1930s. CARI.

In addition to the loss of the brick buildings, a newspaper article noted that

> ten persons were reported injured, one mule was killed and much other livestock injured by flying debris. The roofs of the livestock barn and the hay barn were blown off, 8,000 bales of hay damaged or ruined and a cotton gin was partially blown down.[194]

The extent of the damage may have been what accelerated the move by Magnolia Plantation toward mechanization. The old gin barn, which had been used as a hay barn since the 1920s, was repaired and remodeled, as were the brick Slave Cabin/Quarters for continued use by the day laborers.[195]

Cotton Gin

After the 1939 tornado, the Cotton Gin was left with significant damage. The tornado completely destroyed the adjacent engine house. The main portion of the Cotton Gin remained intact through the tornado, but the sheds along the sides of the building were ripped off the structure and there was damage to the main roof. Because of these damages, along with the age of the Hertzog gin



FIGURE 7-21. Two of the Magnolia Plantation former slave cabins, ca. 1922. *Magnolia Eight Slave/Tenant Quarters HSR.*

190. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 24-27.
191. Keel et al., *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia*, 21
192. Carrie Mardorf in an email to Laura Knott, 2018.
193. An article in The Town Talk (Alexandria LA), dated January 6, 1939, claimed that "[t}en brick slave quarters were blown down" at Magnolia during the tornado. However, Betty Hertzog, in interviews conducted April 4 and April 12, 2012, reported that six out of the remaining eight were damaged. Joseph K. Oppermann, *Eight Slave/Tenant Quarters Historic Structures Report, Magnolia Plantation* (Atlanta GA: National Park Service Cultural Resources, Southeast Region, 2013), 23.
194. "Storm Damaged in Natchitoches," *The Town Talk*, January 6, 1939, 12.
195. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15.

equipment and the readily available community gins, the family made the decision to abandon the plantation-based ginning operation.[196]

Garage

About 1910, the one-story, wood-frame Garage (LCS 100737) was constructed with a gable roof and abutting lean-to storage sheds on either side (Figure 7-22). The building is 11 feet wide and 21 feet deep; one storage shed is 10 feet wide while the second is 17 feet wide. The roof of the entire building is clad with metal.



FIGURE 7-22. Garage at Magnolia Plantation. Commonwealth.

Stable

A Stable (LCS 100652) located north of the Overseer's House (Figure 7-23) was constructed around 1920. The one-story structure has a rectilinear footprint with a gable-roofed core that is expanded by shed-roof components on its north and south elevations. The building is sheathed in metal paneling, some of which is corrugated. The roof has exposed rafter tails in the eaves. Fenestration on the building includes hinged metal doors. An animal pen with wood posts and woven wire fencing extends in front of the structure.



FIGURE 7-23. Stable at Magnolia Plantation. Commonwealth.

Martin House

Located south of the Plantation Store is an approximately 15-foot-tall pole, likely steel, topped by a Martin House (LCS 100457) (Figure 7-24). The Martin House, which was constructed about 1920, is a rectangular structure with two levels. Each level is punctuated by six small openings on both the north and south elevations. The roof of the Martin House has a side-gable form that is clad with metal. The remainder of the Martin House appears to be constructed of wood.



FIGURE 7-24. Martin House. Commonwealth.

Dipping Vat

In the mid-twentieth century, a concrete-walled cattle Dipping Vat (LCS 100500) was constructed on Magnolia Plantation (Figure 7-25). The vat, or trough, is 22 feet long and 3.5 feet wide, forcing livestock to move single-file through the structure.

196. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 23.

The precast concrete structure was deep enough that cattle were submerged up to the top of their neck, coating them with pesticide that was commonly used at the time.



FIGURE 7-25. Dipping Vat at Magnolia Plantation. "A Visit to Magnolia Plantation" video.

Plantation Store

Although there is no record of the exact date that the store installed its gasoline pump, it was likely completed around the same time the Prud'hommes added their pump in the 1920s. Eventually the store had both gasoline and diesel fuel to run automobiles and trucks, as well as farm equipment.[197] The gasoline pump is no longer extant.

197. Crespi, *A Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation*, 36.

Chapter 8: End of the Plantation Era (1946 – 1994)

Introduction

During the second half of the twentieth century, the differences that had previously distinguished various cultural regions of the United States began to disappear. Post-war social changes, increased farm mechanization, ease of transportation, and access to national press, radio, and television resulted in an assimilation of the people of the Cane River region into the rest of the country. Perhaps a little of the innocence that was present in the first half of the century was also lost due to the country's role in two World Wars, and the cloak of caution and suspicion that draped the country during the Cold War. New international conflicts were on the horizon.

The return of African American soldiers from service overseas lit a fire under a growing resentment of the separate-but-unequal results of decades of Jim Crow policies. Civil rights issues became front page news in every community across the country, with integration and segregation the key points of conflict in the South. The civil rights movement in Natchitoches was, in part, inspired by a statue, *The Good Darkey*, that had been installed in downtown Natchitoches the 1920s. The civil discord that brought national attention to the statue resulted in its removal in the late 1960s.[1] Racial integration and school desegregation became a dominant issue in the Cane River region throughout the first twenty-five years of this period.

The period after World War II also saw a dramatic shift in Southern agricultural practices. Mechanization was the driving force of change on southern farms, with increasing use of the tractor to replace animal labor. With increased mechanization, crop yield had to rise to take advantage of more efficient machinery, so the focus of agricultural research turned to hybridization, chemical fertilizers, and chemical weed and insect control. With these improvements, farms needed fewer workers, leading to changes in the size and organization of labor.[2] In the Cane River region, plantations faced economic concerns that led to both the Prud'homme and Hertzog families giving up their respective family farms in favor of leasing their land to larger industrial farming operations. In the end, both families relinquished portions of their plantations to the federal government for the establishment of Cane River Creole National Historical Park.

This period also saw the introduction in the 1950s of a new national interstate highway system, which revolutionized travel and transportation and led to important social changes. In the 1980s, Interstate Highway 49 was constructed west of Oakland and Magnolia plantations, extending from Lafayette to Shreveport.

1. See "Art as a Political Issue," below. A souvenir painting of *The Good Darkey* is included in the CARI collections (CARI 34070).

2. Fite, 180-192.

Due to increased nationalism inspired by the two world wars, combined with the homogenization of the nation's culture during this period from television and interstate highways, people in communities like Natchitoches became more aware of threats to their unique characteristics and local history. Locals began to celebrate the buildings and places that had defined the character of the area for two centuries.

This led to a movement to preserve the Oakland and Magnolia plantations which ended in the 1996-1997 acquisition of most of their resources by the National Park Service and the formation of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park and the Cane River National Heritage Area in 1994(see Chapter 9).

People

White Creoles

While the national white culture was becoming increasingly homogeneous through assimilation acerbated by the voices and trends highlighted in newspapers, radio, and television, some regional differences, such as local accents, lifestyles, social practices, and food preferences continued to distinguish the Creole heritage of the Cane River region.

Oakland Plantation Family

Pierre Phanor Prud'homme, head of the sixth generation of owners at Oakland Plantation, died in 1948, seven years after his wife Marie Laure Cloutier. With his death, James Alphonse Prud'homme II, became the head of the family. Alphonse II had married his wife, Rosalie Lucile Keator, on August 9, 1924, and the couple went on to raise their children on the plantation. As was previously mentioned, the couple had four children, James Alphonse III (b. 1927), Kenneth Andrew (b. 1929), Mayo Keator (b. 1932), and Rose Vivian (b. 1934).[3]

In 1950, James Alphonse III graduated from Northwestern State University, and married Martha Jane Allen the following year. Initially, Alphonse III, nicknamed "Al," was not interested in continuing the family farm; the young couple moved to Texas, where he worked as a cotton broker. In 1954, however, just after the birth of their eldest son, James Alphonse IV, he realized that he missed Oakland Plantation, and moved the family back to Natchitoches. He rejoined the family farming operation, along with his younger brother, Kenneth, allowing their father to gradually retire from farming and concentrate on running the plantation store.[4]

Eventually, all four of Alphonse III's children married. On April 23, 1960, Alphonse III's daughter, Rose Vivian, married her first husband, Eugene Joseph Flores, in the Immaculate Conception Church in Natchitoches. The reception following the ceremony was held in the Big House at Oakland Plantation.[5]

The wedding was far from the only family celebration in the Big House in the second half of the twentieth century. Alphonse II and Lucile (as she was known) celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary there on August 7, 1974. The couple hosted a Mass of Thanksgiving at the St. Charles Chapel, followed by a reception at Oakland Plantation.[6]

In 1987, Alphonse III was diagnosed with cancer.[7] He died the following year, just before Oakland Plantation was honored in the national Family Farm Recognition Program as a National Bicentennial Farm. Managed by the U.S.

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3. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 156.
4. Jones, *Big House*, 40.
5. "Rose Vivian Prud'homme is Bride of Eugene J. Flores," *The Times* (Shreveport), April 24, 1960, 49.
6. "Natchitoches Tour: 'Miss Carmen' Recalls Gala Celebrations at Oakland," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), October 11, 1974, 20. A "Mass of Thanksgiving" is a Roman Catholic celebration marking a notable occasion. While not related to the American Thanksgiving Day, a Mass of Thanksgiving can be held on that day, as well.
7. Jones, *Big House*, 42.

Department of Agriculture. The program, managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, recognizes farms families that have been on the same land for at least 200 years. Oakland Plantation and the Prud'homme family were recognized by the program in 1988. At the time, Oakland was the lone qualifier in Louisiana, with 339 others identified nationwide. To celebrate the occasion, the family held a reunion, with as many as possible joining the festivities. By that point, the family had grown so much that one of the Prud'homme family members explained, "[i]t takes about 30 minutes to kiss everyone goodbye."[8]

Alphonse II was unable to participate in the recognition ceremony due to ill health; he died four years later, in October 1991. His wife, Lucile, died on September 1, 1994.[9] Her obituary, which appeared in *The Town Talk* the day after her death, listed her many activities as "a member of St. Charles Chapel Catholic Church, Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames of the 17th Century, National Society Magna Carta Dames, Americans of Royal Descent, The Denison Society Inc., Daughters of Colonial Wars, Daughters of American Colonists, Colonial Order of the Crown, American Legion Ladies Auxiliary Gordon Peters Post No. 10, Natchitoches Genealogical & Historical Association, and the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historical Natchitoches." [10] The latter organization is now known as the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches (APHN) and continues to organize annual events to support historic preservation activities in the community. It also owns and operates Melrose Plantation as a historic house museum.[11]

After Lucile's death, Rose Vivian's daughter, Denise Annette Flores Poleman, and her family moved in to the Big House, and became the seventh and eighth generations of Prud'hommes to occupy Oakland Plantation. The same year, the Prud'homme family began negotiations with the National Park Service to sell to the federal government approximately forty-one acres of the plantation.[12] The Prud'hommes and NPS reached an agreement in 1997, and the family moved off the plantation in June 1998.[13]

Magnolia Plantation Family

Magnolia Plantation continued in the Lecomte-Hertzog family tradition of plantation-based agribusiness until the 1970s. After graduating college, Elizabeth "Betty" Hertzog, the daughter of Matt and Lydia Hertzog, was in the process of relocating to Houston for a job when she got the news of her father's heart attack, and she returned to assist with the bookkeeping and managing of the farm. Following Matt Hertzog's death in 1973, the plantation lands were leased to larger industrial farming operations.

The last tenant farmers moved out of the Slave Cabins in the early 1970s, and the plantation continued on without a resident workforce. A few years later in 1976, the property containing the cabins and other outbuildings was donated to Museum Contents, Inc.

In 1979, Magnolia Plantation was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a decade

8. "Cane River Creole National Historical Park," (accessed April 20, 2018); Richard L. Ryman, "Prud'homme family farm cited," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), August 18, 1988, 1.
9. Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Oakland Plantation Records and Prud'homme Family Papers, CARI 0003, 4.
10. "Lucile K. Prudhomme," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), September 2, 1994, 32. Mounted on the south wall of the Big House hallway is a vignette of framed certificates related to the organizations and credentials established by Lucile during her lifetime.
11. The mission of the APHN is to promote and preserve an understanding of the rich cultural heritage of Natchitoches and the Cane River area. "Melrose Plantation" (accessed October 3, 2018).
12. Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Oakland Plantation Records and Prud'homme Family Papers, CARI 0003, 4.
13. Jones, *Big House*, 42.

later, the property was recognized as a National Bicentennial Farm. At the time of its designation in 1989, it was one of only two farms west of the Mississippi River that had been in the same family for over two hundred years. The other farm was Oakland.

Lydia C. Hertzog passed away in 1988, shortly before the plantation was honored with the Bicentennial designation. However, Betty Hertzog and Ambrose J. Hertzog III continued to live on the property. The former lived in the main house, giving tours of the property until the 2000s. The latter occupies a caretaker's house built in the 1960s to the north of the main house.

After the establishment of Cane River Creole National Historical Park in 1994, the 19-acre parcel owned by Museum Contents was donated to the NPS. The main house property continued to be owned by the descendants of Ambrose John Hertzog and Sarah Jane Hunter Hertzog, including Betty Hertzog and Ambrose J. Hertzog III. These descendants also continue to lease out 2,400 acres of plantation farm land to industrial farming operations.[14]

Creoles of Color

Like many who lived in the South after the end of World War II, Creoles of color experienced a loss in their numbers through out-migration. Family holdings had been greatly reduced since the Civil War, with property being divided into smaller and smaller parcels to ensure each generation had land.[15] By the twentieth century, these slivers of land were no longer able to support a family. Initially, the community's youth left to seek greater opportunities, but they were soon joined by older family members.

African Americans

With the outbreak of World War I and the U.S. involvement, the out-migration of the rural African American population that had begun with the end of the Civil War increased. Some out-migration had occurred in the 1870s, but had slowed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. With the problems caused by the boll weevil and the endless cycle of sharecropping, many of the younger generation began seeking opportunities elsewhere. As labor shortages were announced in the industrial north and other urban centers, and rumors flew about the attractive pay in northern industries that was distributed weekly in many cases, more and more people left the South. The out-migration of the early twentieth century was often called the "Detroit Exodus," referring to the large number of people who migrated to that city's booming automobile industry.[16] Out-migration caused Louisiana planters to worry about their own uncertain labor supply, particularly since many of those leaving were of the younger generation.[17] It does not appear that the exodus hit the Cane River as early as other parts of the state. The first sharecropper to leave Oakland did not do so until 1949, and sharecropping continued at Magnolia into the 1950s.[18] The last tenants to move off of the Magnolia property, the Vercher family, moved in the early 1970s.

Although out-migration resulted in changes in the region, it paled in importance to the issue of civil rights. In 1957, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission received what they called a "continuing stream" of affidavits from people who were denied the right to vote in Louisiana. Many of these affidavits had come from Shreveport and the commission held hearings on the issue in that city.

Two bills were introduced in the state legislature to deal with discrimination, but they were met with a wall of resistance from legislators, who, as

14. Cane River Creole National Historical Park, CARI 0002: Magnolia Plantation Records, CARI 0002, 2.
15. Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 276.
16. Jones, *Big House*, 37.
17. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 138.
18. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 194; Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15.

one put it, "couldn't be seen as soft on the nigger question." Out of frustration, Governor Earl Long went before the senate chamber, passionately attempting to defend the black right to vote. Long's behavior, which began with shouting at the senators and drinking from a whiskey-laced bottle of soda, and ended with him "crude, rambling, abusive, profane, maudlin, incoherent, and generally out of control," resulted in his family having him committed to a mental institution. As the state legislators rejoiced over how the show-down ended, a state judge enjoined the commission from going ahead with its scheduled hearing.[19]

In Natchitoches, an early proponent of African American voting rights was Dr. E. A. Johnson. Johnson attended McHarry Medical School in Tennessee before moving to Natchitoches to establish his medical practice. As a medical doctor, he already had a place of standing in the black community, which was only enhanced when he became involved in civil rights issues. Dr. Johnson joined other professional African Americans who, during the 1930s and 1940s, established local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) branches in Louisiana. Johnson founded the Natchitoches branch, which flourished for some time, in contrast to branches in other communities in northern Louisiana, which struggled to stay active.[20] Johnson had risen in the ranks to become the president of the statewide NAACP by May 1950, putting him at the forefront of the entire desegregation movement that would follow.[21]

Johnson's home on Fifth Street served as a meeting place for civil rights organizers and supporters. It is also said that the house constructed for Dr. and Mrs. Johnson had an abundance of bedrooms because there were no hotels for blacks in the town. Mrs. Johnson called one of the many such rooms the "Thurgood Marshall bedroom" because that was where he slept when he was in Natchitoches.[22]

In reality, there were very few hotels available to African Americans. Those that were, were centralized in the African American business community around the Natchitoches train depot. One known establishment was the Brown Bomber Hotel (also known as the Morgan Hotel) at the northeast corner of 6th Street and Lafayette Street. The hotel was aptly named, since it was reportedly where the boxer Joe Lewis, "The Brown Bomber" stayed.[23]

Johnson's efforts had positive results: in 1952, an article from Baton Rouge that was picked up in a Pittsburgh newspaper announced that for the first time since Reconstruction ended, an African American was running for an elected position in Natchitoches Parish. The candidate was R. A. Friedman, an African American farmer from Ward Nine, who announced his candidacy for a position on the parish school board with the support of Dr. Johnson.[24] It is unclear if Friedman won the school board position, but either way, he opened doors for additional African American's to run for elected positions.

The push for civil rights strengthened after World War II. On the national stage, the first civil rights law passed in eighty-two years was enacted in 1957, although the law was greatly reduced from the original bill. Subsequent efforts came in 1964, 1965, and in 1968 at the federal level.[25] The NAACP was present at every step of the way, assuring that African Americans were represented and vocal in support of new legislation. In Natchitoches, the local branch of the NAACP re-

19. Fairclough, *Race and Democracy,* 228-229.
20. Fairclough, *Race and Democracy,* 189.
21. "What are the Branches Doing," *The Crisis* (May 1950), 316
22. Rasmussen, "Dr. E. A. Johnson."
23. "Morgan Hotel, aka Brown Bomber Hotel," Louisiana Regional Folklife Program, Accessed February 18, 2019, https://folklife.nsula.edu/civilwartocivilrights/15MorganHotel.html.
24. "Negro Seeks Board Job in Natchitoches," *The Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), June 14, 1952, 18.
25. Fairclough, *Race and Democracy,* 222-223, 319, 322, and 423.

formed in March 1970.[26] Its organizational meeting was attended by approximately 100 people, who elected William Helaire as the first chapter president, Oliver Simon as vice-president, Augusta Williams as secretary, and Cora Benjamin as treasurer.

Despite the new federal civil rights laws, African American voter registration and participation in elections remained low due to the threats received by blacks who attempted to register. In 1982, the Louisiana NAACP sponsored a 246-mile march to Baton Rouge with the goal of increasing voter registration in all of the state's sixty-four parishes. The march began in Shreveport with the intention of reaching Baton Rouge by June 19, the much-celebrated "Juneteenth," a festival held annually in the South to commemorate emancipation from slavery in Texas on that day in 1865.

The march passed through Natchitoches on Monday, June 7. A local celebration included a rally led by the Natchitoches NAACP president, J. W. Scarborough.[27] Around 400 people gathered in Natchitoches to participate in the rally:

> It was almost like a scene out of the 1960s with church choruses singing rousing spirituals and uniformed police standing around. But, the police were there as friends, and they practically melted into the crowd.[28]

Speakers urged participants to get at least one other African American to register each month for the next three months. Ben Jeffers, 1979 candidate for secretary of state, East Baton Rouge City-Parish Council personnel manager, and march coordinator, said, "blacks have split off into splinter groups, and we've got to unify again." He pointed out that the state has "one black district attorney…one criminal sheriff…and you can count our judges on less than four fingers. We have to vote for people sensitive to our needs."[29] Jeffers hoped that after the march ended, on Juneteenth, each parish would begin in earnest the effort to get people registered.

Another prominent civil rights leader and African American community member of the time was Ben D. Johnson. In his early years, Johnson formed and owned a funeral home, casket company, and insurance company and quickly became one of the largest minority-owned enterprises in the state. However, his commitment to the African American community was his true legacy. Upon his death in 2005, he provided economic, educational, and social support through his many programs, including the establishment of Ben D. Johnson Educational Center.[30]

Throughout Johnson's life, he stood up for his community and for equal rights among African Americans. Because of his service, he was named an honorary Louisiana state senator, awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from Northwestern State University, and received the NAACP humanitarian services award. His campaign for civil rights brought him to the attention of Nelson Mandela and U.S. President Bill Clinton, who acknowledged his work with their humanitarian services award.[31]

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26. NAACP Chapter Receives Charter, *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), March 20, 1970, 14. It is unclear if the branch of the NAACP that formed under the leadership of Dr. E. A. Johnson languished after his years of ill health and death in 1958, or if this is a second branch of the organization in Natchitoches.
27. Jim Leggett, "Voter Registration March Will Pass through Cenla [Central Louisiana]," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), June 3, 1982, 21.
28. Jim Leggett, "Black Voter Registration Marchers Greeted by Crowd in Natchitoches," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), June 8, 1982, 17.
29. Leggett, "Black Voter Registration," 17.
30. Lee, Dayna Bowker Lee, "Ben D. Johnson, Sr. [1910-2005]," Louisiana Regional Folklife Program. Accessed February 18, 2019. http://winhttp.nsula.edu/regionalfolklife/civilwartocivilrights/BenJohnson.html; "Ben D. Johnson (1910 - 2005)," Ben D. Johnson Educational Center, accessed February 18, 2019. https://www.bdjcenter.org/about/.
31. Lee, Dayna Bowker Lee, "Ben D. Johnson, Sr. [1910-2005]," Louisiana Regional Folklife Program. Accessed February 18, 2019.

Lifeways

Health

Post-war life in the Cane River region saw local improvements in health care. On October 19, 1955, the Natchitoches Parish Police Jury passed an ordinance establishing a seven-member governing board for the Natchitoches Parish Hospital Service District.[32] A new, sixty-two-bed hospital was completed in 1958, with dedication held in November. The hospital, although not the first in the parish, continued to expand its services, with outpatient facilities added in 2004, assisted living facilities in 2007, a cardiology clinic in 2009, comprehensive wound care in 2013, and a walk-in clinic in 2015. It is unclear if the hospital was originally segregated, but in 1959, hospital chairman, Harold Kaffie, went on record with the Police Jury saying he wanted to "set at rest rumors," and "if anybody ever tells you they were turned away from the hospital it is not true."[33]

Dr. E. A. Johnson, previously mentioned as the president of the Louisiana NAACP, continued to serve the medical needs of African Americans until his death in the late 1950s. Johnson had attended McHarry Medical School in Tennessee before moving to Natchitoches to establish his medical practice.[34]

Religion

By the mid-twentieth century, most American religious faiths and denominations were represented by churches or temples in Natchitoches Parish. Most of the white residents of the parish were Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Latter Day Saints (Mormon), and Jewish. Churches, like much of the community, continued to be segregated. African American churches continued to have strong leaders in both their houses of worship and in politics. Typically, African Americans most often attend Baptist or African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) churches, or other protestant denominations. Creoles of Color continue to participate largely in the Catholic church. The oldest church in the parish was the Church of the Immaculate Conception, built in 1856, but new churches were continuing to be constructed. In April 1952, a newspaper article noted that "ground was broken a few weeks ago for a $350,000 Methodist church."[35]

Not all religious celebrations were limited to the walls of a church. In October 1957, Natchitoches hosted the Christ the King Rally. Thousands of Catholics gathered for the celebration, which included a procession, field mass, and numerous choral offerings. The newspaper announcement of the event concluded with an invitation from Monsignor DeKeuwer, to "all throughout north Louisiana, especially our non-Catholic friends."[36]

In particular, the Catholic faith was very important to the Hertzogs, a legacy handed down from the LeComte family. Throughout the twentieth century, the family continued to use the chapel that was built previously in early 1900s in the ell of the Main House. Oral histories with Betty Hertzog from the late twentieth century also confirm that her mother and grandmother handed out Medals of the Immaculate Conception ("Miraculous Medals") to the residents in the Slave Cabins. Archaeologists from the University of Houston later discovered sub-floor deposits in the Slave Cabins in the 2000s, including a Miraculous Medal and other items, reflecting a blending and adaptation of Catholicism with African worldviews.

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http://winhttp.nsula.edu/regionalfolklife/civilwartocivilrights/BenJohnson.html.

32. Lester, Miller & Wells (accessed December 27, 2017).
33. "Natchitoches to Dedicate Hospital," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), November 28, 1958, 8.
34. Teal, *Natchitoches Parish*, 113.
35. Robert K. Butcher, "Old Natchitoches Capitalized on Past, But Show Great Potential for Future," *The Times* (Shreveport), April 8, 1952, 8.
36. "Natchitoches To Host Christ the King Rally," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), October 16, 1957, 6.

Today, the Hertzog family remain active members of the Catholic Church. Betty Hertzog is a Dame of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, a papal order supporting that church in the Holy Land, and she has hosted several of the regional meetings in her home.

Education

Public school integration was a central issue for African Americans in Natchitoches Parish, and for most of the United States during the second half of the twentieth century, due to "separate but equal" policies that resulted in poorer facilities for blacks. A 1952, an article on the future of Natchitoches and its surrounding parish noted that the community had student enrollment of 1,829 students housed in four elementary schools and three high schools. A fifth elementary school was under construction at the time, at an estimated cost of $355,000. It is assumed that these schools were for white students, because there is additional mention of a new high school for African American students under construction, with an anticipated cost of $271,000, $84,000 below the cost of a white elementary school. Black enrollment at the Natchitoches Parish Training School was 664, and enrollment at the local black high school brought the total enrollment of blacks in these post-primary schools to nearly 3,000, far more than attended the white schools.[37]

In 1954, after sixteen years of school integration lawsuits filed by the NAACP and other community groups, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in Brown v. Board of Education that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.[38] The ruling noted that government bodies had played a crucial role in promoting and preserving racial differences by limiting African American students to separate and therefore inherently unequal educations.

There was immediate national push-back against the ruling. In Louisiana, the NAACP called for immediate "integration of students, teachers and personnel" in Louisiana's public schools, and threatened law suits if the state delayed ending school segregation. The state legislature, which called the Supreme Court's decision "unworkable and unenforceable," reacted to the announcement by immediately filing two bills to skirt the anti-segregation decision. The first bill, introduced by representatives Hardy Goff of Rapides Parish and Nick Cefalu of Tangipahoa Parish, would permit the zoning of city and parish schools by school boards, and giving the school boards the authority to "assign and designate the school in which any child may be enrolled." The second bill, introduced by Cefalu and Representative Wellborn Jack of Caddo Parish, authorized parish school superintendents to designate which school pupils would attend.[39]

In response, Dr. E. A. Johnson, by then the NAACP state president, offered to work with state officials any way they could. He went on: "[w]e realize it is a problem, and we think that by getting together and talking it over we can smooth some of the rough spots." Johnson continued, saying that,

> [w]e might have some suggestions and they might have some. . . . . We want to negotiate in good faith, but we don't want to be sucked into any attempt to circumvent the court's ruling.[40]

On May 31, 1954, the NAACP indicated that there had already been two suits filed to stop integration, with twenty-one others being readied for filing, more than any other Southern state.[41] The suits included one in Natchitoches Parish and one for the integration of Northwestern State College.

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37. Butcher, "Old Natchitoches Capitalized on Past," 8.
38. Birnbaum and Taylor, 349.
39. "NAACP Seeks Quick Integration of Students, Teachers in State," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), May 31, 1954, 24.
40. "NAACP Seeks Quick Integration," *The Town Talk*, 24.
41. "NAACP Seeks Quick Integration," *The Town Talk*, 24.

Following the Supreme Court ruling, Louisiana state officials adopted a three-point plan aimed at "removal of all racial segregation in public education without compromise of principle." The plan called for

> 1. The state board of education to reconsider its policy in regard to the admission of Negro applicants to all state-supported colleges, trade schools and schools for exceptional children.
>
> 2. Parish and city school boards to take immediate steps to bring about integration of students, teachers and the personnel into their respective systems.
>
> 3. All teacher organizations representing both racial groups to lend assistance to facilitate the implementation of this program.[42]

Many local white people were unhappy with what they perceived of as forced integration. As a result, representatives F. W. Gravolet, Jr., of Plaquemines, and T. T. Fields, of Union, introduced a bill that called for a constitutional amendment and three enabling acts to authorize the state, parishes, and municipalities to provide financial assistance to minors for obtaining elementary and secondary education in private schools.[43] The amendment received overwhelming support in the polls, with a 4-1 margin of "yes" votes.[44]

Public school segregation continued in practice in Louisiana for over a decade, but in 1965, schools of Natchitoches Parish were ordered to begin desegregation. A plan was filed by the Natchitoches School Board to carry out integration, but it was viewed as insufficient by members of the community. In response to the proposed plan, attorneys for African Americans in Caddo and Natchitoches parishes filing motions listing seven objections, stating that it

> 1. failed to meet the minimum legal requirements in the rate and scope of desegregation;
>
> 2. failed to provide for a start of systemwide desegregation for the 1965-1966 school term;
>
> 3. failed to provide for a unitary system of attendance zones, retaining instead racial attendance zones;
>
> 4. failed to provide for the permission transfer of students in other schools;
>
> 5. failed to provide for elimination of segregation in services, activities, and programs;
>
> 6. failed to provide for elimination of race as a factor in hiring, retention, assignment, and conditions and privileges of employment of teachers, administrators, and other staff personnel; and
>
> 7. failed to provide for nonracial assignment of students in grades not immediately desegregated.[45]

The Natchitoches Parish School Board had proposed to integrate two grades that year and asked for a one-year delay outside the city.[46] In response to the suit, U.S. District Judge Ben C. Dawkins, Jr., ordered Natchitoches Schools to integrate, but provided an extension for the integration of the first and twelfth grades in 1965-1966. The same order extended integration of grades two and eleven to the 1966-1967 school year, with all remaining grades to be fully integrated the following school year.[47]

It was not until 1970 that the Natchitoches School Board adopted a new integration plan, largely due to the Singleton Decision.[48] As a result, the board required that in the fall of 1970, each school in the

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42. "NAACP Seeks Quick Integration," *The Town Talk*, 24.
43. "NAACP Seeks Quick Integration,", *The Town Talk*, 24.
44. "Six Proposed Amendments are Trailing," *The Times* (Shreveport), November 4, 1954, 1.
45. "School Integration Plan Objections Filed Here," *The Times* (Shreveport), July 22, 1965, 7.
46. "School Integration Plan," *The Times*, 7.
47. "Natchitoches Schools Ordered to Integrate," *The Times* (Shreveport), August 5, 1065, 5.
48. This was a process that was developed from the court case of Singleton v. Jackson

parish would have a ratio of 60-40 white to African American faculty. The Alexandria-base paper, The Town Talk, reported that in Ward 9, where both Oakland and Magnolia Plantations were located, all children grades kindergarten to eight would attend Natchez School, and "all children in the area" kindergarten to grade twelve would attend St. Matthew School. [49] This last may be a mistake; it is possible that St. Matthew School was reserved for all children from grades nine to twelve.

Meanwhile, the sixth generation of the Prud'homme family had completed school before the matter of school integration reached the Supreme Court. Mayo Keator Prud'homme attended the private Catholic school, St. Mary's High School, in Natchitoches before that time, as did Rose Vivian Prud'homme.[50] Betty Hertzog also attended St. Mary's High School

While it is possible that members of other Planter Class families, including the Hertzogs of Magnolia Plantation, also selected private school options for their children, at least some of the family members attended public school. In 1988, the obituary of Mrs. Lydia C. Hertzog, Betty Hertzog's mother, indicated that she had been a long-time teacher in Natchitoches public schools.[51]

Social and Recreational Life

Art as a Political Issue

Art is always a reflection of the human condition, as demonstrated by self-taught artist, Clementine Hunter (1887-1988) (Figure 8-1). Hunter, a servant on the Melrose Plantation who did not begin painting until the 1940s, would paint at night after completing a full day of work. It may be that she was encouraged to pursue painting by Cammie Henry, who had started an art colony at Melrose (see Chapter 7), although she had regular interactions with Lyle Saxon and Frank Mineah aka Francois Mignon, who many have also encouraged her to paint.

Hunter's first exhibit was held in 1949, but she did not gain much public notice until the 1970s, when she exhibited her paintings in both the Museum of American Folk Art in New York, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Figure 8-2). Hunter was not formally trained in art and painted directly from her own experience. Her colorful paintings, done on whatever surface she could find, depicted scenes of everyday plantation life, from cotton field to baptisms and funerals, all



FIGURE 8-1. Clementine Hunter in front of African House at Melrose Plantation. NCPTT.

Municipal School District that required school districts to have all the prerequisites necessary for the implementation of a single school system in place by February 1, 1970. Secondly, it required that the merger of segregated student populations into a single population had to be done prior to the 1970 fall term. Finally, the redistribution of faculty and staff members had to be undertaken so the ration of African American to white teachers and staff in each school remained consistent with the ratio of African American to white teachers and staff in the entire system. The intention was to preclude any school from being viewed as strictly for African American or white students. Lomotey, 579.

49. "Natchitoches School Board Adopts Integration Plan," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), April 27, 1970, 8.
50. "Miss Annette Berry Weds Mayo Keator Prud'homme," *Monroe Morning World* (Monroe), March 31, 1963, 27; "Miss Prud'homme and Mr. Flores to be Married in Natchitoches," *The Times* (Shreveport), February 21, 1960, 51.
51. "Lydia C. Hertzog," *The Town Talk*, February 4, 1988, D-4.

painted from memory.[52] Scenes of plantation life after slavery were the focus of her art. Hunter's efforts are widely appreciated, not only for their aesthetic value, but because they are rare and valuable records of her personal history.

In contrast, a statue donated in 1927 to the City of Natchitoches by local cotton planter and banker, Jackson Bryan, aroused much controversy (Figure 8-3). Born in 1868, five years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Bryan claimed that the statue was inspired by the loving care and affection he was shown as a child by African Americans on Bossier and Desoto plantations.[53] Entitled, "*The Good Darkey*," and locally known as "Uncle Jack," the statue was considered to be the first ever erected in the South to the "memory of the devoted negro of ante-bellum days." The bronze, larger-than-life-sized figure of an elderly African American man tipping his hat was completed by Baltimore sculptor, Hans Schuler. The inscription on the statue's limestone base read,

> The Good Darkey of Louisiana
>
> Erected by the City of Natchitoches in Grateful Recognition of the Arduous and Faithful Service of the Good Darkies of Louisiana.[54]



FIGURE 8-2. Photograph of Hunter's depiction of a baptism close to Melrose Plantation while undergoing conservation. NCPTT.

Ned Sublette, a writer who spent his youth in Natchitoches, authored several books, and served as contributing editor to the magazine, *Bomb*, wrote about the statue, "[i]f you were black and wanted a job in the Natchitoches of my childhood, the Good Darkey was there, beaming his benevolent eyes down to instruct you in deportment. The only jobs open to you were menial ones, since you wouldn't be considered for anything else."[55]

By 1961, the national publication, *Ebony*, had also commented on the statue. In its April issue, the magazine used *The Good Darkey* to illustrate the change between what *Ebony* called the "New Negro Image" and the "Old Negro Image." The



FIGURE 8-3. *The Good Darkey*, downtown Natchitoches, 1930s. Louisiana Digital Library.

52. National Museum of Women in Arts (accessed December 27, 2017).
53. Charles Cunningham, "The Good Darkey [sic] is Gone," *Natchitoches Times*, September 26, 1968, 1.
54. "Louisiana Town Erects Statute to 'Good Darkey [sic],'" *The Anniston Star* (Anniston, Alabama), July 11, 1927, 7. CARI has a souvenir painting of the statue in its collection: CARI 34070.
55. Ned Sublette, "The Good Darkey," *Bomb* (Spring 2006), 100.

unnamed author of the article explained that, in the past, the Old Negro believed that "half civil rights were better than no civil rights at all," and accepted the sophistry of "separate but equal." The author said that while the "racial climate of our country has changed…the Good South is reluctant to give up a way of life that perpetuates the Old Negro Image." The author continued, saying that the New Negro would be "upright and proud. Its hat is not in its hand. It is not weak, meek nor submissive. It is not a child, not a servant."[56]

In 1950, Burgess Johnson, a visitor from Massachusetts wrote about Natchitoches in a travelogue entry for the *North Adams Transcript* newspaper, saying, "the point of interest we liked least in the old town is a bronze statute erected with the best of intentions in honor of "the faithful darkies of Louisiana."[57] Johnson continued by noting that the local Chamber of Commerce boasted, "[t]he white citizens of Natchitoches love and respect the Negroes in their community and claim that some of the best darkies in the world reside there." Despite the local praise, Johnson concluded that "[t]he statue is a fine piece of sculpture, but is represents an old darkie…in an attitude of complete and obsequious humility."[58]

In September 1968, the Natchitoches City Council voted to remove the statue that for over thirty years been a unique marker in the city:

> It was a favorite photographic subject for visitors, and virtually ignored and taken for granted by local citizens. In more recent years, because of the race emphasis, the statue has received some attention even some defacing. First from a white minority group that did not appreciate the fact that there was a statue in the city of Natchitoches that reflected appreciation for the Negro. Then, in very recent times, the statue's existence has been criticized from some Negro elements that the statue should be demolished or removed because it was an "affront" to the Negro society.[59]

On September 28, 1968, a local columnist and Melrose Plantation resident, Francois Mignon, wrote about the statue he called "Uncle Jack," in recognition of the donor, J. L. Bryan. Mignon conceded that, with the passing of time, the reactions to the message provided by the art work had begun to change. He wrote,

> [f]or the life of me, I cannot imagine two more opposing viewpoints on any racial matter than the Ku Klux Klan on one hand and the publishers of EBONY, the magazine devoted to the lives of colored people. But in recent years, fiery crosses, said to have been brought forth by the Klan burned at the base of the statue while Ebony Magazine at about the same time was bringing out a full page picture of the statue and an accompanying page of print denouncing it as libelous or degrading to the colored race.[60]

In 1974, the Alexandria *Town Talk* reported that the statue, which had been put in storage in the 1960s, was eventually placed at LSU's Burden Research Plantation property in Baton Rouge.[61] With its relocation, the name of the statue was officially changed to "Uncle Jack."[62]

Entertainment

Life on the plantation went beyond the season by season cycle of farming. With the increase in mechanized machinery, residents of both plantations had more free time. Leisure activities, such as racing horses, playing music, playing

56. "The Image Makers," *Ebony* 16, No. 6 (April 1961): 88.
57. Burgess Johnson, Professor on Wheels, *The North Adams Transcript* (North Adams, Massachusetts), January 14, 1950, 4.
58. Johnson, Professor on Wheels, 4.
59. "Statue of Negro to be Removed," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), September 25, 1968, 18.
60. Francois Mignon, "Plantation Memo," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), September 28, 1968, 2B.
61. "'Good Darkie' Statue," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), October 14, 1974, 13.
62. Sublette, "The Good Darkey," 101.

baseball, and going to juke joints, were predominant in the mid-twentieth century.

At Magnolia, Matt Hertzog continued the legacy of his great-grandfather Ambrose II in horse racing, but also showed Tennessee Walkers. He was an accomplished rider, as was his daughter Betty. Riding horses was not restricted to the planter class, however, as photos from Magnolia in the 1940s and 1950s show African American children practicing trick-riding skills on horses. Races were held on the turnrows between Magnolia and the Cohen Plantations, but there were also a fair number of small horse tracks along Cane River. The horse races, especially those on plantations, provided socializing not only for the owners, but for many of the area's working families.

The plantation store adapted to provide not only goods for plantation workers, but also a social gathering place. The store at Magnolia was particularly vibrant with people visiting and playing cards and dice. The porch also became center stage for local musicians, including brothers Yuke, Duma, and Shek LaCour. The Hertzog family occasionally shot home movies and played the movies on a projector for the residents of the Slave Cabins.

Local bands also provided entertainment for the Hertzog family at the nearby camp on "Mr. Matt's Island," a small island formed at the south end of Cane River Lake near the dam. The family would spend time on the island, fish, boat, and host dances on the dam.

Baseball was another popular entertainment in the area, and several of the plantations and the local lumber companies fielded teams. A newspaper clipping reporting the results of a game pitched by Matt Hertzog of the Derry team shows several photographs of white and black children playing baseball together at Magnolia, as well as pictures of adults playing.

At least two juke joints, the Friendly Place and Bubba's, were established along Cane River near Melrose Plantation.[63] Each appears to be segregated by race: one was frequented by Creoles of color and the other by African Americans.

By the 1950s, movie production had made its way into the Cane River region. During this period, Oakland Plantation became the setting for several Hollywood movies. In 1958, director John Ford selected Oakland Plantation as the setting for his John Wayne epic, *The Horse Soldiers*.[64] The movie also starred William Holden and Constance (Connie) Towers. Both Vivian Prud'homme, who was the stand-in for leading lady Connie Towers, and Jerry Cloutier participated in the cast, but it was the family dog, Whups, who was reputed to have commanded the highest salary for family members.[65] Two additional movies were partially filmed in the Cane River region: *Steel Magnolias*, in 1989, and *The Man in the Moon*, in 1991.[66]

Historic Preservation

Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches

As prosperity began to return to the region after World War II, with it came a push for urban renewal. Old town houses and commercial buildings were replaced with newer commercial buildings. Many felt this was progress, but public outcry arose when there was talk of covering the brick pavers on Front Street with asphalt. In 1941, Lucille Prud'homme and other concerned citizens formed the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches, initially to stop the paving project. To promote its cause, the group held annual tours, with special events in downtown Natchitoches and at various Cane River plantations.[67] In 1971, the organization changed its name to the Association for the

63. NPS documentary, Juke Joints, Dance Halls, and House Parties. Available on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jHgHXV0mdU
64. "Prud'homme Hospitality," *The Times* (Shreveport), September 30, 1979, 63.
65. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland,* 101.
66. Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 101.
67. Jones, *Big House*, 41.

Preservation of Historic Natchitoches, or the APHN. The APHN owns and operates Melrose Plantation for public visitation.[68]

Oakland Plantation was a regular feature on the group's annual home tour. In October 1975, Lucille Prud'homme, who was also affectionately known as "LuLu," told an interviewer that, although she liked to have visitors, the tours had taken a toll on the house, with many family items broken or even stolen by visitors. Still, she regularly opened the house, showing off its antique furniture and family paintings; for those truly interested visitors, they could also see Lucille's private family museum. Started by Lucille and her mother-in-law, Marie Laure Cloutier Prud'homme, the museum was organized on the ground floor beneath the porch. In it was a collection of items used in and around the home around the turn of the twentieth century, including butter churns, saws, brick presses, and saddle skeletons for the sidesaddles always kept in the lower level of the house so they would be available for the women of the family when they wanted to go for a horseback ride.[69] APHN's Fall Tour of Homes continues today and many Prud'homme family members make the pilgrimage back to Oakland to continue the tradition.

Museum Contents, Inc.

In the 1960s, building on the momentum begun by the APHN, local Natchitoches citizen, Robert Buford DeBlieux, continued the work of preserving Natchitoches' past.[70] A member of an old local family, Robert, known locally as "Bobby," served the community as historian, preservationist, painter, author, businessman, and, for a while, the Democratic mayor of Natchitoches. In 1964, DeBlieux founded the non-profit organization, Museum Contents, Inc., which was dedicated to preserving the history of Natchitoches by exhibiting important community artifacts "before the public eye for study and observation."[71] Museum Contents' early efforts included hosting exhibits in the local banks, but its reach expanded quickly when, in 1967, the company acquired and moved the deteriorating Aubin-Roque House (ca. 1797), also known simply as the "Roque House," from Isle Brevelle to a new location between Front Street and the Cane River in Natchitoches.[72] In spite of its success with the Aubin-Roque House, ownership was not the goal of Museum Contents; instead, it saw its role as a "pass through" to other organizations that would be better equipped to protect the resources, but for some reason were unable to act quickly enough to protect the more fragile resources when threatened.[73]

DeBlieux served as Natchitoches mayor from 1976 to 1980 and, during that time, was instrumental in establishing the Natchitoches Historic District. In the late 1980s, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, and later, Preservation Officer for the State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. In this position, he led to efforts to recognize forty-two historic districts across the state.[74]

Understandably, the work of DeBlieux appealed to Matthew Hertzog II of Magnolia Plantation. In 1976, in collaboration with DeBlieux, the Hertzog family transferred ownership of approximately 19 acres of Magnolia Plantation and 21 buildings and

68. Melrose Plantation (accessed April 19, 2017).
69. Janet Fontenot, "Oakland- Home Rich with 150 Years of History, Life," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), October 10, 1975, 17.
70. Teddy Allen, "City Sees Bright Future in Icons of Preserved Past," *The Times* (Shreveport), April 5, 1992, 56.
71. Robert "Bobby" DeBlieux, obituary, *The Times* (Shreveport), February 2, 2010; "First of Series of Exhibits of Historic Articles is Displayed in Natchitoches," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), February 5, 1965, 5.
72. "Old Home Arrives at New Site," *The Times* (Shreveport), September 3, 1967, 8A; CRSR, *Gin Barn*, 34.
73. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 34.
74. DeBlieux, Obituary, 2010.

structures to Museum Contents, Inc.[75] The donation was made when the family began to lease most of their property to large-scale corporate farming operations. The Hertzogs hoped that, under the care of Museum Contents, their historic buildings and collections would "have a better chance at upkeep."[76] The family retained, and continued to farm, 2,148 acres of Magnolia's fertile land and continued to reside in its main house.[77] The Hertzogs offered public tours of the Big House and the surrounding property until 2006.[78]

In 1979, Magnolia Plantation, both the privately owned property retained by the family and the parcel owned by Museum Contents were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. [79] Throughout the 1970s and into the 1990s, Museum Contents worked to preserve the outbuildings and did substantial work on the Slave Cabins. The same year, Oakland Plantation was also listed.

In particular, the organization focused on the restoration of Cabin 1. The cabin's masonry walls were repaired, a wood shingle roof was put on, and a shed-roof porch was erected along the west elevation. Work on six additional cabins was limited to masonry stabilization, which included repointing and replacing bricks and installing new metal roofs. Additions on the cabins were also removed. The only cabin that did not receive any stabilization work was Cabin 7, which Museum Contents had initially planned to remove.

In 1993, the non-profit group completed an architectural conservation survey and assessment for the Magnolia complex and the Roque House. The document was "intended as a tool for addressing basic conservation and architectural needs" and was "to be used for planning, implementation, and fundraising." The document also noted that the Slave Cabins had been made weathertight, but doing so had resulted in inadequate air exchange; mold, rot, and insect infestation had started to thrive. Additionally, even though seven of the eight cabins had been stabilized, vegetation growth had already started reclaiming the buildings. Photographs show vines and trees growing along the foundations of the newly stabilized cabins.

Studies for a National Park

Investigations into the feasibility of federal acquisition of properties in the Cane River region began as early as 1989, when Louisiana U.S. Representative Jerry Huckaby sought funding for a study to determine if there was interest in establishing a national park there. NPS acquisition had support from Oakland Plantation's owner, Kenneth Prud'homme, who said about its historic agricultural buildings and outbuildings: "[i]f something is not done in the next two generations, all of those support buildings will be gone."[80]

In 1989, Huckaby's focus was the possible acquisition of "half a dozen of the pre-Civil War antebellum homes[,] as well as the Kate Chopin home at Cloutierville that we think could be designated as a National Park," he explained in an interview.[81] The $100,000 requested from the Department of the Interior would support a study to determine if the area met the criteria of historical significance and integrity of existing cultural resources. Huckaby estimated that study would take about a year and the results would include estimates on the cost of creating the park, as well as the park's annual budget. Kenneth Prud'homme, who was considering abandoning farming at the time, noted that the possibility of a park would be "one of the greatest things that

75. Cane River Creole National Historical Park, CARI 0002; CRSR, *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn*, 34.
76. Greg Kendrick, "Magnolia Slave Cabins Refurbished," *The Times* (Shreveport), March 23, 1991, A1-A-2.
77. Firth and Turner, *Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report*, 169.
78. Dustin Fuqua, personal communication.
79. Hertzog, Ambrose J., Dr., and Mrs. Ambrose J. Hertzog. Magnolia Plantation National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1978.
80. Doran, "Cane River Park Sought," 18.
81. Karen Doran, "Cane River Park Sought," *The Times* (Shreveport), March 7, 1989, 18.

could have happened to this area from the point of tourism and restoration."

The Huckaby-supported study would determine the national significance of the 22,000-acre swath of land between the Red River and Interstate 49, including Oakland Plantation, with its twenty-two historic buildings and extensive historic landscape, and the nineteen-acre portion of Magnolia Plantation, with its collection of historic buildings and extensive historic landscape, by then owned by Museum Contents, Inc. John Fricker, director of the Division of Historic Preservation for the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism in 1992, declared that the properties "represent the finest collection of Creole plantation homes in the state."[82]

Time was already running out for the former slave cabins at Magnolia. By the 1990s, Museum Contents, Inc., had secured grants and emergency funding from the state, which supported the stabilization of the eight buildings by boarding up the windows and doors, and installing new roofs; however, there was concern that this would not be sufficient. Ann Brittain, a long-time participant in the area's restoration and preservation efforts, noted that "with local resources, we can only do so much. This is a massive project. But you just feel like you owe it to the future generations to try and get it done. All this is an investment in the future."[83]

In Spring 1992, Teddy Allen, a reporter with the *Shreveport Times*, explained that

> [f]ederal funding would mean restoration and preservation as well as maintenance and upkeep of many antebellum structures. Without that, the plantations, especially several dilapidated structures on massive Oakland Plantation, will simply rot.[84]

It took slightly longer than the year that Huckaby thought it would take to complete the study, but, by June 1993, a draft special resource study and environmental assessment had been completed, and final evaluations were underway. *The Town Talk* wrote, "tourism [was] increasing every year and the urgency to preserve the area and Creole culture becoming more evident, it is almost certain the National Park Service and Congress will achieve its goal."[85]

Before the properties could become a national park, its historical significance had to be verified as rising to the national level. The Secretary of the Interior explains that historical significance can be demonstrated in one or more of four ways:

> association with significant contribution to the broad patterns of history;
>
> association with persons significant in our past;
>
> embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction; or
>
> have the ability to yield, or likelihood to yield information important in prehistory or history.[86]

Because of the potential for national park designation, Oakland and Magnolia plantations were also required to have a national level of significance as determined by the National Historic Landmark (NHL) Program. National historic landmarks are determined by the

82. Teddy Allen, "Federal Funding Would Help Preserve Past, Protect Future," *The Times* (Shreveport), April 5, 1992, 2E.
83. Allen, "Federal Funding," 2E.
84. Allen, "Federal Funding," 2E.
85. Candace Pollock, "Cane River Park Effort Progress," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), October 17, 1993, 1.
86. Andrus, Patrick W. *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.* National Register Bulletin No. 15, revised edition, edited by R. H. Simpson. Washington, D.C. Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997.

Secretary of the Interior, and are identified through theme studies and research through the NHL Program.[87] Additionally, from a practical standpoint, the proposed park would also have to be of sufficient size to ensure long-term protection of the recourses and to accommodate public use.

The four possible alternatives for the park development were presented and presented in the special resource study:

> Alternative A: No Action. This alternative would do nothing and leave the area in the present condition with its historic resources operating with no coordinated interpretive effort;
>
> Alternative B: Frontier Story: Historic Viewshed. This alternative would emphasize the "frontier story" of the Cane River area, including the restoration of Oakland Plantation and many of the outer buildings at Magnolia Plantation. No money would be spent on the option; nor would the federal government acquire any private property. If this alternative was selected by Congress, an interpretive committee composed of representatives from each site should be established to organize and in some cases, implement interpretation.
>
> Alternative C: Plantation Story: NPS Management of Two Sites. This alternative would create a new unit of the national park system. It includes federal acquisition of the Magnolia Plantation outbuildings, but not the Big House, and Oakland Plantation. It would preserve and protect the Creole "plantation story." The park would also seek cooperative agreements with other historic property owners and provide limited technical assistance for preservation and interpretation outside the park boundary. It was estimated this cost would be about $14.3 million.
>
> Alternative D: Comprehensive Story: Heritage Partnership. This would establish a "Cane River Heritage Partnership" that would comprehensively interpret the entire area by incorporating and expanding on the frontier and plantation story outlined in alternatives B and C. This alternative also does did not include any land acquisition by the federal government and required the NPS only be involved in the project for ten years, after which it would turn the project over to a commission that would oversee the coordination of all visitor opportunity in the area.[88]

The study went on to assess the feasibility of adding a new unit to the national park system by evaluating seven historic properties in the Cane River area. New additions would not be recommended if other arrangements could provide adequate protection for the resources and opportunities for public enjoyment.

Of the seven, only Oakland Plantation and the Magnolia Plantation Slave Cabins and outbuildings were deemed feasible for inclusion in the national park system. Oakland had "an adequate land base for resource protection. The grounds are sufficient to allow visitor access without harming the cultural landscape's integrity….Maintaining these features could be done at minimal cost. This site is compact enough to be managed in a cost-effective manner. Acquisition costs should be reasonable parameters because the property is owned by one family."[89]

Magnolia was described in a similar manner as having an adequate land base and reasonable acquisition costs, but it was also noted that the state of Louisiana had granted funds for the preservation work on the Slave Cabins

Louisiana U.S. Senator Bennett Johnston was a vocal advocate during the establishment of the park. In August 1993, he said

87. U. S. Department of the Interior, Manual for State Historic Preservation Review Boards (accessed December 17, 2017).
88. National Park Service, Cane River, Louisiana, Special Resource Study, Environmental Assessment (Denver: NPS Denver Service Center, 1993), iv.
89. National Park Service, Cane River, Louisiana, Special Resource Study, Environmental Assessment (Denver: NPS Denver Service Center, 1993), 47.

> "[t]he designation of that area (as a historic park) will be like a magnet for tourists. . .[; there is] nothing in the country like Cane River and it would give to Northwestern and Natchitoches a certain cache that will put it on the map more than *Steel Magnolias*." [90]

On May 19, 1994, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Bennett Johnston, announced that it had approved a bill to create the Cane River National Historical Park and the Cane River National Heritage Area. With this approval, the bill would move to the full Senate for a final vote. At the time of this vote, estimates of the development costs would be about $9 million, not including the then-unknown cost for the land. The park's annual operating costs were expected to be about $750,000 and the heritage area management costs just below $1 million. The bill also included terms for the establishment of a 19-member Cane River National Heritage Area Commission to work with the park service on the park's general management plan.[91]

The development of the park was not without controversy. In June 1994, Senator Johnston was forced to explain that, although his wife's family owned part of one of the plantations to be included in the proposed park, there was not conflict of interest on his part. Mary Johnston's family were part-owners of Magnolia Plantation, but their current holdings excluded the nineteen-acre parcel that would become part of the park. It was Museum Contents, Inc., that planned to donate the property to the federal government. At the time, it contained eight brick slave cabins, a barn with an original wood cotton press, a blacksmith's shop with tools, the overseer's house, and the old plantation store filled with original plantation records. Bobby DeBlieux, explained that "we've turned all that over to them, there will be no money exchanged whatsoever."[92]

Establishing the Park

On November 2, 1994, Public Law 103-449 [16USC410cc] passed to create Cane River Creole National Historical Park and the Cane River National Heritage Area.[93] The legislation authorized the acquisition of Oakland Plantation, the outbuildings of Magnolia Plantation, and the designation of up to 10 acres of land for a visitor and interpretive center. The visitor and interpretive center location was to be determined later with input from the NPS and a local commission. Also included in the legislation was the establishment of the Cane River National Heritage Area, which would generally extend along four miles of Cane River and include the Natchitoches National Historic District, Los Adaes State Historic Site, and Fort Jessup State Historic Site. The intent of the heritage area was to provide federal technical and limited assistance to property owners and local and state agencies in interpreting and preserving important historic cultural resources in the area. Understandably pleased with the passage of the legislation, Senator Johnston commented that the "Cane River Historic Park will bring more tourists to Louisiana and will also benefit historians and educators. So, this is not just victory for today, but a gift for future generations." The legislation had endorsement from a variety of local sources too, including the Natchitoches City Council, the Natchitoches Parish Tourism Commission, Natchitoches Parish Police Jury, and two area historic preservation groups.[94]

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90. Leigh Flynn, "England Airpark Success Has Surprised Johnston," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), August 25, 1993, 31. Bennet Johnston was related to the Hertzog family at Magnolia.
91. Dennis Camire, "Senate Panel Oks Cane River Park Plan," *The Times* (Shreveport), May 19, 1994, 13.
92. "Johnston says Conflict Doesn't Exist," *Daily World* (Opelousas), June 9, 1994, 2. CARI-29 is the park's Robert DeBlieux Collection.
93. Cane River Creole Draft General Management Plan, 3.
94. "Cane River Projects Expected to Give Area Boost," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), November 4, 1994, D1. Bennet Johnston is related to the Hertzog family at Magnolia.

Occupations

Planters/Farmers

As mechanization increased on the plantations, owners often took on the management of their farms instead of hiring outside professionals. By the mid-1960s at Oakland, both James Alphonse III and his brother Kenneth Andrew were managing farming operations, while their father managed the store.[95] The Prud'hommes continued to grow cash crops during their final years of farming, although the cotton production was greatly reduced. In the 1980s, it was the two Prud'homme brothers who would recognize that the end of family farming had arrived and act to lease their fields to corporate farms.

Magnolia was in a similar situation. The plantation had previously been divided between Ambrose J. Hertzog and his sister Fanny Hertzog Chopin. Ambrose managed his portion of the plantation with the assistance of his children and grandchildren. In 2003, Betty Hertzog and Ambrose J. Hertzog III, were still living on the plantation and giving tours of the main house, but the farm lands were tended by corporate farms.[96] Many of the plantation's buildings had become part of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park after it was established in 1994.

Betty continued to live in the main house until about 2009, when she moved into another house a few miles north along Cane River. Ambrose J. Hertzog III still lives on the main house property today, occupying a caretaker's house built in the 1960s.

Overseers/Farm Managers

The Metoyer family, father Rene and then his son Leo, served as overseers at Oakland in the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s.[97] The Prud'homme family began moving away from hand-labor after Phanor Prud'homme's death in 1948, with the first large farm machinery added to the property in the 1950s. Within ten years, even the cotton-picking was completed by mechanized equipment, virtually eliminating the need for tenant farmers and cheap day labor.[98]

The succession of overseers at Magnolia is less clear. It is thought that Telese Rachal served as Magnolia's overseer in the late 1940s. Rachal and his wife occupied the Magnolia Overseer's House for at least a year, but never hooked up the hot water heater that had been installed in 1948.[99] However, there are also claims that Henry Gallien and Lesley Gallien, Henry's son, also occupied the building from 1943 to 1957.[100]

By 1959, Magnolia's overseer was Floyd Thompson, then George Lynn was the overseer between 1959 and 1961. It was Lynn and his wife who made several changes to Magnolia's Overseer's House, including installing gypsum board over the exposed *bousillage* walls and laying new flooring. Following Lynn, it is believed the final overseer at Magnolia was a Mr. Arledge, although the dates of his service are unknown. As mentioned above, by the mid-1960s, the need for a farm manager/overseer was past, and the position was never filled again.[101]

Hired Laborers, Sharecroppers, and Tenant Farmers

As mechanization became more prevalent in the Cane River area, the need for sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and even hired laborers lessened. The sharecroppers and tenant farmers began

95. Jones, *Big House*, 40.
96. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 13.
97. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 170.
98. Jones, *Big House*, 40.
99. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 14.
100. Carol Petravage, Historic Furnishings Report, Magnolia Plantation: Plantation Store, Blacksmith Shop, and Overseer's House. NPS Harpers Ferry Center, 2015, 40.
101. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 14-15.

leaving Oakland in the late 1940s, and about a decade later none remained on the property.[102]

The Hertzog family stopped using a tenant and sharecropping system in the 1950s, although day laborers continued to work the crops.[103] Some day laborers continued to live in the cabins until the early 1970s. It was likely that as more time passed, particularly once the tenant farming ended, most of the day laborers commuted to work from off the plantation. By the mid-1960s with the continued changes in crops and mechanization, the resident farm management fell to the plantation owner. [104]

Plantation Store/Postmaster

The plantation store at Oakland continued to serve as the local post office into the 1960s. While the mail initially came only to the post office, due to the population density in the area, the rural route mail carrier would also deliver to some of the residences along the way. As mechanized farming began in the region and people began moving away, the delivery route from Bermuda was cut and the post office closed in July 1967.[105]

During most of the period that the plantation store hosted the post office, and particularly in the twentieth century, the postmaster was a member of the Prud'homme family. Alphonse II served in the role approximately a third of the time the post office operated, or thirty-eight years from 1924 to 1962, retiring in February 1962.[106] Alphonse III (Al) served as postmaster following his father's retirement, until April 1966. Al's wife, Martha Jane, served as interim postmaster between April and July 1966, before being replaced by Cleo McBride Drangnet (1913-1987), who was married to a grandson of the Prud'hommes of Atahoe.[107]

Even after the post office closed, the store remained open. By 1978, it was much scaled back from the days of sharecroppers. A local newspaper article from 1978 about the store and post office noted that it served mostly as the headquarters for the farming interests of the Oakland Plantation, with store business largely handled by two-way radio.[108] The few customers who ventured in stopped for small items, such as snacks, soft drinks, and candy. The store continued to operate until the fall of 1982, when Alphonse II had become nearly blind, and the store was closed permanently.[109]

Politics and Government

Civil Rights, Race, and Riot

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s directly opposed the "separate but equal" Jim Crow laws and sparked marches, sit-ins, and other protests to bring attention to the issues. In Louisiana, the bus boycott was one such type of protest. There were few places that African Americans and whites came into close, direct contact under the system of segregation, but one of the few exceptions was the public bus system. While buses were used largely by the black population, regulations required that even when seats were open, if they were designated as "white" seats, the black passengers had to stand.[110]

One of the first bus boycotts conducted by African Americans in the country occurred in Baton Rouge in 1953, two years before the famous Montgomery bus boycott inspired by Rosa Parks.[111] The bus boycott of Baton Rouge was a watershed event in

102. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 141.
103. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15. See Chapter 6 for more information on the difference between these occupations.
104. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15.
105. Robert Morgan, "Roadside View: Bermuda Good Old Days Gone," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), September 20, 1978, 34.
106. Jones, *Big House*, 40.
107. Finch, "Cleo McBride Dranguet"; Jones, *Big House*, 40.
108. Morgan, "Roadside View," 34.
109. Jones, *Big House*, 41.
110. Sinclair, 443
111. Sinclair, 441; "A New Civil Rights Movement" (accessed December 10, 2017).

the city, marking the beginning of an active national civil rights movement that, until then, had been limited to legal attacks on segregation, and moved the effort to direct conflict.[112]

Frustrated by the cruelty of the bus law, African American community leaders approached the Baton Rouge City Council seeking a change in the policy. City council, on the advice of their attorney, approved Ordinance 222 on March 11, 1953, which allowed blacks to fill the bus from the back to the front, leaving room in the front for whites in the front of the bus. Although the ordinance passed, it was not reported in newspapers, and bus drivers refused to honor the change. On June 15, the bus drivers went on strike to protest the ordinance, finally gaining the attention of the public. The strike lasted just four days, ending after Louisiana Attorney General, Fred LeBlanc, ruled that the ordinance was unconstitutional because it did not specifically reserve seats for whites and blacks. The city drivers returned to work, but African American leader, Rev. T. J. Jemison, who was behind the original deal with council, urged a boycott of the bus system. The black community established a "free-ride" system to move workers to where they needed to be, while avoiding riding the public transportation system. At its peak, the free-ride program had sixty-five to seventy cars and trucks involved, and the municipal system was losing an estimated $1,600 per day without black riders. In the end, the city council passed a new ordinance for bus use, requiring just the two front seats for white passengers, and the remaining seats open for black passengers. Angry that any seats had to be reserved, the black community was determined to fight the issue in the courts, but the strike was officially over.[113]

As the legal battle over bus segregation in Baton Rouge was waged in the courts, a 1954 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregation in schools was illegal, stating, "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[114] The ruling spelled out the steps required to integrate schools. In the South, where the new ruling would impact the greatest number of schools and students, states rallied to establish legal means to continue segregation.

In response to the ruling, the Louisiana legislature proposed state constitutional Amendment 16, which would mandate school segregation using police powers. This gave new authority to local school districts to assign children to schools in a hope to stave off integration. Amendment 16 passed by a measure of five to one. When federal courts ruled the amendment unconstitutional, the state legislature continued to propose laws that would ensure the legality of segregation. They even sought to eliminate compulsory school attendance if the federal government was going to force segregation.[115]

These efforts started to backfire when it came to sporting events. In one example, the University of Wisconsin cancelled games against Louisiana State University due to LSU's policy against sports contests with schools that had integrated teams. This only encouraged additional protests, such as the lunch-counter sit-ins that occurred across the South. In some cases, protests grew large and unruly: on December 15, 1961, 1,500 people, mostly students from Southern University, a local historically-black university in Baton Rouge, marched from their campus to the city's downtown. When the demonstration grew unruly, officials used tear gas to break up the crowd, and fifty marchers were arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit criminal mischief. After it was all over, there were more than seventy students languishing in jail, many missing Christmas celebrations, despite pleas from the community to accept bail. It was not until February 1962, that all students were out of jail, and a permanent injunction was issued barring further demonstrations by the organizations. The final incident occurred in 1962, when Rev. Arthur Jelks, head of the local NAACP, attempted to register African American students at three

112. Sinclair, 443.
113. Sinclair, 444-445.
114. Sinclair, 447.
115. Sinclair, 447.

different white schools, only to be met by a crowd of 125 jeering whites. The permanent injunction was thrown out by the federal courts, but not until 1963. This largely ended student-led civil rights activity for some time in Baton Rouge.[116]

In 1963, civil rights efforts moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where boycotts of discriminatory white-owned businesses met with Sheriff "Bull" Connor's dogs and water hoses, and were captured by television news cameras. Baton Rouge, however, could not escape white backlash or the escalating violence of the civil rights struggle. After 1964, there were frequent bombings of businesses and a major riot of on Third Street in 1969; in 1970, the state capitol building was bombed. The violence culminated in a shootout on a downtown street in 1972, in which two police officers and two black activists were killed and thirty-one people wounded.[117]

Foreign Wars

Natchitoches Parish has a long tradition of supporting military activities continuing into the second half of the twentieth century, with the U.S. involvement in Korean, Vietnam, and the Gulf Wars. In each conflict, the parish was represented.

On June 28, 1950, Seoul, South Korea, fell to the North Korean army, and U.S. bombers made their first assault on North Korea to enter the war.[118] After three years, including two years of negotiation, the U.S. exited the war. During the three years of conflict, there was an estimated 36,516 U.S. soldiers killed.[119] Two of these men, James Youngblood (23) and Jeremiah Jackson (20), were from Natchitoches.[120] Neither man was associated with either Oakland or Magnolia Plantation.

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War lasted considerably longer than the Korean War, beginning in 1961 and lasting until 1975.[121] The conflict, intensified by the ongoing Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, resulted in one out of every ten U.S. soldiers killed or injured.[122] Thirteen men from Natchitoches Parish died in the Vietnam conflict.[123] As with the Korean conflict, those who gave their lives did not have any connection to either Oakland or Magnolia Plantation. The number of fatalities of soldiers from Natchitoches Parish who fought in the Gulf Wars, Operation Desert Shield, or Operation Desert Storm are not known at this time.

Transportation

The most significant change in transportation in the Cane River region during this period was the construction of Interstate Highway 49 (I-49) connecting Lafayette and Shreveport. While not part of the original 1957 interstate highway system, residents of Louisiana lobbied for this north-south link between Interstate Highway 10 to the south and Interstate Highway 20 to the north, starting in 1965. Construction on the project began in the mid-1970s and was mostly completed by 1988, with the section through Alexandria completed in the spring of 1996. An extension of Interstate 49 from Shreveport into Arkansas was recently completed in November 2018.[124] With this major interstate artery, traffic increased substantially between the central and northern Louisiana.

116. Sinclair, 448-51.
117. Sinclair, 452.
118. Fitzgerald, 13.
119. History, "This Day in History: June 27" (accessed December 10, 2017).
120. "U.S. Military Fatal Casualties of the Korean War for Home-State-of-Record: Louisiana," National Archives, accessed March 18, 2019, https://www.archives.gov/files/research/military/korean-war/casualty-lists/la-alpha.pdf
121. Lawrence, 1.
122. History, "Vietnam War" (accessed December 10, 2017).
123. "U.S. Military Fatal Casualties of the Vietnam War for Home-State-of-Record: Louisiana," National Archives, accessed March 18, 2019, https://www.archives.gov/files/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-lists/la-alpha.pdf.
124. "Interstate 49" (accessed January 3, 2018).

Truck traffic that had used state roads and four-lane U.S. highways, with their stop signs and traffic lights, now flowed unimpeded. With the completion of Interstate 49, visitors could now easily leave the interstate and be at Magnolia or Oakland within minutes, with Magnolia only two miles from Exit 119 and Oakland only five miles from Exit 127.[125]

On a local level, the state highway system remained relatively unchanged. The exception was the construction of a new concrete bridge spanning Cane River Lake at the intersection of Highway 119 and 494 near Oakland Plantation. The concrete bridge was built adjacent to the Bermuda Bridge and opened to traffic in 1982. Bermuda Bridge was then closed, fenced off, and transferred from the state to the Natchitoches Parish government.

Significant changes in the highway system spurred the decline of the passenger railroad. The Texas and Pacific Railway, which has provided passenger service to Natchitoches since 1927 ended the service in the late 1960s. The railroad depot property was conveyed to the Missouri Pacific Railway, which used the building as a freight station until 1984. Since then, the Natchitoches train depot has sat vacant while the community has tried to rally behind its preservation.

There were no notable changes in river or railroad transportation during this period. What did occur during this period was the accelerating change of use of Cane River Lake from water transport to recreation. Increasingly, owners with waterfront property constructed camps and high-end subdivisions along the lake edge in the late twentieth century. The camps were built to provide bases for fishing, storage and use of recreational watercraft, and family gatherings. Subdivisions have expanded the high-end housing market in the region, and have increased the number of second-home owners from adjacent states. The popularity of these waterfront locations has continued to this day as tracts of land are purchased, cleared, and converted into homes.

Plantations

By the second half of the twentieth century, occupants of the Cane River plantations enjoyed most of the advantages of living close to a town, but with the added enjoyment of being surrounded by family history and the wide-open spaces of the often thousand-plus acre properties. Many of these plantations became tourist destinations during this period as featured stops on the annual tour hosted by the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historical Natchitoches, of which Lucile Prud'homme was a member. However, it had become more and more challenging to survive on a family farm, which had to complete with large agri-business operations. In the end, both Oakland and Magnolia plantations were forced to find other means of supporting family and farm without facing bankruptcy.

Although the plantation families strove to maintain their holdings, in some cases, the heat and moisture of the environment and the sheer cost of upkeep meant that some buildings were lost. One example of this was Gabe Nargot's cabin at Oakland Plantation. Although still standing in 1969, it was in deteriorated condition. Eventually, the building was removed completely. A similar circumstance occurred with a corn crib at Magnolia, which was standing in 1993, but has deteriorated to the point of ruination, although there have been some efforts by the park to stabilize the remaining logs.

As technology changed, however, it was easier for the families to remove the buildings when they were no longer needed. For example, the gin barn at Oakland was removed sometime between 1941 and 1957, when mechanical cotton pickers made the cotton gin obsolete. Larger equipment sheds, such as the large tractor shed and cotton picker

125. Keel, 11.

shed (non-extant) were erected to house the new equipment.

Livestock and Crops

After World War II, the old method of farming the plantations with a human work force was nearing its end. Massive "industrial" farming operations threatened family farms across the country, often pushing smaller farmers into bankruptcy. Although there had been attempts at corporate farming as early as 1833 in the U.S., they consistently met with failure.[126] It was not until the second half of the twentieth century, when advances in mechanization and rural electrification were in place, that corporate farming was able to gain a toehold. The number of corporate farms grew substantially in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported 13,313 corporate farms nationwide with 60,056,000 acres in 1968. In 1969, the Census of Agriculture reported 21,513 corporate farms, with 80,831,000 acres.[127]

In Louisiana, the first census of farms that included corporate entities was in 1974, when 748 farms were recorded, a number that grew to 1,105 in 1992.[128] The growing trend in corporate farming was not surprising to State Commissioner of Agriculture, Dave Pearce, when the topic was discussed in 1968. At the time, he indicated that while it was much more of an issue in other parts of the country, it always happened in areas that were experiencing population growth. The Louisiana population was growing at a faster rate than anywhere else in the country at the time, and that combined with the technological advances, the trend to corporate farming was inevitable. Even though corporate farming was rising, Pearce suggested that many of the farms were comprised of land being sold to neighbors. He estimated that just fifteen-percent of organizations based outside of Louisiana owned farmland at the time, with the greatest percentage in timberlands.[129]

By the 1980s, the Cane River plantations faced escalating production costs and competition from corporate agriculture. In Natchitoches Parish, there were two non-family-held corporate farms in 1992, although the available data did not provide the total number of acres to avoid disclosing data for individual farms. At the same time, there were twenty-seven family-held corporate farms, working 20,359 acres. [130]

At Oakland Plantation, by the 1960s, all the tenant farmers had moved away and their efforts replaced by modern tractors and eventually, mechanical cotton pickers. By 1984, the owners of Oakland ceased farming altogether.[131] At Magnolia, tenant farmers left a decade later, in the early 1970s. The owners had already begun to lease their property to corporate farmers, but continued to also farm themselves; a 1989 newspaper article listed Magnolia as producing cotton, soybeans, milo, and cattle that year.[132]

Cane River Plantations

Oakland Plantation

The period following WWII up to the time that the Prud'homme family sold the central portion of Oakland in 1997 was one of profound change in agricultural practices and farm economics.

Not long after Phanor Prud'homme's death in 1948, his son Alphonse II, began to replace the mules on the plantation with the more dependable modern tractors, which necessitate larger sheds and equipment storage areas. By the 1960s, even the cotton-picking was completed by mechanized equipment, virtually eliminating the need for tenant farmers and cheap day labor. In 1949,

126. Raup, 274.
127. Raup, 276.
128. *1992 Census of Agriculture, Geographic Series*, 8.
129. John Hickey, "Farmer's Future Worries Pearce," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), January 22, 1968, 17.
130. *1992 Census of Agriculture*, 283.
131. Jones, *Big House*, 3.
132. "Rich History of Magnolia Plantation Honored," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), February 11, 1989, 15.

Lawrence Helaire and his wife were among the first of Oakland's tenants to leave the plantation. The final tenant left the property in 1959.[133]

The Bermuda post office continued its operation until 1967. Oakland's Plantation Store closed over a decade later, in 1982.

By the 1980s, Al and Kenneth Prud'homme knew that the end of their family farm was approaching. In 1984, the family-run farming operation at Oakland ceased. When questioned about the decision, Kenneth told a reporter, "[t]he family has been at it for well on to two hundred years and finally decided we couldn't make a living at it." He continued, saying, "I'm tired of it. I want to get out before I go broke." Once the decision was made to close the operation, the family auctioned off the farm equipment, leased as much land as they could, and retired from farming entirely.[134]

Organization of the Landscape

During this period, many of the smaller buildings that had housed plows, mules, and the various accouterments of plantation life would no longer have been utilized for their former purposes. Some were repurposed for use to hold larger tractors and cotton equipment, while smaller buildings were used for general storage. New buildings to house the larger mechanized equipment were also constructed. The Prud'homme family constructed the Tractor Shed sometime after 1948 and the Cotton Picker Shed around 1960, both located west of the Big House.

The plantation landscape became a scene of removal with the dismantling of the gin barn and its engine house between 1941 and 1957. It was probably less expensive to remove these larger elements in the landscape than to maintain and repair them. Other small elements, such as fencing and remnant plantings in the landscape remained in place, but their conditions continued to decline.[135]

Activity between the big house and other elements in the landscape had been shifting for many years, especially towards the front portions of the plantation that were closer to the main road and in closer proximity to the plantation store and post office. Even this association ended during this period, with the closure of the store/post-office in 1982.

The line of former Slave/Tenant Quarters that had been used by tenant farmers was empty by 1959.[136] This further exacerbated the abandonment of circulation patterns within the plantation, as more and more of the property was no longer in productive use. When *The Horse Soldiers* was filmed in 1958, the fence along the highway removed and replaced with some more in keeping with western themes and precedents of the movie's era.

Entrance Gate

Today, the entrance drive to the Oakland Big House is flanked at the road by the components of the Entrance Gate (LCS 091619) (Figure 8-4). The gate consists of two, 10.4-foot-tall, hollow, fluted, cast-iron columns with Corinthian capitals resting on 1.83-foot-square, 4-inch-high brick piers. A semi-circular cast and bent metal arch-style sign is attached to the columns; it reads "OAKLAND 1821." The date refers to the date of establishment of the plantation, not the date of the gate



FIGURE 8-4. Entrance gate to the Oakland Big House, installed after the mid-twentieth. Commonwealth.

133. Jones, *Big House*, 40.
134. Jones, *Big House*, 42.
135. Jones, *Big House,* 40.
136. Jones, *Big House,* 40.

installation; local lore suggests that the gate was made for the Prud'hommes in the mid-twentieth century in trade for farm goods.

Corral

The Corral at Oakland Plantation encircles a large pasture with a five board post-and-rail fence. It also has a 45'-long livestock chute, which is used to gather the animals in a single row to ready them for medical treatments. There is a 48'x50' fenced area for livestock, with several openings and gates. The Corral Shed stands at one corner of the corral.

Cattle Dipping Vat

Oakland's Cattle Dipping Vat (LCS 91642/100654) was constructed in the mid-twentieth century about 200 feet directly west of the Square Crib (see below). It is composed of a square-shaped 10-foot by 10-foot poured-concrete foundation, a 3.6-foot by 31-foot poured concrete ramp leading into a depression (the dipping vat), and a 3.6-foot by 14-foot concrete area in front of the depression. The dipping vat itself is a trough-like structure made of poured concrete. It is set into the ground and one end is open, which allowed cattle to walk down its sloped floor into a square receptacle, which was filled with chemical solution. The dipping vat was repaired in 2016 by the National Park Service. The area around the vat was excavated and broken concrete walls were pieced back together with a new concrete structure.

Buildings at Oakland Plantation

Big House

From the late 1940s through 1964, the Prud'homme family implemented an extensive renovation of the Big House at Oakland Plantation. These changes were, in some cases, addressing deferred maintenance from the Depression and World War II eras. Some materials were simply removed, including the steps from the north gallery and the wood walls enclosing the piers beneath the old kitchen. The wood stairs from the south and rear galleries were removed and rebuilt in salvaged brick. The slate roof that had been salvaged from the old LeComte townhouse had finally reached its end of life in 1951, resulting in its removal and a new asbestos-cement roof advertised for its fire-resistance was installed. The old wing on the west side of the master bedroom was also partially removed, with a new west wall constructed and the space converted into a dressing room.[137]

Annette Prud'homme tells a story about repairs at the Big House. When her children were babies, in the early 1960s, she had walked down the brick steps on the front of the Big House with a baby in each arm. The worn bricks were slick, and she fell. The babies were unharmed, but the next time she returned to the Plantation, the worn steps had been replaced with new brick ones.[138]

More significant changes to the Big House including adding a new kitchen and bathroom. In 1952, the second bathroom was added to the house in a space created between the two south bedrooms. Finally, in 1987, central heat and air conditioning were installed in the Big House.[139]

Doctor's/Leveque House

The Doctor's/Leveque House continued to provide lodging for a variety of Prud'homme family members in the second half of the twentieth century. After its owners, Marie Adele Prud'homme and her husband, Jesse Brett, moved out of the area, having occupied the house for about thirteen years, they rented it to Arnold Cloutier and his wife Virginia LeMeur. The Cloutiers also made several changes to the house during their residency, including remodeling the southwest bedroom that had previously been remodeled into a kitchen, and demolishing the detached kitchen that had been present likely since before the Civil War. After spending a year renovating the cottage, the couple moved in

137. Jones, *Big House*, 40 and 60.
138. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony," 198; Haynie, *Legends of Oakland*, 167.
139. Jones, *Big House*, 40 and 60.

during October 1952, but by December had moved to another residence for a reason unknown.[140]

After the Cloutiers left the Doctor's/Leveque House, James Alphonse III and his wife Martha Jane returned from Texas and moved into it. Again, their stay was brief, since the Bretts returned in the summer of 1956, and updated the building again. During this renovation period, the Bretts had the original lapped siding on the exterior of the house, except those walls protected by overhanging porch roofs, clad with asbestos shingles. They also removed two of the chimney stacks and re-roofed the house with asphalt shingles. The garage the Bretts had removed when they had previously occupied the house was not replaced with a new garage until perhaps as late as the mid-1980s[141]

Adele and Jesse Brett lived in the house until Adele died in 1974, with Jesse staying on until about 1984, until he moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, to be near his daughter Doris Brett Vincent. The building would change occupants three more times before it was sold by Doris to the National Park Service as part of the Oakland Plantation transfer in 1997.[142]

Gin Barn

Other changes to Oakland Plantation included the dismantling of the gin barn and its engine house sometime between 1941 and 1957. The diesel engine that ran the equipment was sold to J. H. Williams and was still in place at Cedar Grove Plantation by 1997. After the Prud'hommes closed the family gin, they took their cotton to Cloutier's Starlight Plantation, five or six miles away, for ginning, until 1984 when farming operations ceased. After 1957, the only component of the gin still standing on the property was the Seed House.[143]

Plantation Store

One of the longest surviving active elements of the plantation was the store, likely because the post office was located in the building until July 14, 1967.[144] However, by 1978, the store operation was much scaled back from sharecropping days, and in the fall of 1982, the store closed for good.[145]

There were relatively few changes to the building after World War II. In the 1950s, two large propane tanks were installed near the southwest side of the store; these were removed in the 1990s. At some point, underground storage tanks and gas pumps were installed east of the store, as it became an Esso gas station in the mid-twentieth century. In the 1960s the store's ice house was removed and electrical connections made for a window air conditioning unit for Kenneth and Mayo Prud'homme when they used the building as an office. By the 1990s the building was essentially abandoned.[146]

Pigeonniers

While it is known that some of the ancillary structures on the plantation were moved around over time, their original locations are often unknown. At Oakland, however, family oral tradition holds that the two *pigeonniers* were originally positioned much closer together. Kenneth Prud'homme explained that the west *pigeonnier* was moved approximately twenty feet to the south of its original position sometime between 1953 and 1955 to accommodate large mechanized farming equipment that needed to use the farm lane and pass between them.[147]

Carriage House

Constructed as the Carriage House (LCS 91621) in the 1820s, the structure was modified a number of times over the years. Perhaps the most significant change came in the twentieth century when it first was converted into a garage by enclosing two side bays. The final major change came when the rear

140. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 25.
141. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 38-40.
142. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 25-26.
143. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Gin Complex*, 27.
144. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store,* 24.
145. Jones, *Big House*, 41.
146. Jones, *Prud'homme's Store*, 39-40.
147. Miller and Wood, *Oakland Subsurface*, 28.

wall was removed, and the structure was converted into a farm shop.[148]

Doctor's/Leveque Garage

The original garage associated with the Doctor's/Leveque House was demolished sometime in the 1940s or early 1950s. The structure was not replaced when the house underwent a major renovation in 1957. According, however, to Doris Brett Vincent, whose parents owned the cottage between 1941 and 1994, it was replaced "later in the life of the house," perhaps in the mid-1980s.[149] A cistern (LCS 100634) is located adjacent to the Doctor's/Leveque Garage and has reportedly been filled. It is likely that it was constructed in much the same way as the northwest and south cisterns adjacent to the Doctor's/Leveque House and likely preceded the construction in 1957 of the current garage.

Tractor Shed

Tractors replaced mules at Oakland around 1949, and the extant tractor shed was likely erected sometime thereafter.[150] The Tractor Shed (LCS 101986) currently stands at the western end of the Big House complex, west of the Wash House, Fattening Pen, and Chicken Coop (Figure 8-5). The one-story, wood-framed building has wood posts supporting a gable roof. The roof is sheathed in metal with horizontal planks sheathing the gable ends. Four open bays extend along the east elevation. The Tractor Shed is constructed primarily of re-purposed historic lumber.



FIGURE 8-5. Tractor Shed, viewed from the southeast. Commonwealth.

Cotton Picker Shed

A second equipment shed, known as the Cotton Picker Shed (LCS 092411), was constructed around 1958 at Oakland southwest of the Tractor Shed (Figure 8-6). The structure was built of using recycled telephone poles with a corrugated metal shed roof. The one-story shed has a rectilinear footprint with three open bays and one enclosed bay stretching across the east elevation. The southern-most bay had a gable roof, and the remaining bays were housed under one long shed roof. The footprint was slightly expanded by a one-half-story shed-roof component on its southwest corner. The exterior surfaces of the structure were clad in corrugated metal. The middle bay was wider than the others so that the large, mechanized cotton picker, could be parked inside.[151] The shed was removed sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s.



FIGURE 8-6. Cotton Picker Shed, erected around 1958, looking northeast. Commonwealth.

Magnolia Plantation

Magnolia Plantation continued in the Lecomte-Hertzog Family tradition of plantation-based agribusiness until the 1970s. Sharecropping and tenant faming had largely ended in the 1950s, but the Hertzogs continued to hire day laborers to work their crops. Some of the day laborers may have continued to live in the Slave Cabins until the

148. Miller and Wood, *Oakland Subsurface*, 23.
149. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *The Cottage*, 39.
150. Jones, *Big House*, 65.
151. Personal communication with Ron Bolton, December 3, 2018.

1970s, but most lived off the plantation and would commute to work daily.

Because of mechanization, fewer workers were needed, but due to the regional out-migration, there were also fewer people available to work. During this period, the Hertzogs revived raising of cattle for cash and diversified their field crops. By the mid-1960s, a resident farm manager was no longer needed at the plantation, which meant that the Overseer's House fell empty.[152] Upon Matt Hertzog's death in 1973, the plantation system shifted to corporate farming, by which the lands of Magnolia Plantation were leased.[153]

As the residents moved out of the cabins and Overseer's House, the Hertzog family transferred the outbuildings and 19 acres to a non-profit organization, Museum Contents, Inc. The organization aimed to restore the buildings and open them to the public.

In February 1989, Magnolia Plantation was honored by the Family Farm Recognition Program as one of only 700 farms nationwide that have remained in the same family for over 200 years; making this the second bicentennial plantation, along with Oakland, to be recognized in the Cane River region.[154] At the time, the plantation was owned by Elizabeth Hertzog, Ambrose J. Hertzog III, Norman Gunn, Mary Johnston, Marie Louis Spencer, Sally Boggs, Irma H. Laufersweiler, and Dr. and Mrs. Ambrose J. Hertzog. Gunn and Johnston are brother and sister, and were raised on the plantation when their father died, and their mother relocated the family to the property.

In the early 1990s, Museum Contents was successfully stabilizing the plantation outbuildings through an architectural conservation study and preservation grant from the State of Louisiana. The majority of their restoration work was focused on the Slave Cabins and preserving the story of slavery at Magnolia.

In 1994, Cane River Creole National Historical Park was established. The portion of Magnolia Plantation owned by Museum Contents, Inc., was donated to the National Park Service as part of the new park in 1996.[155]

Organization of the Landscape

The Big House at Magnolia became less important as the hub of agricultural management during this period. With the continued segregation of farm management through the increase of leases to larger regional and national corporate farming companies, the need for the suite of buildings associated with the day-to-day operations of Magnolia steadily decreased. Finally, with the transfer of the buildings that had once formed the nucleus of the agricultural landscape to the Museum Contents, Inc., there was even less need for any form of hands-on management by the family, which focused on the receipt and acceptance of leasehold agreements for the outlying agricultural lands, still under family ownership and control. As the property transferred from Museum Contents, Inc., to the National Park Service, separation of the Big House and its landscape, still retained by the family, from that owned by the NPS became more important, and screening vegetation was either planted or allowed to grow up between the Big House and the adjacent agricultural landscape.[156]

The family began to clear some of this vegetation in late 2018. In the process, some of the outbuildings surrounding the main house were removed. According to the family, Betty Hertzog had asked James Scarborough, family friend and neighbor, to clear the overgrowth around the house and remove the garden house (the original garden house had been torn down by the *For Sale by Owner* movie crew and a new one built) but the

152. Hartrampf and Pyburn, *Overseer's House,* 15.
153. Cane River Creole National Historical Park, CARI 0002: Magnolia Plantation Records, CARI 0002, 2.
154. "Rich History," *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), 15.
155. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn,* 36-37.
156. Conversation with Dustin Fuqua, Sept. 27th, 2016. Oakland Plantation.

twentieth-century chicken house was taken out in the process as well.

By 1958, the dirt tracks and paths described in Chapter 7 were mere traces (Figure 8-7). They had been replaced by straight tracks that appear to have skirted fence lines. The aerial also shows an oval-shaped area of more intense activity around the southernmost Slave/Tenant Quarter.

At the time of its acquisition by the NPS, the Magnolia Plantation cultural landscape was criss-crossed by various types of fences and related gateways. Vernacular fenceposts surviving from the agricultural period were made of *bois-d'arc* (Osage orange), cedar, cypress, pine, and other local species, as well as repurposed railroad cross ties. Gates were made with vertically-placed ties, as well as purchase lumber and metal components.



FIGURE 8-7. Aerial photograph of Magnolia Plantation dated 1958. CARI.

These fences and gates have preserved the spatial arrangement of the plantation over time and represents shifts in agricultural practices.[157]

Buildings at Magnolia Plantation

Few new buildings were added to the Magnolia Plantation after 1900. Those that were added, however, showcase the evolution of agriculture and the broader landscape. In the mid-twentieth century, a cattle dipping vat (see above) and garage were added to the grounds at Magnolia. Matthew Hertzog also relocated a log corn crib to the plantation in the mid-twentieth century from another site.[158] The 1979 NRHP nomination for Magnolia Plantation shows a similar corn crib already there at the time, but its exact location is not known.

Slowly, mechanization replaced the old practices, reflected on the landscape through the reduced need for hay and living quarters for mules, but the need to safely store the expensive new machinery. Ginning had ended at Magnolia following the 1939 tornado, and the gin barn was in a deteriorated state by the time of Matthew Hertzog II's death in 1973.[159]

In 1976, the Gin Barn, Slave/Tenant Quarters, Blacksmith House, Overseers House, and remaining outbuildings were donated by the Hertzog family to the local non-profit, Museum Contents, Inc.[160] The organization stabilized and repaired the buildings, focusing mainly on the Slave Cabins. Though documentation is limited, it appears they rebuilt the brick parapet walls on some of the cabins, removed all additions and lean-tos, re-roofed the buildings with metal, and "restored" Cabin 1 with a wood shingle roof and porch.

In the 1960s, Dr. Ambrose Hertzog constructed a modern residence north of the Big House on land outside the park.[161] This building continues to be

157. National Park Service, CARI Request Consensus Determination of Eligibility, Magnolia Plantation, 3.
158. Dustin Fuqua, personal communication with author.
159. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 33.
160. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 37.
161. Keel, 16.

occupied by members of the Hertzog family today.[162]

Big House

Not part of Cane River Creole National Historical Park, the Big House was the site of tours occasionally until circa 2006. Betty Hertzog occupied the house until around 2009 when she moved to another residence on Cane River Lake. Between 2008 and 2011, the Cane River National Heritage Area funded an exterior painting project at the Big House. Then, at the owners' request, park staff member Dustin Fuqua conducted an inventory of the furnishings and museum objects. The resulting data and image files are maintained as collection item CARI-145.

The Hertzog family also completed foundation repairs around the same time, hiring a firm from New Orleans to complete the work. The original foundation, constructed of the same soft, low-fired brick as the Magnolia Slave Cabins had major issues with spalling. Unfortunately, repairs were completed with Portland cement, which is likely to exacerbate the issues in the long term.

As a whole, the Big House at Magnolia is largely unchanged from its original appearance with minor modifications for twentieth-century utilities. In 2018, the family approached the National Park Service and the Cane River National Heritage Area about potential future partnerships to save the building and surrounding property.

Plantation Store

The store remained open until 1973, but eventually only part-time because so many local residents had relocated away from the area. In addition, the store was already failing to compete with the supermarkets of Natchitoches. By then, almost every family owned a car and could travel there or even to Alexandria to shop. In addition, keeping the small store stocked required Hertzog or an employee to travel to Natchitoches or Alexandria. The associated time, labor, and gas, when added to rising wholesale prices and a very small profit margin meant markups beyond what the public was willing to pay. Matthew Hertzog died in 1973 and the store was subsequently closed.[163] By the time the NPS had acquired the store, its upper masonry components had been covered with aluminum panels and a hinged aluminum panel lid installed.[164]

Gin Barn

In 1983, Museum Contents, Inc., received a grant for $21,500 from the Louisiana Office of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism to repair and stabilize the gin barn. This included repairs to the pole rafters and replacement of one-third of the metal roof. Still under Museum Contents at the time, there was extensive publicity about the project, which included a public open house at the facility on November 1, 1983.[165]

In the 1970s, the associated Seed House was demolished. It was connected by a flue to the Gin Barn until the 1939 tornado.[166]

Corn Crib

Currently in near ruins, the log corn crib located near the road and between the Plantation Store and Blacksmith Shop was moved to its present site from elsewhere on the plantation by Matthew Hertzog (see Figure 4-41).[167] The 1979 National Register nomination shows a similar corn crib already on site at that time, though the exact location is unknown.

The crib consists of two partial walls of saddle-notched logs that rest on stones at each corner. Additional logs that were part of the structure have

162. Dustin Fuqua, personal communication with author.
163. Firth and Turner, Magnolia Plantation CLR, 155.
164. National Park Service, CARI Request Consensus Determination of Eligibility, Magnolia Plantation, 2.
165. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, *Gin Barn*, 37; Catherine B. Downs, "Cotton Press to be on Display," *The Times*, October 31, 1983, 8A.
166. Cultural Resources Southeast Region, Gin Barn, 55.
167. Keel, 28.

been stored within the log frame for safekeeping. The structure was stabilized in 2016 by park staff and a local Girl Scout Troop.

Slave Cabins

These buildings continued to be occupied by day laborers who worked for the Hertzogs for a daily wage rather than a share of the crop. Their lives were much improved over earlier residents of the tiny buildings. Electricity had made its way to these dwellings in the 1940s, and by the 1950s, most of the residents had television sets.[168] The last residents at the Slave Cabins were members of the Vercher family, who moved out in the early 1970s.

After the cabins were transferred to Museum Contents, the organization worked to stabilize and make repairs. As mentioned above, the organization focused on the restoration of Cabin 1. The cabin's masonry walls were repaired, a wood shingle roof replaced, and a shed-roof porch erected along the west elevation. Work on six additional cabins was limited to masonry stabilization, which included repointing and replacing bricks and installing new metal roofs. Additions on the cabins were also removed. The only cabin that did not receive any stabilization work was Cabin 7, which Museum Contents had initially planned to remove, but in the end left it standing.

168. Malone, *Historic Resource Study,* 125.

Chapter 9: Cane River Creole National Historical Park (1995 – present)

Introduction

After Cane River Creole National Historical Park was established by Public Law 103-449 on November 2, 1994, the National Park Service prepared to set up the new park. In 1996-1997, the NPS finally acquired both properties, including 19 acres of Magnolia Plantation from Museum Contents, Inc., excluding the Big House and its immediate landscape, and the core of Oakland Plantation directly from the Prud'hommes, along with a smaller parcel of land surrounding the Doctor's Cottage from Doris Vincent. The NPS immediately began preservation of structures at both Oakland and Magnolia and planning the best ways to bring the story of the plantations and the surrounding Cane River region to life for visitors.

Transfer of Property from Private to Public Use

Once the park had been established, it was time to determine funding. In November 1995, a vote by U.S. House and Senate negotiators resulted in the approval of a $4 million appropriation for the Cane River Creole National Historical Park (CARI) in Natchitoches. The approved bill also included $2 million for the National Center for Historic Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) at Northwestern State University and $400,000 for continued renovation at Kisatchie National Forest's Gum Springs Recreation Area in Winn Parish.[1] The bill still had to pass both chambers and be signed by President Clinton before it was official. Senator Johnston, who sponsored the funding, indicated that the funds would be used for construction and emergency repair of the park's deteriorating buildings and other areas.[2] As the park struggled with funding, the Cane River National Heritage Area was also set up. The heritage area's Commission held its first meeting on August 4, 1995.

In July 1996, the Senate announced that it was close to approving almost $22.8 million for projects in North Louisiana in the next year, including the funds for CARI. The funding approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee included $5.7 million for repairs, other work, and exhibits at the park.[3]

Just six months before, on January 19, 1996, Museum Contents, Inc., transferred to the NPS the approximately 19 acres that had been donated to the non-profit by the Hertzogs in 1976 (Tract 101-01). A survey of the donated property was completed in 1997. In February 11, 1998, a second parcel, totaling 0.52 acres (Tract 101-02), was also

1. NCPTT was established in 1992 through Public Law 102-575—Oct. 30, 1992.
2. "Cane River Meeting," The Town Talk (Alexandria), August 4, 1995, D1; Dennis Camire, "Negotiators approve $4M for Cane River Historic Park," The Times (Shreveport), November 3, 1995, 6.
3. "Editorial: Jobs Funding," The Times (Shreveport), July 22, 1996, 14.

transferred from Museum Contents, Inc., to the NPS.[4]

The Prud'homme family had begun negotiations with the NPS to sell Oakland Plantation in 1994 after Congress passed Public Law 103-499, creating CARI and the Cane River National Heritage Area. On November 20, 1997, the Prud'homme family sold 42.0 acres of the core of Oakland Plantation, including the Big House and many of its furnishings, the remaining outbuildings, and the land they stood on, to the U.S. government (Tract 102-01). In addition to the buildings and landscapes associated with the park, its inventory also included plantation records, and an extensive collection of tools, equipment, furniture, and personal items. The Prud'homme family moved off the Oakland Plantation in June 1998. The 2.16-acre parcel that contained the Doctor's/Leveque House and surrounding outbuildings (Tract 102-03) was sold to the U.S. government in a separate transaction in July 21, 1998 from then property owner, Doris A. Vincent. Vincent remained on the property until November 16, 1998.

One of the first projects to be undertaken by the NPS once the park was established was to carry out a month-long archeological investigation at the Magnolia Plantation site in 1996.[5] Initial funding was also slated for use in carrying out preliminary studies and emergency repairs to the Magnolia outbuildings. Repairs were planned to begin within a year, but the park had initially not received their funding allocation, so it was uncertain how far the funds they had would stretch. The archeological study was led by the National Park Service's Southeast Archaeological Center, with assistance from Northwestern State University of Louisiana students. It was during this survey that, among other artifacts, a brick pillar located six inches under the topsoil near Magnolia's former slave cabins was discovered; it was once a support for an unidentified building. Archeologist Benny Keel noted that "there are a number of structures that no longer stand, and our job is to identify where they were so they can be replaced in accurate locations."[6] Ambrose Hertzog, descendant of Magnolia plantation owners, was on the site when the pillar was discovered, and was eager to see if the dig unearthed any family valuables that were hidden from Union soldiers during the Civil War. Any finds would be owned by the U.S. government, but the family still wanted to see their ancestors' wares recovered. The completed report on the excavation notes that only a few items were discovered that could be considered family valuables. These include a few coins, parts of a damaged ladies' brooch made of metal and glass, a few pieces of what was believed to be a broken pocket watch, and aluminum sales tax tokens.[7]

In the spring of 1998, Superintendent Kate Richardson announced that, although the park was not yet fully open, limited tours were available on weekends. The tours would allow the public to see the sites during their restoration and to observe preservation efforts in progress. Richardson also noted that, beginning in July of that year, there would be preservation activities at both Magnolia and Oakland Plantations, something she estimated would continue for between five and twenty years.[8]

The grand opening for the park was initially scheduled for October 1999, but by late summer 1998, the park was already on official NPS maps. At the time, the NPS superintendent was Laura Soulliere, an architectural historian and park service veteran. In an interview, she explained that the park's purpose is not just to show off pretty buildings and landscapes: "[h]istory doesn't stand at one point and come to an end, so restoration

4. Firth and Turner, Magnolia Plantation Cultural Landscape Report 169. Land transfer records are located in CARI Central Files.
5. Jeff Richard, "Work Under Way at Cane River," The Times (Shreveport), June 7, 1996, 13; Keel, et al, Magnolia Subsurface.
6. Richard, "Work Under Way," 13.
7. Keel, et al, Magnolia Subsurface, 57.
8. Leigh Flynn, "'Wonderful Story to Tell,'" The Town Talk (Alexandria), May 17, 1998, D3.

will be very limited. We will use the buildings to tell the whole story," explained Supt. Soulliere. She also explained that the park is mandated to demonstrate the history of colonization; frontier-influenced French Creole architecture; cotton agriculture, slavery and tenancy labor systems; changing technologies; and evolving social practices over 200 years.[9]

Benefits for the community beyond the park boundaries were already being recognized in 1998. The executive director of the Natchitoches Parish Tourist Commission, Iris Harper, predicted that the park would increase tourist visits to the area by twenty percent.[10] There were already plans for additional hotels in the region, and Natchitoches Mayor Joe Sampite was hoping that one would be added in downtown Natchitoches.

Recognizing the desire for additional tourism and the jobs they represented, Souillere remarked that "[i]f the area keeps its wonderful sense of place, it will encourage more tourist dollars. We hope to keep a sense of place on Cane River and Natchitoches."[11]

General Management Plan

As the property transitioned from private to public ownership, the National Park Service began defining the direction for resource stewardship and visitor use through the park's general management plan (GMP).

Part of the GMP process included a series of public hearings that began in January 1998. Hearings were held at various locations, including Northwestern State University and St. Augustine Catholic Church to share information on current plans and the management efforts.[12] In addition, the public was asked how they wanted the NPS to interpret the history of the former plantations. The public showed great enthusiasm for the restoration of the buildings, but when the issue of slavery was brought up it was often met with silence.[13]

> Speaking about slavery proved difficult for whites and blacks, and promised complications for park interpretation," the Park Service reported. "Blacks and whites treated slavery as a delicate, nearly taboo subject for public discussion.[14]

For park staff, the issue is an important part of the interpretation of the Cane River region, and one that continues to be studied and shared with the public.

A total of five options were laid out in the draft GMP that was published in June 2000. The alternatives outlined a range of ways to manage the park for the next 10-15 years.

Under Alternative 1, the NPS preferred alternative, the emphasis of the park would be on preserving and rehabilitating the landscapes and structures, with the plantations eventually reflecting the circa 1948 appearance. New development would include on-site parking areas for cars and buses. An outdoor pavilion-style shelter/entry portal and a maintenance facility would be constructed at or near Oakland Plantation. The NPS would help develop a joint regional visitor center and headquarters in the Natchitoches/Cane River area, along with a joint curatorial facility as part of the complex.

Alternative 2 served as the "no action" alternative showing limited new development. Any new development would be temporary and reversible until an action was tied to an approved plan. Visitor services would be limited.

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9. Margret Martin, "Plantation to Showcase History," The Times (Shreveport), August 3, 1998, 1A.
10. Martin, "Plantation to Showcase History," 2A.
11. Martin, "Plantation to Showcase History," 2A.
12. "Cane River Park is Topic of Hearings," The Times (Shreveport), January 28, 1996, 19.
13. Ginger Thompson, "Reaping What Was Sown on the Old Plantation," New York Times, June 22, 2000.
14. Thompson, "Reaping."

Alternative 3 focused on ongoing research and preservation work, which would be used as the primary avenue to interpret the park. Once the work was complete, the landscape would reflect a circa 1960 appearance. The park would also develop a visitor center and headquarters complex at Oakland Plantation and a park shuttle between the two units.

Alternative 4 showcased limited development with minimal parking areas and walkways in a landscape that reflected the circa 1948 appearance. Low-key interpretive methods would be used, and a joint visitor center would be built offsite in the Natchitoches/Cane River Area. A shuttle transportation system would operate out of this visitor center for tourists to the park and heritage area.

Lastly, in Alternative 5, the plantations would be brought to life as working plantations. Both Oakland and Magnolia would be very active sites with live demonstrations and activities, including live farm animals. The landscape would reflect the continuum of history up to circa 1960. A park headquarters and maintenance facility complex would be constructed at Oakland Plantation. No major visitor center would be constructed, but a visitor contact station would be jointly operated with the heritage area along a major highway in the heritage area.

Throughout the GMP process, park officials determined that the buildings associated with the Oakland Plantation would not be preserved to their appearance in 1821, a static approach to interpreting history. Instead, the alternatives illustrated the centuries-long succession of changing agricultural technologies from pre-contact through the twentieth century.[15]

Comments were received on each of the five alternatives and the NPS presented the final GMP to the public in January 2001. In the final GMP, the preferred alternative (Alternative 1) was modified so that Oakland and Magnolia Plantations would be preserved and rehabilitated to reflect their appearance circa 1960 instead of circa 1948. Originally the alternative recommended that post-1948 buildings be removed; this was changed in the final document and buildings built after 1948 were retained.

The final GMP also noted that the presentation of the plantation stories would differ at the two units. Oakland's stories would ultimately provide a very active visitor experience that would include not just exhibits, but also interpreter-led programs and demonstrations. Visitors at Magnolia would have a quieter, more contemplative discovery experience of the site's landscape and structures, primarily through the use of more passive media.

As the GMP progressed from 1998 to 2001, the park continued with emergency stabilization to keep buildings from deteriorating and prioritizing what work should be completed. The GMP process informed decisions along the way by outlining areas for utilities, parking lots, and walkways for visitors. Public parking at Oakland was provided in a lot west of the Big House, away from the oak allée, which could be damaged from the weight of vehicles.[16] A visitor entrance pavilion was to be constructed nearby. The Doctor's/Leveque House at Oakland Plantation was selected for park offices, along with additional offices in the Oakland Big House. Because the main house was used as a temporary park office, temporary plywood floors and doors were installed throughout the building to protect historic materials.

Other Planning Efforts

After the GMP was finalized, the park began additional planning and design for the proposed joint visitor center and curation facility outlined in the NPS preferred alternative. In 2004 the park and heritage area worked together on a Development Concept Plan/Environmental

15. National Park Service, Cane River Creole National Historical Park Foundation Document, 6.

16. Martin, "Plantation to Showcase History," 2A.

Assessment (DCP/EA) to evaluate different sites for the proposed shared visitor/interpretive center, which would also include park headquarters and offices. In the interim, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) began planning for an interstate rest area along Interstate 49, at Highway 478/Waterwell Road, which was an area that coincided with a location under consideration for the shared visitor/interpretive center. LADOTD was very interested in housing the shared center at the new rest area, and in building and maintaining the structure at its own expense.

In June 2005, the DCP/EA team conducted a "Choosing-by-Advantages" decision-making roundtable to draft the preferred alternative. The preferred alternative selected out of the CBA process was the partnership alternative with LADOTD. It was estimated that the project could save the federal government between $3.5 and $7 million in construction costs in addition to long-term operations and building maintenance costs, which would be borne by LADOTD.

Plans for the shared visitor/interpretive center never came to fruition. LADOTD postponed the project for a few years. Support for a rest area along I-49, however was growing in Rapides Parish to the south. Ultimately, the state of Louisiana secured an Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant to build a new welcome center and rest area nine miles north of Alexandria along the interstate. By 2011, the park's plan for a shared visitor center with LADOTD and the heritage area was permanently put on hold.

Between 2002 and 2011, the park began planning for a new NPS Collections Conservation Center on lands provided to the park by the Northwestern State University of Louisiana (NSULA). The complex would also incorporate offices for park headquarters. Initial discussions for the project began in 2002, and funding was securing through an earmark in 2005 to begin design development. Pre-design was completed in 2009 with an estimated cost of $12.5 million to build the facility.

The proposed project involved a partnership between the park, the NCPTT, and the Williamson Museum of NSULA. The Collections Conservation Center was to provide a suitable storage space for the park museum collection. The new facility would not only serve as park headquarters and curatorial storage with exhibit space, but also house the anthropological collections of the university's Williamson Museum. Moreover, the new facility would serve as a conservation laboratory for the NCPTT. Work toward the establishment of the Collections Conservation Center resulted in the development of partnership agreements with the State of Louisiana, pre-planning design and construction documents, and introduction of enabling legislation at the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives levels.

However, by 2016, momentum for the project stalled due to a change in leadership at NSULA and challenges in securing funding within the NPS. As of 2018, the university has moved forward with other plans for the parcel of land.

Historic Preservation at The Park

Beginning in 1998, the NPS completed a variety of stabilization and repair projects on the buildings within the park. To guide the preservation work, detailed historic structures reports (HSRs) were completed for nearly all the buildings at Oakland and Magnolia. Each report documented the history of the building, its existing conditions, and identified appropriate treatment recommendations for future preservation work. Using these HSRs as guidance, the park began more in-depth preservation and rehabilitation of the structures between 2001 and 2006.

Preservation work was divided into three large construction packages that were contracted out, while the in-house park preservation crew tackled smaller projects. Construction Package 101 included the rehabilitation of the Doctor's/Leveque House for offices at Oakland; construction of visitor parking lots at Oakland and Magnolia; rehabilitation of the Oakland and

Magnolia plantation stores for visitor services; construction of an entrance pavilion at Oakland; and rehabilitation of the Seed House at Oakland to serve as maintenance offices and a carpentry shop. Package 101 also included upgraded utilities at both plantations. These projects were completed in Summer 2004. Construction Package 102 included the rehabilitation of the Big House and other structures at Oakland. This project was completed in the summer of 2005. Construction Package 103, rehabilitation of the Magnolia Overseer's House/Slave Hospital, Cotton Press and the Blacksmith Shop began in 2006 and ended in 2008.

Historic Preservation at Oakland Plantation

The Oakland Big House underwent a major rehabilitation, that reinforced the foundation, updated electrical systems, installed fire suppression, and generally made the structure suitable for the visiting public. The exterior of the house, excluding the shutters and doors, was also painted in 2000. Major rehabilitation work was completed in 2005. The asbestos roof was replaced with a slate roof in 2016-2017.[17]

The Oakland Plantation Store also underwent a rehabilitation to preserve the exterior of the structure, install new utility systems including fire suppression, and adapt a room for reuse as the park bookstore. An accessible ramp was also added to the west elevation. The northeast room was converted into office space in 2019.

Some of the most significant preservation work took place at the Oakland Overseer's House, North and South Slave/Tenant Quarters, and Cook's House. Decades of neglect had caused substantial deterioration, with trees growing through the foundations and partially collapsed walls. Using historic photographs and treatment recommendations outlined in the HRS documents, each building was returned to its circa 1960 appearance.

Stabilization and rehabilitation of Oakland's Seed House, the remaining portion of the gin complex that once stood in that area, took place between 1999 and 2001. Although the Seed House was in advanced stage of structural failure, there was a significant amount of historic fabric still existing, including its floor beams, wood frame super-structure, some roof framing, seed hopper, much of the exterior and interior siding, window framing, corrugated and 5V-profile metal roofing, and the west seed chute shutters. The work included constructing new brick and concrete block foundation piers, repairing and replacing floor framing, replacing flooring with plywood, reinstalling existing metal roofing and replacing deteriorated roofing, stabilizing and reinforcing structural framing, reconstructing and modifying exterior walls, reframing the north and south shed roofs with additional diagonal supports, and constructing and installing exterior doors with reinforced plywood.[18] After the work was completed, the park converted the space into maintenance offices and a carpentry shop. The NPS also documented the bottle garden, including its history and layout.

Historic Preservation at Magnolia Plantation

Preservation work at Magnolia Plantation was largely the last phase of construction carried out as Construction Package 103. Work was carried out at the Magnolia Overseer's House, Gin Barn, Plantation Store, Blacksmith Shop, and the former Slave Cabins.

Work on the Overseer's House comprised the reconstruction of the foundation piers, including the perimeter piers, as well as those beneath the gallery of the main building and the wing additions. Portions of the roof and wall framing of the main roof were also reconstructed using members and joinery consistent with the historic materials and construction technologies. In 1998, new, galvanized, 5V-metal roofing was installed on the main roof to match roofing present around 1960. Prior to 2004, deteriorated materials were

17. Jones, Big House, 60.

18. Hartrampf and Pyburn, Gin Complex, 34-36.

replaced in select gallery columns, and portions of the ceiling and flooring.[19] Exterior plaster was repaired and the entire exterior repainted in 2018.

The Gin Barn at Magnolia received structural repairs, fire suppression system, and a new galvanized metal roof; however, the weight of the heavier gauge material significantly buckled and broke the original rafters, necessitating additional repairs. The character of the pole barn changed significantly as the original peeled timber rafters were replaced with large square timbers, reinforced with metal plates and steel supports. This steel support structure is still visible today along the south elevation of the barn.

Rehabilitation of the Blacksmith Shop at Magnolia also had mixed success. The project called to reuse the original bousillage infill to repair the structures. However, the NPS added fiberglass and an epoxy mixture to the bousillage recipe, which resulted in a glossy, plastic-like appearance of the replaced bousillage. Sections of original bousillage were kept that exhibited original handprints from the building's former builders.

Magnolia's Plantation Store was rehabilitated in a similar fashion as the store at Oakland. The exterior of the building was preserved with repairs made to the siding, roof, foundation, and electrical systems. The main interior room was preserved with original furnishings, while the north and south wings were adaptively reused as visitor restrooms. South of the store, a parking lot was added in accordance with the GMP.

The eight remaining Slave Cabins received a substantial amount of repair and rehabilitation work from the late 1990s to early 2000s. At the time the NPS acquired the property, Cabin 1 had received the most work from Museum Contents, but the other cabins were in dire need of stabilization.

A wall on Cabin 7 had collapsed at the building was completely rebuilt. Cabin 7 also had a deteriorated roof and wood gable ends, which was built after the 1939 tornado damaged the eight buildings. The NPS removed the wood components, rebuilt the gable ends with bricks, and capped the structure with a metal roof to match the work on the other cabins (carried out previously by Museum Contents). Trees were removed from cabin foundations and the area was generally cleaned up.

The wood shingle roof on Cabin 1, completed by Museum Contents, Inc. just years earlier in the early 1990s, had also deteriorated and was also replaced with new wood shingles in 1998. By 2013, Cabin 1 needed a new roof again and the park replaced the wood shingles with a metal roof to match the roofing material on the other cabins. From 1998 to 2006, the other cabins were repointed and louvered doors and windows were installed to allow ventilation on the cabin interiors.

Despite the massive amount of preservation work that went into the cabins as part of Package 103, their masonry continued to deteriorate into the 2010s. From 2017-2019, the park began another major rehabilitation project, replacing deteriorated bricks, repointing with lime mortar, removing concrete parging where feasible, and constructing porches on the west elevations on each cabin.

Other ancillary structures at Magnolia, such as the Cotton Picker Shed, Stable, and Garage were also repaired, though to a less significant degree. Improvements to these structures were mainly to reuse the buildings for general park storage.

A fair amount of environmental remediation also took place during the early years of the park. Risk assessments, monitoring, and clean-up plans were formed for arsenic, pesticides, and other contaminants both in and around outbuildings and from underground storage tanks—the result

19. Note: The exact number of items in the collection is unknown; however, as of 2018 the park began a 100% inventory to document all the objects in the collection and get more accurate numbers.

of agricultural products being stored and used on the landscape for decades.

Park Collections

Inventories were taken of all the objects left behind in the buildings at Oakland and Magnolia from 2001 to 2006. These objects were kept and became the foundation of the park's museum collection – a collection of 500,000 to 1,000,000 objects and archives. Taken together, these resources provide an overarching view of everyday plantation life for the owners, enslaved individuals, and later workers, including tenants, sharecroppers, and day laborers, throughout the Cane River region. Among the artifacts in the museum collection are paintings, decorative arts, hand tools, farming equipment, architectural elements, textiles, works of art on paper, photographs, and extensive other archival materials that were either created locally or imported by the Prud'homme and LeComte-Hertzog families from regional and international sources. There are vernacular, one-of-a-kind, handmade tools and decorative items made by the enslaved workers, American Indians, and others who worked and lived in the Cane River region. The collection is used by park staff, visitors, researchers, and other individuals, to understand the material culture and reconnect to the lives of those who occupied the region.[20]

In the early years of the park, the collection was moved at least three times to various spaces in Natchitoches. The collection was first moved to a former bakery building, then to a former bank, and finally to a former bar that was part of a GSA lease facility in Natchitoches in 2001. The lease includes approximately 8000 square feet of collections space with 800 square feet for park headquarters in a separate building. However, the leased collections storage facility lacks enough space to house the entire collection and does not meet NPS museum standards. Since 2016, the park has been actively looking for more suitable space to relocate the collection and headquarters offices.

Without a permanent museum curator, the collection was largely unmanaged in its early years. The park hired a part-time museum technician in 2000 and supplemented the work force with seasonal hires and interns.[21]

Since 2010, the park has worked to increase access to the collections by putting them on display at the park and at various other institutions. Historic furnishings reports, which guide the implementation of historically-furnished exhibit spaces, were produced for Oakland in 2004-2006 and for Magnolia in 2015. Resources staff have utilized these reports in the production of exhibits in the park's historic structures. Park structures in which museum objects are on display include the Oakland's Big House, Plantation Store, and North Slave/Tenant Cabin, and at Magnolia's Plantation Store, Slave Cabin 1, and the Blacksmith Shop. Larger museum objects including sugar kettles, signs, hay balers, wagons, and other agricultural objects are on exhibit outdoors in the cultural landscapes of both park units.

Objects from the park museum collection are displayed not only at the park, but also in national venues. In 2016, the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, borrowed 32 museum objects from the park collection for display. Nancy Bercaw, curator of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, remarked that,

> [w]e have been drawn to Cane River since the beginning of the Slavery and Freedom exhibition process for its rich and complex history and culture. These artifacts help us bring history to life by personalizing the past through men like Solomon Williams or places from churches to home to work spaces. We

20. National Park Service, Cane River Creole National Historical Park Foundation Document, 3.

21. Dustin Fuqua, personal communication, December 5, 2018.

look forward to returning often and learning from the residents.[22]

Park staff and the Smithsonian worked together for approximately three years to identify artifacts that would be part of the loan. This process including reaching out to the people of the Natchitoches region for public input. The public response was, according to Dustin Fuqua, the park's Chief of Resource Management, "overwhelmingly positive." Included in the current ten-year loan are two pieces attributed to Solomon Williams, Oakland Plantation's blacksmith: a well-drilling tool that was part of the earliest rotary well-drilling equipment in America, and a grave marker for his wife, Laide Williams. Additional artifacts on loan are a coffee grinder bench, marbles recovered from the quarters at Magnolia Plantation, a bottle and medal presumed to have been used in spiritual rituals, and equipment for picking and shipping cotton.[23]

In addition to those items already curated and in the collection are a large backlog of objects still located outside in the landscape. Initial backlog cataloging projects took place from 2007-2013, though cataloging continues today. Moreover, the park does not have a good understanding of how extensive the collection really is. Various park reports from the past decade state different numbers when quantifying the collection. Current estimates vary from 500,000 to 1,000,000 objects. As of 2017, the park is working to complete a 100% inventory to identify each object in the collection, which will provide a framework for a deaccession plan in future years. The park hired its first full-time museum technician in June 2018 to address some of these issues.

Park Visitors

As was hoped by the residents of Natchitoches and the surrounding region, the establishment of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park has proven to be a draw to visitors. In 2014, there were 28,981 visitors, with greatest number in May (3,217), June (3,479), and October (3,027).[24] Given the high heat and humidity of the region, it is unsurprising that the greatest tourism occurred then, rather than in July and August. In an early newspaper article about tours at Oakland Plantation, it cautioned visitors to "dress comfortably, wear walking shoes and bring water, sunblock and insect repellent."[25] Park tourism has also increased around local or regional festivals, such as the Fall Tour of Homes, the Natchitoches Christmas Festival of Lights, annual park-led bicycling tail rides, church fairs, and family reunions.[26] Overall, visitation at the park has been steady, at approximately 25,000 to 30,000 visitors per year for the past five years.[27]

To improve accessibility for visitors, by 2014, accessible lifts had been installed at the Oakland Big House and both Overseer's Houses at Oakland and Magnolia, and accessible ramps had been added to the Oakland Store and Dr. House. The park also installed rubber trail mats to provide stability and support for walking aids and wheelchairs.[28]The park is also planning to improve trail surfaces during the next few years.

Park Interpretation

Cane River Creole National Historical Park interprets the history of the plantations and the surrounding heritage area in a variety of ways via its website, park exhibits, ranger talks, and tours,

22. Matthews, "From Natchitoches to the Smithsonian."
23. Matthews, "From Natchitoches to the Smithsonian."
24. National Park Service, Cane River Creole National Historical Park Foundation Document, 17.
25. Flynn, "Wonderful Story," D3.
26. National Park Service, Cane River Creole National Historical Park Foundation Document, 17.
27. Carrie Mardorf, based on NPS Visitor Statistics entered in the NPS Integrated Management Resource Application (IRMA).
28. National Park Service, Cane River Creole National Historical Park Foundation Document, 17.

and through hosting conferences, festivals, and other events. Currently, the park is re-adapting and making use of the buildings already on-site. The Oakland Plantation Store serves as the park's main visitor contact station; inside are a variety of exhibits, and a book and gift shop. Interpretation offices have been moved into the store and a park ranger leads regularly-scheduled tours of the park.[29] The park offers daily tours at Oakland Plantation and when staffing allows, also provides weekend tours of Magnolia as staffing allows.[30] The Magnolia Plantation Store also serves as the primary visitor contact station for that site and is staffed with a park ranger, as available.

Art exhibits, tours, trainings, and larger events, including conferences, have been hosted by the park. In 2000, for example, the park hosted the first of the recurring program, *Feast or Famine: An Interactive Glimpse into an Agrarian Past*. The multi-day-long event brought children from the Boys' and Girls' Club of Natchitoches monthly to Oakland Plantation to learn about planting and monitoring crops.[31] Led by interpreter Carla Cowles, the program allowed children to experience the challenges of growing a cash crop on a plantation, such as cotton, okra, and corn, using historically accurate methods and equipment. One of the instructors for the program was James W. Helire, Sr., who introduced himself as "the son of a sharecropper." Helire, a former school teacher, demonstrated how to plant the cotton after the fields were plowed using horses. He explained, when "you plant the cotton, you plant six seeds, one for the worm, one for the crow, one to rot, and three to grow."[32] Partnerships are a large part of what make park interpretation and special events successful, and the park has a wide variety of partnerships within the local community.

More recently in 2016, Magnolia Plantation was the inaugural site for a traveling exhibit entitled "Purchased Lives," which was completed in partnership with the Historic New Orleans Collection. The exhibit on slavery travelled around Louisiana for two years. As mentioned above, artifacts from the park's collection have also been shared with the Smithsonian Institute to further advance the story of the Cane River Creole culture on a national stage.[33]

Since 2016, the park has also hosted a historic masonry training with NCPTT and the NPS Historic Preservation Training Center, along with guiding principles of historic preservation training in partnership with the NPS Vanishing Treasures program.

In the spring of each year, the park hosts a series of bike rides with stops at historical sites along the Cane River. A local non-profit, Bike Natchitoches, assists with the rides. One such trip, in June 2015, was a thirteen-mile ride from Magnolia Plantation to St. Augustine Catholic Church, and the Badin-Roque house.[34]

The park's largest partner is the Cane River National Heritage Area, which was established at the same time as the park.[35] The park and heritage area previously collaborated on several documentary films, publications and brochures, and the Cane River Music Festival, which was held annually until 2017.

In 2017, the park and heritage area began the annual Find Your Park Festival in April and the annual Harvest Festival in October. Both events

29. "Plan Your Visit" (accessed December 17, 2017).
30. "Guided Tours" (accessed December 16, 2017).
31. National Park Service, Cane River Creole National Historical Park Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2000.
32. Margret Martin, "Program Shows How to Plant Crops the Old-Fashioned Way," The Times (Shreveport), May 28, 2000, 31.
33. Jeff Matthews, "From Natchitoches to the Smithsonian," The Town Talk (Alexandria), September 9, 2016.
34. "Cane River Bike Rides," The Town Talk (Alexandria), June 18, 2015, B2.
35. Cane River Creole National Heritage Area (accessed December 17, 2017).

are geared toward bringing a younger audience to the plantations to explore the lifeways of Creole Louisiana. In 2018, over 300 people attended the Find Your Park Festival and over 525 attendees were at Harvest Festival.

In November 2019, both the park and heritage area celebrated their 25th anniversary. Planning included increasing local outreach with three large events. A 25th anniversary celebration with a farm-to-table dinner held at Oakland Plantation during the anniversary week kicked off the events of the Harvest Festival. Festivities ended with park staff participating in the annual Natchitoches Christmas Parade.

Another park partner is the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches (APHN) (formerly known as the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches).[36] The Big House at Oakland Plantation is a regular feature on the Natchitoches Fall Pilgrimage/Tour of Homes offered by APHN. During this event, Prud'hommes come from all over the country to gather at the plantation. The Fall Pilgrimage/Tour of Homes has been expanded by the park to include the Metoyer and Sheilds families, who share their stories of growing up in the overseer's and tenant cabins during the mid-twentieth century.[37] Most recently, Oakland's Big House was part of the APHN's Cane River Country Tour, October 14 and 15, 2017, and again on October 13 and 14, 2018.[38]

In 2019, the park began re-evaluating the interpretative programming offered at the plantations. As part of the undertaking, the park worked with the NPS Harpers Ferry Center in 2018 to complete a wayside exhibit plan that corresponds to the improved trail system. Using the wayside plan as a framework, the park intends to incrementally design and install waysides throughout the park landscape to increase the interpretation at both sites. New interpretive panels will also be installed at the Oakland entrance pavilion.

Studies and Reports

Since the park was established, the NPS has continued to study the plantation sites and plan for their preservation and interpretation. In 1999, the NPS commissioned the completion of a national historic landmark (NHL) registration form for Oakland Plantation; it was designated on January 3, 2001.[39] The NPS commissioned an NHL registration form for Magnolia Plantation at the same time; it was designated on January 3, 2001.[40]

Oakland Plantation was determined to have national significance as a historic district in the area of agriculture for the period of 1818 to 1950, and in the area of architecture for the period of 1818 to the mid-nineteenth century. The NHL nomination lists Oakland's contributing resources as twenty buildings, one site, and four structures.

Magnolia Plantation was also determined to have national significance as a historic district in the area of agriculture for the period of ca. 1835 to 1939. The NHL nomination lists eighteen buildings and three structures as contributing resources at Magnolia.

Both of the NHL nominations lack sufficient detail, are missing information about landscape features, and no longer meet NPS standards. Periods of significance for each plantation should also be expanded.

Oakland Plantation NHL

The current period of significance for Oakland Plantation begins in 1818 and ends in 1950. If the end of sharecropping and the period of mechanization is considered a more appropriate

36. Northwestern University Libraries, Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches Collection (accessed December 17, 2017).
37. Personal communication from CARI.
38. "63rd Annual Fall Pilgrimage," *Natchitoches Times,* August 25, 2017.
39. Fricker and Fricker, Magnolia Plantation, 18.
40. Fricker and Fricker, Oakland Plantation, 21.

determinant of the period of significance, this would push the end date to 1968. However, Oakland continued farming until the 1980s, so perhaps an argument could be made to extend the period of significance further.

The contributing resources currently listed in the 2001 Oakland NHL nomination include, with their LCS numbers (LCS name shown in brackets):

Buildings

- Barn [Corn Crib/Storage Shed] (LCS 91628)
- Carpenter's Shop (LCS 91624)
- Carriage House (LCS 91621)
- Cook's House (LCS 91632)
- Corral Shed (LCS 91635)
- Cotton Seed House [Seed House/Seed Barn] (LCS 91706/100732)
- Doctor's House [Doctor's House/Leveque House] (LCS 100629)
- Doctor's House Barn[Doctor's/Leveque House Barn] (LCS 100630) (later determined to be contributing)
- Doctor's House Garage [Doctor's/ Leveque House Garage] (LCS TBD)
- Doctor's House Shed (2 Seater) [Doctor's/Leveque House Shed/Privy] (LCS 100632)
- Main House [Big House] (LCS 91620)
- North Slave/Tenant Quarters [Quarters Houses] (LCS 91638)
- Overseer's House (LCS 91636)
- Pigeonniers (2) (LCS 91622 and 91623)
- South Slave/Tenant Quarters [Quarters Houses] (LCS 91639)
- Stable [Mule Barn] (LCS 91625)
- Store/Post Office (LCS 91617)
- Tractor Shed (LCS 101986)
- Wash House (LCS 91630)

Structures

- Chicken Coop [Big Chicken Coop] (LCS 91627);
- Cistern [Jug Cistern] (LCS 91634)
- Fattening Pen (LCS 91629)
- Setting Pen [Little Chicken Coop] (LCS 91626)

Sites

- Bottle Garden
- Live Oak Allée

Features not listed in the 2001 Oakland NHL documentation, but later determined by the Louisiana SHPO to be eligible include:

- Cattle Dipping Vat (LCS 91642/100654)
- Cistern, Oakland Plantation Store (LCS 91618)
- Corral
- Doctor's/Leveque Coop (LCS 100631)
- Doctor's/Leveque Grist Mill Shed (LCS 100633)
- Doctor's/Leveque House and Garage Cisterns (LCS 100634)
- Entrance Gate and Turnstile Gate (LCS 91619)
- Fences and Gates
- Gin Cistern (LCS 100733)
- Gin Machinery Pedestals (LCS 100731)

- Main House Cisterns #1/#2/#3 (LCS 100738/100739/100741)
- Overseer's House Cistern (LCS 91637)
- Privy ("4-Holer") (LCS 91641)
- Turkey Shed/Shed #1 (LCS 91631)
- Wagon Shed/Shed #2 (LCS 91640)

Sites

- Blacksmith Shop Archeological Site
- Cotton Gin Archeological Site
- Gabe Nargot's Cabin/Gabe's Cabin Ruin (LCS 100735)

Contributing resources listed in the NHL, but missing important details are the:

- Setting Pen (LCS 91626);
- Corn Crib/Storage Shed [Barn] (LCS 91628);
- Fattening Pen (LCS 91629);
- Wash House (LCS 91630);
- Jug Cistern (LCS 91634);
- Corral Shed (LCS 91635);
- South Slave/Tenant Quarters (LCS 91639);
- Seed House/Seed Barn (LCS 91706/100732); and
- Doctor's Leveque Shed/Privy (2 Seater) (LCS 100632).

Non-contributing resources not currently listed in the documentation include the entrance pavilion and parking lots, which were built in the early 2000s.

Magnolia Plantation NHL

The period of significance for Magnolia Plantation is currently from 1835–1939. If the end of sharecropping and the mechanization of the plantation are considered, this would bring the period of significance to at least 1945. However, it could extend to as recently as 1976, the year that the Hertzog's transferred ownership of around 19 acres of Magnolia to Museum Contents, Inc.

The contributing resources currently listed in the 2001 Magnolia NHL nomination include, with their LCS numbers (LCS name shown in brackets):

Buildings

- Blacksmith Shop (LCS 91559)
- Gin House [Cotton Gin] (LCS 91561)
- Building of Unknown Use, Carriage Shed [Garage] (LCS 100737)
- Slave Hospital/Overseer's House [Overseer's House] (LCS 91558)
- Plantation Store (LCS 91557)
- Slave Cabin #1 (LCS 91562)
- Slave Cabin #2 (LCS 91563)
- Slave Cabin #3 (LCS 91564)
- Slave Cabin #4 (LCS 91565)
- Slave Cabin #5 (LCS 91566)
- Slave Cabin #6 (LCS 91567)
- Slave Cabin #7 (LCS 91568)
- Slave Cabin #8 (LCS 91569)
- Stable (LCS 100652)

Structures

- Corn Crib (100497)
- Modern Tractor Shed [Cotton Picker Shed] (LCS 92411) (Note: The 2001 NHL

nomination states this is non-contributing, but it was subsequently determined eligible in June 2018)

- Pigeonnier (LCS 91560)

Contributing features listed in the NHL that are located outside the park include:

- Main House
- Modern Residence
- Main House Privy
- Fattening Pen
- Long Shed
- Small Residence/Cook's House

Features not listed in the 2001 Magnolia NHL documentation, but later determined by the Louisiana SHPO to be eligible include:

- Slave/Tenant Cabin Cisterns (4) (LCS 91643)
- Cotton Gin Cistern (LCS 91644)
- Cotton Gin Machinery Pedestal (LCS 100736)
- Plantation Store Cistern (LCS 100635)
- Dipping Vat (LCS 100500)
- Purple Martin Bird House (LCS 100457)
- Fences and Gates (LCS 1131606)
- Mule Lot Fence (LCS 1131630)
- Wood Cotton Screw Press (LCS 1131652)
- Steam and Box Press (LCS 1131688)

Non-contributing resources not currently listed in the documentation include the parking lot, which was built in the early 2000s.

Other Studies & Reports

In addition to the NHL registration forms, the NPS has commissioned several studies of individual resources within the plantations. These include:

- Archeological studies for Magnolia Slave Quarters [Slave Cabins] (1991), Magnolia Plantation (1999,2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009), Shallow Lake Cemetery (2015), St. James AME Church (2014), and Oakland Plantation (2000), including one for Gabe Nargot's Cabin (1998). Two additional studies in 2015 and 2016 of regional archeology also included Magnolia and Oakland;
- Historic structure reports (HSRs) for the Oakland Cottage [Doctor's/Leveque House] (2002), Big House (2004), Magnolia Gin Barn Complex (2004), and Oakland Plantation Store (2004); Oakland South Tenant Cabin (2004); Oakland North Tenant Cabin (2004); Magnolia Blacksmith Shop, Pigeonnier, and Carriage Shed (2003), Oakland Overseer's House (2004), Cook's Cabin (2004), Magnolia Overseer's House/Slave Hospital (2003), and Magnolia Quarters [Slave Cabins] (2013);
- Historic structure assessment reports (HSARs) for Magnolia's Blacksmith's Shop (1997), Magnolia slave/tenant houses (1997), Oakland Main House [Big House] (1998), and Oakland Overseer's House, Store, South Tenant Cabin, and North Tenant Cabin (1998), Magnolia Store (1997), and Oakland Cook's House, Corn Crib, West pigeonnier, east pigeonnier, carriage house, carpenter shop, chicken coop, setting pens (1998);
- Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) drawings and photographs including, Oakland Plantation (LA-1192) (1988), Magnolia Plantation (LA-1193) (2002-2003), Magnolia cotton screw press (LA-1193-A) (2002-2003), Magnolia slave

quarters [Slave Cabins] (LA 1193-B) (2002-2003);

- Historic American Engineering Record drawings and photographs for the Magnolia cotton gins and presses (LA-11) (1996-1997);
- Materials Reports, including Study on the Durability of Traditional and Modified Limewash Recipes (2005);
- Condition Assessment Reports, including Doctor's House Complex (all buildings) (2001);
- Materials Analysis and Physical Investigation, including Oakland Overseer's House, Store, and Main House [Big House] (1998); Magnolia Plantation (all buildings) (1996);
- Records of Treatment, including Seed House (1999), and Magnolia Quarters [Slave Cabins] (2018);
- Structural Inspection and Assessment, including Magnolia gin barn (1995);
- Cultural landscape studies, including a Cultural Landscape Overview (1998), draft Cultural Landscape Inventory (1997), and Cultural Landscape Reports for both Magnolia (Part 1 in 2006, Part II underway) and Oakland (Part 1 in 2003, Part II underway), and Bottle Garden Inventory (2002);
- Documents on the people of Oakland Plantation, including "Oakland Plantation, Its People's Testimony" (1998), "The Helaire Family of Oakland Plantation (1780-1865); and two short books looking at people associated with Oakland Plantation and the Civil War: *A Planter's Son Goes to War* (2012) and *A Blacksmith's Son Goes to War: The Story of William Smith* (2015);
- Ethnographic study for Magnolia Plantation (2004);
- Resource Management Plan (1998);
- Historic Furnishings Reports (HFRs) including Oakland's Main House [Big House], [Plantation] Store, North Tenant Cabin [Slave/Tenant], Overseer's House (2004), Magnolia Plantation Slave/Tenant Cabin [Slave Cabin] (2005), Magnolia [Plantation] Store, Blacksmith Shop, and Overseer's House (2015);
- Museum planning documents, including Collection Storage Survey (2003), Museum Collections Management Plan (2003), Museum Emergency Operations Plan (2011), Textiles Collection Condition Survey (2008), Historic Furnishings Conservation Survey (2008), and draft Scope of Collections Statement (2018);
- Park interpretation studies, including a framework for interpreting slavery at Oakland Plantation and Long-Range Interpretive Plan (2006);
- Park planning documents, including a General Management Plan (2001) and a Foundation Document (2015);
- Natural resources studies, including a Survey of the Amphibians and Reptiles (2003); and
- Planning documents with the Cane River National Heritage Area, including Transportation Study (1999), heritage area management plan (2003), and Evaluation and Visioning Project (2008).

The current historic resource study started in 2015 and will support the preparation of a comprehensive determinations of eligibility (DOEs) for Oakland Plantation. The DOE will consolidate and update the information regarding the unit in its 2001 NHL listings and incorporate information about landscape features. Previous drafts of a historic resource study were completed

for Magnolia and Oakland Plantations in 1996–1998 but were never finalized.

The Park Today

Visitation

Today, Cane River Creole National Historical Park is an active and constantly evolving site. Visitation is high at certain times of the year and the mild weather allows park staff to continue to pursue its preservation and conservation year-round. Currently, the park operates with a base budget of $1.151 million with approximately twelve full-time staff, numerous part-time and seasonal workers, and numerous volunteers.

Chapter 10: Management Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter contains recommendations intended to encourage preservation and enhance interpretation of historic resources located within Cane River Creole National Historical Park (CARI). It contains descriptions of data gaps, management issues, recommendations for any special history studies, and other detailed studies that should be prepared in the future. Recommendations are also made for the acquisition of additional documents or other evidence relating to the history of the park and its resources.

Historic and Prehistoric Resources

National Register of Historic Places Nominations

Oakland and Magnolia Plantations were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and designated National Historic Landmarks in 2001. National Register and National Historic Landmark documentation for both properties is out of date. In accordance with National Park Service Management Policies and Guidelines, it is recommended that the National Park Service prepare a single National Register nomination that documents all the park resources in a single form, capturing local and state significance as well as national significance. Updated documentation would expand the period of significance for each plantation to include the period of mechanization and to address cultural landscape resources.

The current period of significance for Oakland Plantation begins in 1818 and ends in 1950. If the end of sharecropping and the period of mechanization is considered a more appropriate determinant for the end of the period of significance, this would push the end date to 1968. However, Oakland continued in agricultural use until the 1980s, so perhaps an argument could be made to extend the period of significance further.

The period of significance for Magnolia Plantation is currently from 1835–1939. If the end of sharecropping and the mechanization of the plantation are considered, this would bring the period of significance to at least the early 1970s when the last tenant farmers vacated the Magnolia cabins. However, it could extend to as late as 1976, the year that the Hertzogs transferred ownership of around 19 acres of Magnolia to Museum Contents, Inc.

Documentary Sources and Research

People

Additional research is needed regarding the families of Magnolia Plantation. While information available about the Prud'homme family and Oakland Plantation is extensive, there is much less known about the LeComte/Hertzog family and their home at Magnolia. To help understand how Magnolia functioned, and its social and cultural dynamics, additional investigation of this family should be undertaken. A comprehensive genealogical study would be helpful as a start, and would provide a structure on which to build additional research and interpretation.

Research is also needed regarding the families and lifeways of sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and day laborers who worked at both plantations. Additional information on who they were, where they lived, and where the property was that they farmed would also be valuable, particularly for understanding decisions about when they abandoned farming altogether at each plantation. Maps of ancillary buildings beyond NPS holdings that were part of the plantations would also be useful, particularly to the understanding of the dynamic that occurred when sharecropping came in and people moved out of the quarters and into houses in the surrounding area. This phenomenon represented another loss of control over workers who had once been enslaved on the plantations.

Most information regarding the twentieth century at each plantation has been gathered from newspaper articles. It is important that extensive oral histories be gathered before the last residents and workers of the plantations, particularly Oakland, pass on. A few oral histories have been conducted, but they have not yet been transcribed, which inhibits their use. The park should actively transcribe the existing oral histories for increased accessibility.

Two projects are currently in progress at the park: the Lineal Descent Study of Cane River's African American Community and the collection of data on the Traditionally-Associated People of NPS-CARI. The park has started the process of identifying the park's traditionally associated people and by mid-2018, had already made nearly 500 entries of this data into ICMS. These projects and other oral history and ethnographic projects should be developed in collaboration with the SER Cultural Anthropology program.

Buildings

Facilities Master Plan/Building Use Plan

To maximize the effective use of CARI's existing facilities, including those that are cultural resources, a facilities master plan or building use plan should be implemented. Such a plan would analyze how well existing facilities support both the park's work and visitor use, and makes recommendations for future actions that enhance the way that facilities support programs. Based on a complete inventory of park buildings and a thorough understanding of both park goals and workforce needs, a facilities master plan may, for example, recommend the adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings for staff offices or other functions. CARI has several buildings that are not actively used, which presents an opportunity to align park need with existing space through new uses.

Historic Structure Reports

Management recommendations for some significant buildings within CARI have not yet been completed through HSRs, or the existing HSRs are out of date, since most are close to twenty years old. At Oakland, updated HSRs are recommended for the Cook's House, Carriage House, Pigeonniers, Overseer's House, South Slave/Tenant Quarters, and North Slave/Tenant Quarters. In particular, treatment recommendations should be updated and provide detailed information, including design drawings, for selected treatment approaches.

At Magnolia, more detailed treatment recommendations should be included as part of an updated HSR for all of the eight Slave Cabins. Existing recommendations for the cabins are limited to general preservation philosophy, and lack sufficient detail for the park to move forward with repairs. In addition, the HSR for the Plantation Store, completed over twenty years ago, should be updated, as should other HSRs nearing the twenty year mark.

Building Technology

Additional documentation on the use of *bousillage* on the two plantations is needed, including which buildings have *bousillage*, how were they made, how *bousillage* is made, and how prevalent is it in Louisiana and beyond. The use of this technology would be an interesting way to further link the two plantations of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park beyond shared family connections and farming practices. It would also benefit Missouri's Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park, which was authorized as another NPS unit in

March 2018. That newly established park also contains *bousillage* buildings.

In addition, a special history study is needed for the cotton gin at Magnolia. Through this study, additional research could be conducted on both the wood screw press and the steam gin. The study would confirm the structure's uniqueness and include a broader contextual study of screw presses within the U.S. and how many remain.

Finally, dendrochronological studies of building timbers could help determine the ages of buildings and/or their components. This could be conducted together with dendrochronology of the trees on both plantations and can provide information about climate events over time.

Cultural Landscape

Special Studies

Additional documentation regarding both vernacular and ornamental gardening traditions at the plantations would enhance interpretation at the park. For example, although the bottle garden was documented by HABS, additional information about its creation and the creation of similar gardens in the region and state would add to the story. In addition, more information about ornamental plants at both plantations, when they were planted and by whom, and their context within larger traditions of gardening in the South and in France would also be helpful and could be developed in a special garden history study. Finally, information is needed about the tradition of whitewashing tree trunks at the plantations and its relationship with the practice as it has persisted throughout the southern U.S.

Further, additional documentation regarding the crops raised at both plantations that is tied to maps and aerial photographs would be useful for interpretation. This information could also be the basis for a future demonstration farm or a local farm leasing program.

Finally, a special study of the trees of both plantations would provide more information about their age and how to care for them. This would include dendrochronology to assist in determining their ages and to also provide information about climate events in the region. This might be tied to additional dendrochronological studies of building timbers to help further determine the ages of buildings or their components.

Climate Change, Disaster Preparedness, and Response

The effects of world-wide climate change on the Cane River region include an increase in extreme weather events, particularly tropical storms, as well as flooding, drought, and extreme temperatures. All of these events challenge the ability of the park to maintain historic buildings and landscapes that were constructed or created during a time when climate was more temperate and predictable.

To set the course for the agency, the NPS established the Climate Change Response Program. This program has published the Cultural Resources Climate Change Strategy (CRCC Strategy) to guide park managers in anticipating, planning for, and responding to the real and potential effects of the changing climate on park resources.[1]

Climate Change Threats to Cultural Resources

The strategy begins by outlining the potential effects of the various types of climate stressors. The two that will have the greatest effect on the park are tropical storms and drought.[2] The

1. National Park Service, *Cultural Resources Climate Change Strategy* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, Climate Change Response Program, 2016).

2. Patrick Gonzalez, "Climate Change Summary, Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Louisiana" (Washington, DC: Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, National Park Service, January 28, 2015), accessed March 20,

potential effects of these threats on cultural resources at CARI are as follows.

Tropical Storms

Cultural Landscapes

- Wash out or damage to roads, trails, and landscape features throughout parks;
- Increased tree fall due to waterlogging;
- Loss of historical integrity with the addition of modern drainage structures, such as culverts and detention ponds;
- Decline/disappearance of some vegetation species;
- Loss of landscape features;
- Increased susceptibility to destructive fungi;
- Erosion of earthworks, such as levees; and
- Disruption or delay of traditional maintenance practices (e.g. burning).

Buildings and Structures

- Swelling/distortion of wooden building materials and architecture features due to wetness and damp;
- Increased risk of rot and fungal/insect attack;
- Historic building drainage systems unable to cope with downpours;
- Erosion of supporting ground around structure;
- Accelerated decay of masonry units and mortars due to increased extremes of wetting and drying;
- Cracks in building infrastructure and associated destabilization of buildings and pipes due to ground heave and subsidence/ shrink swell soils;
- Severe damage and loss of historic structures made of traditional materials, such as bousillage;
- Spalling, weathering of wood, brick, and stone materials due to salt infiltration during drying; and
- Increased pressure to relocate or elevate structures, and/or surrounding structures.

Flooding

Cultural Landscapes

- Wash out or damage to roads, trails, and landscape features throughout park;
- Decline/disappearance of important vegetation species, other species favored; and
- Loss of landscape features.

Buildings and Structures

- Structural collapse from moving force of floodwaters particularly during flash floods;
- Sewage backup and overflow leading to saturation and related flooding, contamination and damage;
- Walls "implode" from hydrostatic force of standing water;
- Damage to utilities, generators and electrical systems;
- Increased risk of rot, fungal/insect attack, mold and mildew;

2019, https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/519255.

- Swelling/distortion of wooden building materials and architecture features due to inundation;
- Spalling, weathering of wood, brick, and stone materials due to salt infiltration during drying; and
- Increased pressure to relocate or elevate structures, and/or surrounding structures (may also be pre-flood).

Drought

Cultural Landscapes

- Water stress may inhibit growth of some species;
- Decline/disappearance of some vegetation species with other species favored;
- Soil infertility due to decreased microbial activity;
- Limited water supply inhibits established maintenance practices;
- Increased soil erosion; and
- Challenges to current irrigation practices.

Buildings and Structures

- Increase in dry salt deposits near masonry and porous stone which hydrate and infiltrate during infrequent rain events causing spalls and fractures;
- Reduced humidity stress on buildings (possible benefit); and
- Cracking and splitting of wooden/ organic features due to complete drying.

Extreme Temperatures

Cultural Landscapes

- Decline/disappearance of some vegetation species, other species favored;
- Heat stress on culturally significant vegetation;
- Increased stress (e.g. desiccation, warping, cracking, etc.) on constructed landscape features; and
- More rapid deterioration of constructed materials of landscape features (e.g. corrosion, decay, desiccation).

Buildings and Structures

- Increased demand for complex air conditioning systems that can add stress to the building envelope and often require significant alterations to a structure (including insulation, routing of extensive ducts and pipes, etc.);
- Existing HVAC systems in historic buildings (often uninsulated) unable to cope with extreme temperature fluctuations, resulting in high utility bills;
- Increased crystallization of efflorescent salts due to increased evaporation rates, leading to increased rates of structural cracking, deterioration;
- Surface cracking, flaking, and sugaring of building stone and spalling of brick due to increase in wet-frost;
- Damage to foundations due to increased frost heave action; and
- Increased absorption of salts from road and sidewalk treatments which can lead to efflorescence, cracking, and spalling, etc.

Cultural Resources Climate Change Strategy

The strategy developed for addressing the effects of climate change on NPS cultural resources has

multiple steps: existing conditions documentation, significance evaluation, prioritization, and action.[3]

Existing Conditions

Existing conditions documentation involves gathering baseline data for all cultural resources, including location and condition, and determining their vulnerability to the effects of climate change. At CARI, baseline data has already been collected on most resources via historic structure reports, cultural landscape reports, and archeological research reports for its most important buildings and landscapes, but some of these are over twenty years old and may need to be updated.

Significance

Significance evaluations are based on the history of the resource and are tied to NRHP criteria. Significance helps the park determine which resources are unique or are most important to the mission of the park. At CARI, both Oakland and Magnolia plantations are already NHLs, which have resource inventories, and are likewise listed in the NRHP. In addition, determinations of eligibility that expand the inventories of both sites have been submitted to the Louisiana SHPO. This information should be incorporated into the documentation for each plantation.

Prioritization

The next step is to prioritize cultural resources for treatment and protection based on vulnerability and significance. Park staff are also evaluating resources by considering their capacity for reuse, their visibility and accessibility for visitors, and the uniqueness of the resource.

Action

The CRCC Strategy lists seven possible options for action in addressing the effects of climate change on cultural resources.

1. No Active Intervention: This may be appropriate in situations of low vulnerability or when, due to one or more of a range of constraints, including lack of technological or economic feasibility, no action can be taken. This decision may include monitoring the resource, with a plan to revisit a no-action decision in the future.

2. Offset Stress: Removing or deflecting stress is one or more actions taken to reduce or remove the environmental forces acting on the resource. This might include temporary measures, such as sandbags or levee plugs; upstream re-vegetation to reduce flood hazards; or changes in adjacent forest management to reduce wildfire risk.

3. Improve Resilience/Resistance: This consists of one or more actions that change the nature and/or setting of a resource so it can better able withstand or recover from climate events. This might include treating structural materials to better withstand increased moisture, wind, or invasive species; raising a building above projected flood levels; adding a cap over an archeological site; or changing landscape plantings or soil treatments.

4. Manage Change: This is an action that incorporates change into the form of the resource to maintain its character-defining features, even if original specific materials or individual species are no longer part of the resource. Examples include removing an original tree species that has died and replacing it with a different species that is healthier in that environment, but will provide similar visual characteristics.

5. Relocate/Facilitate Movement: This includes either moving a resource or

3. The following information was adapted from National Park Service, *Cultural Resources Climate Change Strategy*, 33-37.

allowing movement to happen. The first involves relocating all or a portion of a building or structure to a less vulnerable location. An example of facilitating movement would be to allow a plant community to migrate to preferred soils in response to inundation or other environmental condition.

6. Document and Prepare for Loss: This is a set of actions to record a resource and then subsequently allow the resource to undergo full effects of environmental or other forces that are likely to destroy or remove it entirely or in part. Documentation may be exhaustive, such as full excavation of an archeological site, or detailed recording of a building or structure or cultural landscape through HABS/HAER/HALS photographic, drawing, and laser scanning documentation, or a cultural landscape inventory. Documentation also may be done at a less than exhaustive level when such approaches are not feasible due to access, time, or financial limitations, or not warranted, due to the nature and scale of impacts. There may also be merit in not recovering or preserving the whole of the resource if the effect is that the resource simply become inaccessible, but not destroyed. Other examples of documentation techniques that may be used in either approach include collection of pollen and seeds or plant cuttings, and oral histories and video.

7. Interpret the Change: This action can accompany any of the previous six recommendations because it engages people in thinking about the future. Simple examples include interpretive signage of freeze-thaw cracking in historic bricks, or photo series of changes in garden phenology or vegetation across a landscape. While interpretation may be developed across any of the adaptation options on this list, for this option, interpretation addresses not only preservation issues and history of the cultural resource, but also climate change itself, and seeks to tell the story of the interaction of place and climate change.

Armed with this plan, park staff will be better able to respond to climate events with a carefully considered plan for the future.

In the meantime, CARI staff can begin to implement small changes to build resiliency of its resources. At a minimum, the park should ensure that all baseline documents are complete and available if and when disaster strikes, as baseline plans and images are often useful for disaster recovery teams. Digital copies of these documents and plans should be consolidated in one location and stored on an external hard drive in case of emergency. The park should also consider updating baseline drawings, to include an updated survey of all park lands and/or 3-D laser scanning to document condition of existing buildings and landscape features prior to any potential disaster.

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Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscape Survey

The Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) is a collection of records that documents achievements in architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture, and adheres to specific guidelines and standards of documentation. For those sites of national significance, the collections are housed at the Library of Congress, and made digitally available online at: https://www.nps.gov/hdp/coll.htm. Recordation can include photography, measured drawings, and brief histories. Among the HABS/HAER/HALS records for resources at Oakland and Magnolia plantations are:

Oakland Plantation

- Bermuda Plantation (Photos, House and *Pigeonnier*)
- Plantation Store
- Main House and Nearby Outbuildings.
- Slave Quarters
- Cook's House
- Carpenter's Shop
- Setting Pen
- Chicken Coop
- Storage Shed
- Wash House
- Fattening Pen

- Stables
- North *Pigeonnier*
- South *Pigeonnier*
- Barn
- Carriage House
- Doctor's House
- Turkey Coop
- Corral Shed

Magnolia Plantation

- Plantation Store
- Main House
- Cotton Press-Gin
- Cotton Gins and Presses (HAER No. LA-11)
- Slave Quarters
- Overseer's House
- Blacksmith Shop
- *Pigeonnier* & Fattening Pen
- Privy
- Corn Crib

Historical Newspapers

Local historical newspapers provide a view into the area's events as they happen. In the papers are society pages that discuss the lives of prominent families, pieces on local politics, agriculture, and area advancements. These dates are based on relevant articles found thus far but are subject to change as more are discovered.

- *The Caldwell Watchman* (Columbia), 1915.
- *The Louisiana Populist* (Natchitoches), April 1897 – October 1898.
- *The Natchitoches Courier*, December 1825-July 1827.
- *The Natchitoches Enterprise*, July 1889-November 1922.
- *Natchitoches Union*, November 1861-December 1862.
- *The New Orleans Republican*, August 1872.
- *New Orleans Republican*, 1874 -1870.
- *The Donaldsonville Chief*, August 1883.
- *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 1873-1879.
- *The Times-Democrat* (New Orleans), November 1897.

- *The Daily Times* (Wilson, North Carolina), May 1896.
- *The Natchitoches Times*, 1921-1922.
- *The Times* (Shreveport), May 1903-1996.
- *The Town Talk* (Alexandria), 1892-2016.
- *Weekly Town Talk* (Alexandria), 1901-1948.
- *The True Democrat* (St. Francisville), 1900.
- *The Daily World* (Opelousas), 1994
- *The People's Vindicator* (Natchitoches), February 1874-August 1883.

The People's Vindicator was one of the most incendiary newspapers of Reconstruction-era Louisiana. Founded by James H. Cosgrove (1842-1914), the Confederate army veteran used verbal and physical violence in his mission to reestablish white supremacy in Louisiana and drive out northern carpetbaggers. During Reconstruction, the newspaper's reporting focused almost solely on politics, specifically the promotion of the Democratic party and white supremacy. Published under the motto "The Welfare of the People is the Supreme Law," by 1879 the People's Vindicator had declared itself the "Official Organ of the White Citizens of Red River, Sabine, Winn and Natchitoches Parishes." The White League, a paramilitary organization formed to intimidate both black and white Republican voters, was a frequent topic of reporting. In the 1880s, political tensions died down and the People's Vindicator reported more frequently on topics such as schools, railroads, and agriculture.

Other newspapers consulted include:

- *Globe* (Washington, D. C.), September 1833.
- *The Avoyelles Pelican*, (Marksville, LA), January 1863.
- *The Madison Journal* (Tallulah, LA.), July 1914.
- *The New York Time*s (New York, NY),
- *The Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh, PA), 1952.

During the late nineteenth century, members of the Hertzog and Prud'homme families attended the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. The university's student newspaper provides a window into the lives of the students while at school, their lives after graduation, and donations their families have made to the university. Dates provided below are based on relevant articles identified thus far but are subject to change as more is discovered.

- *The Notre Dame Scholastic*, April 1879- June 1889.

Archival Collections

Archives of the University of Notre Dame.

_____. "Calendar." http://archives.nd.edu/calendar.htm.

Online database containing descriptions of individual documents within nineteen different collections, dating from 1576 to 1957; with most from the 1800s. Many of the items are correspondence between Catholic priests. Many of the documents relevant to Natchitoches Parish, and more specifically to the Prud'homme and Hertzog families, date from 1789 to 1886 and are written in French. The *Calendar* summarizes these documents in English, making it possible to glean information from the collection.

_____. "Notre Dame Early Presidents' Letters, 1856-1906." http://archives.nd.edu/vfindaids/ead/xml/pel.xml.

Both members of the Prud'homme and Hertzog families attended Notre Dame in the late nineteenth century. Among the records in this collection are correspondence between the families and the university president, offering insight to their personal lives.

_____. "Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas." http://archives.nd.edu/cgi-bin/q-ead.pl?keyword=Diocese+of+Louisiana+and+the+Floridas.

Many of the records for the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas collection are digitized, translated/summarized, and available online. The collection, which contains 809 items, spans from 1576 to 1803. Relevant to the project are censuses taken of Natchitoches from 1795 to 1800.

Cane River Creole National Historical Park, CARI Resources Management Records, CARI 0001.

The Resources Management Records collection includes numerous types of materials relating to park management, natural and historical resources, archaeological investigations, and ethnography projects conducted at Oakland and Magnolia Plantations. The collection provides insight into park formation and its evolving goals; research materials for interpretation of resources; personal accounts from the Cane River region, provided through oral histories; and many other documents related to research.

_____. Magnolia Plantation Records, CARI 0002.

Contains operational documents of the plantation and personal documents of the Hertzog family. The plantation records were created by workers on the plantation, including laborers, overseers, store clerks, and planters, reflecting Magnolia's agricultural production. Items in the plantation records include: crop and labor books, and plantation store records. The personal records of the Hertzog family consisting primarily of legal, financial, and insurance documents.

_____. Oakland Plantation Records and Prud'homme Family Papers, CARI 0003.

Contains operational records for Oakland Plantation and personal records of the Prud'homme and Keator families. These reflect plantation life and include such relevant items as correspondence, banking information, tax information, and insurance policies. In footnotes, references to these Cotton Plantation Record and Account Books are abbreviated to "R.A.B." They can be found in the Prud'homme Family Papers as follows: R. A. B. 1852 and 1866, P.F.P. folder 271; R.A.B. 1857, P.F.P. folder 272; R.A.B. 1860, P.F.P. folder 274.

_____. Assembled Collection of Documentary Materials Relating to Cane River Sites, CARI 0004.

Assembled of documentary records and photographic materials, this collection was created by members of the Docournau and Lambre families, and primarily reflect the personal lives of the Docournaus and the operation of Lambre Brothers Gin and Store. Although these families were not directly affiliated with the Oakland or Magnolia plantations, items in the collection will be useful to provide a broad understanding of the area and include correspondence, booklets, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center.

_____. Judge John Jones, Jr., Collection, Folders 12, 18, 22, 64.

Most of the materials in the Judge James W. Jones, Jr., Collection consists of his unpublished manuscript on the history of the Red River Valley. Included in the folders are materials showing Jones' interests in railroad lines and their effect on development, locations of old roads, brief accounts of officials, and details of his own experience. The collection will be helpful in building a regional context.

_____. Robert DeBlieux Collection, Folders 96, 97, 265, 317.

Includes papers relevant to Natchitoches Parish from the 1700's to 1900's. Included in the collection are papers of the Metoyer and Prud'homme families, among others.