

Bagatelle Plantation  
East River Road  
St. James Parish (Moved to Iberville Parish)  
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1142

HABS,  
LA,  
47-\_\_\_\_,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
WRITTEN DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORICAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
BAGATELLE PLANTATION HOUSE HABS NO. LA-1142

HABS  
LA,  
47-\_\_\_\_,  
1-

Location:

Original Site: East Bank, Mississippi River (near Sunshine Bridge) St. James Parish, Louisiana

Present Site: East or Left Bank, Mississippi River, Iberville Parish (near East Baton Rouge Parish line) Louisiana

Present Owners: Trenton L. James and Kay Sundbery James

Present Occupant: T. L. James and family

Present Use: Home

Statement of Significance: Bagatelle is a Greek Revival house built in 1841-42 on the Mississippi River by the Tureaud-Bringier Family. It is one of several plantation homes built by this illustrious family which figured significantly in Louisiana's antebellum agricultural history.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. General Statement:

Throughout its history, the house and its property has had varied uses: a home for several families; its crops a source of income; its worth a mortgagable collateral; and its location threatened by its neighbors, first, the Mississippi River, and second by modern industry. All of this has been a saga of Louisiana and her peoples as they passed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

2. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the house stood. References are in the Clerk of Court Office, St. James Parish Courthouse, Convent, Louisiana.

The land in question was immediately adjacent and downriver to "Union" Plantation. Union was given to Louise Elizabeth Bringier and August Dominique Tureaud on their marriage in 1803 by her father, Emanuel Marius Pons Bringier, an important eighteenth-century settler of Louisiana, and land owner in St. James and neighboring parishes. M. P. Bringier and his descendents were responsible for several river plantation homes, a few remaining to this date and recorded in HABS.

A. D. Tureaud was Judge of St. James parish until his death in 1826. At this time, the property on which Bagatelle was to be eventually built was sold or given in payment for debts to a Jesse Strong. The estate of Jesse Strong sold the property (4 arpents by 80 arpents) to Louise Elizabeth Bringier Tureaud, widow of Judge A. D. Tureaud, on August 9, 1840. She in turn sold the property to her son, Augustin Marius Claiborne Tureaud, on October 6, 1841.

Articles of Agreement & Specifications for "Bagatelle" between R. S. Chadsey and A. M. Tureaud were signed on December 7, 1841. It is assumed that construction was started shortly thereafter, as bricks dated 1841 were recently found in the walls.

A. M. Tureaud died in 1853, and his widow, Frances Aurore Mather Tureaud, and children sold the house and property to Dr. Jacques Auguste Demophon Tureaud, A. M. Tureaud's brother, on February 14, 1857.

The house and property later passed back to the children of A. M. Tureaud. It changed hands some four times during the 1880's before returning, minus the back acreage and sugar mill, to the ownership of Marie Valentine Tureaud, daughter of A. M. Tureaud. Upon Valentine's death in 1914, her sister, Louise, inherited the house, and lived there until her death in 1929 - the last Tureaud to live in Bagatelle.

A nephew, Gordon MacDonald Mather of Toledo, Ohio, inherited the house from Louise, and during his ownership, the house was moved back to save it from encroachment by the Mississippi River and the levee.

In 1941 Mather sold the house and property to Father C. M. Chambon, who in turn sold it to Francis Henderson James on September 30, 1946. In 1961 the house and property passed to the heirs of F. H. James. The house and dependencies were sold by the family to Dr. and Mrs. Trenton L. James.

On October 8, 1977 the property, excluding the house and dependencies, was sold to Missouri Portland Cement Company.

In November, 1977, the house and its dependencies were moved via truck and barge on the Mississippi River to its present site on Plaquemine Point, East Bank, Mississippi River in Iberville Parish, near the East Baton Rouge Parish line.

3. Date of erection: 1841-42
4. Architect: Robert S. Chadsey from St. James Parish
5. Alterations and additions: Two additional dormers were added, probably in 1939-41, when the house was repaired by Father Chambon and a twelve foot addition was added across the rear of the house.

The house and five of its dependencies were moved sometime during the years 1929-32 when the levee was rebuilt over the original site. The garconnières were lost as well as the gardens. During the move plaster fell from the ceilings and walls, destroying cornices and paintings on the walls and ceilings, these paintings being described by family members as rather elaborate. The only plaster to remain was over the fireplaces. One painting remained over the fireplace in the center room.

The house was neglected for several years. Father C. M. Chambon began to repair the house in 1939. The roof was replaced and a skylite added. Two additional dormers were added to the northwest and southeast sides of the roof. Two bathrooms were built within the small rear rooms of the original house. The house was extended ten feet across the rear, enclosing the back porch; a kitchen and living area were thus created. Gas heaters were placed in four of the six fireplaces and the hearths rebuilt with tile. The walls were replaced with sheetrock and the ceilings were covered with cypress planks. The entire house was electrified. Two cypress cisterns were functioning and water from them was used into the 1950's when public water became available. The cisterns then deteriorated and were taken down in 1971.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Three photographs exist of the house prior to its move back from the river during the levee work. Two of these photographs were taken by a daughter of G. M. Mather in the 1910's or 20's on a visit to the plantation. One view taken from the levee shows how close the road and levee had come to the house. The rear view of the house shows the architectural detailing which was later covered by the addition carried out by Father Chambon. The negro woman standing at the back steps was Celestine or "Tine" as she was called by family members. Tine was one of the original slaves from the plantation; she is listed on an inventory of the estate of A. M. Tureaud on January 5, 1854, "No 51 Celestine, a creole quarterson aged 15 years appraised at (\$900 00/100) Nine hundred dollars."

The photograph showing the front or north view of the house is believed to be an earlier view pre-dating the levee move which occurred about 1906-08. This photograph shows a wooden shingle roof and a gate across the entrance on the front porch.

2. Conveyance Records: A copy of the Agreement & Specifications for Bagatelle as well as the mortgages on the property are all recorded in the Clerk of Court Office, St. James Parish, Convent, Louisiana.
3. LSU Archives: The Benjamin Tureaud Papers are in the Archives of Louisiana State University Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This raised Louisiana cottage is a tasteful expression of the Greek Revival style as interpreted by local craftsmen in a rural setting.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The house is 54 feet wide by 58 feet deep with 14 foot ceilings. It is two stories high, with all living space on the first floor.
2. Foundation: The house rests on 4 foot high brick masonry piers, 56 in place after the 1929-32 move. At the present site, the brick piers are resting on a surfaced, reinforced concrete foundation, 36 inches deep by 24 inches wide.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Cypress plank weatherboard laid flush, with fine beading on lower edge. Originally white, the house is now painted yellow, with contrasting details in white.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood framing throughout
5. Porches: The front gallery is across main facade and enclosed by railing and banisters and six Doric columns. The rear porch is small and opened to steps; added in 1973.
6. Chimneys: Four stacks - two are double and two are single.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Double French doors front and

back entrances have had glass panels added in place of upper wooden panels, as well as the addition of screen doors. The front door has side and transom lights, while the rear door has side lights only.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden windows throughout. The four front windows are to the floor - eighteen panes twelve by eighteen inches. The side windows, three on each side, have twelve panes, twelve by eighteen inches.
8. Roof:
- a. Shape: Hip roof with widow's walk on top.
  - b. Dormers: There are six dormers: two in front, two in the rear and one to each side.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans:
    - a. First floor: Louisiana Creole en suite arrangement - six main rooms
    - b. Second floor: Attic - open and unfinished
  2. Stairway: Added to the house by Father Chambon; it came from the Landry home in Donaldsonville when it was demolished
  3. Flooring: Cypress planks - tongue-and-groove
  4. Ceiling and wall finish:
    - a. Ceiling: Originally plaster; replaced by cypress planks in 1939 repair work
    - b. Walls: Originally plaster; replaced by sheetrock
  5. Doorways and doors: Paneled wooden doors throughout; with a pair of oversized sliding doors in the wide doorway between the double parlors. Doorways and doors are painted white.
  6. Trim: Original cornices were lost when the plaster was lost when the house was moved back from the river and levee.
  7. Hardware: Simple silver hardware with round knobs.
  8. Lighting: Electrical fixtures were added in 1939.

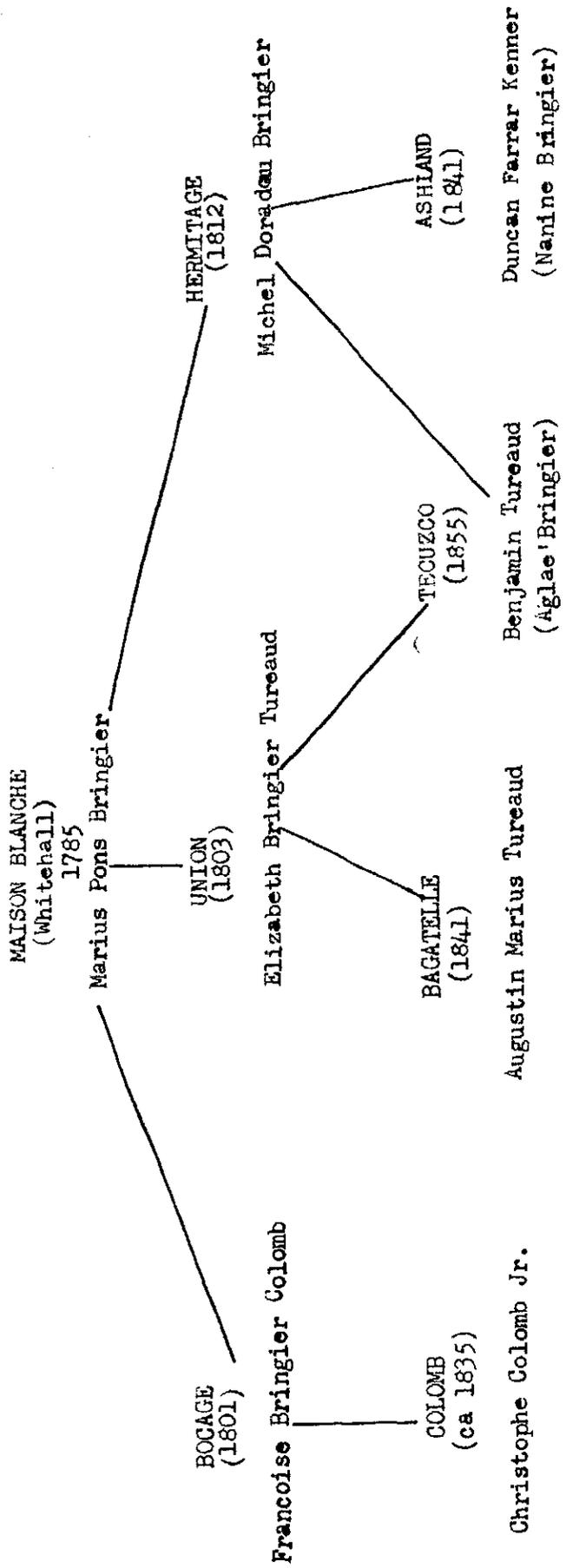
9. Heating: There are fireplaces in each of the six principal rooms. The mantels are of cypress, painted to resemble marble.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: On the left or east bank of the Mississippi River - facing the river and river road in a westerly direction. The original site was destroyed by the river and relocation of the levee in the 1930's.
2. Outbuildings:
  - a. Kitchen: The original kitchen, which was used as a school in the early 1900's, was given to the Louisiana State University Rural Life Museum in the 1960's. It was moved to that site where it has been restored to its original function.
  - b. Two square support buildings: These single room structures, possibly used as kitchen support buildings, are located to the rear of the main house. They are of briquette-entre-poteaux construction and covered with cypress weather boarding. The wooden shingle roof was covered with tin.
  - c. Two slave cabins: Originally two room cabins, they were enlarged by means of a rear addition. They are of briquette-entre-poteaux construction with cypress weatherboarding on three sides.
  - d. Stable: A small wooden structure of mortise and tenon construction covered with cypress weather boarding. It was enlarged by overhangs of tin which extended to either side. The building was carefully dismantled and marked for future reconstruction.

Edited by: Jack Barker, Jr.  
Historic American Buildings  
Survey  
National Park Service  
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THE BRINGIER DYNASTY IN LOUISIANA



ADDENDUM TO:  
BAGATELLE PLANTATION  
East River Road (moved to Iberville Parish)  
Donaldsonville vicinity  
St. James Parish  
Louisiana

HABS LA-1142  
LA,47-\_\_\_\_,1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

This report is an addendum to a seven-page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### BAGATELLE PLANTATION

After the establishment of HABS in 1933, and its continuance under a tripartite agreement between the National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress, the AIA nominated a member of their local chapters to lead the documentation effort in the thirty-nine districts under the HABS program umbrella. These district officers had already devoted years to recording examples of early American architecture, were active in local preservation initiatives, and typically had architectural practices dependent on a design and restoration business. Richard Koch of New Orleans, Louisiana, was one of these men.

Koch was an established restoration architect and was active in New Orleans's emerging preservation community. He was a member of the Vieux Carre Commission, an entity charged with design review of the nascent historic district beginning in 1925. His architectural firm, Armstrong and Koch, was responsible for the renovations at the River Road plantation Oak Alley (HABS No. LA-71) and at Shadows-on-the-Teche as well as the new construction of Le Petit Theater in New Orleans's French Quarter. The theater project was heralded as one of the first new buildings designed, sensitively, with an eye to the historic character of the neighborhood. He also collaborated with William Wiedorn and Enrique Alferez on the design for the city's botanical garden. Coinciding with his work for HABS, Koch guided the restoration of the Gauche-Gray House on Esplanade; afterwards, he worked on the rehabilitation of the mansion house at Evergreen Plantation (HABS No. LA-1236).

As the district officer for Louisiana, Koch took photographs of various sites and encouraged research into local land records. The primary source material discovered in the archives was subsequently folded into the HABS record. Some of his photographs were included in a 1938 *Pencil Points* presentation of HABS work in the state; the *Pencil Points* publication came out in time for the AIA's annual meeting in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> Not all of Richard Koch's photographs made it into the formal HABS collection at the Library of Congress, however. The HABS office in Washington has file copies of several of Koch's photographs dating from around 1936 to about 1941. Each print is mounted on a card and identified, but the negatives (and original pictures) remain elusive. Scans were

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the HABS program, see Lisa Pfueller Davidson and Martin J. Perschler, "The Historic American Buildings Survey During the New Deal Era," *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 49-73; Catherine C. Lavoie, "Architectural Plans and Visions: The Early HABS Program and Its Documentation of Vernacular Architecture," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 2 (2006/2007): 15-35; and Jessie Poesch and Barbara SoRelle Bacot, editors, *Louisiana Buildings, 1720-1940: The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997).

made of the surviving photo mount cards and, for each site catalogued by Koch,  
appended hereafter.

LOUISIANA, SAINT JAMES PARISH, UNION VICINITY

BAGATELLE PLANTATION

LA-1142



Ph. Richard Koch