

Magnolia Plantation  
LA Route 19  
Natchitoches *vicinity*  
Natchitoches County  
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1193

HABS  
LA,  
35-NATCH.V,  
2-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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ADDENDUM TO:  
MAGNOLIA PLANTATION  
Louisiana Route 119  
Natchitoches  
Natchitoches Parish  
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1193

HABS  
LA  
35-NATCH-V,  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS  
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Addendum to  
MAGNOLIA PLANTATION

HABS LA-1193

- Location: Left downstream bank, Cane River Lake, Natchitoches Parish; 5487 Highway 119; 1½ miles northeast of the town of Derry, Louisiana. Section 112, T7N, R6W. Approx. 31° 33' 08" N lat., 92° 56' 32" long. UTM 15 505490E, 3490620N
- Present Owner: Ambrose J. Hertzog Estate.<sup>1</sup>
- Present Occupant: Betty Hertzog.
- Present Use: The "big house" of Magnolia Plantation is a private residence, open as a bed and breakfast and for limited public tours. The complex of plantation buildings adjacent to the big house is under development by the National Park Service as part of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park.
- Significance: Lands within Magnolia Plantation have been owned and cultivated by the same family since the French land grants of 1753. Magnolia remains one of the South's most complete plantation complexes, with buildings and landscape features spanning its entire 250-year history. Noteworthy are the oak alley, a nationally significant cotton press, the brick slave quarters later used for tenant housing, a slave hospital, a blacksmith shop, the plantation store, and the big house with private chapel.
- Planter Matthew Hertzog built the plantation's "big house" in the 1890s on the foundation of a dwelling burned during the Civil War. The previous house was a regionally distinctive, raised Creole cottage dating to the 1840s, up to 1851; it had a two-story brick basement, raised galleries on the front and back, and ringed by over twenty 18' brick Tuscan columns. The present "big house" is a late nineteenth-century interpretation of the raised Creole cottage traditionally built in the Cane River area, adapted to modern materials, technologies, and tastes.
- As one of the largest plantation homes in the area, Magnolia's big house reflects the wealth, status, and endurance of the Hertzog family at the end of one of the most turbulent periods in Louisiana history. The house tells much about the history of planter society, agriculture, and the rural South since the colonial era.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ambrose J. Hertzog Estate consists of Norman L. Gunn, J. Bennett and Mary Johnston (nee Mary Gunn), Mary J. Catallo, Hunter Johnston, Sally J. Roemer, Bennett H. Johnston, Jr., Marie Louise Spencer, Archie Boggs, Charles A. Boggs, Sarah Holbrook Boggs, Dr. Charles Spencer, Marie Louise Allen, Carolyn S. Buseulerner, Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., and Elizabeth "Betty" Hertzog.

The big house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the plantation complex is a National Historic Landmark. The United States Department of Agriculture recognized Magnolia plantation in 1989 as a National Bicentennial Farm, one of only two farms west of the Mississippi River that had been in the same family for over two hundred years. Congress established the Cane River Creole National Heritage Area in 1994, and the 19-acre Magnolia Plantation Complex was added to the Cane River Creole National Historical Park in 1996. Descendents of the original land grant recipients retain ownership of the Magnolia big house and plantation, and the agricultural lands remain in production.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of construction: 1895-1898.
2. Architect: Nothing has been found to indicate that a professionally trained architect was involved in the design of the current or previous house. The evidence points to construction by a local experienced builder.
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: The previous residence functioned as a plantation home from its construction until it was destroyed by fire in 1864. Although the date of construction is not certain, Ambroise LeComte II (1807-1883) likely built it in the 1840s and 1850s. LeComte's wife Julia Buard (1809-1845) gave birth to four daughters and two sons before her death in a house at Magnolia.<sup>2</sup>

After his marriage to Desiree Sompayrac, LeComte spent much of his time in a Natchitoches townhouse, leaving the daily operation of the plantation to the overseer, W. B. Eddins. With no surviving male heirs, LeComte gave a 40 percent interest in Magnolia to his eldest daughter, Ursula Atala LeComte (1830-1897) and her husband Matthew Henry Hertzog (1829-1903) after their marriage in 1852. Matthew and Atala had twenty children, but only two survived to adulthood.<sup>3</sup>

After the big house burned in the spring of 1864, the Hertzogs moved into the slave hospital, which they modified extensively into a residence. They lived there until 1897 or 1898, when construction of the present house was completed.

The Magnolia Plantation "big house" was completed in 1898 as the home of Matthew Hertzog (1829-1903), his wife Atala LeComte (1830-1897), their adult son Ambrose J. Hertzog (1857-1921), and his wife Sarah Hunter (1873-1960). Ambrose

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<sup>2</sup> Julia Buard's daughter recalls her mother dying in the Magnolia big house, which contradicts evidence pointing to a later construction date for the house that burned in 1864. Henley Hunter, personal communication, July 20, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> J. Fair Hardin, *Northwestern Louisiana*, 1939[?], p. 69.

inherited the big house in 1903 when his father's death divided the plantation between Ambrose and his sister Frances "Fannie" Hertzog Chopin (b.1865).

After returning from the first World War, Ambrose's son Matthew Hertzog (1897-1973) managed the plantation. Matthew's younger brother, Dr. Ambrose J. Hertzog (1907-1991), completed his medical degree at Tulane University in New Orleans, followed by a doctorate at the University of Minnesota and a fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester Minnesota. Dr. Ambrose practiced in Minnesota and New Orleans, but returned home often, documenting his visits in photographs and home movies that provide early views of Magnolia Plantation and the big house.<sup>4</sup>

With the death of the senior Ambrose Hertzog in 1921, ownership passed to the Ambrose J. Hertzog Estate, which included several surviving heirs and their spouses. Matthew Hertzog (1897-1973) managed the plantation on behalf of the estate. He lived in the big house with his wife, Lydia Compton (1903-1988), and their only daughter Elizabeth "Betty" Hertzog (1929-). In all, Matthew managed the plantation for fifty years.

Betty Hertzog has been the primary resident in the big house since the death of her mother Lydia in 1988. Betty opened the house as a bed and breakfast and for limited public tours beginning in the 1990s. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., son of Dr. Ambrose, lives at Magnolia in a house next to the big house.

#### 4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

a. Builder: There remains some uncertainty about the time of construction of the house that burned in 1864, a structure traditionally dated between 1830 up to about 1840 in oral histories.<sup>5</sup> Other evidence, however, places the house under construction and nearing completion in 1851. Correspondence between the Magnolia overseer, W. B. Eddins, and Ambroise LeComte II (1807-1883) refers to floors under construction in LeComte's "new house." A letter from Eddins to LeComte dated May 2, 1851, mentions one of the builders by name, informing LeComte that, "Baptist will have the floor on the inside of your house completed I think by next Friday – he has already laid the floors of the entry closet, dining room pantry, and one of the bedrooms[.] [H]e has now but one large room and store room to finish."<sup>6</sup> A letter the following week reports, "Baptist commences this morning on the front gallery floor. The floor is all finished on the inside." The

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<sup>4</sup> Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16 and July 20, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Betty Hertzog, "Magnolia Plantation" 1989; Ambrose J. Hertzog, M.D., historical statement in support of National Register of Historic Places nomination, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office files, October 24, 1978; Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002; Henley Hunter, personal communication, July 20, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Correspondence, W.B. Eddins, Magnolia overseer, to Ambroise LeComte II (1807-1883). May 2, 1851. Reproduced in Appendix "A Glimpse of Magnolia Plantation, 1851," Keel, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 1999, from Ann Malone's copies of documents found in the attic of the home at Oakland Plantation, Natchitoches Parish, sent to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as part of the Prudhomme family papers.

context of the letters point to the activities taking place at Magnolia, and the letters carry the return address of "Magnolia Grove, Cain [sic] River," rather than at LeComte's other plantations at Vienna or Shallow Lake.<sup>7</sup>

An 1845 inventory of LeComte property may provide a clue about the identity of Baptiste. The inventory lists a 40-year-old Negro male slave identified as *Baptiste Macon*, valued at \$900. That was equal to the highest assessed value of any slave in the inventory, including the blacksmith, suggesting a highly skilled individual.<sup>8</sup> An inventory the following year also lists a 40-year-old male slave, *Baptiste macon*, suggesting that his trade, rather than his name, was *macon*, a French term for mason or bricklayer.<sup>9</sup>

Baptiste may have been the bricklayer responsible for the construction of the brick slave quarters begun in 1845, and perhaps the brick foundations of the big house. It is not clear whether he is the same Baptist who was building floors in the 1851 letters cited above. The activities described in the correspondence could refer to carpentry work or brick masonry. Further correspondence from Eddins in May of 1851 refers to Baptist's masonry work when he reports, "Baptist tells me that he will not have lime enough for your ditching." They were apparently using lime to seal the bottom of a drainage ditch.<sup>10</sup>

The big house was erected in the late 1890s under the direction of Matthew Hertzog (1829-1903). No records have been found naming the builder of the house, but oral tradition attributes its construction to an illiterate carpenter of a mixed racial lineage.<sup>11</sup> Invoices from the Magnolia store, dated from 1895 to 1898, indicate that Matthew Hertzog purchased wholesale building materials through the store.<sup>12</sup> Some of the invoices for lumber, lime, and Portland cement bear a handwritten note directing that the purchases be charged to "Magnolia Building," suggesting that Hertzog established a separate account for those materials used to build the house. From the high quality of the finished lumber and materials, moreover, it can be construed that they were used for the big house rather than for sharecropper's homes raised in the area around the same time.<sup>13</sup> Most of the invoices name Matthew Hertzog as the purchaser, but others indicate that Hertzog bought materials for Victor David, Henry Douglas, and L. Chopin.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Eddins to LeComte II (1807-1883). May 9, 1851. In Keel, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 1999, p. 88.

<sup>8</sup> Succession of Julia Buard (1809-1845), deceased wife of Ambroise LeComte. August 12, 1845. Natchitoches Parish Succession Record, Book 20, July 1845-August 1846, p. 273.

<sup>9</sup> Marriage Contract, Ambroise LeComte and Louise Victoire Desiree Sompayrac, January 3, 1846. Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Record 2005, Book 37, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> Eddins to LeComte, May 9, 1851, reproduced in Keel, 1999, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Ambrose and longtime Magnolia employee Walter Blackman played at Magnolia as children. Blackman recalled an illiterate Mulatto carpenter working on the house in the 1890s. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> See Supplemental Materials Table 1.

<sup>13</sup> Magnolia plantation store invoice book, 1890s. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection.

<sup>14</sup> Magnolia plantation store invoice book, 1890s. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection.

Victor David's name also appears in Magnolia store accounts in 1883. David is listed at the top of Magnolia payroll ledgers from May through October of 1900. The records show that David earned \$1.75 per day, which was greater than any other person listed, and that he worked more days than anyone else listed, suggesting a supervisory role.<sup>15</sup> Mills mentions a Victor David who lived in a settlement of free people of color at Campti, north of Natchitoches, then moved to the Cane River area after the Civil War. David may have served with the Union army during the Civil War.<sup>16</sup> Conveyance records indicate that Victor David purchased 200 acres from Joseph J. Metoyer in 1889 located on Cane River, 23 miles below Natchitoches. David made another purchase of 19 acres from Marie F. V. Metoyer in the same vicinity in 1891. Victor sold much of his land in 1902 to Kirklands, which may have been grandchildren. Succession records from the 1920s show that Victor and Corinne David owned 12 acres of land fronting Cane River Lake next to the Ambrose J. Hertzog estate.<sup>17</sup>

b. Contractor: No information on the contractor has been located. Matthew Hertzog may have acted as his own contractor.

c. Suppliers: Invoices from the Magnolia plantation store record the purchases of large quantities of lumber, millwork, lime, Portland cement, firebrick, and other building materials between 1895 and 1898.<sup>18</sup> Locations of suppliers ranged from rural Natchitoches Parish to Shreveport, New Orleans, and Cincinnati. Materials arrived by wagon, by the Texas and Pacific Railroad, and possibly by water. Family members indicate that the Hertzogs were involved in the lumber business after the Civil War, but it is not clear if that had any relation to the lumber companies named in the invoices. The charter of the Victoria Lumber Company did not convey any Hertzog involvement, for example.

The Old River Lumber Company was incorporated in Natchitoches on February 27, 1893, with Charles M. Green as president. The company owned land along the Old River around Montrose, within a few miles of Magnolia. The company was still buying land and lumber in 1917, when the board of directors included E. L. Williams, L. L. Williams, and J. H. Williams.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Magnolia Plantation, Weekly Time Book, January – December, 1900, Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection. Ambrose recalls that the Magnolia overseer received a monthly salary, suggesting that David had different role on the plantation. David's name does not appear on payroll records from 1902, when William Cheatham's name began appearing at the top of payroll ledgers.

<sup>16</sup> Mills, *Forgotten People*, 1977, p. 95, p. 236 note 52.

<sup>17</sup> Natchitoches Parish Notarial and Conveyance Records, conveyance #18934, book 87, p. 61, February 16, 1889 and conveyance #20711, book 90, p. 156, December 24, 1891 and conveyance #27739, book 108, p. 170, April 1902; Succession of Victor David and Corinne David. Natchitoches Parish succession number 56857, July 23, 1926. The record lists the David's sole heir as daughter Victoria Kirkland, wife of Jeff Kirkland.

<sup>18</sup> See Supplemental Materials Table 1.

<sup>19</sup> John Brogan, sale of land to Old River Lumber Company, Natchitoches Parish conveyance record #21432, book 90, p. 722, March 6, 1893; Sale of land, lumber, and sawmill to Old River Lumber Company, Natchitoches Parish

Suppliers:

Old River Lumber Co., Old River La. (pine lumber, weatherboard)  
ONG-Hiller, New Orleans, La. (cement, lime, firebrick)  
Brakenridge Lumber, New Orleans, La. (flooring)  
Victoria Lumber Co., Victoria, La. (pine lumber)  
Scott and Co., Cincinnati, Ohio. (locks, paint)  
Roberts & Co., New Orleans, La. (mantels, gallery columns)  
New Orleans Roofing and Metalworks, New Orleans, La. (roofing or eaves(?))  
W. F. Taylor, Wholesale Grocer, (Shreveport ?) (Lime)

5. Original plans and construction: Malone and Keel have presented evidence indicating that the present big house was the third on the property and the second on the present site.<sup>20</sup> According to that evidence, the first residence on the property was the Cottage Buard, which came with the 960 arpents that Ambroise LeComte (1807-1883) purchased from Gasparite Lacour for \$29,000 in 1835. That transaction essentially completed the land acquisitions that became Magnolia plantation.<sup>21</sup> Cottage Buard may have been the home of widow Suzette Buard, her children, and her younger brother Matthew Hertzog, who lived at Magnolia at the time of the 1850 census. Archaeological investigations suggest the Cottage Buard may have been located northeast of the gin barn near the present Highway 119, but the structure does not appear on Walmsley's 1858 plat.<sup>22</sup> Malone described the Cottage Buard as a small Creole cottage of brick, bousillage, and whitewashed cypress, and suggested that it was occupied until destroyed by a tornado in 1939.<sup>23</sup>

Family lore dates the previous house to the 1830-40 period, while other oral tradition states that a house existed on the present site before the house that burned in

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conveyance record #45689, book 141, p. 599, July 1917; Charter of the Victoria Lumber Company June 18, 1891, *Natchitoches Enterprise* June 25, 1891.

<sup>20</sup> Malone, "Magnolia Plantation Overview," 1996; Keel *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation of Magnolia Plantation*, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Gasparite Lacour to Ambroise LeComte, sale of land July 21, 1835, 900 arpents (765 ac.) on the left bank and 60 arpents (51 ac.) on the right bank of the River of Canes, together with houses, outhouses, cotton gin and other buildings, for \$29,000. Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Record no. 901, book 2, p. 212. Keel, *Subsurface investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 1999, pp. 18-28, 81, 84-88. Malone *Magnolia Overview*, 1996, pp. 46-54. 1 Arpent = 0.85 acre = 0.34 hectare

<sup>22</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication June 13, 2002. The Walmsley plat of 1858 is reproduced in part on the cover of Keel, *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 1999, pp. 18-28, 81, 84-88; Malone *Magnolia Overview*, 1999, pp. 46-54; Given the preferences that French colonists had for home sites with a strong central axis and distant framed vistas, property boundaries and tree lines on early plat maps might provide a clue about the location of the previous house.

<sup>23</sup> The belief that the structure destroyed in 1939 was the Cottage Buard may be based on a misreading of a poor copy of Walmsley's 1858 plat. Neither the Cottage Buard nor the domestic structure discovered by Keel appear on the plat of 1858, so it is not clear how it could have been destroyed in 1939. Malone "Magnolia Plantation Overview," 1996, pp. 46-47. Barbara Yocum, "Magnolia Plantation: Building Materials Assessment and Analysis," 1996. Keel *Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 1999, p. 21, p. 28.

1864.<sup>24</sup> Other sources date the previous house to 1840.<sup>25</sup> Eliza LeComte Prudhomme (1840-1923), youngest daughter of Ambroise LeComte II and Julia Buard, recalled the death of her mother in the bedroom of the Magnolia big house.<sup>26</sup> That contradicts the evidence placing the big house under construction in 1851, unless the work had been ongoing since before 1845. The 1845 inventory in the succession of Julia Buard offers no clarification, simply mentioning that the plantation included buildings and improvements, without describing the residence.

Stylistic evidence does not support a construction date in the 1830s, but rather points to a time closer to 1850. A number of raised Creole cottages survive on plantations in the vicinity of Magnolia plantation, and a larger number are extant throughout Louisiana. These were built between ca. 1790 through 1850. Between 1790 and 1840, moreover, a number of raised Creole plantation dwellings with a brick basement story were built in Natchitoches Parish and on the Mississippi River plantations.

Examples of raised Creole cottages with brick basements in the vicinity of Magnolia include the Kate Chopin House (ca.1809), the Roubieu-Jones house (ca.1835), and the main houses at Oakland Plantation (ca.1818-21), Oaklawn (1830-35), and Melrose (1833). Others around the state include Laura Plantation house (ca.1820), Reserve Plantation house (ca.1825-50), Graugnard Farms house (ca.1790-1820, ca.1850), North Bend (1835), and Whitney Plantation (ca.1803, 1836-39).<sup>27</sup>

The brick basements in those houses were either a full story or less. The full story basement was not the norm, however. While basements ranged down to just a couple of feet in height, the basement type was more common than the big house on brick piers. In addition, houses along the River Road were occasionally moved and rebuilt on a shorter basement, adding to the tendency toward shorter basements in the extant examples. The evidence in the structure at Magnolia is not clear whether the ground

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<sup>24</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, 2002; Henley Hunter, personal communication, July 20, 2002; Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> HABS, the National Register nomination, and Graham's historic architectural assessment date it to 1840. The Cultural Landscapes Inventory of Magnolia Plantation states that during the period 1835-45 "major construction is begun and completed at Magnolia including big house and brick slave quarters." However, that seems unlikely given that the 1845 succession of Julia Buard lists "5 brick Negro cabins unfinished with necessary materials." Historic American Buildings Survey, Magnolia Plantation, HABS No. LA-1193; Yocum, "Magnolia Plantation: Building Materials Assessment and Analysis," 1996; Graham, "Architectural Conservation Survey and Assessment" 1993; Buard Succession, Natchitoches Parish Succession Record book 20, p. 264, August 12, 1845.

<sup>26</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, 2002; Henley Hunter, personal communication, July 20, 2002; Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Interior, HABS No. LA-1274, "Kate Chopin House"; Louisiana SHPO, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "Roubieu-Jones House," 1999; NRHP Registration Form, "Oakland Plantation," 1978; NRHP Nomination Form, "Oaklawn Plantation, 1979; NRHP Nomination Form, "Melrose Plantation," [n.d.]; NRHP Registration Form, "Laura Plantation," 1992; NRHP Registration Form, "Reserve Plantation," 1993; NRHP Registration Form, "Graugnard Farms," 1992. NRHP Registration Form, "North Bend Plantation," 1992; NRHP Registration Form, "Whitney Plantation," 1992.

floor of the previous house had a full story raise or whether it was the present height of around 6'.<sup>28</sup>

Those raised Creole cottages built before about 1840 all had either bousillage or *brique-entre-poteaux* (brick between posts) construction for the upper story. Such raised cottages used the ground floor for storage with the second story as the *premier etage* or primary living space for sleeping. Some included a parlor and dining room on the ground floor, which appears to have been the case at Magnolia. Aside from the Magnolia big house, Uncle Sam plantation in St. James Parish (1841, rebuilt 1849, demolished 1940) is one of the only known examples of a two-story, brick basement on which sits a raised Creole cottage.<sup>29</sup>

Another indication of a slightly later date for the previous big house at Magnolia Plantation is the central hall and nearly symmetrical floor plans, indicating Anglo-American influences. The examples of raised Creole cottages built before about the late 1830s normally used an asymmetrical floor plan, without the central hall. As an indication of the endurance of traditional building methods in Natchitoches Parish, Cedar Bend plantation (ca. 1850) included bousillage walls, wraparound mantles, and an asymmetrical plan with no central hall.<sup>30</sup> The two-story brick house at Magnolia, with its central hall plan and exterior surrounded by Tuscan columns, must have been the finest outside of the River Road when it was built. The brick masonry of the edifice lent a cosmopolitan air to the rural landscape, was enhanced by the presence of the equally-durable, brick slave quarters, and contrasted sharply with the bousillage buildings all around it.

The two-story structure made of brick masonry was rare even for 1850, but more understandable in the context of the brick slave quarters under construction in 1845. Large-scale brick production must have been underway at Magnolia around 1845 to provide building materials for the slave quarters. In addition, there was a bricklayer in the slave population. It is likely then that the brick portions of the big house were constructed around the same time as the quarters.<sup>31</sup>

Further insight into the appearance of the previous house comes from correspondence from the Magnolia overseer E. B. Eddins to Ambrose LeComte describing a burglary of the "new" house committed by a boy named Charles Natchitoches. Eddins's description of the burglar's path provides clues about the

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<sup>28</sup> NRHP Registration Form, "Reserve Plantation," 1993.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Interior, HABS LA-74, "Uncle Sam Plantation"; Bacot, 1997, notes that "only rarely did a Creole house have masonry construction for both stories," p. 104.

<sup>30</sup> Louisiana SHPO, "Cedar Bend Plantation," NRHP Nomination Form, 1988.

<sup>31</sup> Family members recall that brick-making facilities were located in a field southeast of the plantation buildings. The field was located within the area inherited by Frances Hertzog when Magnolia was divided in 1903. Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, 2002; Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002. Malone, "Oakland Plantation, its People's Testimony," 1998, and Miller and Wood, "Oakland Plantation: A Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation," 2000, report that many of the bricks used at Oakland plantation were purchased, but that Phanor Prudhomme had established a brickyard and was selling bricks by 1860.

home's appearance. He states that the burglar entered LeComte's "new house" by way of,

"a ladder from the ground to the floor of the back Gallery – up which he went on to the floor – he came to the last door on the end of the Gallery next to the Sugar Cain and (said) he found that door unlocked. [H]e opened it passed through the room to the stairs – and down on to the lower floor he first went into the Clausit and then into the dining room and to the store room which he found locked he passed then into the pantry where he found the pantry key."<sup>32</sup>

Charles then entered the storeroom, where he stole whiskey, wine, and meat.

The brief passage confirms that the house had two stories, a raised gallery, interior stairs, and ground floor dining room. The stocked pantry indicates that the house may have been occupied in some capacity. The passage raises several questions however, such as why the burglar used a ladder rather than exterior stairs to reach the gallery, and why a house would be stocked with meat, wine and liquor before the floors were finished. In addition, the designation "new house" may have been used to distinguish it from another, older home, rather than to indicate its age.

After the fire, the family lived in a Natchitoches townhouse and the Magnolia slave hospital until the present house was completed. The family converted the slave hospital to a residence, modifying the structure extensively over the next thirty years. The building was used as an overseer's house after the family moved back into the big house. Keel states that the Hertzogs moved into the big house less than a year before Atala's death on October 31, 1897, but family history indicates that Matthew Hertzog (b. May 11, 1897) was born in the overseer's house, suggesting the big house was not completed until after that.<sup>33</sup>

Little is known about how much of the house survived the fire and its condition between 1864 and the 1890s. The only evidence comes from oral history and from the physical evidence of the house. Oral history states that the foundation, walls, and brick columns survived the fire, along with a portion of the back of the ell. Family lore states that Matthew Hertzog started making plans for rebuilding soon after the fire, when he saw a white mockingbird in the ruins of the house. Oral history also states that bricks were salvaged from the slave quarters to rebuild the house.<sup>34</sup>

Another glimpse of the previous house and the ruins comes from the short fiction story "Ma'ame Pelagie," by Kate Chopin. Author Kate Chopin (1850-1904) moved to Cloutierville with her husband Oscar Chopin in 1879. While there she spent time visiting the Chopin plantation, operated by Oscar's brother Lamy (b. 1850), and experienced life in Natchitoches Parish. From her home in Cloutierville, Kate could walk or ride her horse to Magnolia plantation. After Oscar's death in the 1880s, Kate moved back to her home in St. Louis, but kept in touch with the Chopin family and

<sup>32</sup> Eddins to LeComte, May 2, 1851, reproduced in Keel, 1999, p. 87.

<sup>33</sup> Keel, 1999, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, 2002; Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002. Keel, 1999, p. 20.

returned to Cane River for visits. Oscar's brother Lamy married Fannie Hertzog in 1893, the same year that Kate published "Ma'ame Pelagie" in the *New Orleans Time-Democrat*.<sup>35</sup> Fannie had grown up in the modified slave hospital, within sight of the ruins of the big house. She inherited half of Magnolia Plantation from her father Matthew in 1903.

The story of "Ma'ame Pelagie" is fiction, but has some basis in what Kate Chopin had seen of the ruins at Magnolia. The fictional account tells of the life of a woman obsessed with her memories of the mansion that had been destroyed and of the husband who had died in the war. Chopin describes the home as "an imposing mansion of red brick, shaped like the Pantheon. A grove of majestic live-oaks surrounded it." Thirty years after the war, "only the thick walls were standing, with the dull red brick showing here and there through matted growth of clinging vines. The huge round pillars were intact; so to some extent was the stone flagging of hall and portico."<sup>36</sup>

The brick masonry may provide the best evidence for determining how much of the previous house at Magnolia survived. The bricks throughout the house are soft, slightly larger than a modern brick, and have a roughened surface suggesting they were hand-made. The mortar has a pink color. The "pie-shaped" bricks forming the cylindrical columns have the same texture. The round columns are distinctive enough that they must have dated from the previous house, particularly in the context of the perpendicular lines and conservative construction of the present structure.

The builders would have had to reconstruct chimneys, sections of the walls that had collapsed, and door and window openings. They also may have lowered the elevation of the first floor, cutting off the round brick columns to support the gallery and leaving the ground floor ceiling too low for occupancy. The builders in the 1890s may not have had enough brick to resurrect two-story, brick structure after the ruins sat exposed for thirty years. Or they may have merely chosen to reduce the height of the brick walls to accommodate the new wood-framed second floor.

Seams in the brick walls indicate possible areas of reconstruction. One such area is located where the chapel joins the utility room. Diagonal and vertical seams are visible from the ground floor to the top of the wall on both exterior walls of the ell. Cracks are also visible around most of the windows in the house, spreading diagonally above and below the corners of the lintels. Those may be cracks from stress and water seepage, or may designate seams where the walls were reconstructed above and below the windows. Seams are also visible below the windows that open onto the front and back galleries. The seams continue down to the ground floor, where all of the openings have brick in-filled around them. The seams point to places where a wider or taller opening was filled in to make a window or a smaller door.

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<sup>35</sup> Toth, *Kate Chopin*, 1990, p. 214, p. 317, p. 386.

<sup>36</sup> Chopin, "Ma'ame Pelagie," p. 232, in Seyersted, 1997.

Physical analysis of the mortar may be necessary to determine if there are different ages of masonry present around the areas of apparent reconstruction. Much of the brick is painted or covered with mortar or concrete stucco, but several areas have been exposed as sections of the concrete has fallen off. If a substantial restoration of the brick masonry occurred in the years leading up to 1895, when the frame house was under construction, there may have been invoices recording purchases of large quantities of lime through the Magnolia store.

The earliest invoices for building materials found so far date to October of 1895.<sup>37</sup> Eight invoices for materials between October 25, 1895, and February 29, 1896, record purchases of various dimensions of cut lumber, heart pine, and credit for 810' of cypress, suggesting that construction had been underway already. Purchases through that winter included six barrels of cement and more than five thousand board feet of cut lumber. Family members report finding large numbers of steel bands used to bind lumber in the front yard at Magnolia, indicating the builders stored the materials there.<sup>38</sup>

After a lapse of two months in the spring, deliveries resumed in May of 1896. Records show nine purchases from May through September of that year, including cut lumber, weatherboarding, flooring, siding, fourteen barrels of lime, and fourteen barrels of cement. The lime could have been used for whitewash or for mortar. That group of invoices from the summer includes lumber purchases designated for Victor David and Henry Douglas.

Purchases continued through the fall and winter of 1896, including more lumber, lime, flooring, and purchases of materials for other people. The first invoice marked specifically "Charged to Magnolia" was dated November 17, 1896. After a period of inactivity over the winter, deliveries resumed in March of 1897. Purchases from March through September included rough and cut lumber, ceiling and flooring, pine fencing, 175 barrels of lime, six barrels of Portland cement, and six hundred firebricks. An invoice dated July 30, 1897 from Roberts & Co. of New Orleans records the delivery of four half-columns measuring 5"x 10" x 13' at \$2.50 each, credit of \$3.00 for a newell, and unspecified "materials as per estimate 35/97, \$621.00." The half-columns match the dimensions (5"x10"x13') of the four half-columns currently on the galleries. The invoice bears the hand-written note, "charged to Magnolia Building."

Invoices suggest that the structure was nearly complete by the end of 1897, but roofing, lime, Portland cement, locks, fifty-two gallons of paint, and three additional orders from Roberts & Co. valued at over \$150.00 came between October of 1897 and February of 1898.

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<sup>37</sup> See Supplemental Materials Table 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16, 2002.

Tax assessment records indicate the value of the plantation increased from \$12,000 in 1888 to \$21,000 in 1898.<sup>39</sup>

6. Alterations and additions:

a. Bathroom additions: There were two bathroom additions to the big house at Magnolia Plantation.

Two-and-a-half story bathroom addition, ca.1905-ca.1980-- The bathroom addition on the southeast side of the main house is not present in a ca.1905 photo. A photo, dating to about 1915, shows the brick portion of structure in place with a pitched roof. A 1937 photo shows a wood framed, screened sleeping porch on top of the brick structure. The screened porch was enclosed and a bathroom added to the second floor between 1960 and 1980. The doors in the bathroom addition match those in the main part of the house, suggesting they may have been purchased from the same millwork supplier as the original doors.<sup>40</sup>

Privy/Storage at the end of the ell, ca.1897-1915 -- A privy was added to the end of the ell, probably before the bedroom was converted to a chapel before 1915. Access to the privy was through a door on the gallery. The privy was likely constructed by enclosing the back corner of the gallery, which probably would have extended across the rear of the ell. The elevator was installed in front of the back door of the chapel. The addition is currently used as storage.

Evidence in support of the gallery across the end of the ell is structural and stylistic. First, the masons left the base of the corner column's pedestal when they built the privy's foundation. In addition, the one-and-a-half story brick wall ends at the back of the chapel, but the gable roof extends to the back end of the gallery. The end of the ell would have looked wrong as seen from the back with half the gable roof hanging over nothing. The need for symmetry would also require a gallery with supporting columns at the end of the ell to match the gallery at the other end.

b. Elevator, ca.1950s -- The elevator was installed in the 1950s after Matthew Hertzog's heart attack. It was purchased in New Orleans.

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<sup>39</sup> Natchitoches Parish Tax Assessment Records, 1888 and 1898, Natchitoches Genealogical and Historical Association.

Fundamental questions about the construction of the house remain unanswered, however. These include the following: Is the present big house the second or third on the same building site? What did the previous house look like and when was it built? How much of the walls and foundation of the previous house survived the fire of 1864? How much of the walls were incorporated into the new house in the 1890s? Were the walls of the previous house cut down in height, accounting for the low ceilings in the ground floor? How is that related to the seams visible in the brick walls? When did reconstruction of the present house begin?

<sup>40</sup> Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr. private collection; "Crop Rotation System of Cultivation Maintained at Magnolia for 125 Years." *The Progress Magazine*, (March 20, 1937); Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, 2002.

c. Catholic Chapel, ca.1910-15 -- The senior Matthew Hertzog (d.1903), used the room at the back of the ell as a bedroom. The room was converted to a chapel for Sarah J. Hertzog (1873-1960), wife of Ambrose J. Hertzog (1857-1921), when she developed health problems that kept her from attending religious services.<sup>41</sup>

d. Breakfast room, enclosed ca.1918 -- The breakfast room was constructed by enclosing the back gallery between the rear of the house and the ell. Family members report that the northwest exposure made that area the coldest part of the house, to the extent that the family stored meat under the gallery during the winter. Matthew's mother, Sarah directed the work done while Matthew Hertzog was away for military service in World War I. Her son-in-law, Charles H. Nold, husband of Atala Hertzog (b.1895) may have done the work. Nold, a lumberman from St. Joseph, Missouri, bought lumber in the Natchitoches area.<sup>42</sup>

e. Bathrooms, second floor dormer, ca.1900s-1990s -- A half bath had been installed in the northeast dormer on the back of the house shortly after construction. During the 1990s, Betty Hertzog installed a full bath in that dormer, a second full bath in the attic space directly to its left, and walled over the door between the two rooms.

f. Closets, second floor, n.d. -- The upstairs bedrooms as originally constructed had no closets. Storage was available in the attic space, accessible through doors in the sides of the dormers. Two of the four attic spaces accessible from the dormers have been finished with ceilings. At some point, soon after the house was built, closets were added in the left front and right rear bedrooms, extending out into the rooms from the wall adjacent to the central hall. The walls of the closets do not have the beaded wainscoting found throughout the second floor, but have smooth, painted wood walls.

g. Sleeping porch, rear gallery, ca.1920s-1940s -- Historic photos show the back gallery entirely screened in, and the front portion of the ell gallery screened in. The sleeping porch had wainscoting on the walls, three iron beds, and awnings. Nail holes and hardware remain on the back gallery where the walls and awnings were located.<sup>43</sup>

h. Rustication, front façade, ca.1900-20 -- Early photos of the front façade show a pattern resembling large square blocks of cut stone. The pattern may be siding applied to the surface or merely a pattern painted over the brick. In some images the texture of the brick bond may be visible on the wall, suggesting a painted surface over the brick. The rusticated front facade appears in photos from around 1914 to 1917, but is gone by 1928. Based on other images of the façade, it appears to have been bare brick at times and painted or whitewashed at others.

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<sup>41</sup> A note in the chapel says the room was converted to a chapel around 1910 because of Miss Sally's health.

<sup>42</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection; Melrose Collection, Scrapbook 71, p. 50, p. 53, p. 56.

Early descriptions of the house indicate it was painted gray, which is supported by physical evidence on the walls, possibly until the mid-1950s.<sup>44</sup>

- i. Concrete pads over brick flagging, under front and rear galleries, ca.1940s-1950s.

## B. Historical Context

### Introduction

Much of the history of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, and the American South is written in the Magnolia big house and the agricultural landscape it occupies. Magnolia plantation has been the site of over 250 years of human experience on Cane River, from prehistoric settlement through European colonization, the Louisiana Purchase, the expansion of cotton and slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction, sharecropping, depression, world war, farm mechanization, and the agricultural and technological changes of the twentieth century. In addition to a view of planter society, Magnolia also offers insight into groups that would otherwise leave little record of their passing. The buildings and landscape form a physical record of the daily lives of slaves, field hands, domestic labor, sharecroppers, children, the sick, and the elderly, who lived, played, worked, and died, there. The natural history of the Red River valley and its tributaries is intertwined with the human history, explaining much about the creation and endurance of the Cane River plantation landscapes.

Geography and the natural abundance of the northwest Louisiana river valleys attracted the earliest human settlers to areas like the Cane River. Cycles of deposition and erosion produced a dynamic landscape of soil and water, seen in shifting channels, bayous, and the rich alluvial soil. The rivers, bayous, and levees supported dynamic wetland and upland ecosystems with a diverse flora, and abundant fish, shellfish, birds, and fur-bearing animals. The sub-tropical climate, with hot, humid summers, abundant rainfall, and mild winters created a hospitable environment for insects and insect-borne diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. The depositional environment yielded building materials in the mud, clay, and sand, while the riverbanks and swamps produced fibers and cypress wood. The moist bottomlands and fertile terraces contrasted sharply with the adjacent piney woods, where water was scarce. Rainfall percolating through the sandy upland soils left deposits of mineral salts sought after by wildlife, domesticated animals, and humans.

Archaeological remains indicate human activity in Natchitoches Parish around 10,000 to 8000 B.C. Those early people hunted, fished, and gathered along the rivers, bayous, prairies, and piney woods. More complex cultures developed in the area beginning around 2000 B.C., with the Caddo culture recognized in the area by A.D. 1000. Remains of several Caddo settlements in Natchitoches Parish indicate a complex society based on farming, hunting, fishing, and gathering. They lived close contact with the riverine environment, farming the alluvial terraces,

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<sup>44</sup> Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection; Seebold, *Old Louisiana Plantation Homes and Family Trees*, 1941, p. 360; Mary Johnston, personal communication, June 10, 2002.

building shelters from the sturdy riverbanks grasses, and burying their dead in ceremonial mounds on the natural levees overlooking the rivers.<sup>45</sup>

Early inhabitants of northwest Louisiana traded extensively in the region through a network of trails. The area that became the town of Natchitoches sat at the crossroads of the Caddo and Ouachita paths, major Native American trade routes to the north and south. A third trail to the east linked Natchitoches to Natchez Mississippi, where it intersected the Natchez Trace. Other major trails led west and south into Texas and Mexico.<sup>46</sup>

After the European discovery of the New World, explorer Hernando DeSoto passed through Louisiana around 1540. Roberto de LaSalle journeyed the length of the Mississippi River in 1682, claiming all of the land drained by it for the King of France. On LaSalle's second journey in 1687 he encountered a native village at the present site of Natchitoches. His associate Henri de Tonti made reference to the Natchitoches Indians in 1690.<sup>47</sup>

### Colonialism, 1712-1803

The period of French colonization left its mark on Louisiana and the Cane River region in the language, culture, architecture, and landscape. King Louis XIV of France issued the first colonial charter for Louisiana in 1712, granting rights to trade and governance, and pledging financial support to develop agriculture and the fur trade. The French explorer Louis Juchereau de St. Denis established the settlement of Fort St. Jean Baptiste near the Spanish frontier in 1714, four years before the founding of New Orleans. The town of Natchitoches formed around the fort as a frontier trading post and river port. The fort sat at the eastern terminus of El Camino Real, a major overland trade route west to the Spanish settlement of Los Adaes, and from there, on into Texas and Mexico. Natchitoches sat at the northernmost navigable point in the Red River, below a 160-mile long logjam that had existed for two centuries.<sup>48</sup>

France established a system of land grants in the Louisiana colony in 1716. The grants provided a river frontage to as many landowners as possible, creating the distinctive pattern of long, narrow lots perpendicular to streams. Along the sinuous channel of the Cane River, the system produced a landscape of irregular field shapes still visible in fencerows and tree lines. Grants stipulated that the land had to be cleared within a specified period of time, beginning the area's great transformation into an agricultural landscape and initiating changes unparalleled in the previous eight thousand years of habitation. Settlers typically built their homes on natural levees near the river, above most minor floods and close to river transportation and communication. Breezes blowing across the water offered some relief from the summer heat.

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<sup>45</sup> U. S. Dept. of Interior, "Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Draft General Management Plan," 2000, pp. 110-117, 144.

<sup>46</sup> Hardin, *El Camino Real*, 1940.

<sup>47</sup> Nardini, *My Historic Natchitoches*, 1963, p. 15; Porter-Bobinski, *Natchitoches: The Up-to-Date oldest town in Louisiana*, 1936, p. 17; *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana*, 1890, p. 293.

<sup>48</sup> Hardin, *El Camino Real*, 1940; U. S. Dept. of Interior, "Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Draft General Management Plan," 2000, pp. 110-117, 144.

French colonists typically arrived in New Orleans before moving into the hill country and river valleys to the north and west. They sought the relatively moderate and healthful climate and fertile farmlands. There they practiced subsistence farming, raising corn, poultry, hogs, and cattle. As transportation systems developed on the rivers, they shifted to tobacco, sugar cane, cotton, indigo, and pecans, and harvested cypress and pine lumber for markets. Many early French settlers arrived in the New World after military service in Louisiana or other French colonies, such as Haiti. Jean Baptiste LeComte I (d.1784) completed military duty at Fort St. Jean Baptiste. In 1753 he received a land grant on both sides of the Red River, which formed the core of what eventually became Magnolia plantation. In 1756 Jean Baptiste LeComte I married Marguerite Leroy (d.1811), who had been living on the military post at Natchitoches since the 1720s. Their son Ambroise LeComte I (1760-1834) was the first of three children born on the plantation. He married Helene Cloutier (ca.1766-1825) in 1783.<sup>49</sup>

The New World became the stage upon which Europe played out its disputes. French losses in the Seven Years War, carried on in America as the French and Indian War, gave Spain control of all French lands west of the Mississippi in 1763. Spain recognized Jean Baptiste LeComte I's 1753 French land grant in 1787. During the Spanish era, the LeComtes pastured cattle at Yanacocoo Prairie, now the Sabine Wildlife Refuge in the Toledo Bend area in Sabine Parish. The LeComtes reportedly had a deal with the Spanish authorities to check the credentials of anyone crossing the Sabine River.<sup>50</sup> The Spanish resumed the slave trade, which, along with the introduction of the Whitney cotton gin in the 1790s, encouraged the expansion of the cotton plantations in Natchitoches Parish.

The Spanish also instituted an effective system for manumission of slaves. A complex caste system had developed in the area since the introduction of African slaves in the 1720s, in which the degree of whiteness largely determined legal and social status. Colonists adopted terminology to distinguish the degrees of whiteness, including "Negro" or "Negress" for persons of African heritage, "Mulatto" or "Mulattress" for persons half Negro and half European, "Griffe" for the offspring of a Negro and a Mulatto, and "Quadroon" for the offspring of a Mulatto and a European.<sup>51</sup>

The Cane River area became home to a number of free persons of color, who were former slaves or the descendents of freed slaves. The most notable of these was Marie Thereze Coincoin, slave of Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, the founder of the settlement at Natchitoches. After the death of St. Denis, Marie Thereze gave birth to ten children fathered by Pierre Metoyer, the Frenchman who gave her freedom and helped her apply for her own land grants. She went on to acquire substantial land and slaves of her own, becoming one of the wealthiest tobacco planters in the area, and subsequently freed all of her children from slavery.<sup>52</sup> The LeComte plantation was located in the area known as the *Riviere aux Cannes*, just south of the area known as the Isle Brevelle where many of the manumitted slaves of the Metoyers settled. Records

<sup>49</sup> Mills, "European Origins of the Early French Families of Natchitoches, Louisiana," 1985; Thomas C. David, Jr., personal communication, July 18, 2002; Keel, 1999, p. 18; Hertzog, "Magnolia Plantation," 1989; Edwards, "What Louisiana Architecture Owes to Hispanola," 1999, pp. 36-47.

<sup>50</sup> Keel, 1999, p. 18; U. S. Dept. of Interior, 2000, p. 110; Betty Hertzog, personal communication, July 18, 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Mills, *Forgotten People*, 1977, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>52</sup> Mills, *Forgotten People*, 1977. See also, Jon L. Wilson, "Coincoin-Prudhomme House," HABS No. LA-1295.

indicate that a number of LeComte slaves of mixed French and African ancestry were freed and subsequently married into the Isle Brevelle colony.<sup>53</sup>

The king of Spain ceded Louisiana back to the French in 1800, and negotiations were soon underway for the American purchase of the Louisiana Territory from the French in 1803.<sup>54</sup>

#### Early American Period, 1803-62

The period between the Louisiana Purchase and the Civil War saw the expansion of large-scale cotton cultivation and slavery on the Cane River. During that time, the Americans expelled the Caddo Indians from the area. Yellow fever and cholera epidemics found victims in Cloutierville and among the Magnolia slaves, and possibly the LeComtes. In 1833, General Shreve began the dismantling of the logjam that had blocked navigation of the Red River above Natchitoches. Those and subsequent efforts changed the dynamic of the Red River, resulting in the shift of the main channel from the Cane River to a channel east of Natchitoches. Natchitoches was left as a 40-mile long oxbow lake, while Shreveport inherited the lucrative Red River traffic.<sup>55</sup>

After American recognition of LeComte's land grant in 1811, Ambroise LeComte I (d.1834) and his son Jean Baptiste LeComte II (1786-1825) added to their landholdings on Cane River. Through the 1810s and 1820s they made purchases from neighbors, primarily Gasparite and Pierre Lacour.<sup>56</sup> Jean Baptiste II married Marie Cephalide Lambre (1793-1811) in 1806. The young bride gave birth to a male heir, Ambroise LeComte II (1807-83), before her premature death. Young Ambroise II grew up quickly, losing his mother at age four and his father at eighteen. When his grandfather died in 1834, Ambroise II inherited the family plantation at age twenty-four.

Ambroise further expanded the plantation, including the acquisition of 960 arpents from the Lacour's, valued at \$29,000, in 1835. That purchase, along with residence and buildings, marked the founding of Magnolia plantation.<sup>57</sup> Ambroise II's wife, Julia Buard (1809-45), gave him four daughters, but no surviving male heirs, before her own death at Magnolia in January of 1845. The Lecomte's owned three plantations in the area during that time, Magnolia, Vienna plantation, and Shallow Lake plantation, and several lots and buildings in Natchitoches.<sup>58</sup>

European and American settlers continued to arrive during the early American period. The brothers Richard William Hertzog and Jean Francois Hertzog (1782-1842) came to northwest Louisiana from Bordeaux after service in the military. Jean Francois married Marianne Prudhomme in Natchitoches in 1809 and they had nine children. Their son Matthew Henry

<sup>53</sup> Mills, 1977, pp. 83-84.

<sup>54</sup> Mills, *Forgotten People*, 1977; Jon L. Wilson, "Coincoin-Prudhomme House," HABS No. LA-1295.

<sup>55</sup> Dept. of Interior, 2000, p. 145; Keel, 1999, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> U. S. Congress, *American State Papers* 1993 vol. 2, p. 849.

<sup>57</sup> Gasparite Lacour to Ambroise LeComte, sale of land July 21, 1835, 900 arpents on the left bank and 60 arpents on the right bank of the River of Canes, together with houses, outhouses, cotton gin and other buildings, for \$29,000. Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Record no. 901, book 2, p. 212. Keel, *Subsurface investigation at Magnolia Plantation*, 1999, pp. 18-28, 81, 84-88. Malone *Magnolia Overview*, 1996, pp. 46-54.

<sup>58</sup> Succession of Julia Buard, 1845.

Hertzog (1829-1903) married Ursula Atala LeComte (1830-1897), daughter of Ambrose II and Julia Buard. Matthew and Atala received a 40 percent share in Magnolia when they were married in 1852. Matthew and Atala also owned a number of slaves on a nearby plantation known as Magnolia Point.<sup>59</sup>

By 1860, LeComte was the largest producer of cotton and held the largest slave population in the parish. A total of 235 slaves lived in seventy cabins on the all LeComte plantations.<sup>60</sup> The big house at Magnolia Plantation had been built several years earlier using slave labor. With its oak alley, two-story brick construction, and surrounding Tuscan columns, the house would have been one of the finest outside of the River Road. In addition, the brick slave quarters at Magnolia were among the finest in the South. Matthew and Atala assumed management of the plantation, while Ambrose LeComte II lived in his Natchitoches townhouse and focused on breeding, training, and racing horses. LeComte owned racetracks and training grounds in Natchitoches Parish, and raced locally and in New Orleans. His winning horses became sporting legends among nineteenth-century racing fans.

Horsing was but one example of the sporting life, which, along with riding and hunting was a prominent feature of masculine culture in antebellum planter society. While men's lives revolved around work, business, and sport, Cane River women of means focused on childbirth and the intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social well-being of the family. The LeComtes sent their daughters to convent boarding schools to educate and prepare them for marriage into other wealthy planter families. Marriage constituted a contractual relationship, with mutual financial obligations and an emphasis on producing a male heir and marriageable daughters. Many men and women found themselves widowed at a relatively young age, and second or third marriages were common.

Natchitoches Parish was home to an elite planter society, centered on the wealthy cotton plantations, Natchitoches town homes, and shopping trips to New Orleans. In addition to the LeComtes and Hertzogs, Cane River was home to the Metoyers and then Hertzogs at Melrose, the Prudhommes at Oakland plantation (called Bermuda then), and a number of wealthy free persons of color in the Isle Brevelle and Cane River area. Many members of the new landed class built mansions overlooking the river, fronting fields and forests that seemingly stretched to the horizon. Cane River architecture borrowed heavily from the half-timber construction brought from the colonists' French homelands and from the experiences of slaves and settlers who came to Louisiana from tropical French colonies in the West Indies.<sup>61</sup>

That amalgam of influences produced a vernacular architecture along Cane River based largely on bousillage, a half-timber construction of cypress wood in-filled with mud, moss, and animal hair. Plantations along the Mississippi River also used *brique-entre-poteaux* (brick

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<sup>59</sup> Mills, "European Origins," 1985, pp. 32-33; Keel, 1999, p. 20, p. 84, discusses the correspondence between Magnolia overseer W. D. Eddins and Ambrose LeComte in 1951, indicating that LeComte left the management of the plantation and other affairs to Eddins. The letters make no mention of Hertzog, suggesting that he took charge of the plantation sometime after the letters were written, most likely after his marriage to Atala in 1852.

<sup>60</sup> Keel, 1999, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> Fricker, et al., *Louisiana Architecture*, 1998; Edwards, "What Louisiana Architecture Owes to Hispanola," 1999, pp. 36-47.

between posts), half-timber construction with brick infill. A typical plantation home on Cane River built between 1800 and 1840 was a Creole cottage, raised off the ground on a brick basement story (or less often brick piers) to avoid damage from insects and moisture. The bousillage upper story raised the living spaces into cooling breezes and away from floodwaters and mosquitoes. The façade and floor plan were asymmetrical, with exterior stairs, and windows placed according to internal need rather than external appearance. The ground floor rooms were used for storage, although sometimes included a parlor and dining room. Steep, hipped roofs deflected the sun while broad overhangs shaded the loggias from sun and rain. The Creole cottage evolved over time, incorporating more Anglo-American influences after 1803, such as the central hall, symmetrical floor plans and facades, wider galleries on front and back, gabled roofs, and classical revival decorative styles.<sup>62</sup> Bousillage remained the favored building system on Cane River as late as 1850, when tastes and expertise began to shift to wood framing and brick masonry.

#### Civil War and the Magnolia Plantation Big House, 1862-64

The slave and cotton economy that had been such an integral part of the plantation system became the focus of national attention during the Civil War. A federal naval blockade in 1862 left New Orleans under northern occupation for much of the war. Louisiana planters could not sell their cotton for much of the war, and stored it on their plantations. Cotton became a strategic weapon for north and south in the Red River Campaign of 1864, which brought the war to the doorsteps of the Cane River plantations.

The Louisiana capital had been moved north and west during the war to Alexandria and, finally, Shreveport as the Union army captured city after city. General Nathaniel Banks was given the task of capturing Shreveport and shutting off the route for Confederate excursions into the Southwest. Banks marched his army north from Alexandria along the Red River in the spring of 1864, accompanied by a flotilla of gunboats and supply ships. The Union and Confederate armies supplemented their rations with fresh meat taken from the farms and plantations along the way, in defiance of orders. The federal troops marched north through the Cane River region in late March, capturing Natchitoches on March 31, 1864.<sup>63</sup>

As cotton speculators crowded Alexandria, rumors spread that Union officers profited from the cotton they were able to capture. Reporters covering the campaign began referring to it as "a mere cotton raid." Confederate troops traveled ahead of the advancing federal troops, burning cotton to keep it out of Union hands. Planters who did not help by rolling the cotton out into the fields often found their barns and gins burned as well. Union troops passing through the area remarked on the seemingly endless fires and blackened plantations in their path. One soldier passing through in late March noted that the fire at the LeComte plantation had burned for five

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<sup>62</sup> Newton, "Louisiana House Types," 1971; Edwards, *Louisiana's Remarkable French Vernacular Architecture*, 1988.

<sup>63</sup> Mills, "Civil War and Northwest Louisiana," 1985, pp. 31-33; *War of the Rebellion*, 1985; Williams and Hebert, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 1964.

days. At that point it would have been the burning bales of cotton, and perhaps the gin barn, but worse was yet to come.<sup>64</sup>

The Rebels turned back Banks and his troops at the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill in the early days of April of 1864, initiating a hasty Union retreat. The navy tried to make its way back down the Red River as falling water levels threatened to trap the boats in the river. Meanwhile, Rebel sharpshooters and artillery rained bullets and shrapnel down on them. The Union infantry and artillery, miles from their supplies, retraced their path through Natchitoches and Cane River in a series of forced marches through heat, dust, and Rebel harassment.<sup>65</sup>

Union stragglers, composed largely of undisciplined soldiers from the Midwest (known as Westerners at the time) under the command of Brigadier General Andrew J. "Whitey" Smith, set fires in a spree of wanton destruction that shocked Union troops and correspondents from Northern newspapers who accompanied Smith's "guerillas." The retreating army spared Natchitoches, but set fires in Grande Ecore, Cloutierville, and Alexandria. The retreating troops, who found "everything ablaze as far as they could see," reportedly camped at Magnolia plantation April 22-23, and skirmished with the Rebels from the 21<sup>st</sup> Texas for two days in the field behind the slave quarters. It was during that time that the federal troops reportedly set fire to the big house and shot the overseer, a Mr. Miller.<sup>66</sup>

After the war, Congress held inquiries on the conduct of Federal troops during the Red River Campaign, but they shed little light on the events at Magnolia Plantation. In determining responsibility for the fires along Cane River, attention has focused on the actions of Smith's Westerners during the retreat of April 22-23, 1864, but speculation has ranged from Jayhawkers to former slaves. Jayhawker, in this context, refers to armed groups of Southern deserters or draft resisters, who supported neither the Union nor the Confederacy. They lived off the land, hunted by the Confederate army, occasionally acting as scouts and spies for the Union, "to avenge old wrongs." John Mead Gould, a Union soldier who marched in the retreat, recalled that the identity of the arsonists was never discovered, despite a reward of one thousand dollars. He understood that it was done by the former slaves, who were running away "by the thousands."<sup>67</sup>

The Southern Claims Commission and the French and American Claims Commission settled claims made by American citizens or French nationals who lost property during the War.

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<sup>64</sup> Landers, "Wet Sand and Cotton," 1936, pp. 166-175; Andrews, *North Reports the Civil War*, 1955, p. 502; Correspondence, Cunningham to Taylor, March 14, 1864, in Landry, *Military Records of the Civil War in Louisiana*; Mills, "Civil War and Northwest Louisiana," 1985, pp. 33-34; Tyson diary, entries for April 1 and 20, 1864.

<sup>65</sup> For the history of the Red River Campaign see Mills, "Civil War and Northwest Louisiana," 1984, pp. 31-33; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 1890; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 1958; Forsythe, *Red River Campaign of 1864*, 2002; Brooksher, *War Along the Bayous*, 1998; Ayres, *Dark and Bloody Ground*, 2001.

<sup>66</sup> Clark, *116<sup>th</sup> Regiment of New York State Volunteers*, 1868, p. 150, p. 191, p. 225; Pellett, *History of the 114<sup>th</sup>*, 1866, p. 172; Ewer, *Third Massachusetts*, 1903, 141; Williams, *56<sup>th</sup> Ohio*, 1899, pp. 65-70; Ambrose J. Hertzog, M.D., historical statement in support of National Register of Historic Places nomination, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office files, October 24, 1978; *War of the Rebellion* vol. 34, 1891; Malone, *Magnolia Overview*, 1996; Andrews, *North Reports the Civil War*, 1955, p. 498; Malone, "Oakland Plantation," 1998, p. 99.

<sup>67</sup> Correspondence, R. Taylor to W.R. Boggs March 26, 1864 in Landry, *Military Records of the Civil War in Louisiana*; Gould, *History of the First - Tenth - Twenty-ninth Maine Regiment*, 1871, p. 433.

There were thirty-six claims filed with the Southern Claims Commission by residents of Natchitoches Parish.<sup>68</sup> American citizens had to prove that they had been loyal to the Union in order to collect. The LeComte and the Hertzog families filed no such claims.<sup>69</sup> The family had supported the Confederate cause and lost family members in the war. Matthew Hertzog's (1829-1903) brothers Fred and Henry served in the New Orleans Guards, and Fred was seriously wounded at the Battle of Shiloh. Henry Hertzog had organized a cavalry squadron, called the Augustin Guards, composed of free people of color from the Isle Brevelle. Another brother, Hypolite Hertzog, organized a militia, along with Adolphe Prudhomme and other white planters. The group, known as Monet's Guards, was made up of free people of color from the Isle Brevelle. A fourth Hertzog brother, Emile Toussaint Hertzog, joined the Natchitoches Rebels and was killed in action in 1862.<sup>70</sup>

### Reconstruction, 1864-99

The years between the destruction of the Magnolia Plantation "big house" in 1864 and its resurrection in 1898 marked one of the most turbulent periods in Louisiana history. The Civil War had left much of the South impoverished and in ruins, and had overthrown the entire system of slave labor. Demands for a share of political power for the freedmen threatened the economic and political existence of the white planters. Parish government became the site where the new political reality most directly challenged traditional ways of life, and where white planters asserted their political and economic power. For thirty years the ruins of the big house at Magnolia sat as a reminder of the individual price paid in defense of a traditional way of life. Its recreation in the 1890s proved the resilience of that traditional way of life, the family's skill in managing the plantation through war and political Reconstruction, their ability to adapt to new social realities, and their commitment to remaining on the land. Rebuilding the big house at Magnolia Plantation also proved how little had changed since the Civil War, with a racial caste system firmly in place, and land and political power still largely in the hands of the white planters.

After the Civil War, many freed slaves remained on their former plantations, compelled by military orders, the need for work and security, and the uncertainty and threats of violence beyond.<sup>71</sup> The Cane River plantations quickly converted to a system of sharecropping and day labor. The economic system and living arrangements reflected the social status based on race. The day laborers consisted primarily of landless blacks, who had little except their own labor to sell, and mostly lived in the Magnolia Plantation quarters. Sharecroppers tended to be of mixed race, had a social status intermediate between the blacks and the landed whites, and had some hope of owning land someday. They lived with their families in cabins along Cane River.

<sup>68</sup> Mills, *Forgotten People*, 1977, p. 240.

<sup>69</sup> Mills, "Civil War," 1985, pp. 31-33; U.S. Dept. of the Army, *War of the Rebellion*, 1891, series 1, vol. xxxiv, part 1; Mills, *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War*, 1994; Mills, *Civil War Claims in the South*, 1980; *The Official Report on the Conduct of Federal Troops* (Allen, 1865) found that most of the fires had been set by men from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, particularly those from Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Indiana, p. 159; Gould, "History of the First-Tenth-Twenty-ninth Maine Regiment, 1866, p. 433.

<sup>70</sup> Mills, *Forgotten People*, 1977, pp. 233-234; Malone, "Oakland Plantation," 1998, p. 98.

<sup>71</sup> In June, 1865, the Union commander at Natchitoches notified all freedmen that they were not to leave the premises where they had been living without written permission of their former owners. Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 1974, p. 321.

Sharecroppers were required to own a cow and to raise vegetables in their own gardens. Those with their own mules earned a greater share of the crop than those without, and having a large family to work the share increased profitability. Poor whites found themselves competing for work with the blacks, but their white skin placed them in alliance with the wealthy planters.<sup>72</sup>

The Hertzogs opened the Magnolia Plantation store in the 1870s to provide clothing, groceries, and household goods to the sharecroppers. The store also served as the main office for the plantation business. Sharecroppers depended on credit through the plantation store for groceries, clothing, and domestic goods until the crops were sold and accounts settled in the fall. Anything that could not be purchased at the store was acquired in town. Magnolia received bills for medical care and marriage licenses, all of which were charged to the sharecroppers' accounts. The plantation required an extensive accounting system to keep track of each man's share and his debts in the store and in town. The store also became a gathering place to greet the neighbors and hear the latest news.<sup>73</sup>

The LeComtes and Hertzogs, like most of their planter colleagues, supported the Democratic Party in the period after the Civil War. The Republican Party represented the newly freed Blacks and the Radicals who sought to give the former slaves a political role. To help the transition from slavery to citizenship, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in March of 1865. During its three-year existence the Freedman's Bureau provided immediate aid to the indigent, mediated labor contracts, advocated on behalf of the freedmen in civil matters, and created schools to educate the former slaves. Freedman's Bureau agents were often U. S. Army officers, and federal troops supported the often-unpopular efforts to make the former slaves into citizens.<sup>74</sup> Because French remained the language used for daily communication, part of the Freedman's Bureau Schools' unspoken mandate included the Americanization of the remnants of Creole culture by teaching the children of the former slaves to speak, read, and write in English.<sup>75</sup>

Opposition to educating blacks ran high in the rural parishes. An 1830 Louisiana law had prohibited teaching slaves to read and write. Freedmen's Bureau schools were supported by taxes on property and crops, and a tax on wages paid through contract labor. Many whites refused to engage labor if the contract included taxes to support schools for blacks. Louisiana had few public schools for white children before the Civil War, and the economic hardships after the War made it difficult for many whites to pay to educate their own children.<sup>76</sup> Many Catholics opposed the secular education provided by the Freedman's Bureau Schools, and Catholic leaders created alternatives, including day schools for black girls. A black Methodist church also offered schooling to black youth.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Crespi, "Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation," 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Magnolia store records, NPS CARI, Natchitoches, July 2002, and Magnolia store Invoices, Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr. private collection

<sup>74</sup> Dollar, *Freedman's Bureau Schools of Natchitoches Parish*, 1998, p. xiii, pp. 5-6.

<sup>75</sup> Dollar, 1998, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Dollar, *Freedman's Bureau Schools of Natchitoches Parish*, 1998, p. xiii, pp. 5-6.

<sup>77</sup> Dollar, 1998, pp. 5-6, 41, 43.

Freedman's Bureau Schools operated in Natchitoches Parish for two and a-half months in 1865, providing instruction to ninety students. However, three consecutive years of bad cotton crops undermined the financial support of Freedman's Bureau Schools in Natchitoches Parish. Drought in 1865 was followed by spring floods and caterpillars in 1866. Natchitoches Parish was spared the flooding seen in southern Louisiana in 1867, but armyworms ruined the cotton crop that year, and an outbreak of yellow fever added to the hardships.<sup>78</sup>

While many white planters resisted efforts to educate the freed blacks, at least some members of the Hertzog family supported such schools. Matthew Hertzog's brother Hypolite Hertzog supported Freedman's Bureau Schools through labor contracts that included the school tax. He offered to house a teacher at his plantation and proposed to create a school in the plantation quarters for eighty blacks from three plantations.<sup>79</sup> Freedman's Bureau agent E. H. Hosner held four meetings in Natchitoches Parish in October of 1868, including one at the Hertzog plantation, to gain support for new Freedman's Bureau Schools. By November there were ten schools in the parish, including three in Natchitoches, one each in Allen and Campiti, and five plantation schools. Tensions had been high in the parish, with violence and threats against Freedman's schools in neighboring parishes<sup>80</sup>

In 1867 the U. S. Congress passed a series of Reconstruction Acts, with the first providing voter registration for all adult males who could take an oath professing their loyalty to the Union during the War. The Act essentially gave the vote to all male blacks and disqualified large numbers of whites. With the backing of a large number of newly enfranchised black voters, including those in Natchitoches Parish, the electors for the 1868 Louisiana constitutional convention enabled black suffrage, disenfranchised those whites who had been disloyal to the Union, provided equal access to public places and conveyances, and directed the creation of public schools open to all.<sup>81</sup> Despite threats, beatings, and murder around Louisiana and in Natchitoches Parish leading up to the elections, Louisiana seated a Republican state government in 1868.<sup>82</sup>

Opposition to Negro suffrage was high among white planters, especially in areas where large slave populations had created large communities of freed Blacks, such as Natchitoches and other cotton parishes. Although some of the Cane River planters could be classified as Bourbon reactionaries, embracing the no-compromise white supremacist point of view, many, like the Hertzogs, would more properly be classified as Patrician conservatives. That group supported the status quo, but tempered their ideologies with a strong sense of the moral responsibility or *noblesse oblige* that came with their social position.<sup>83</sup>

A taxpayer's revolt in Natchitoches Parish in 1874, led by an alliance of white supremacists and Democratic planters, charged the members of the Police Jury, including some Blacks, with corruption and incompetence. The group elected among its leaders A. LeComte and

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<sup>78</sup> Dollar, 1998, p. 6, p. 36, pp. 55-56.

<sup>79</sup> Dollar, 1998, pp. 18-19.

<sup>80</sup> Dollar, 1998, p. 74, p. 84.

<sup>81</sup> Dollar, 1998, p. 49, p. 65.

<sup>82</sup> Dollar, 1998, p. 93.

<sup>83</sup> Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 1969, p. 21.

several other area planters. It appointed a Committee of Seventy, including M. Hertzog, to oversee the Police Jury and deliver the group's grievances to the Governor.<sup>84</sup> The group forced the resignation of members of the Radical Republican police jury after an encounter on Front Street between hundreds of armed whites and blacks. The group successfully decreased Parish taxes, which they felt the Radicals were using to push them from their property. The uprising encouraged similar actions in surrounding parishes. Within weeks the reactionary White League led an uprising in New Orleans, killing several police and installing a Democratic governor. Federal troops soon arrived to reinstate the Republican governor. Federal troops were sent to Natchitoches Parish to oversee the elections of 1874. During that time they jailed several people, including J. R. Cosgrove, the reactionary editor of the Natchitoches newspaper *People's Vindicator*, the "official organ of the white citizens of Red River, Sabine, Winn, and Natchitoches Parish."<sup>85</sup>

The taxpayer revolt of 1874 signaled the intentions of the planters to reassert their political power. With the return of white, Democratic rule to state and parish government during the 1870s, the hopes for an equal share of economic and political power faded among blacks. Plantations played a central role in rural Natchitoches parish politics during the 1870s and 1880s. Polling places and schools were typically located in churches and on plantations. As community leaders, plantation owners and their families sat on grand juries and held leadership positions in Democratic Party organizations, school boards, and on the Police Jury. By 1898 the conservatives in Louisiana had enough influence to call another state constitutional convention, which effectively disenfranchised nine in ten blacks and one in five whites.<sup>86</sup>

The Magnolia Plantation big house was constructed in the 1890s in the context of that conservative political and social climate, and the extremes of social hierarchy. The Natchitoches personals columns reported on the activities of Natchitoches high society, including the ever-popular Hertzogs, who visited friends in town and hosted guests from New Orleans, apparently while still living in the slave hospital. Elite social clubs, such as the men's "13 Club," hosted the planters and their families for holiday dinners. At the same time, a series of arsons destroyed cotton gins, barns, and seed oil presses around Natchitoches Parish. A series of homicides among the black population shocked the white community.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Cosgrove, "The Welfare of the People is the Supreme Law," *People's Vindicator*, June 20, 1874; "Proceedings of the Meeting of the Taxpayers of the Parish of Natchitoches," *People's Vindicator* June 20, 1874; *People's Vindicator* of August 4, 1877 congratulated "Masters Hertzog and Prudhomme, sons of three very dear and cherished friends of the *Vindicator*," on their recent graduation from Notre Dame university.

<sup>85</sup> "Report of the Committee of Seventy," *People's Vindicator* July 4, 1874; Cosgrove, "Fruits of Manly Protest," *People's Vindicator*, July 11, 1874; Lestage, "White league in Louisiana," 1935, pp. 649-657; See *People's Vindicator* weekly issues, July - December, 1874 for local coverage of the formation of the White People's Ticket, the White League assault on the statehouse in New Orleans, the presence of federal troops for the election of 1874, and jailing of Cosgrove; Seyerstand, *Kate Chopin*, 1980, pp. 43-44, gives an account of the rejection of Radical Reconstruction in Natchitoches Parish in the 1870s as told by Chopin's brother-in-law Phanor Beazeale, from the White supremacist point of view.

<sup>86</sup> "Officers of the Democratic Club of Natchitoches Parish," *People's Vindicator*. September 23, 1876; see also *People's Vindicator* November 4, 1876, June 22, 1878, July 13, 1878; Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 1969, p. 21; Howard, *Political Tendencies in Louisiana*, 1957, pp. 71-108 and 1971, p. 190.

<sup>87</sup> See "Personals" column, *Natchitoches Enterprise*, June 5, 1890, July 16, 1891, December 3, 1891, January 21, 1891, May 12, 1892, September 1, 1892; Stabbing at Bayou Natchez, *Natchitoches Enterprise*, August 13, 1891;

Magnolia Plantation had survived the upheaval of Reconstruction by becoming a large and diversified agricultural and mercantile enterprise including cotton, corn, livestock, lumber, and the plantation store. Magnolia Plantation and the plantation store were the center of economic and social life for the rural community. Magnolia employed local skilled and unskilled men and purchased goods and services from wholesale grocers, ice companies, and clothiers in nearby towns.<sup>88</sup> By the 1890s, Matthew Hertzog (1829-1903) set about rebuilding the big house. He acquired lumber and other building materials through the plantation store from wholesale suppliers and charged the costs to a separate building account. The family selected the mantels, staircase, and gallery pieces from the catalogs of suppliers from New Orleans and Cincinnati. They purchased them through the mail, and had the materials delivered to the building site by wagon.<sup>89</sup>

The big house was also constructed in the context of the past, both in its physical relationship to the previous house and in its owners' understanding of the meaning and value of the past. The Hertzogs rebuilt on the foundation of the previous house, for practical as well as symbolic reasons. The plan of the previous house established the location of rooms and openings. Faced with the same natural environment as the previous occupants, the builders looked back to traditional building elements. Shade and breeze, the keys to staying comfortable in the Louisiana summers, were achieved through elevation of the living quarters and strategic arrangement of doors and windows. Deep shaded galleries protected from sun and rain. The massive oak trees lining the building site provided shade and cooled breezes. Eaves collected rainwater from the wide, steep roof for storage in cisterns arrayed around the house. The large, yet simply designed home signaled the resilience and conservatism of the planter class on the eve of the twentieth century.

#### Early Twentieth Century, 1900-40

Matthew Hertzog lived to see his dream realized in the reconstruction of the family home. After the death of Matthew's wife Atala in 1897, son Ambrose's wife Sarah "Miss Sally" Hunter Hertzog (1873-1960) became the focus much of the social and religious life of the plantation. Despite becoming an invalid after the birth of her fifth child, Miss Sally grew into the role of family matriarch and lived another five decades. The big house shows her influence in the modifications made during her life, including the bathroom additions, the breakfast room, which she had enclosed during the 1910s, and the chapel, which was built in the room at the rear of the ell when poor health kept her from attending mass in town.

Miss Sally looked after the family's spiritual well-being, developing a close relationship with the local Catholic clergy. Bishop Desmond came to the chapel on a monthly basis to deliver communion and to have lunch. Father Michael Becker and other priests from Cloutierville visited often as well. On one occasion Father Lyons stayed at Magnolia for six weeks while the rectory at Cloutierville was under construction. The young white missionaries

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Seed oil press burned, *Natchitoches Enterprise*, April 23, 1891; generally see *Natchitoches Enterprise* November through December, 1891 for weekly gin barn fires and homicides.

<sup>88</sup> Crespi. "A Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation, 2002.

<sup>89</sup> See Supplemental Materials Table 1, a summary of invoices from the Magnolia store for purchases of building materials between 1895 and 1898; Magnolia Invoices, Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr. private collection.

from the Holy Ghost Brothers, and later Fathers Callahan and Huber and other diocesan priests from St. Augustine, were frequent luncheon guests at Magnolia. The men sought the companionship of the few white planter families around the largely African American Isle Breville communities where they served.<sup>90</sup>

During the 1930s, the Rockefeller Foundation took an interest in public health in the South. Natchitoches area physician W. W. Knipmeyer had received his medical degree at Washington University in St. Louis and interned in New Orleans. He later completed a residency in Long Island, New York and, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, earned one of the early Master of Public Health degrees from Johns Hopkins University. Knipmeyer returned to Natchitoches, where he practiced general medicine and on Thursdays traveled to clinics up and down Cane River, treating communicable diseases and giving inoculations. In the summers Knipmeyer would drop off his son Robert at Magnolia Plantation to spend the week playing baseball and exploring the plantation with Norman, Miss Sally's grandson.<sup>91</sup>

Magnolia survived the economic hardships of the Great Depression and the agricultural decline that preceded it, through conservative farming practices and New Deal programs. During the 1920s and 1930s, Miss Sally reportedly had as many as sixty-five families on her place, "mostly Negroes."<sup>92</sup> Natchitoches Parish was almost equally divided racially, but the hardships of the Depression brought about the first great wave of emigration, as landless rural blacks left for urban centers. The white population of Natchitoches Parish increased from 17,900 in 1920 to 21,010 in 1940. The non-white population decreased from 20,702 or 53.6 percent of the total in 1920, to 19,987, or 48.4 percent in 1940. In 1930, 81 percent of employed black males and 76 percent of employed black females in Natchitoches Parish worked in agriculture.<sup>93</sup>

In the first years of its existence, members of the extended family and a network of friends and acquaintances came to the house for visits and in times of need. Many adults carry fond memories of weekends and summers spent at Magnolia Plantation as children, playing baseball, riding horses, playing in the playhouses, summer nights on the sleeping porches, and days spent watching the busy farm operations.<sup>94</sup> A large staff of domestic servants, cooks, yardmen, store employees, and overseers and their families lived on Magnolia Plantation in the cook's house and overseer's house, or occasionally in the rooms in the ell. The big house was a constant reminder of the social hierarchy that existed on Cane River and much of the nation based on wealth, family, and race. Yet the house was also the place where those borders broke down. Long-time workers became like family, and employers and employees developed complex relationships based on mutual dependency, obligation, trust, and loyalty.

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<sup>90</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, June 13, and July 18, 2002; Mary Gunn Johnston, personal communication, June 10, 2002.

<sup>91</sup> Personal communication, Robert Knipmeyer, June 12, 2002.

<sup>92</sup> Hardin, *Northwestern Louisiana*, 1939, p. 131.

<sup>93</sup> Bobo and Etheridge, *Louisiana: A Demographic Study*, 1968, p. 100, p. 104; Smith, *The Population of Louisiana*, 1937, p. 98.

<sup>94</sup> Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16 and July 20, 2002; Henley Hunter, personal communication, July 20, 2002; Mary Gunn Johnston, personal communication, June 10, 2002.

Late Twentieth Century, 1940-2002

The period following the Great Depression saw some of the most profound changes in Cane River since colonization began over two hundred years earlier. Military service and migration of farm labor to the cities during World War II encouraged the mechanization of crop production at Magnolia Plantation and the adoption of herbicides and chemical fertilizers.<sup>95</sup> Mechanical harvesting of cotton became more widespread in the 1940s.<sup>96</sup> The 1950s and 1960s saw the end of an era of farm labor as the migration of blacks to the cities in search of work and a new life largely depopulated Cane River. The population of Natchitoches Parish declined by 15.4 percent between 1940 and 1965, a net loss of 6297 people. The white population declined from 21,010, or 51.2 percent of the total in 1940, to 20,082, or 56.3 percent in 1960. The non-white population declined by 22 percent, from 19,987 in 1940 to 15,571 in 1960. Those who remained increasingly moved into town, as the urban population of Natchitoches Parish more than doubled from 6812 in 1940 to 13,924 in 1960.<sup>97</sup>

Changes in agriculture and the social climate in the latter half of the twentieth century seemed to signal the end of an era. The period saw the death of Sarah Hunter Hertzog (1873-1960), marking the passage of the generation that saw the big house rebuilt. The Civil Rights and environmental movements created strong feelings in this conservative area, with its long tradition of land stewardship and unique experiences with creolization. Changes came to the land as well. Between 1957 and 1974, more than 27,000 acres of wooded wetlands in Natchitoches Parish were converted for agricultural use.<sup>98</sup> Ground-nesting birds declined as fire ants and predators went largely uncontrolled. The post-War period also saw fundamental changes to the family plantation. The Hertzogs donated most of the historic outbuildings at Magnolia Plantation to a non-profit corporation, Museum Contents, Inc., in the 1970s to help preserve them. That area is now part of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, established in 1996. Betty and her cousin Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., gave up farming in the 1990s, although they lease their land and Betty continues to raise horses.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The Magnolia Plantation big house is an 1890s interpretation of the raised Creole cottages constructed on the Cane River plantations since the early 1800s. The balloon frame house was built in the 1890s on top of the walls and foundation of a two-story brick raised Creole cottage built ca. 1840s-1851 that had burned during the Civil War (1864). The previous house was a rare example of a two-story brick basement on a raised Creole cottage. The plan of the previous house is preserved in the eighteen-inch thick brick walls and foundations of the current house. The main part of the house has a central hall plan with five rooms, symmetrical façade, galleries on the front and

<sup>95</sup> Keel, 1999, p. 21.

<sup>96</sup> "Magnolia Plantation Cotton Gins and Presses," HAER No. LA-11.

<sup>97</sup> Bobo and Etheridge, 1968, p. 47, p. 100, p. 104.

<sup>98</sup> U.S. Dept of Interior, "Draft General Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement," 2000, p. 148.

back, and a long ell with a gallery. More than twenty Tuscan columns support the galleries, which were cut down from their previous two-story height during reconstruction.

Although constructed in the 1890s with modern building technology and materials, the designers and builders of the Magnolia Plantation big house demonstrated their familiarity with traditional raised Creole cottage architecture and its later American influences. The raised living spaces, and decorative features such as beaded ceilings, chamfered gallery columns, wraparound mantles, twin-leaved French doors, and French lozenge mantel treatments were traditional French Creole design features dating from the early 1800s. The Georgian central hall plan with symmetrical façade and floor plan, which the builders inherited in the brick walls and foundation, represented later American influences. However, the builders also incorporated the late nineteenth-century taste for dark wood, starburst and other non-classical decorative patterns, and balloon framing building technologies and prefabricated materials.

The strong horizontal and vertical lines in the post and beam construction and the simple geometric forms emphasizing the square and the circle suggest permanence and stability. Interior decorative features are subdued, with dark wood staircase and floors, and low-relief Greek revival features painted white. The cream colored, thin-gauge beaded wainscoting on the second floor ceilings, walls, and fireplace flues creates a visually rich pattern of closely spaced horizontal lines on all surfaces above the floor. Oversized doors and the massive thick walls create a sense of monumentality in the interiors.

The house is built to the scale of the monumental live-oak trees flanking it. The ranks of large trees perpendicular to the Cane River lining the approach to the house emphasize a central axis through the front door and central hall. The long horizontal lines of the house parallel the spreading oak branches, and the layer upon layer of brick suggests the depositional environment of the alluvial plain where the brick originated. Thick, cylindrical columns of brick, resting on cubic brick pedestals, support the deep galleries on the front and back of the house. Square post columns -- piers -- elevate the massive roof of the house up into the spreading oak branches. The columns and windows create a rhythm reminiscent of a church or riverboat. With the rustic textures provided by the gnarled oaks and weathered brick, and the monumentality of the trees and house, the overall effect is one of melancholy romanticism, or Southern gothic. The house is a visible reminder of the endurance of planter society through Civil War, Reconstruction, and the twentieth-century revolutions in agriculture, technology, and society.

## 2. Condition of fabric: Overall: Fair.

The main part of the house is in good condition, with the worst deterioration in the exposed portions of the chimneys and the water-damaged gallery floors. Sections of the flooring and beams under the front and back galleries have been replaced within the past fifteen years, as have all of the exterior staircases on the main house and the ell. One

chimney has been reconstructed above the attic. The eaves on the house are not functioning because they have filled with debris or have rusted through.

The ell is in good-to-poor condition. It is generally in a more advanced state of deterioration than the main house, primarily because of water damage. Wash water from the kitchen and utility room and years of hosing off the gallery floors has eroded the gallery floors, stairs, square post columns or piers, and walls. In addition, the concrete pads under the galleries tend to drain toward the foundation. Crumbling of the brick and mortar in the ell ranges from superficial to structural, with partial collapse of the fireplace in the room under the kitchen. Much of the brick foundation was coated with a layer of concrete, which is now detaching from the walls, bringing the soft brick and mortar with it. Water from a leaking water heater in the attic has damaged the northwest wall of the breakfast room, where the bay window joins the wall of the ell.

## B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The dimensions of the main house are 62½' x 63', including front and rear galleries. The ell measures about 70½' x 26½'. The longest side of the house, from front gallery to rear of the ell, extends a total of 133'.
2. Foundations: The foundation consists of brick masonry, laid in American bond, with a row of headers every sixth row; this bonding pattern is also known as 6:1 common bond. Cylindrical brick columns on brick pedestals support the galleries on the front and rear of the house and on the ell. A concrete sill is in place around the inside perimeter of all the ground floor rooms.
3. Walls: The walls of the ground floor and first floor are brick masonry laid in American bond, with rows of headers every sixth row. The second floor is wood framed and clad with horizontal weatherboards. Interior brick walls are thinner than the exterior walls. The long northwest wall of the ell is about one brick thicker than walls on the gallery side. Exterior walls are painted white, with gray paint visible underneath. The end wall of the breakfast room projects out from the northwest wall of the house by 2'4", resting on square brick columns, that each measure about 6'5" tall. It has a pitched roof about 2' wide, weatherboard siding, and a set of three large double-hung, sash windows with a transom consisting of a double row of eleven lights above.
4. Structural system, framing: The structural system is load-bearing masonry at ground level and on the first floor, and light wood balloon framing on the second floor and attic. Roof trusses have a miter joint at the peak, with cross-braces just below. The first floor and gallery floors have a single row of cross-braces toe-nailed between the floor joists. Floors under the mantels have metal reinforcement to support the extra weight and a perpendicular joist to distribute the load.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: Raised galleries with chamfered, square piers are located on the front and back of the main house and along one side of the ell. Hollow, cylindrical columns made of triangular, "pie-shaped," bricks support the

galleries. These Tuscan-style, masonry columns are 63" in circumference and stand about 5'0" tall; they have a torus at the base and rest on cubic brick pedestals measuring approximately 2' on a side. These 5'0" columns holding up the galleries are the remnants of the two-story, brick columns present in the previous house that were cut down from about 18' to their present height during reconstruction. The gallery floors are painted gray, the handrails green, and the balusters, newels, and 13' square piers are white. Red paint is visible under the green paint on part of the rear gallery's handrail. Although the evidence is not certain, it is possible that the house was painted dark gray, with red trim and had exposed red brick columns at some point. Attic vents in the ceiling of the ell gallery are wood lath placed in a grid pattern. The spaces under the galleries have concrete floors poured over brick flagging. The unified design of the gallery piers, rails, and balustrades suggests they were purchased as a package.

6. Chimneys: There are three chimneys in the main portion of the house and five in the wing. The chimneys in the main block are located on interior walls, while the stack heating the chapel is an exterior end chimney. The chimney in the pantry would have been on an exterior wall before the breakfast room was enclosed. The chimneys are not in use and all but two have been covered with metal enclosures over the top. The two that remain uncovered reveal that the number of flues in each chimney is equal to the number of fireplaces sharing that chimney, four in the main part of the house and ranging from one to three in the ell.

7. Openings: The first floor's central hall has an exterior door at each end. The ground floor follows a similar pattern, with a low door at each end of the central hall. The ground floor rooms each have a window and small vent on the front and back walls and two windows on the side walls. The second floor has a similar fenestration pattern, with two windows on each exterior wall.

a. Doorways and doors: The main entry is positioned roughly on center in the five-bay front façade; there are slight variances in the distances between the openings of the façade because of the location of the interior stair. The opening in the brick is 7'4" wide, with a 3'4½" wide door. The four-panel front and back doors each have a simple rectangular transom with four lights across the top and sidelights consisting of two lights and a molded panel. The front and back doors also have screen doors painted black.

Each of the rooms on the first floor has (or originally had) a door and a window opening onto the gallery. Doors opening onto the front gallery from the bedroom and parlor have screen doors painted black and twin-leaved louvered doors painted green. The back bedroom door to the gallery has no screen door. The dining room now opens onto the breakfast room and has a closet where the window had been located. Hinge impressions and screw holes on the exterior wall indicate a screen door before the breakfast room was enclosed.

Openings at the end of the central hall on the ground floor have six-panel doors that are 4'5" wide and 4'11" tall. The rooms in the ell and the breakfast

room have screen doors painted black, each of a different design, but consistent with fancy screen doors from the end of the nineteenth century. The screen doors on the ell have more ornamental features, such as brackets, than those on the main entrances.

b. Windows and shutters: The double-hung, sash windows are glazed with six-over-six lights, and have louvered shutters painted dark green. Windows in the bathroom additions and breakfast room are glazed with nine-over-nine lights. Red paint is visible on some window sashes and frames. The window-sized ground level openings have batten doors painted green, matching those in the overseer's house. One historic photo shows glass in a ground floor window behind the batten door, and the ground floor windows reportedly were screened.

## 8. Roof

a. Shape, covering: The main part of the house has a Class III gable roof with a single-pitch and umbrella framing. Rafters are supported in their middles by the top of the second floor walls. A roof ridge is not present. A thin wedge at the end of each rafter reduces the roof pitch at the eaves. The roof has pine sheathing and asphalt shingles. The ell has a gable roof with pine sheathing and asphalt shingles. Sheathing on the back half of the roof in the main house has narrower boards than the sheathing on the front half of the roof. Gable end walls have louvered vents at the attic level.

b. Cornice, eaves: The house has a simple cornice, no relief, and unpainted steel eaves and downspouts.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The main house has three dormers on the front and two on the back. The dormers have low relief classical pilasters in the front similar to those used on the mantels inside the house. The exterior dormer walls have ornamental shingles with hexagonal and square butts.

## C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The house has a symmetrical plan with wide central hall and double parlors with fireplaces between them. The hall traverses the short axis of the house from front to rear, with an exterior door at each end. That same basic plan is used on the ground floor, first floor, and second floor. The plan is approximately symmetrical on either side of the central hall, but departs from symmetry by several inches because of the staircase. The asymmetrical ground floor plan suggests that the staircase from the ground floor to first floor in the previous house had been directly below the present staircase. Galleries on the front and rear, which are as wide as the rooms, create an overall plan that is nearly square. All of the rooms on the first floor originally opened onto the galleries. The ell is one room wide by four rooms long, plus the breakfast room at the front and the privy that was added to the back of the ell. Each room in the ell opens onto the gallery, and interior doors connect pairs of consecutive rooms.

2. Stairways: One staircase in the rear corner of the central hall connects the first and second floors. It has a quarterspace landing and closed string. It is stained a dark, reddish brown, and has turned spindles, square newels with oval caps, and drop finials. A larger square landing newel sits on the bottom step. It is painted white, has chamfered edges, fluting, a starburst or floral design, and a large, goblet-shaped newel cap stained dark brown.

3. Flooring: The flooring is made of heart pine stained a dark brown; the boards are blind nailed and joined together with tongue and groove construction. Flooring in the first floor central hall runs parallel to the long axis of the hall, perpendicular to the floor bracing. The floor in the kitchen in the ell is made of plywood, replacing the brick and sand there previously for fireproofing. Flooring on the ground floor is generally brick, although obscured by thick red brick dust. The floor in the room under the kitchen was dug out to make head room for living quarters. The room under the pantry has a concrete floor.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first floor walls are plaster over brick. First floor ceilings and second floor walls and ceilings are thin gauge beaded wainscoting, 1½" wide in some places, and 3" in some places. The wainscoting is placed horizontally on the walls, from floor to ceiling, and across the ceiling. The beaded wainscoting panels covering the fireplace flues on the second floor are aligned vertically, perpendicular to the wall covering. The chandelier in the first floor central hall has an ornamental plaster rosette where it attaches to the ceiling. The breakfast room has ornamental faux beams in the ceiling and an interior surface of Beaverboard, a manufactured wood product made of compressed pulp. Ground floor rooms have unfinished ceilings consisting of the floor joists and flooring of the rooms above.<sup>99</sup>

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The four rooms in the main part of the house all have a door opening onto the central hall, a door to the adjacent room, and a door to the gallery. Interior doors have working transoms each glazed with three lights. These are four-panel doors, forty-five inches wide. The exterior door in the parlor is glazed with nine lights. The pantry and kitchen have interior swinging doors that are also glazed. The chapel also has a door to the rear, which is not in use and is obstructed by the elevator.

b. Windows: Interior doors are aligned with windows to encourage cross-ventilation. The double-hung, sash windows throughout the house are glazed with six-over-six lights. The breakfast room, however, is lit by nine-over-nine, double-hung windows. The dining room closet was added where the window had been when the breakfast room was enclosed. Seams in the brick walls indicate that some windows on the galleries may have been taller windows, or doors even, in the previous house.

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<sup>99</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, July 3, 2002.

6. Decorative features and trim: Decorative trim, mantels, rails, banisters and moldings include simple geometric classical revival forms and subdued versions of contemporary 1890s ornamental patterns. The decorative features and trim all appear to have been purchased through commercial sources and assembled and painted on site. Baseboard molding on the first floor of the main house is 11" high. Baseboards on the second floor are 5½".

Every original room in the house that was occupied had a finished fireplace. None of the ground floor rooms, except the room under the kitchen in the ell, have a fireplace. Later bathroom additions used gas heat. All the mantels in the house are painted white. Mantels on the second floor have plain surfaces with no ornamentation except for pilasters. Mantelshelves have rounded corners and straight edges. Those on the first floor have curvilinear mantelshelves, a simple lozenge and curved diamond mantel, and classical pilasters with fluting. The same pattern of decorative pilasters, without fluting, was used on the mantels in the ell and the second floor.

The mantels closely match those in an 1891 Roberts & Co. catalog, with minor differences in the plan of the mantelshelf. The mantel design was popular in the late nineteenth century throughout Louisiana. Betty Hertzog reports seeing the same mantel in other houses in Natchitoches Parish. The same mantel, with a light colored wood finish rather than paint, appears on a ca.1880s fireplace in the Graugnard Farms plantation home overlooking Lake Ponchartrain in St. Tammany Parish.<sup>100</sup>

The fireplaces in the chapel, utility room, and kitchen are of the French wraparound style, often associated with domestic architecture built in the Federalist or early Greek Revival period in Louisiana. Wraparound mantels appear in several of the Mississippi River and southeast Louisiana plantation houses dating from ca.1790 to 1850. Wraparound mantels appear in Cane River dwellings constructed in the 1830s and 1840s, such as in the Oaklawn (1830-35) and Cedar Bend (ca.1850) plantation houses.<sup>101</sup>

7. Hardware: Interior and exterior doors have butt hinges with pins. Exterior doors on first floor central hall and the parlor have mortise locks with ornately etched brass escutcheons and doorknobs. Knobs and escutcheons in the remainder of the house are white or brass without ornamentation. Cylindrical *Schlage* brand locks have been added above the original doorknobs on the front and back doors. The back door also has three sliding bolts. The front door also has a *Weiter* tubular lock. The exterior kitchen door opening onto the ell gallery has a second lock and knob installed above the original hardware. Interior doors on the second floor have box locks.

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<sup>100</sup> Roberts & Co. *Illustrated catalog of mouldings, [etc]*. New Orleans, 1891. Southeast Architectural Archive, Tulane University. New Orleans, Louisiana; Betty Hertzog, personal communication, July 3, 2002; Louisiana SHPO, Graugnard Farms Plantation, National Register of Historic Places Registration form, 1992.

<sup>101</sup> Louisiana SHPO Reserve Plantation, National Register of Historic Places Registration form, 1993; Whitney Plantation, NRHP Registration Form, 1992; North Bend Plantation, NRHP Registration Form, 1992; Francois Cousin House, NRHP Nomination Form, 2000; Laura Plantation, NRHP Registration Form, 1992.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Window air conditioning units and a central air conditioner have been installed in the occupied areas of the house. The fireplaces located in nearly every room have been closed and replaced with butane gas heaters sitting in front of the fireplace. The gas heater in the kitchen is a *Dearhorn* brand. A wood stove stored under the house once stood in front of the fireplace in the central hall.

A bell-shaped punkah, or hand-operated fan, hangs from the ceiling of the rear gallery. The punkah has a wood frame stuffed with cotton batting and covered with canvas fabric painted white. Home movies from before World War II show a piece of fabric hanging from the bottom of the punkah to accentuate the motion of the fan.<sup>102</sup>

b. Lighting: A small structure in the northwest yard housed facilities to produce carbide gas for interior lighting. The Valley Electric Coop, subsidized by the Rural Electrification Administration, electrified the house in the 1930s. Incandescent light fixtures hang from ceilings, in some cases modified from carbide gaslights. The second floor hall has a combination ceiling fan and incandescent lamp. Glass chandeliers hang in the first floor hall, parlor, and dining room. The other rooms in the main part of the house each have a single light fixture hanging from the center of the ceiling.

c. Plumbing: Interior toilets supplanted chamberpots and washstands soon after construction. The last room in the ell was added later and functioned as an indoor privy. Seats with holes opened into the room below, which was cleaned out by hand. The first floor bathroom addition on the southeast side was added between 1905 and 1915, and may have begun as a privy like the one noted above. The present laundry room was previously used to heat water and had a bathtub. Water supply to the house was converted from cisterns to rural water in the 1960s.

d. Other: An elevator bearing the brand name *Ehram* is in place at the rear of the wing on the outside of the house. The elevator uses no electricity, but rather uses counterweights, a pulley system, and a brake to allow the occupant to raise or lower the car by hand with little effort. The attic in the ell was lighted at the time the elevator was installed, but already had a floor.

D. Site

1. Historic Landscape Design: The sinuous channel of the former Cane River, now a long oxbow lake, winds through the alluvial valley scoured with bayous, natural and constructed levees, drainage ditches, and canals. Colonial settlers sought out the fertile

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<sup>102</sup> Susan Eakins and Daniel Graves, *Plantation Life, 1938-1950s*. Videocassette.

river bottoms to raise cotton, corn indigo, pecans, and harvest the pine and cypress lumber. The site plan reflects the importance of the river to the colonists. The original French land grants consisted of long, narrow lots perpendicular to the river, providing a river frontage to most of the properties. Fences and tree lines mark field edges based on the long narrow lots arrayed perpendicular to the channel, which carried the Red River during the colonial era. The axis created by the oak alley passes through the front door of the house and continues in the field borders that diverge to the horizon.

Overland transportation was available on the Jefferson Highway, now Louisiana 119, which passed in front of Magnolia. The road followed the meandering banks of the Cane River until sections were straightened during the 1930s. A ferry landing known as the 24-mile ferry was located on the Cane River to the north, between Magnolia and the Cohen plantations. A Texas and Pacific Railroad station in Derry provided access by rail.<sup>103</sup>

The big house and most of the other Magnolia Plantation buildings look to the outer edge of a bend in Cane River Lake. Bacot (1997) refers to this as the lateral plantation plan based on the arrangement of buildings parallel to the waterway. The house is not aligned with the cardinal directions, but rather is aligned facing the Cane River to the southwest. The longest side of the house, however, faces northwest. Outbuildings are positioned in the fields to the east and southeast of the house.

Rows of live oaks, magnolias, and pecans create a shaded alley along the entry drive from the highway nearly to the front stairs, reinforcing the axis of the site. The oldest oaks, measuring from 16' to 22' in circumference, continue in a row along the side yards to the rear of the house. At least two different ages of live oaks remain, which may correspond to different periods of construction. A single column of large oaks is located northwest of the home and another parallel column is located southeast, bracketing the lot where the house sits. A levee system behind the house protected it from the flooding of the Red River to the northeast.

Front and rear perennial flower gardens, remnants of an orchard, a tall cane thicket, and a vegetable garden provide contrast in texture and height to the large trees and green fields around the house. Family members recall removing bottles from a bottle garden that once existed behind the house. A low brick wall outlines the perimeter of the garden. A kitchen may have stood in the back corner of the yard, and remnants of brick suggest a paved walk of some kind. Historic photos show an arbor and possibly a swept yard to the rear of the house. A dairy was located behind the big house. Approximately seven cisterns around the house collected rainwater from the roof. Two playhouses were located in the yard, one of whitewashed logs and the other of cypress, with bousillage walls and mud chimney.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, July 18, 2002.

<sup>104</sup> Betty Hertzog, personal communication, July 18, 2002; Mary Gunn Johnston, personal communication, June 10, 2002; Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., personal communication, June 16 and July 20, 2002.

2. Outbuildings: Several buildings associated with the plantation survive on the site, including antebellum brick living quarters, a former slave hospital converted to the overseers house, a gin barn, blacksmith shop, chicken coop, greenhouse, pigeon house, and plantation store. A garden house is located within a dense stand of cane on the southeast side of the house. It had a roof that opened, and at one point housed a lemon tree. Concrete footings remain from a small structure along the northwest side of the house, which held equipment for producing carbide gas to light the house. Footings remain from several raised cisterns arrayed around the house.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Early Views

1. Map of survey, Walmsley, 1858. The map of a survey dated 1858 includes drawings representing the location and character of buildings on the plantation, including the dwelling. Most of the drawings bear some resemblance to the type of building named, but probably were not intended to show features specific to those buildings. For example, the map shows the oak trees lining the entrance drive, but not the rows of trees beside the house. In addition, the slave quarters are represented with two chimneys each, although in reality they only have one chimney in each dwelling. The buildings are not to scale, and Keel has noted the discrepancies between the plat and the actual locations of buildings and remains.<sup>105</sup>

The image of the dwelling includes identifiable features, although it remains uncertain how accurately Walmsley intended it to depict the house. The dwelling shown on the map has two stories, a hipped roof with an upward curve at the eave line, and two interior chimneys. The front facade is slightly asymmetrical, with two windows on either side of a central door, but with the doorways slightly to the left of center. The walls of the house are shown in red or pink, which was used to indicate brick. The drawing indicates a two-story brick structure, which agrees with the family's understanding of the configuration of the previous house.

The house was drawn in perspective, showing the right side of the house with a light colored feature wrapping around the front and sides, which may be a gallery or stairs or both. There are no stairs shown on the front of the house, which would be consistent with the earlier style of raised Creole cottage. Rectangular shapes on the sides may be doors opening onto the gallery. An arch and series of lines in front of the house may represent a fence and gate aligned with the driveway and front door. A dark brown feature, possibly roofed with a chimney, sits at the right rear corner of the house, in the location that the family believes a detached kitchen once sat.

2. Painting, Betty Hertzog private collection, n.d. Betty Hertzog discovered this painting in the attic in the late 1990s. A family member may have painted it, as Betty noted that boarding school education for young women included training in painting. This painting

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<sup>105</sup> Keel, 1999, pp. 23-24.

is badly damaged, but may be a depiction of the plantation, including the previous dwelling. It is a piece of fabric, possibly linen, with a seam down the middle and a floral pattern, mounted in a frame. The fabric has become detached from the frame on three sides, and the movement of the fabric has dislodged large areas of paint. The painting is badly faded, paint is continually falling off of the fabric, and Betty noted that it is deteriorating rapidly.

The entire painting is about 36" x 24". The artist seems to have applied thick layers of chalky paint, then drew the images with lines of paint. The only identifiable area is about 6" on a side, left of center, showing the lines of two buildings, with distinct roofs and windows, although Betty noted that dormers were visible in the past. The smaller building to the lower left of the other building has a distinctive brown roof and red chimney. Vertical lines between the windows of the larger building somewhat resemble a colonnade of two-storied columns. Three vertical lines next to the larger building resemble the legs of a tripod or structure holding a cistern or bell. The larger building has no visible chimney, but has a vertical blue line above the roof with short horizontal lines, like half of a ladder, possibly depicting another structure behind the main building. The most puzzling feature is a large curly bracket extending horizontally from the eave line on the left edge of the building. If done to the scale of the remainder of the building, it would be nearly as long as the height of the structure.

3. Dr. Ambrose J. Hertzog (1907-91) photographs and 8mm film ca.1924-59. Dr. Ambrose documented family and plantation life in still photos and moving pictures. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection. Eakins and Graves have produced a videocassette tape, *Plantation Life*, with film clips narrated by Dr. Ambrose and Ambrose, Jr.

4. Sarah Hertzog scrapbooks, photos and clippings. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection.

5. Cammie Henry scrapbooks, Melrose Collection, NSU. These include pictures and clippings collected by Cammie Henry documenting plantation life and architecture at Melrose plantation and other locales.<sup>106</sup>

6. Babb, Arthur. *My Sketchbook, 1926-27*. This travelogue by a visitor to the Cane River region includes photographs and descriptions of Magnolia plantation.

7. "Ma'ame Pelagie," short fiction story by Kate Chopin. The story provides a dramatized view of the ruins of a plantation home destroyed by fire and was based on Chopin's visits to Magnolia during the 1880s.

## B. Interviews

1. Mary Gunn Johnston. June 10, 2002.

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<sup>106</sup> Northwestern State University. Melrose Collection, scrapbooks 45, 50, 70, 71.

2. Betty Hertzog. June 13, 2002, July 18, 2002, and informal personal communications on several occasions May through August, 2002.
3. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr. June 16, 2002 and July 20, 2002.

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D. Likely sources not yet investigated

1. LeComte Family Papers -- Ann Malone has said that she inventoried the LeComte family papers at Oakland plantation before they went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where they became part of the Prudhomme Family Papers. Henley Hunter has been unsuccessful in locating those papers at Chapel Hill.<sup>107</sup>
2. Eliza Hertzog diary -- Henley Hunter has noted that his family donated the diary of Eliza Hertzog (1840-1923), daughter of Julia Buard and Ambrose LeComte II, wife of J. Alphonse Prudhomme, to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Mr. Hunter has indicated that the diary includes the period in late March and early April of 1864 when federal troops passed through the area. The diary discusses harassment and threats to her family by the troops, but makes no mention of the destruction of her family's house at Magnolia Plantation, where she grew up.
3. Millworks catalogs -- Hertzog family members recall seeing a mail order catalog for a millworks company in New Orleans in the Magnolia plantation store attic. If a Roberts & Co. catalog or other similar source from the 1895-98 period could be found, it would verify the sources for the porch columns, the mantels, the staircase, and perhaps the ornate brass doorknobs and escutcheons.
4. Newspapers, ca. April 1864 -- No contemporary reports of the fire that destroyed the big house have been located. Understandably, few Louisiana newspapers have survived

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<sup>107</sup> Ann [Malone] Rose, personal communication, June 2002; Henley Hunter, personal communication, July 20, 2002.

from the period of late March through April of 1864. A more thorough search of newspapers from that period or shortly after might turn up an account of the fire at the LeComte plantation on or about April 22-23, 1864. The New Orleans Public Library holds a complete run of the New Orleans *Times Picayune* from 1837.

Northern newspapers may be a good source as well. In his book, *The North Reports the Civil War*, J. C. Andrews mentions newspaper correspondents who covered the events along Cane River. Those included a reporter from the St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, which printed a story March 26, 1864, John Weik, who reported the story in the *Philadelphia Press*, June 1, 1864, and a *Chicago Tribune* reporter who had accompanied Smith's troops since the start of the war.<sup>108</sup>

5. Oakland and Melrose Plantation -- Because of intermarriage, documents related to Magnolia Plantation, the Hertzogs, and the LeComtes have turned up in the records of neighboring plantations. More information related to the big house could have been overlooked in National Park Service storage or in the attic at the Oakland plantation big house.

6. Magnolia Day Books, checks, and bank statements -- These types of documents record the daily financial transactions at Magnolia, but have not yet been located for the 1895-98 period. Insurance policies could also provide insight into the timing of construction.

7. Victor David and Henry Douglas -- Further research, including census, tax records, and Magnolia store accounts, could reveal more about these men, who purchased lumber through the Magnolia store during the period when the big house was under construction.

#### E. Supplemental materials

Table 1. Building Materials, Invoices. Magnolia Store. 1895-1898<sup>109</sup>

Invoice Date	Supplier	Materials	Customer or notes
25 October 1895	ORL <sup>110</sup>	Heart pine and cut lumber, various dimensions >1728 ft.; to bill of lumber \$21.03 less credit for 810 ft. cypress	M. Hertzog; Alphonse
7 November 1895	ORL	Heart pine, 584 ft.	M. Hertzog
2 December 1895	ONG <sup>111</sup>	1 bbl. (illegible) cement \$2.50	
11 December 1895	ONG	2 bbl. (Ros?) cement \$3.50	
7 January 1896	ORL	Cut lumber, various sizes 512 ft.	M. Hertzog
7 January 1896	ORL	Cut lumber 3488 ft.	M. Hertzog
10 February 1896	ONG	4 bbl. Pt. Cement \$10.00	

<sup>108</sup> Andrews, *North Reports the Civil War*, 1955, p. 498, p. 514, p. 517.

<sup>109</sup> Magnolia plantation store invoice book, 1895-98. Ambrose J. Hertzog, Jr., private collection.

<sup>110</sup> Old River Lumber Co., manufacturers of pine lumber. Old River, La.; telegraph office Cypress, LA.

<sup>111</sup> ONG-Hiller Co., Ltd., New Orleans, LA. "Paints, oils, glass, grease, lime cement. Importer of English, German, and Belgian cement, direct receiver of naval stores."

29 February 1896	ORL	Hrt. Pine, rgh pine, and cut lumber 1800 ft.	M. Hertzog
26 May 1896	ORL	Cut lumber 2136 ft. and ¾ x 6 weatherboarding 770 ft.	M. Hertzog
4 June 1896	ORL	#1 com.(?) Flooring 2520 ft.	M. Hertzog
1 July 1896	ONG	2 bbl. Lime \$1.70	M. Hertzog
3 July 1896	ORL	Cut lumber 2369 ft. Heart s/s & rgh lumber 1192 ft.	M. Hertzog Victor
9 July 1896	ORL	Cut lumber 372 ft.	M. Hertzog for Victor David
25 July 1896	ORL	Cut lumber 300 pcs., 2700 ft. \$21.60	M. Hertzog
24 August 1896	ORL	Lumber and siding 998 ft.	M. Hertzog; ord. to Henry Douglas
9 September 1896	ONG	12 bbl. Lime @ \$.85 12 bbl. Pt. cement @ \$2.50 2 bbl. (Ro-?) cement @ \$1.75	Neville Prudhomme
11 September 1896	MMW <sup>112</sup>	76 (illegible) poles, @ 20 ft.	
16 October 1896	ORL	Cut Pine 7100 ft.	M. Hertzog ord. for Henry Douglas
17 November 1896	ORL	Cut lumber 420? ft. 300 ft 120 ft.	M. Hertzog by Fountaine (?) order Charged to Victor David Charged to Magnolia
21 November 1896	WFT <sup>113</sup>	5 bbl. Lime @ \$1.50	
3 December 1896	BLC <sup>114</sup>	Heart flooring 64 pcs. 1 1/8 x 3 ¼, 400 ft.	M. Hertzog
10 December 1896	ORL	Hrt. siding	M. Hertzog for Victor David
14 December 1896	VLC <sup>115</sup>	Longleaf pine lumber by rail	L. Chopin for Mr. Hertzog
30 December 1896	ORL	204 ft. 500 ft.	M. Hertzog ord. by Kirkland Ord. By Prudhomme
1 March 1897	ORL	Heart fencing 1/6 1280 ft.	M. Hertzog by Mr. Prudhomme
17 March 1897	ORL	Hrt. Pine 1/6 1368 ft.	M. Hertzog
27 April 1897	ONG	50 bbl. Lime @ \$0.80	
27 April 1897	ORL	Ceiling, 165 pcs. ¼ in. 880 ft.	M. Hertzog
17 May 1897	ORL	Cut lumber 3070 ft \$24.56	M. Hertzog
18 May 1897	ORL	Ceiling ¼ in. x 10 3730 ft. Flooring 1 ¼ x 4 x 12 846 ft.	M. Hertzog

<sup>112</sup> Morris McGraw Wooden Ware, manufacturers willow ware. New Orleans, LA.

<sup>113</sup> W. F. Taylor, wholesale grocer. [Shreveport?]

<sup>114</sup> Brakenridge Lumber Co., seller of sashes, doors, blinds, moulding; manufacturer of pine and cypress lumber. Office 303 Baronne Street, New Orleans; mill Maxwell, La.

<sup>115</sup> Victoria Lumber Co., Ltd. Victoria, La., Natchitoches Parish. Shipped via Texas and Pacific Railroad.

## MAGNOLIA PLANTATION

HABS No. LA-1193

(page 50)

19 May 1897	ORL	Flooring 1¼ x 4 x 10 5044 ft. Ceiling ¼ in. 663 ft.	M. Hertzog
20 May 1897	ORL	Rgh pine and S/S pine 4607 ft.	M. Hertzog
21 May 1897	ORL	Hrt. Pine fencing 1/6 4744 ft.	M. Hertzog
21 May 1897	ORL	Pine 4131 ft. Cull 444 ft.	M. Hertzog
28 May 1897	ORL	Hrt. Pine flooring 2797 ft.	M. Hertzog
28 June 1897	ORL	Cull 3100 ft.	M. Hertzog ord. to H. Douglas
21 July 1897	ONG	25 bbl. Lime \$18.75 6 bbl. Pt. Cement \$14.10 600 Eng. Fire brick \$16.20	
30 July 1897	R&C <sup>116</sup>	Materials as per estimate 35/97 \$621.00 4 half columns 5x10x13 @ \$2.50 Credit newell \$3.00	M. Hertzog; charged to Magnolia Building
6 August 1897	ONG	25 bbl. Lime	M. Hertzog; charged to Magnolia Building
6 August 1897	VLC	3206 ft. [longleaf pine]	L. Chopin shipped M. Hertzog; Chopin, La.
25 August 1897	ONG	25 bbl. Lime	M. Hertzog
7 September 1897	ONG	25 bbl. Lime	
8 September 1897	VLC	Longleaf pine 25 pcs. 7/8 x 6 x 16 Cut lumber 160 pcs.	M. Hertzog
22 September 1897	WFT	25 bbl. Lime \$37.50	
18 October 1897	S&C <sup>117</sup>	29 squares V (brick?) @ \$2.35 Locks cut & turned 29 x 10 \$2.90 Nails 52 gal. Paint	M. Hertzog; charged to Magnolia Building direct
25 October 1897	WFT	6 bbl. Lime @ \$1.50	
24 November 1897	R&C	Materials as per estimate 35/162 \$95.00	
5(?) January 1898	WFT	5 bbl. Lime @ \$1.40 2 bbl. Portland cement @ \$2.50	Charged to Magnolia Building
11 January 1898	R&C	Materials as per estimate 35/186 \$62.00	
Date missing	R&C	Materials as per estimate (missing)	
14 February 1898	NOR <sup>118</sup>	\$450	

<sup>116</sup> Roberts & Co., New Orleans. Louisiana steam sash, blind, door & moulding factory.

<sup>117</sup> Scott & Co., Cincinnati. Seller of siding, eaves, spouts, gutters, paint, steel roofing. Shipped via St. Louis and Shreveport.

<sup>118</sup> New Orleans Roofing and Metal Works.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project was sponsored jointly by the Cane River National Heritage Area, Nancy I.M. Morgan, Executive Director, and the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Laura S. Gates, Superintendent, together with the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record division of the National Park Service. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), E. Blaine Cliver, Chief of HABS/HAER, under the direction of Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS, Robert R. Arzola, HABS Architect, and Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS Senior Historian. Oversight of the historical component was provided by Virginia B. Price, HABS Historian. The project was completed during the summer of 2002 and was headquartered at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. The field supervisor was Felicia Atwell (Auburn University); she was assisted in the field by architectural technicians Brian Carnahan (University of Arkansas), Andrew Sanders, and Oxana Tulejova, Architect (ICOMOS/Slovak Republic). The project historian was Tony Bremholm (University of Oklahoma).

ADDENDUM TO:  
MAGNOLIA PLANTATION  
~~(Douceur Plantation)~~  
Louisiana Route 119  
Natchitoches  
Natchitoches Parish  
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1193

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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