

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

BRIARWOOD: CAROLINE DORMON NATURE PRESERVE

HALS No. LA-1

Location: 216 Caroline Dormon Road, Saline, Natchitoches Parish,
Louisiana.

The nature preserve can be found in the northern sand hills of Natchitoches Parish just off of Louisiana State Highway 9, between Saline and Campti. Briarwood borders the Kisatchie National Forest, existing as a separate but compatible entity to the forest. (figs. 1-2)

Owner: The Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve owns and operates Briarwood.

Present Use: The parcel of land known as Briarwood is a nature preserve.

Richard and Jessie Johnson live on the property, acting as curators for Briarwood and opening it to the public. Together, the Johnsons care for Briarwood, looking after the plant materials as well as Caroline Dormon's legacy.

Significance: Briarwood, now the site of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, was originally a tract of land belonging to the Dormon family. Caroline Dormon (1888-1971) noted conservationist, horticulturalist, and author shaped Briarwood as her natural garden and cultivated many native plants there. Dormon primarily collected plant material from Louisiana and other regions of the southeastern United States, but she also conducted experiments with these and other examples gathered from all over the world. The Louisiana iris was of particular importance to Dormon and this species is featured at Briarwood today in the iris bog that is called the Bay Garden.

Dormon began her Bay Garden in the 1940s as a place to nourish her seedlings and to record the successes and failures of her cross-pollination experiments with irises found in the wild.¹ Although

¹ Dormon called the Louisiana iris the "[...] most wonderful flower ever to come right out of the wild to gardens." Caroline Dormon to Ike Nelson, 1 February 19-, University of Louisiana - Lafayette. When asked what her favorite flower was, however, Caroline Dormon confessed she had "a lot of 'favorites.'" She first listed the Birdfoot Violet, then yellow jessamine, "our fragrant white violet," closed gentian, witch hazel, yellow adder's tongue and *Erythronium americanum*, plus fifteen native orchids. Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle, [response to 8 February 1935], Northwestern State University, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Dormon

Dormon was not alone in her work with the iris, she introduced several award-winning variations that brought her much acclaim between 1942 and 1952. Because of its significance to Miss Carrie, as Dormon was affectionately called by her friends, the Bay Garden was the first place at Briarwood to be restored by the Foundation in the 1970s.²

Dormon and her work were of particular importance on a state-wide basis as well as on a national scale. She lobbied for the establishment of state parks and an arboretum in Louisiana and for federal protection of the Longleaf Pine forests. Moreover, she did so – and made herself heard in political circles – despite the gender barriers facing her generation. Dormon was an educated female, but she was neither a traditional society lady of the early twentieth century nor was it money that gained her cause acceptance. She attended Judson College in Marion, Alabama, an institution she described as an “old southern school for girls.” At Judson, she planned to become an illustrator but she “finished both academic and art”; later Dormon painted with the Natchitoches Art Colony studying under Will Stevens. While not trained in science or formally taught about forestry in school, Dormon began to draw and to write about nature because she “simply loved it.” Her personal studies of birds, flowers and trees brought her to the attention of the Louisiana Federation of Women’s Clubs President Mrs. A.F. Storm, who persuaded Dormon to become her Chairman of Conservation. It was in this role that Dormon - although she protested she was “not a club woman” - could promote her desire for the preservation of a tract of Longleaf Pine.³

It also turned into her first position with the state Forestry Division, where she wrote *Forest Trees of Louisiana and How to Know Them*, soon adopted as the standard text for schools and for foresters of the region, and where she was in a position to promote her interest in the establishment of a national forest to lawmakers. Dormon’s advocacy efforts of the 1920s culminated in the land purchases necessary to create Louisiana’s Kisatchie National Forest in 1928-1930, its authorization by the Department of

Collection, folder 1089. Regarding the iris, see also Dormon Collection, folders 349, 351, 353, 968.

²Caroline Dormon *Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1973).

³Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle, [response to 8 February 1935], Dormon Collection, folder 1089.

Agriculture in June of 1930, and its formal establishment by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1936.⁴ With a tract of Longleaf Pine under federal oversight, Dormon increasingly turned her attention to Briarwood and to her experiments with various plant species; at Briarwood, Dormon indulged in her personal pleasures of writing about and painting the natural world she saw outside her window and beyond.

Period of Significance: The dates of significance primarily correspond to Caroline Dormon's tenure at Briarwood between 1916 and 1971.

Author & Discipline: Rebecca A. Howell, Architectural Historian, 2003.

Project Information: This project was sponsored by the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, James Durham, Board Member; and by two divisions of the National Park Service, the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission, Nancy I.M. Morgan, Executive Director, and the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey, John A. Burns, Acting Chief. The documentation was undertaken as a pilot project for the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) under direction of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief, with assistance from Virginia B. Price, HABS Historian, and Cari Goetcheus, Historical Landscape Architect, Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, and the American Society of Landscape Architects. Assistance was also provided by Mary Linn Wernet, Archivist, Northwestern State University, and by Brian Cockrell, Archaeologist, NSU Cultural Resource Office. The project was completed in 2003, with field research conducted at the nature preserve and summary remarks and analysis composed in Washington, D.C., by project historian Rebecca A. Howell. Howell's report followed the outline established by the working guidelines for HALS historical narratives. Landscape photography by HABS photographer James Rosenthal is scheduled for 2003-04.⁵

⁴Kisatchie was established as a purchase unit by order of the Secretary of Agriculture on 10 June 1930 and formally established as a national forest on 3 June 1936 by Proclamation 2173 (49 Stat. 3520, Federal Register 544). Gerald W. Williams, PhD., National Historian, USDA Forest Service, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 21 March 2004.

⁵Richard L. Johnson mentioned the project to gather and record stories about Caroline Dormon and Briarwood in early 2003; the collection will help preserve the memories for future generations. In the summer, the *Newsletter* alluded to this effort by reporting on the HALS project and Rebecca Howell's planned stay in the Writer's Cabin. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1 January 2003); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve*

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Historical Context

1. Caroline Dormon

Briarwood was the home of naturalist, artist and writer Caroline Dormon, and her mark is still impressed upon its landscape.⁶ Once a large plantation owned by her grandfather B.S. Sweat, Dormon had always known Briarwood as her family's summer home. To Dormon, it was a retreat, a kind of camp. It was also where her parents instilled in all their children a love for nature.⁷ Caroline Dormon called Briarwood her woods or a wild garden, for Briarwood was more idyllic than ideal as a horticultural show place. Dormon emphasized its natural character, for example, when a first-time visitor observed *Echinaceae purpurea* (Purple Coneflower) growing there, miles away from other gardens.⁸ In 1947, moreover, she insisted that "[she did] NOT have a garden – just a hundred acres of wild woods, with lots of natural bogs filled with native iris. And like my distinguished predecessors, Thoreau and Burroughs, I live in a shack dropped down

Newsletter, vol. 31, no. 3 (1 July 2003).

⁶Dormon was the subject of various newspaper articles, especially in reaction to her death in 1971, and the subject of a book published in 1990, *Gift of the Wild Things*; her many accomplishments were recognized posthumously in Natchitoches city when she received a plaque in the "walk of fame." *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1 July 1990); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1 July 1991); Northwestern State University, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Vertical File. The book title came from Dormon's diary entry wherein she wrote, "Well, new year, bring me what you will, but leave me my wide-open view of the sky, the wind on my face, sweet clean earth to dig in, the whirl of wings, the smell of witch hazel in moist winter woods, and all my 'gift of the wild things.'" Caroline Dormon, 1 January 1938, Dormon Collection, folder 922.

⁷Dormon said of her father, for example, that "he was a lawyer by profession, a naturalts [sic] for love." Dormon Collection, folder 1090. They lived in Arcadia, where her father practiced law. After her parents died, the children stored "their things in two rooms, and rented the house at Arcadia. The people had only lived in it three months when the house burned, and needless to state, everything we had went up in smoke. Of course we were not there." Dormon also explains that her grandfather had "an excellent library. My parents had a part of that. Then they were both great readers, and did a lot of private research, and collected books all of their lives. We had a [m]ost unusual library, and I can't remember when I began reading and looking things up for myself. Also, an aunt who was an excellent botanist spent a good deal of time with us. She and my father would get into great arguments over the classification of some plant, and look it up in numerous books before the point was settled. I eagerly drank in all of this." Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle, [response to 8 February 1935], Dormon Collection, folder 1089.

⁸Caroline Dormon, "Botanical Ramblings," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 728. The visitor was a botanist, and Tulane University Professor, named Reginald Somers Cocks; he corresponded with Dormon prior to coming to Briarwood and actually was the first botanist to visit her there. Cocks asked if the *Echinaceae purpurea* was an escapee from gardens, and Dormon replied she was sure it was not because "there is not a garden in in [sic] ten miles!"

among the pines.”⁹ She reiterated this point ten years later, emphatically penning in her diary that “I do not have a ‘garden’ - just wild woods, with an unusual plant here and there among the briars!”¹⁰ At Briarwood she nurtured native Louisiana plants and those she collected from throughout the southeast United States. Dormon also conducted experiments at Briarwood with the American species she propagated as well as the specimens she acquired from far-flung corners of the globe.¹¹

Briarwood was the inspiration for all of Dormon’s work, functioning as her laboratory and muse.¹² She collaborated with famed botanists, such as Professor Reginald Somers Cocks of Tulane and Dr. Edgar T. Wherry of the University of Pennsylvania, to identify species of native plants found at Briarwood; her correspondence included seeds and specimens, plus drawings, blueprints, and written descriptions. The articles she wrote for gardening magazines were based on her observations of how her garden grew; her studies were recorded in various diaries and notebooks. Caroline Dormon’s illustrations accompanied the pages of her own books and Elizabeth Lawrence’s *Gardens in Winter* with the model for each image having been cultivated at Briarwood.¹³ Dormon provided consultation services and plants for the Wild Garden at the Country Place era estate of Longue Vue in New Orleans (fig. 3). In addition, she gave the Sterns artwork for the walls of Longue Vue.¹⁴ A.J. Hodges also hired Dormon as a consultant, and in this venture, she planned the Hodges Gardens in Many, Louisiana. Dormon continued to design public landscapes, such as those at several state hospitals and along state highways.¹⁵ In 1937, she wrote in her diary about planning the state hospital grounds at

⁹Caroline Dormon to Geddes Douglas, Nashville, 23 March 1947, Dormon Collection, folder 101.

¹⁰Caroline Dormon to Dr. [Joseph] Evan, Tulane, 3 May 1957, Dormon Collection, folder 53.

¹¹ Dormon Collection, folder 1125.

¹² Dormon called Briarwood her laboratory in her letter to Mary Belle in ca. 1935. Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle, [response to 8 February 1935], Dormon Collection, folder 1089. It was also her inspiration. As she wrote in 1938, “I wish I could make a picture of my trees, especially the beeches and maples, against the night sky. I lie in my bed and study them, but can’t quite decide how Nature does it! What a queer idea that art must modify and improve Nature! Of course there must be selection, as one cannot put all of nature on a canvas. But selection only, is needed.” Caroline Dormon, 14 January 1938, Dormon Collection, folder 922.

¹³Caroline Dormon to Mr. Chowning, 29 May 1959, Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve; Caroline Dormon to Lutchter Starks, 24 June 1962, Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. In these letters, Dormon mentions that she is illustrating Elizabeth Lawrence’s next book.

¹⁴ Dormon continued to help the Sterns care for the gardens at Longue Vue, although she fretted when those duties took her away from her activities at Briarwood. As she wrote to Cammie Garrett Henry in May of 1948, “Am off to New Orleans this afternoon, to ‘put Mrs. Stern’s wild garden to bed for the summer’ – as she expresses it. It is like pulling off my arm to leave at this time – so much to do ...” Northwestern State University, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Francois Mignon Collection, folder 86.

¹⁵Dormon’s advocacy of native plant material has been interpreted as helping to define a broader, national environmental aesthetic that favored natives over exotic specimens in early twentieth-century gardens. Specifically regarding her consulting work, Dormon is said to have transplanted over six hundred natives to the hospital grounds

Pineville, "I have a beautiful job--- painting a landscape with trees and flowers instead of pigment."¹⁶ Indeed, Caroline Dormon could have made this statement about her life's work at Briarwood, where she was motivated not only by her compassion for the wild things, but also by the desire to educate children about the world around them. Caroline Dormon generously shared her knowledge of history and nature and worked to preserve both natural and cultural resources for future generations.

The arena in which Dormon taught and the audience to whom she lectured expanded over the years. As a schoolteacher during the 1910s, she instructed first graders and offered classes in singing and drawing. From 1921 to 1923, Dormon continued her educational role, but in a different venue. At that time she worked for M.L. Alexander, Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Conservation, in the department's public relations office planning school activities and public outreach bulletins, posters, and Arbor Day programming; in 1923 Dormon was turned down for a job with the Forest Service because she lacked a degree in the field. Undeterred, throughout the 1920s she campaigned for the establishment of Kisatchie National Forest and for the preservation of Louisiana's pines.¹⁷ Dormon first wrote to Alexander in 1919, and the following year attended the Southern Forestry Conference in New Orleans. There she met with Alexander, as well as Mrs. A.F. Storm, Henry Hardtner, Colonel Henry S. Graves, and other leaders in the conservation movement who advocated reforestation. Hardtner, who was President of the Louisiana Forestry Association, appointed Dormon to the Forestry Committee; in that role she planned for and promoted forestry education programs to the state school districts; her efforts were emulated in other states.¹⁸

Dormon worked for W.R. Hine as an Extension Forester between 1927 and 1929, and declined to work for the U.S. Forest Service under Ashe as a dendrologist.¹⁹ Instead she chose to lobby "for the preservation of native trees and shrubs already growing along

in Pineville. Benay Blend, "I Was ... the Very Heart of Wildness': Caroline Dormon, Naturalist and Preservation Activist," *Southern Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 71-72; Diane M. Moore, *Their Adventurous Will: Profiles of Memorable Louisiana Women* (Lafayette: Acadiana Press, 1984), p. 63.

¹⁶Caroline Dormon, 1 January 1939, Dormon Collection, folder 922.

¹⁷ See for example, Caroline Dormon, Chestnut, LA, to the Honorable J.B. Aswell, MC, Washington, D.C., 31 December 1926, Dormon Collection, folder 367, and Herbert Evison, Executive Secretary, The National Conference on State Parks, Washington, D.C., to Caroline Dormon, Louisiana State Parks Association, Audubon Park, New Orleans, LA, 21 January 1931, Dormon Collection, folder 369.

¹⁸Reginald Forbes to Caroline Dormon, 23 February 1923, Dormon Collection, folder 73; Donald M. Rawson, "Caroline Dormon: A Renaissance Spirit of Twentieth-Century Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 124-26; Dormon Collection, folder 1095; Dormon Collection, folder 1089; Dormon Collection, folder 1090; Ray Brandt, "Kisatchie National Forest," *Forests & People* 13, no. 1 (1963): 52; Bob Crittenden, "Miss Caroline's Dream Became Louisiana's National Forest," *Forests & People* 30, no. 3 (1980): 24-29.

¹⁹Reginald Forbes to Caroline Dormon, 23 February 1923, Dormon Collection, folder 73; Rawson, pp. 124-26; Dormon Collection, folder 1095; Dormon Collection, folder 1089; Dormon Collection, folder 1090; Brandt, p. 52; Crittenden, pp. 24-29. Note, *Forests & People* articles copy Dormon's account; see *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter* 8, no. 3 (1 July 1980).

state highways.”²⁰ In the 1930s, she was employed by the state of Louisiana as a “beautification consultant” which was a role akin to that of a landscape gardener or designer. Beginning in 1936, Dormon served on the De Soto Commission which was to trace the Spanish explorer’s route through the southern United States with special emphasis to the Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi pathway.²¹ Both of these appointments for the state of Louisiana took her away from Briarwood and her studies there. Nevertheless, Dormon’s first book *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* was published in 1934. Up until this time, her focus was on the state of Louisiana.²²

During the 1940s and 1950s, Caroline Dormon retired as much as possible from public life and devoted herself to the study of native plants.²³ This was the time when Briarwood was at its peak of scientific activity. Dormon collected specimens of *Solidago* that were growing at Briarwood for Edison’s experiments seeking alternative sources of rubber as early as 1930. In later years, however, her own scientific leanings were defined

²⁰Delores Blalock, “Miss Carrie’s Dream,” *Louisiana Life* (September/October 1985): 46; Elona Boggs, “The Legacy of Caroline Dormon,” *Forests & People* 52, no. 1 (2002): 5,7; Emma L. Stringfellow, “Caroline Dormon and her Accomplishments,” Report 1961; Hope Norman, “At Her Home In Briarwood,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (21 September 1980): D1, D3; Rawson, pp. 123-27.

²¹The De Soto Commission was in existence between 1936 and 1939, however, Dormon resigned earlier due to conflicts over expenses and other logistical matters. Established by Congress at the urging of the Colonial Dames, the commission was to study and travel the route taken by Hernando De Soto through the South some four hundred years earlier. The commission was chaired by John R. Swanton of the Smithsonian, and consisted of representatives from Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana. Dormon was Louisiana’s candidate and the only female. She was selected because of her interests in, and involvement in, archaeological efforts in the state and because of her enthusiasm for Native American culture, namely in the surviving artifacts and myths of the people. Unfortunately, the commission was politically charged; its members had differing agendas and localities vied for recognition as part of the route. Their findings remain controversial and were largely refuted in later twentieth-century examinations. Rawson, pp. 132-136; Rawson, in turn, cites Dormon Collection, folders 1371-73, 1377 -78, 1381, 1418, 1427.

²²Northwestern State University, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Vertical File (var. articles, transcripts re: Caroline Dormon’s life and work); Dormon Collection, folder 1090; Dormon Collection, folder 1089.

²³Dormon could do so because her sister Virginia Dormon Miller returned to Briarwood to live and engaged in various entrepreneurial efforts; Dormon also lectured extensively. A lack of money, however, was a perennial problem. Family and friends assisted Dormon with projects at Briarwood when they could.

In a post-script to an undated note to H.J.L Stark, that he stamped “received” on 12 April 1955, Dormon conveys both her desire for privacy to do her work, and the unsolicited attention her success has brought to Briarwood. She wrote, “Hope you can come any day BUT Sunday --- that’s the worst day for the hordes to flock in. There is nothing to see, but they come anyway!” Caroline Dormon to Starks, n.d., Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. Stark bought several of Caroline’s paintings of iris and they traded plant material.

Regarding Dormon and the study of native plants, Cole observed that “the tradition of gentility in the plantation South had been repackaged for urban America [in the early twentieth century] and had opened the way for the native plants movements, in which Caroline Dormon reigned in her home state.” Cole continues, quoting Dormon on Briarwood as a place to “see native Louisiana trees and flowers ‘as is.’” Karen Cole, “A Message from the Pine Woods of Central Louisiana: The Garden in Northup, Chopin, and Dormon,” *Louisiana Literature* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 71.

by more botanical – classifying and hybridizing – endeavors. Examples of her work are the many Louisiana irises she nurtured, created, and publicized in these decades.²⁴

Dormon's hybridizing of Louisiana iris brought her many awards and helped to popularize the native plant. Her sister-in-law Ruth Dormon also grew Louisiana iris, and Wild Gardens sold many of the varieties developed by Ruth and Caroline. When Ruth died, Caroline Dormon was able to fill orders for iris but she preferred the practice of trading. She exchanged materials as far afield as Japan (with Tsuneshigo Rokuyo), New Zealand (Sam Rix), and England (Kew Gardens and the Royal Botanical Society).²⁵

During this period, Caroline Dormon collected plant specimens in neighboring states and brought them back to grow at Briarwood. She corresponded with and hosted botanists such as R.S. Cocks (Tulane), W.W. Ashe, J.K. Small, Clair Brown (LSU), Edgar Wherry (University of Pennsylvania), Edgar Anderson (Missouri Botanical Garden), Ira B. Nelson (Lafayette), and S.L. Solymosy.²⁶ She was able to expand the documented range of a number of species and helped to identify other entirely new species. Dormon also wrote, after more than two decades of study, the book *Flowers Native to the Deep South*; it was published in 1958, reflecting her growing knowledge and reputation.²⁷

Caroline Dormon's books *Natives Preferred* (1965) and *Bird Talk* (1969) are representative of her last decade. With age and poor health, she was no longer able to exert herself as she had before, and with the death of Virginia Dormon Miller in 1953, she was more alone at Briarwood. Dormon was never lonely, though, as her birds entertained her, even from her bedroom window. She corresponded with friends like Elizabeth Lawrence, Mrs. Oscar Shanks, Mem Leatherman, and Cammie Henry, women gardeners that shared her passions; her neighbor May Nichols, niece Carolyn, and faithful servant Nora all looked after her while she wrote, painted and planned. *Bird Talk* responds to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, while *Natives Preferred* is an intimate portrait of her gardening career, with Briarwood at the center. In these last years, Caroline Dormon determined that the best future for Briarwood was in the hands of a special foundation. From her own description of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, Dormon was most proud of the *Pinckneya pubens* (Fevertree), *Torreya taxifolia* (Florida Yew), *Magnolia macrophylla* (Large-leafed Cucumber Tree), *Stewartia malocodendron* (Silky

²⁴ See for example her correspondence with Frank E. Chowning about the iris in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Caroline Dormon to Frank E. Chowning, var. dates, Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve.

²⁵ Dormon Collection, folder 1125.

²⁶ Caroline Dormon, "Botanical Ramblings," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 728. See also, Caroline Dormon, 28 March 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977, Dormon Collection, folder 262, wherein she notes "up drove a car filled with men and all sorts of weird looking paraphernalia. It was Percy Viosca and Dr. Penfound."

²⁷ For this book, Dormon was honored by the Council of Garden Clubs (1959); her work for this publication also garnered her a citation from the American Horticultural Society (1961). Rawson, p. 130-31; Rawson, in turn, cites Dormon Collection, folder 1090.

Camellia), *Quercus meuhlenbergia* (yellow chestnut oak), *Quercus macrocarpa* (Bur Oak), her large mountain laurels and almost complete collection of native azaleas, especially *A. prunifolium* (Plum-leaved Azalea) and *A. austrinum* (Florida Flame Azalea), *Leucothoe catesbaei* (Drooping Leucottia), *Zenobia pulverulenta*, *Silene subciliata* (catchfly), *Zephyranthes atamasco* (Zephyr Lily), wild "spider lilies", phlox and verbena.²⁸

By the 1960s, Briarwood was known as a tract of land "[...] consisting of 120 acres of almost-virgin-forest, with magnificent trees towering a hundred feet tall. There are more than a hundred species of trees, with as many of shrubs. Most of these are native to this tract, but others have been brought in from other parts of the South. For fifty years Caroline Dormon has been collecting rare and unusual species and growing them there."²⁹ Like other gardeners, however, she used DDT to protect her plants from insects; concurrently, Dormon observed the lack of birds passing above Briarwood on their seasonal migratory routes. It was only then that she echoed Rachel Carson's 1962 warning of *Silent Spring*.³⁰ In a similar vein, Caroline Dormon rejoiced when her friends bought her an air conditioner, ignorant of the chemicals it used. Likewise, Dormon's introductions of foreign plants seem incongruent with her writings encouraging the planting of native specimens but in the early conservation movement, sentiment raced ahead of science.³¹

Caroline Dormon's conservation work was both facilitated and made all the more important as the automobile appeared with greater frequency along the roadways of northern Louisiana; Dormon herself traveled throughout the Kisatchie pine lands by foot, on horseback, by wagon, and finally by car.³² Caroline Dormon admittedly disliked driving and having to leave Briarwood but she owned a car from early on, considering it a necessary evil. She drove the few miles to Saline to accomplish the more routine tasks of daily life, such as collecting mail and buying groceries, but Dormon often needed the car for traveling great distances to speak to groups. The car also enabled her to reach remote locations to collect rare plants that she then replanted at Briarwood.

²⁸ The Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, ca. 1971; Dormon Collection, folder 1109.

²⁹ Dormon Collection, folder 1109.

³⁰ Examples of articles by Dormon relating to the subject of pesticides are "Still the Slaughter Goes On," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 865; "The Last Wood Thrush," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 791; and "D.D.T. Must Be Banned," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 749. See also, Caroline Dormon to Starks, 30 June 1961, Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, wherein she notes she is starting to poison to keep the "jungle" from "closing in on [her]." See also, Benay Blend, "Caroline Dormon: A Louisiana Writer and Her Environmental Ethic," *Louisiana Literature* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 61; Cole, p. 72; Caroline Dormon, "We Are Doing IT Again!", Dormon Collection, folder 879.

³¹ Examples of correspondence relating to Dormon's imports of plant material can be found in Dormon Collection, folder 1125.

³² Julia Larke, "Caroline Dormon and the Story of Kisatchie," *Louisiana Conservationist* (March/April 1997): 12; David Snell, "The Green World of Carrie Dormon," *Smithsonian* (February): 32.

The emergence of the automobile and its rapid rise to dominance resulted in changes in the conception of American space, enabling individuals such as Dormon to travel further in less time. This allowed the increasingly urban population to experience almost a kind of time-travel by driving to places that resembled America before the settlement by Europeans. It has been argued that the automobile, therefore, spurred the American conservation movement as the touring motorists began to worry about losing America's wild past.³³

Certainly throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth, the growth of historic preservation and environmental concerns was a response to nostalgia, memory, and an urge to protect, see, and collect Americana. Women in particular became strongly identified with historic preservation, as "patrons of the past," in the wake of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association's (1856) involvement with saving George Washington's home from obscurity and ruin, and as sponsors of American culture through collections amassed by Isabella Stewart Gardner and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Progressive-era reformers, both male and female, bound by ideas of social change and guided by an awareness of history, also endorsed environmentalists such as the popular John Muir, plus Aldo Leopold and J. Horace McFarland, adding battlefields to the fledgling state and national park systems (1890s) as well as offering protection to the pueblo ruins in the southwest (1906) and establishing Glacier National Park (1910). Muir and his followers tried to honor the American past and the future generations of Americans by preserving the nation's natural heritage. Muir tapped into a pastoral ideal that appealed to urban Americans; the travel industry capitalized on that segment's available leisure and transportation. The parks, museums, and historic shrines gave them a place to visit – and the railroad and automobile got them there.³⁴

Increasingly mobile, it was the educated, middle and upper class white women who gathered at literary club meetings; championed social causes such as suffrage and public health; promoted preservation and conservation concerns; and pursued leisure activities like gardening, birdwatching, and botanizing. The latter became Dormon's passion. These women, her predecessors, were versed in romanticism, transcendentalism, ecology, and natural history. Ladies of the era did not explore the wilderness as Thoreau and Muir did, nor were they expected to do so. Rather, they put their energies into organizations like the Federation of Women's Clubs through which they could promote educational reforms, social welfare, civic affairs, fine arts, and gardening or conservation to an ever growing audience. In the 1920s, for example, Cora Whitley, chairman of the Forestry Committee for the Iowa Women's Club, testified in Washington, D.C.; Whitley lobbied for the establishment of a wildlife refuge and promoted "good manners" in the

³³Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launches the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

³⁴Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1991; paperback ed., New York: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 259-71; 610-11.

out-of-doors. William B. Greeley, then the Chief Forester of the United States Forest Service, echoed Whitley by advocating fire prevention, expanded forest reserves, research and forestry education service-wide.³⁵

Female fascination with the rural aspects of country life, for open space and parks as countermeasures to urban squalor, and with the American past - including an Audubon inspired landscape with its incipient wildlife - was matched by the male sportsmen who wanted places to hunt, hike, and be outdoors. Both approaches fed into the reformist politics at the turn of the twentieth century that endorsed preservation and conservation and began to address an urban-based use of the land. A similar shift occurred in the perceptions of the forests' meaning; no longer merely commodities to be exploited, the forest lands came to be understood as an environment, a setting for work and play. Forests - like Dormon's Longleaf Pine tract - were interpreted by these men and women as integral to modern social well-being and through their continued existence, quality of life would increase.³⁶ At least that is what the forestry advocates said, beginning with George Grinnell's Audubon Society (1886), with the publication of George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature* (1894), with studies and reports by John Wesley Powell and Franklin Hough, with the passage of the Forest Reserve Act (1891), and with the establishment of the Society of American Foresters (1900). This generation was rewarded early in the twentieth century for conservation was institutionalized during Theodore Roosevelt's administration. Roosevelt himself was a member of the Boone and Crockett Club and an advocate of a national forest reserve system, hosting a Governors Conference on Conservation in 1908 which was also attended by a Women's Club representative, Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker of Denver.³⁷

By the time of the 1908 conference, more than a generation of women belonged to clubs, including the Federation as well as other organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, and were active in the conservation movement. Led by urbanites, like Mrs. Lovell White in California, Mrs. Mabel Osgood Winglet of Connecticut, Mrs. Philip N. Moore in St. Louis, and by author Lydia Adams-Williams, the ladies sought to build bicycle paths and parks, beautify highways, establish land grant colleges, and create extension programs within the Department of Agriculture. They pursued these goals throughout the Roosevelt administration and into the 1920s. The grass-roots movement some six to seven thousand strong is credited with saving New

³⁵Doreta E. Taylor, *Race, Class, Gender and American Environmentalism* (Portland: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Portland Northwest Research Station, 2002), pp. 14-15; Rebecca Conard, *Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism*, American Land and Life Series (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), pp. 71-118; Carolyn Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement, 1900-1916," *Environmental Review* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 58-59.

³⁶Samuel Hays, *Explorations in Environmental History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), p. 79, 172-73; Taylor, pp. 14-15.

³⁷Robert J. Brulle, *Agency, Democracy and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 133-72; Merchant, pp. 57-75.

Jersey's Hudson River palisades, the Colorado pueblos, California's Big Trees, and Chippewa Forest (Minnesota), among other natural sites. Each state was headed by a woman familiar with forestry principles, and the forestry committee numbered close to 800,000 in all. The forestry committee was active throughout the United States, and in 1910 the Women's Club added birdlife to its forestry and waterways agenda.³⁸

Caroline Dormon and her work at Briarwood and for Louisiana coincided with this budding concern for America's past. Conservation and preservation issues dovetailed with evolving perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior, and with growing opportunities for women as activists, authors, and employees in the early twentieth century. And yet, land conservation and forestry in Louisiana were tied to two men, Gifford Pinchot and Henry Hardtner. Pinchot, a Yale graduate and European-trained forester, headed the Department of Agriculture under Theodore Roosevelt and invigorated the U.S. Forest Service. Hardtner, a mill owner, began buying cut-over land for reforestation and his reforestation efforts drew the attention of government officials, such as W.W. Ashe, by 1909 and scientists such as those enrolled in Yale's program by 1910. It was not until 1921, however, that Louisiana opened its Southern Forest Experiment Station.³⁹ By this time, forestry and conservation had become technical or scientific professions and so removed from the sentiment associated with the Women's Clubs efforts. Women in conservation suffered a set-back in the 1910s, with the loss of the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite to a dam project largely due to Pinchot's support for it. The defeat signified a withdrawal of government backing for the Women's Clubs as their voices were ignored; by 1913, no female was present at the National Conservation Conference and articles in the American Forestry Association journal *Forests and Irrigation* were penned solely by men. The female role in the public campaign for conservation diminished, but women still supported the cause. It was in this environment that Caroline Dormon came of age.⁴⁰

Like their counterparts elsewhere in the United States, women in Louisiana were not immune to Progressive-era reforms. They began to channel the duties expected of them as protectors and nurturers of the proverbial hearth – shackles of Victorian ideals of womanhood perhaps – into public, and professional endeavors, turning gardening into landscape architecture and women's clubs into a demographic capable of garnering support for legislative and environmental issues. It was the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs that first gave Dormon a platform to promote her ideas about protecting a swath of pinelands and about using native flora in landscaping. In response to Women's

³⁸Brulle, pp. 133-72; Merchant, pp. 57-75.

³⁹Anna C. Burns, *A History of Kisatchie National Forest*, ed. Ronald W. Couch (Pineville, LA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Region, Kisatchie National Forest, 1994), p. 8.

⁴⁰Merchant, pp. 76-80. See also, Melanie Simo, *Forest and Garden: Traces of Wildness in a Modernizing Land, 1897-1949* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

Club support, the state Department of Conservation offered Dormon her job there.⁴¹ Interest in the natural was acceptable for turn of the century women moreover, and thought to assist with developing moral character; Dormon's parents encouraged her pursuits - her father helping her to learn botanical nomenclature and her mother showing her how to garden. Efforts to learn, preserve, and teach the next generation about their natural heritage was in keeping with female culture at the time, a responsibility even, and Dormon as lobbyist and educator embodies this movement. Similarly, what she created at Briarwood is a manifestation of the garden clubs' focus on native species, and because of that parallel, the clubs offered Dormon a large audience for her lectures, writings, and paintings. Ultimately, in 1961, Briarwood was recognized as a sanctuary for trees and wildflowers by the American Horticultural Society, and around the same time (1960s) Dormon herself received the Garden Club of America's Eloise Payne Luquer Medal.⁴²

Caroline Dormon encouraged the establishment of the Kisatchie National Forest because she wanted to preserve a tract of virgin timberland and the beauty of the Longleaf Pine. Although her advocacy for the forest was pivotal, her activities stayed within the parameters set by the traditional role of women as keepers of culture and beauty. And while she was one of the first women employed in forestry in the state, if not the country, her duties were limited to working with women and children and continuing in educational pursuits. When she worked for the State of Louisiana, her job title was "Highway Beautification Consultant" rather than landscape designer or architect; moreover, her ideas about planting wildflowers along Louisiana's highways in order to make an impression upon visitors can be interpreted as that of playing hostess for the state.⁴³ She, interestingly, chose this seemingly female, peripheral position over one in the male-dominated Forest Service but likely did so as a result of her shift in focus from Kisatchie to Briarwood and horticultural pursuits. Dormon became the authority on native flora in her lifetime.⁴⁴

Although at once a part of, and dependent on, the female-led preservation and conservation movement Dormon identified herself with her male predecessors such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir.⁴⁵ She also emphasized the relationship with her father that gave rise to her enthusiasm for and knowledge of the natural world, or rather the scientific masculine approach as opposed to the emotional response to nature

⁴¹Blend, "I Was ... the Very Heart of Wildness': Caroline Dormon, Naturalist and Preservation Activist," pp. 69-72; Blend cites, M.L. Alexander to Mrs. A.F. Storm, 26 November 1921.

⁴²Blend, "I Was ... the Very Heart of Wildness': Caroline Dormon, Naturalist and Preservation Activist," pp. 69-73; Moore, pp. 57-70; Dormon Collection, Index notes. Dormon also received a citation from the Louisiana Federation of Garden Clubs in 1957; this was in recognition of her work in forestry.

⁴³For an interpretation of Caroline Dormon's adaptation of male/female roles in her conservation efforts, see Blend, "Caroline Dormon: A Louisiana Writer and Her Environmental Ethic," pp. 55-63.

⁴⁴Moore, pp. 57-63.

⁴⁵Blend, "I Was ... the Very Heart of Wildness': Caroline Dormon, Naturalist and Preservation Activist," pp. 69-73; Blend, "Caroline Dormon: A Louisiana Writer and her Environmental Ethic," pp. 55-63.

associated with women of her generation. This dichotomy persisted throughout Dormon's lifetime, and is representative of the dueling roles of gender within the concurrent preservation movement. The sentimental, memorializing campaign of Cynthia Coleman and Mary Galt initiated full-scale preservation through the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1889; whereas the male-dominated Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (1910) interpreted preservation and conservation differently, preferring reconstruction over relics of historic sites. SPNEA was initially viewed as the more professional of the two organizations.⁴⁶ Equally-identity driven as the cornerstones of the historic preservation movement was Dormon, who fostered her reputation as somewhat of a recluse living in the woods. That Dormon was conscious of her image and the laudable quality of her accomplishments is evident in her participation in the effort to gain recognition from Louisiana State University by way of an award or honorary doctorate, an event she afterwards described as her "coronation." In this context, Dormon wrote of her life's work:

I am a pioneer in the efforts to save flora and fauna of Louisiana. It was I who initiated the movement for the Kisatchie National Forest; long before state parks had ever been mentioned. I took pictures all over Louisiana, had slides made, and gave lectures urging state parks. For twenty years I plead for a state arboretum. I was the first woman in the United States to be elected Associate Member of the Society of American Foresters. [...] For many years botanists and horticulturalists from all over the country have visited Briarwood (my home) because I have gathered here native trees and flowers from all over the earth.⁴⁷

Dormon, and her advocates, were rewarded in 1965 when she received an honorary degree in science from LSU for her contributions to botany and horticulture. Her work also earned her acceptance into the American Society of Foresters and into the Royal Horticultural Society. These she valued more so than the citations from the garden clubs whose support of her interests she dismissed at times and whose visits she merely endured because of the likelihood some plants might accidentally be trampled and others

⁴⁶James M. Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion: Historic Preservation and Virginia Traditionalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993); James M. Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). By the end of the twentieth century, however, the professionalism of the APVA was recognized and the organization held in the same esteem as its counterpart in New England.

⁴⁷Caroline Dormon to Frank Chowning, 18 January 1965 & Sunday, n.y., Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve; quotation cited in Moore, pp. 66-67. The folders relating to correspondence with W.W. Ashe, or at least those indexed against his name, may elucidate Dormon's nomination to the American Society of Foresters. See Dormon Collection, folders 144-48, 241.

deliberately picked.⁴⁸ In fairness, it is likely that Dormon distanced herself from her own perceptions of the garden club ladies in their “high heels and silk stockings” because she wished to be thought of, and so too have her legacy regarded, as those she admired – Thoreau and Muir – were; she spoke not boastfully but earnestly of what she had done, admitting only to being carried away by the support letters for her membership in the American Society of Foresters.⁴⁹

2. The Land of Briarwood and Kisatchie

The essence of Briarwood has always been something to see and experience, and is far more elusive than the extensive listing of plant material found growing within its boundaries. Patterns of garden life were contingent upon the rain, and fears of drought persisted throughout Dormon’s life there, concerns that continue to the present day.⁵⁰ Cognizant of Dormon’s never ending efforts to blend the science of cultivation with nature, shortly after her death the goals of those administering Briarwood were summarized as an effort to “maintain [her] fifty-year old collection of southern native plants in their woodland setting and to bring to Briarwood those who cherish the beauty and tranquility of the deep undisturbed forest.”⁵¹ Records of the landscape, a natural but not a virgin forest, exist in Dormon’s writings about her beloved birds and in her campaign for state parks and for national forest land in the Kisatchie area. Dormon once wrote, “fortunately for me, I live in a forest [...]” but she was conscious of – and amused or exasperated by – her neighbors’ whispered opinions of her unorthodox lifestyle.⁵² Undeterred, Dormon valued her privacy in her “somewhat hidden” retreat and, while she

⁴⁸Blend, “‘I Was ... the Very Heart of Wildness’: Caroline Dormon, Naturalist and Preservation Activist,” p. 72. “Patter” was Blend’s word for Dormon’s opinion of club ladies’ support, possibly drawn from Dormon’s written commentary. Dormon often wrote admonishing her readers not to pick the wildflowers and could be quite entertaining in describing her worries about tying down Briarwood’s plant materials before an onslaught of guests.

Perhaps Dormon’s viewpoints were less of a reflection of the individual women participating in the clubs, than the legacy of the Victorian-era notion of separate spheres for men’s and women’s activities, interests, and vocations. Dormon grew up in a world governed by this social ideology and so in preferring what had become a male profession (forestry) and practicing horticulture rather than flower arranging, Dormon aligned herself with her male predecessors and contemporaries and sought to distance herself from the female sphere characterized by a notion of true womanhood as well as the home and children. Perhaps this is why she exhibited less patience with a broad category of women, who as a body politic, had been quite supportive of her work.

⁴⁹Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle [response to 8 February 1935], Dormon Collection, folder 1089. Regarding the garden club ladies, Dormon wrote rather disparagingly of the Shreveport Iris Society women “mincing along in their high heels and silk stockings, trying to climb over the brush” in response to the proposed en masse visit to Briarwood in 1944. Caroline Dormon to Ike Nelson, 20 April 1944, University of Louisiana - Lafayette.

⁵⁰Caroline Dormon *Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1 July 2001); Caroline Dormon, “Drought,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B.

⁵¹Vertical File (“Nature Preserve Is Open,” *Natchitoches Times* 3 April 1975, 8A).

⁵²Dormon Collection, folder 794; Caroline Dormon, “Homo Sapiens,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B; Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle [response to 8 February 1935], Dormon Collection, folder 1089. Here Dormon writes that her neighbors were only beginning to understand her way of life or accept it as it was for she was “a woman that spends all her time foolin’ with bushes and weeds ...At last they have just given me up as hopeless. [...]”

could not keep visitors away, she fenced out the neighborhood livestock, resorting to legal action for rights to lock out the grazing cattle and pigs.⁵³ Of the offending animals, Dormon observed

The "little old pigs" had thoroughly ploughed the lovely woods in front of the house, where for years I had been seeding-in wild flowers. [...] price one pays for creating a sanctuary in the sand hills. We have always owned this land, but for many years it lay "open," and cattle and hogs roamed at will. The cattle grazed on the herbage, the hogs feasted [...] So when we fenced it, about twenty years ago, one of neighbors told someone we had "just ruined their hog pasture"! This was more than they could bear, so they left gates open on all occasions. I used every argument and persuasion, but only recently hit on the idea of planting in the minds of the men that the trees and wild flowers constitute [sic] my crop. This is sinking home.⁵⁴

Dormon, however, welcomed other animals to Briarwood, particularly the birds that she called the joys of her life.⁵⁵ She associated birds and Briarwood, describing one through the sounds of the other:

Dusk at Briarwood is steeped in peace. Come varied goodnights from the day-time birds, then the sharp, quick voice of the whip-poor-will. Presently the moon rises, and over by the railroad the mockingbird in his wild plum tree begins to really sing. Later still, a great-horned owl gives the closing notes in the solemn bass, like the trump of doom, and it is night.⁵⁶

Briarwood, Dormon noted, was part of the old homestead her grandfather bought when the family moved to Louisiana in 1859.⁵⁷ One of its early features was a honeysuckle arbor; Dormon commented that it only recently had begun to spread, a lovely smelling nuisance; otherwise her written recollections focus on the pine trees she encountered when combing through the forests with her siblings and walking with her

⁵³ Northwestern State University, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, R.B. Williams Collection, folder 8; "Homo Sapiens," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B; Caroline Dormon, 24 January 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

⁵⁴ Caroline Dormon, "Adventures of a Naturalist at Home," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 708.

⁵⁵ Caroline Dormon, "Birds My Delight," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B.

⁵⁶ Caroline Dormon, "Bird-Song," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 720.

⁵⁷ The family re-located from South Carolina; it is not known what the "old Homestead" - as Dormon dubbed it - entailed as neither buildings nor other improvements are mentioned or platted. Richard Johnson, however, noted generally where the house was located, to the northeast on a hill where the four Native American/pre-Sweat era paths met. See Johnson's sketch map.

father.⁵⁸ For example, Dormon once proclaimed that “with the forest gone, the place would be valueless to [her].” Of the Longleaf Pine trees, one was treasured above the others. Dormon wrote of it, “By the pond there is a huge Longleaf Pine (*pine palustris*) which I call “Grandpappy”. The gnarled branches at the top bespeak its age, [...].”⁵⁹ Dormon was photographed sitting at the foot of this towering pine, an image that captured Dormon’s passion for her homeland and its natural gifts. Her emotional response to the landscape was also revealed in her reaction to the damage caused by the ice storm of 1944. Dormon described the “devastation” as “unbelievable”; she “sobbed our woods will never be as beautiful again!” Regaining her composure, Dormon recalled that the woods were not as lovely, “for the stripped trees let in much light that undergrowth sprang up, changing the charming open vistas to tangled masses of shrubs and vines. [...] But trees grow amazingly, and eventually the gaps in the forest were closed. [...] my] chief sorrow was that [the] woods had lost the look of a primeval forest.”⁶⁰

The vanishing primeval forests alarmed Dormon as she watched the hill farms disappear and the logging companies or pulpwood industry take over the area. Land use changed from agricultural to timbering for profit, the cut-and-get-out philosophy that threatened to leave Louisiana denuded of her forestland.⁶¹ By 1919, Dormon was persuaded to serve in the unsalaried position as State Chairman of Conservation, for the Louisiana Federation of Women’s Clubs, traveling and exploring Louisiana’s forests. In 1921, the Department of Conservation offered to pay her to continue her efforts, and in 1927, the State Forester W.R. Hine hired her to write what became the seminal bulletin, *Forest Trees in Louisiana and How to Know Them*.⁶² Of Dormon’s writing, Herbert Evison of the National Conference on State Parks told her that her promotion the Louisiana landscape was “a revelation to me of the loveliness and the variety of Louisiana’s native landscape and strengthens the hope I have long held that some of the noblest of it may be preserved.”⁶³ Dormon’s efforts to preserve Louisiana’s forests were two-fold; she hoped for both a national forest and a state park. While Evison’s support was encouraging, it was through her appeal to another Washingtonian, Congressman

⁵⁸ Caroline Dormon, “Beautiful Nuisances,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B; Dormon Collection, folder 1089; Dormon Collection, folder 1090.

⁵⁹ Caroline Dormon, “Acts of Providence,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B.

⁶⁰ Caroline Dormon, “Nature Can Be a Cruel Stepmother,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B; Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Oscar Shanks, December 1943/January 1944, Dormon Collection, folder 922. Dormon wrote to her friend that “Briarwood is a shambles. [...] Tall pine saplings, up to 8 inches in diameter, snapped off like stick candy; great trees stripped of every branch; beautiful beeches uprooted.”

⁶¹ Caroline Dormon, “Farewell Hill Farms,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 754.

⁶² Caroline Dormon, appendix to “Planting State Charity Hospital Grounds,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 1179.

⁶³ Herbert Evison, Executive Secretary, National Conference on State Parks, Washington, D.C., to Caroline Dormon, Louisiana State Parks Association, New Orleans, 21 January 1931, Dormon Collection, folder 369.

Aswell, that she provided a picture of the forested area to which she was most drawn, the region Native Americans called the *Kisatchie Wold*.⁶⁴

Caroline Dormon "discovered" Kisatchie as a young schoolteacher. Summering at Briarwood, Dormon knew of the area but was unaware of the extent of its "scenic features," namely its "magnificent" covering of Longleaf Pine trees. The *Kisatchie Wold* began near the Cane River and ran westward to the eastern regions of Texas. Dormon wrote that it was

[a] range of great sand hills, with occasional rugged out-croppings of grey sandstone. The creeks – and the streams are many – are swift, clear and beautiful, tumbling over rocks in cascades and small falls, and forming long banks of snow-white sand. Along the streams there is a very fine and varied growth of hardwoods (which have not yet been cut for lumber). There are great springs gushing out of the rocks, some with mineral properties.

Dormon told Aswell that she was "at once [...] impressed with the idea that here was the ideal location for a national forest, and also for a state park, the latter to preserve some of the unusual beauty spots." The sparsely populated countryside, Dormon insisted, would lend itself to hosting a national forest, as the "land will grow pine trees" but little else remained in cultivation.⁶⁵

Dormon originally hoped to preserve the virgin timber land at Odom Falls, but that was lost to lumbering. Echoing Henry Hardtner, and aware of his reforestation practices through his lumber company Urania, Dormon turned her sights to the nearby cut-over land of Kistachie that had been ravaged by the timber industry and promoted the potential of second-growth pine forests. If protected, the seedlings produced by the stumps left behind by the loggers would grow and in doing so rejuvenate the tracts of forest that once characterized the Louisiana landscape.⁶⁶

It was in 1922 at the Southern Forestry Conference in Jackson, Mississippi, that Dormon learned from William B. Greeley that there could be no demonstration forest lands or federally-protected forests in Louisiana because there was no enabling act permitting purchase by the government. Following Florida's statute, Dormon had a

⁶⁴Patricia Teel Bates, "A Tribute to Caroline Dormon," p. viii, in Caroline Dormon, *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* (1942; reprint, Baton Rouge: Claitor's Publishing Division, 199). Bates relays Dormon's explanation of the term *Kisatchie Wold*; it was a name cartographers had used for the heavy forested areas of the region, a name derived from the Kichai Indian tribe, part of the Caddoan Confederacy, who called themselves Kisatchies.

⁶⁵Caroline Dormon, Chestnut, LA to the Hon J.B. Aswell, MC, Washington, D.C., 31 December 1926, Dormon Collection, folder 367.

⁶⁶Burns, v, 5-15; Marcia M. Bonta, *Women in the Field: America's Pioneering Women Naturalists* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), pp. 250-61.

Louisiana bill drafted to allow government acquisition in the state. In 1924, after testimony by Greeley and Hardtner, the Clark-McNary Act passed Congress effectively extending the 1911 statute regarding the purchase of forest land, but not authorizing funds to do so. After four years, three purchase units were approved in Kisatchie, Catahoula, and Vernon, and the fourth in 1930. In June of that year, the Department of Agriculture formally designated the units of cut-over land spreading through Natchitoches, Vernon, Grant, and Rapides parishes as Kisatchie National Forest.⁶⁷ Beginning with 75,589 acres in 1930 Kisatchie now spreads over seven parishes, accounting for 604,000 acres of public lands through which run some 335 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Other features include camping areas, and four lakes for recreation; there is also an 8700-acre wilderness. It was Dormon who selected the name of the forest, Kisatchie, and her choice was promoted by W.W. Ashe of the forest service to the appropriate officials in Washington. In recognition of her interests, perhaps, there is a "Caroline Dormon" trail running through Kisatchie National Forest, which can be hiked today.⁶⁸

Conversely, in promoting her idea for a state park, Dormon noted that area was accessible by the two graveled highways intersecting at Kisatchie School.⁶⁹ She soon returned to the natural attributes of Kisatchie to make her case, however. Lobbying for the preservation of forests of her beloved Longleaf Pine trees, Dormon reiterated her belief that

Kisatchie [...] is an ideal location for a state park and wildlife refuge. It is one of the few places in Louisiana where a large area in its natural state may yet be found. It is centrally located, and can boast the combined advantages of fine water and lovely streams. Typical tracts of timber, both pine and hardwood, could be set aside and preserved for their educational value, as well as for their beauty. Most urgent of these is the case of the Longleaf pine; for these straight, clean trunks make most wonderful timbers; and --- if we hope to save a bit of this virgin forest, it must be TODAY, for tomorrow will be too late; [...] We are custodians of

⁶⁷The cut-over land from these parishes was contained in the four purchase units, three authorized and acquired in 1928 in the Kisatchie, Catahoula, and Vernon districts and the fourth unit in 1930 in Evangeline. Brandt, p. 52; Crittenden, pp. 24-29; Burns, p. 9.

⁶⁸Larke, "Caroline Dormon and the Story of Kisatchie," pp. 11-13. Richard Johnson encouraged the nature preserve membership to read this article and to share it with others. *Caroline Dormon Nature Newsletter*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1 April 1997). An endorsement to be proud of, as Johnson is extremely knowledgeable and talked about Kisatchie in an earlier *Newsletter*. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1 July 1980). See also, Blalock, p. 46; Rawson, p. 126; Kisatchie National Forest website, accessed February 2003. The Caroline Dormon trail was built in stages during the mid to late 1980s and complete by 1992. Brian Cockrell, Archaeologist, NSU Cultural Resources Office, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, March 2004.

⁶⁹Caroline Dormon, Chestnut, LA to the Hon J.B. Aswell, MC, Washington, D.C., 31 December 1926, Dormon Collection, folder 367.

this heritage. In what shape are we going to pass it on to the next generation?⁷⁰

In the same article, Dormon described the beauty of Kisatchie, but the same could be said of the Briarwood landscape. In her words, the land of Kisatchie (and so Briarwood though she was not writing about her home) has

hills [...] of sand, but from them spring splendid forests of Longleaf pine, a rapidly disappearing type, and one that is uniquely beautiful. Its large, terminal, clusters of lustrous, glistening straws set this species apart from all other pines. The open cleanness of a virgin forest of Longleaf is seldom found in second growth.

In the spring, every cleft in the hills is literally filled with fluffy, pink azalea, while a little higher up, the snowy dogwoods gleam out: for background, the brown trunks of the pines and the soft grey of lichen-covered rocks. As if this were not enough, from the shadows between the rocks, big blue violets lift their faces to the sky.⁷¹

Dormon later bemoaned the attention her compelling words brought to Briarwood, admonishing a friend to not “[...] tell exactly where it is! I don’t want anybody but my personal friends to know [sic] how to get here! All you need to say is that it is in the sandhills of Natchitoches Parish.”⁷² Briarwood for Dormon was a place where friends and horticulturalists were welcome but it also was her home or personal refuge where she could relish nature, garden, birdwatch, paint and write - all quiet endeavors. As she got older, Dormon increasingly disliked the distractions that took her away from writing and painting, but these distractions or public attention were the fruits of her earlier successes and the audience for her on-going projects. The curators of the nature preserve today harbor quite opposite feelings, encouraging the membership, general public, and school children to visit Briarwood and to learn about Caroline Dormon and her life’s work there. Richard L. Johnson maintains that “Briarwood is more than a place, it is a way of life and we would hope that you feel a part of it.”⁷³

As her successor, with his wife Jessie, Richard Johnson is as much a part of Briarwood as Caroline Dormon was. He observed the Briarwood of his youth as abundant in flowers, trees, wildlife, and fruit. There were Chickasaw plums, wild grapes,

⁷⁰ Caroline Dormon, “Our Native Landscape,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 830.

⁷¹ Caroline Dormon, “Our Native Landscape,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 830.

⁷² Caroline Dormon to Mary Belle [response to 8 February 1935], Dormon Collection, folder 1089. Regarding privacy concerns, see Caroline Dormon to [Martha B.] Chowning, 9 May 1956, Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve.

⁷³ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1 April 2003).

cultivated peaches, pears, melons, and the "best" of all, the Briarwood plum. The latter grew on four trees found on the bank of the Old Sparta Road.⁷⁴ Within the preserve, nature's rhythms mark the passage of time. Johnson commented in 1984 that Briarwood's year moves to bloom-times and migration paths of the plants and birds that coexist within the preserve; instead of calendar months, Briarwood accounts for temporal change through azaleas, mountain laurels, and mulberries and with special days set aside for the "stop over of the Whip-poorwill and the leaving of the last Whitethroat Sparrow for the nesting grounds farther north."⁷⁵

Johnson also commented on Briarwood's boundaries - the national forest and salt trails - at various times, clarifying Briarwood's relationship to each for the un-initiated through the *Newsletters*. To the northwest of the preserve is Kisatchie National Forest, and today timber is sold from the forest Dormon campaigned to save. The timber profits are returned to the parishes in which the forest is located; Natchitoches Parish, for example, received funds from the timber and used the money for the school boards and police jury.⁷⁶ The western boundary of the nature preserve is marked by a "ditch-like depression in the wooded hillside." This is the old salt trail of the Native Americans; as the trail runs east, it widens to accompany wheeled vehicles and over time when the ruts became too deep, the trail was shifted slightly and began anew on a parallel course. This happened four times and at the confluence of the pathways, Dormon's grandparents built their house.⁷⁷ Of the water features inside Briarwood, there are two ponds. Wings Rest Pond was named by Dormon because it became a haven for the wood ducks; it continues to be today. The other pond is more marsh-like and is located on the lower-portion of the preserve. It is filled with cypress and plant material such as the blueflag iris, bogtorch, sedge, and jack-in-pulpit.⁷⁸

B. Physical History of Landscape

1. Chain of title

The Natchitoches Parish Land Records associated with the Dormon family's ownership and with the nature preserve are as follows:

1861 Deed, 20 December 1859, recorded 7 June 1861 in Conveyance Book 63, folio 38-40. Joshua Prothro and James E. Prothro to B[enjamin] S. Sweat.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 31, no. 3 (1 July 2003).

⁷⁵ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 12, no. 3 (1 July 1984).

⁷⁶ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 15, no. 2 (1 April 1987).

⁷⁷ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 11, no. 1 (1 January 1983).

⁷⁸ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 15, no. 1 (1 January 1987).

⁷⁹ See also Natchitoches Parish Land Records, Renunciation, recorded 9 March 1861 in Conveyance Book 55A, folio 358-60; *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1 April 2001).

Property described herein as lands situated on the waters of the Bayou Saline in the Parish of Natchitoches containing 560 acres as specified ... No 452 containing 159 and 62/100 acres, being the east half of the northwest quarter the west half of northeast quarter of Section 10; No 6666 being the southwest quarter of southwest quarter of Section 3; No 204 being the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 10; No 453 being the south half of the west half of the southwest quarter Section 2; No 203 being the west half of the northwest quarter the west half of the southeast quarter and the east half of the southwest quarter of Section 3 all in Township 13, Range 6 West.

1872 Sale of land and Mortgage, 23 November 1871, recorded 26 January 1872 in Conveyance Book 66, folio 660. B.S. Sweat to A. G. Harper.

The property sold and mortgaged was described as the west half of the southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, Township 13, Range 6 with all improvements therein lying and being in Natchitoches Parish.

1872 Deed, 23 November 1871, recorded 20 January 1872, in Conveyance Book 68, folio 32. B.S. Sweat to A[bsolom] G. Harper.

The property sold was described as southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ and northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 6, Township 13, Range 1, containing eighty acres more or less and all the improvements and fixtures therein lying and being in the parish of Natchitoches.

1872 Deed, recorded in Conveyance Book 68, folio 43. B.S. Sweat to A.G. Harper.

The property sold was described as the west half of the southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, Township 13, Range 6 with all improvements therein lying and being in the parish of Natchitoches. Land to be paid for in two installments, one each in November of 1872 and 1873.

1875 Delinquent Tax List [for the year 1873], Parish of Natchitoches, recorded 1 October 1875 in Conveyance Book 70, folio 527. B.S. Sweat.

Deed relates to 440 acres valued at \$855 and taxed at \$12.40; the parcel was described as the southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 3 Township 13, Range 6 and east half of southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 3 and east half of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4 and east half of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 9 northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10.

1878 Deed, 10 February 1876, recorded 4 December 1878 in Conveyance Book 68, folio 397. B.S. Sweat to July Patterson.

The property sold was described as the east half of the west half of the northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10, Township 13, Range 6, containing forty acres, more or less, the line dividing it from my land to begin at the center of the line between my land and that of Thomas Harper [...] the house now occupied by Matilda Patterson the said house is reserved [...].

1879 Deed, 24 October 1872, recorded 14 April 1879 in Conveyance Book 76, folio 29. B.S. Sweat to John G. Readheimer.

The parcel sold was described as southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9, Township 13 North, Range 6 West, containing forty acres more or less.

1888 Deed, 17 January 1882, attested to 28 September 1888 and recorded 15 October 1888 in Conveyance Book 85, folio 643-44. Harriet T. Sweat to William Tobin.⁸⁰

Tobin had built a house on this parcel by the time of execution of the deed (1882).

1888 Deed, 2 December 1885, attested to 28 September 1888 and recorded 15 October 1888 in Conveyance Book 85, folio 644. William Tobin to J.A. Dormon.⁸¹

Tobin's parcel included about forty acres beginning at a point on the south line of the southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of northwest quarter Section 10 Township 13 Range 6, 7 and 58/100 chains east from the southwest corner of said quarter and running west 17 58/100 chains, thence north 22 and 75/100 chains, thence east 17 and 58/100 chains, thence south 22 and 75/100 chains to point of commencement a portion of said land being part of west half of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 9 Township 13 Range 6, all in Natchitoches Parish.

1889 Deed, 19 January 1882, recorded 18 April 1889 in Conveyance Book 87, folio 206. Harriet T. Sweat to Jefferson Bradley.

The parcel was described as beginning at a point 22.96 chains from southwest corner of southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 10 Township 13 Range 6 on south line of said northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ and running east 15 and 38/100 chains thence north 26 chains thence west 15 and 38/100 chains thence south 26 chains to point of commencement said land being part of the northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10 Township 13 Range 6 West containing forty acres more or less said land to include the house now being built by Jefferson Bradley.

1889 Deed, 29 October 1886, recorded 18 April 1889 in Conveyance Book 87, folio 207. J.J. Bradley to T.J. Pinckard.

⁸⁰ See also Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

⁸¹ See also Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

The parcel was described as beginning at a point 22 and 96/100 chains east from southwest corner of southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 10 Township 13 Range 6 on south line of said northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ and running east 15.38 chains thence north 26 chains thence west 15.38 chains thence south 26 chains to point of commencement said land being part of the northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10 Township 13 N, Range 6 West containing forty acres more or less.

1889 Deed, recorded 30 November 1889 in Conveyance Book 87, folio 652. A.E. Sweat et al to H[enry] Safford.⁸²

1893 Deed, 12 September 1893. Mrs. E.C. Pinckard & T.J. Pinckard to J[ames] A. Dormon.⁸³

The property was described as the west half of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 3, southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3 and eighteen acres off of the west side of the west half of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3 east half of the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4, eighteen acres off of the west side of west half of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 10, all that part of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10 and the east half of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 9 left after taking out the three forties sold respectively to Will Tobin, William Watson, & Jeff Bradley, the forty sold to Will Tobin being now owned by J.A. Dormon and the forties sold William Watson and Jeff Bradley being now owned by William Everett all of said land being situated in Natchitoches Parish Louisiana Township 13 Range 6 containing 470 acres more or less together with all and singular the appurtenances & improvements thereto belonging, it being the intention in this act to describe all of the land known as the B.S. Sweat place & to sell my entire interest in same, my said interest being an undivided one-seventh, as a forced heir of B.S. & H.T. Sweat deceased.

1895 Deed, 20 April 1895. E. O. Edgerton to J[ames] A. Dormon.⁸⁴

The tract of land was described as the B.S. Sweat place and encompassed about 470 acres; Edgerton's interest in the property was one-ninth of one-seventh.

1900 Deed, 30 August 1897, recorded 13 December 1900 in Conveyance Book 104, folio 316. F[annie].C. and V[irginia] S. Sweat to B.S. Edgerton.

Fannie and Virginia Sweat sell their one-seventh interest in the Natchitoches property known as the B.S. Sweat place and containing about 470 acres. The only difference in the

⁸² Annette E. Sweat (nee Safford) was the widow of Scriven Sweat. The property in question here was acquired through an act of sale recorded in the Natchitoches Parish Land Records, March 1889, Conveyance Book 87, folio 89-91.

⁸³ Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

⁸⁴ Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

property description is in who owned William Watson's and Jefferson Bradley's forty-acre plots; these two were owned by B.F. Hoyner. James A. Dormon owned William Tobin's forty acres at this time.

1900 Patent, 5 September 1890, recorded 26 February 1900 in Conveyance Book 102, folio 322-23. United States of America to James A. Dormon.⁸⁵

1902 Deed, recorded 5 June 1902 in Conveyance Book 108, folio 321. Dr. C.E. Edgerton v. Mrs. Bessie Shivers et al; Sheriff to J.A. Dormon et al.

Land and other property of Edgerton were sold at public auction on 12 February 1902. Land parcels were purchased by L.M. Edgerton, J.A. Dormon, and Rydeau Lumber Co. Dormon's first parcel was described as being in the west half of east half of the northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 9, Township 13 North, Range 6 West; the second parcel, which Dormon bought along with Miss A.T. Edgerton, Mrs. F.E. Brasen, C.E. Edgerton, Otis Edgerton, and Mrs. C.T. Dormon, was described as being southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ and eighteen acres off the west side of the west half of the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 34 east half of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4 and eighteen acres off the west side of west half of [?] quarter Section 10 and all that part of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10 left after taking out the lands belonging to B.F. Harper and J.A. Dormon and about fifteen acres on east side of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of the northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 9, Township 13 North, Range 6 West in one lot containing 356 acres more or less.

1904 Deed, recorded 15 October 1904 in Conveyance Book 114, folio 203-04. Lucile B. and Scriven Sweat et al, to J.A. Dormon.⁸⁶

1906. Deed, 23 July 1906, recorded 5 September 1906 in Conveyance Book 118, folio 590. C.E. Edgerton et al to J[ames] A. and C[aroline]T. Dormon; J[ames] A. and C[aroline] T. Dormon to Harper.⁸⁷

C.E. Edgerton, E. Otis Edgerton, Mrs. Fannie V. Brown and her husband D.E. Brown, Jr., sell to James A. Dormon and Mrs. Caroline T. Dormon with full warranty of title their entire interest in the following property: thirty acres off of the west side of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4 and all that part of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 9 lying west of and included between the right of way of the L. & N.W. R.R. Co. and the land owned by J.A. Dormon containing eleven acres more or less; all of said land being in

⁸⁵ In the margin of the Conveyance Book, it was noted that the original was mailed to the Detroit Lumber Co., in St. Louis, Missouri on 14 April 1900. The patent was for 159.67 acres, granted during Harrison's Presidency by the General Land Office, City of Washington, 5 September 1890 and recorded in vol. 3, p. 373.

⁸⁶ This sale of land comes out of the partition and succession of the estate of B.S. and H.T. Sweat, their grandparents, in June of 1902. Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

⁸⁷ See also Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

Township 13 North Range 6 West. Transfer and conveyance made because of the sale by said J.A. Dormon & Mrs. C.T. Dormon to Harper of their undivided one-third interest in the following tract: northeast ¼ of southeast ¼ and ten acres off of east side of southeast ¼ of southeast ¼ Section 4, all that part of Section 3 lying west of the L. & N.W. R.R. Co.'s right of way, and all of Section 10 lying west of said right of way, all of said land being in Township 13 North Range 6 West and containing 115 acres more or less. The said J.A. Dormon & Mrs. C. T. Dormon receiving the forty one acres herein conveyed to them and \$55 of the money paid by Harper for the land sold to him, in full payment for their undivided one-third interest in the tract of land heretofore held in division between them and ourselves and these transfers are made for the purpose of effecting a partition between us and the said J.A. Dormon & Mrs. C.T. Dormon of said tract which embraces the two tracts herein above described.

1909 Deed, 1 May 1909, recorded 14 September 1909 in Conveyance Book 126, folio 438-439. J.A., B.S., Geo., V.T., C.C. Dormon and James T. Dormon to S.F. Thomas.⁸⁸

1910 Succession of J.A. Dormon, No. 1167 (old No. 452), Probate Docket, Third District Court, Bienville Parish, recorded 25 January 1910.⁸⁹ James L. Dormon, Virginia T. Dormon, Benjamin S. Dormon, A.B. George Dormon and Caroline C. Dormon.

The Dormon children demonstrate to the court that they accept the succession of their said father and mother, unconditionally, and that they are the only heirs of their deceased parents and so are entitled to be in possession of the real and personal property left at their parents' death.

⁸⁸ This deed is subject to a correction in 1919 because of an error in the property description.

⁸⁹ Dormon Collection, folder 1548.

Sometime between 1893 and 1910, James A. Dormon contemplated selling fifty to sixty acres to a man named Pratt. His sketch of the land included Harper's, Tobin's, Lucy's, and his parcels. Above JAD, Tobin, and Harper was the notation "house"; presumably this is the area discussed and described in Dormon's note: I think the land we want to sell Pratt is all that part of the east half of northeast ¼ of northeast ¼ Section 9 and the southeast ¼ of southeast ¼ Section 4 Township 13 North, Range 6 West but can't tell how many acres there will be as I do not know exactly how near the lines the R.R. runs. It will be between fifty and sixty acres I think. We will be compelled to get Mr. Friday to survey it to find out. This will give Pratt the house, the two-acre patch in front of the house and very near all of the old orchard and the spring field as they called it, which is a good tract and will make him a nice place and at the same time leave the balance of place in good shape. I understand that Friday has changed the corners from where we thought they were. For instance, we thought that sections 3,4, 10 & 9 all cornered somewhere nearby the house and I am told Friday made that corner near where a persimmon tree stood in front of the old gin house. Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

1914 Deed, 14 September 1914, recorded 16 September 1914, in Conveyance Book 137, folio 222. James L. Dormon to Virginia F. Dormon.⁹⁰

James L. Dormon and his wife Ruth sold to Virginia T. Dormon, of Bienville Parish, his undivided one-fourth interest in and to following tract of land in Natchitoches Parish: Northeast quarter of Section 9 and thirty acres off of west side of southeast quarter of southeast quarter of Section 4, one and one half acres in northwest corner of Section 10 and a strip of land described as commencing at the southwest corner of southwest quarter of northwest quarter of Section 10 thence running east 7 and 58/100 chains, thence north 22 and 75/100 chains, thence west 7 and 58/100 chains, thence south 22 and 75/100 chains to point of beginning, less four acres sold off of northeast corner to Frank Harper and less about fifty acres east of the Louisiana and Northwest Railroad track sold to Sam Thomas all in Township 13 North Range 6 West. The tract conveyed containing 150 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres more or less; said interest inherited from deceased brother A.B. George Dormon and their parents, Caroline T. Dormon and James A. Dormon.

1915 Deed, recorded 11 June 1915 in Conveyance Book 138, folio 104-105. Virginia T. Dormon and Caroline C. Dormon to William M. Hughes.

In this transaction, Virginia Dormon acted as Caroline's power of attorney. The Dormon sisters sold a tract described as the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4, Township 13, Range 6 West, less ten acres off the east side and less fifteen acres of the south side, all above lands situated in Township 13 North, Range 6 West in Natchitoches. They held a mortgage, which Hughes was to pay in two installments, on the fifteen or so acres.

1917 Deed, 26 December 1917, recorded 8 June 1917 in Conveyance Book 141, folio 521-22. Benjamin S. Dormon to Caroline C. Dormon.

Benjamin Dormon sells his sister Caroline his undivided one-fourth interest in the Briarwood property they inherited from their parents, just as James had done for Virginia. The tract included about 150 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres more or less.

1919 Deed [Correction], recorded 6 January 1919 in Conveyance Book 144, folio 107-08. James L. Dormon, B.S. Dormon, V.T. Dormon, C.C. Dormon to S.F. Thomas.

Correction to sale of about fifty acres of land as recorded in Conveyance Book 126, folio 438. The tract in question was described in the land record as beginning at a point on the east side of the Louisiana and Northwest Railroad where same is crossed by the south

⁹⁰ This transaction was confirmed in the Parish of Red River, Louisiana, on 17 December 1919. It referred to James L. Dormon's sale to his sister Virginia his one-fourth interest in lands in Natchitoches Parish as recorded in Conveyance Book 137, folio 222. Dormon sold his one-fourth interest in the land for \$3 an acre (\$12 per acre if sold as one entity). Dormon Collection, folder 1320.

line of the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 9 in Township 13 North, Range 6 West, and running east along the south line of the said quarter section to the southeast corner thereof, then running east along the south line of the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 10 of said Township 13 North, Range 6 West a distance of 7 and 58/100 chains, thence north 22 and 75/100 chains, thence west to said railroad right of way, thence along said railroad right of way to the point of beginning, less four acres in the northeast corner of said lot of land previously ceded by J.A. Dormon to B.F. Harper, and whereas in said deed, by error and mistake, the southern boundary of the land conveyed is incorrectly described as running partly in the south lines of said Sections 9 and 10 instead of the said quarters thereof, and whereas James B. Dormon of New Orleans, LA (whose wife Ruth Marsalis is living and abides with him) B.S. Dormon of Anniston, AL (whose wife Nannie Moore is living and abides with him) Virginia T. Dormon and Caroline C. Dormon, both residents of Natchitoches Parish, LA and both unmarried, being the only ones of the Vendors appearing in the said Act of Sale who are now living [...] in order to correct the said error of description, the said surviving Vendors, do hereby declare that the description herein first above written is the true and correct description of the tract of land conveyed to the said S.F. Thomas [...].

1919 Agreement, 6 December 1919. Virginia Dormon and Carolyne [sic] Dormon to O.M. Coleston. Re: Oil, Gas and Mineral Grant.

Here the Dormon sisters entered into an oil and gas lease for four years; the portion of the property leased was a forty-acre parcel located "southwest of northeast ¼."

1920 Abstract of title, recorded 1 January 1920.⁹¹

1932 Mineral rights, recorded 20 October 1932 in Conveyance Book 168, folio 355. C.C. Dormon et al to S.E. Evans et al.⁹²

1935 Cash sale, recorded 3 May 1935 in Conveyance Book 172, folio 132. Caroline C. Dormon to Virginia D. Miller.

⁹¹ Title abstract refers to "N ½ of NE ¼ of Section 3, Township 13 North, Range 8 West." Virginia T. Dormon gains ownership through tax sales in 1917 and sells the land in 1919. Natchitoches Parish Land Records, June 1917, Conveyance Book 141, folio 575; Natchitoches Parish Land Records, March 1919, Conveyance Book 144, folio 327. Attached to the abstract is a description of Briarwood: "That certain tract of land ... situated in Ward Two of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, and being all that part of NE ¼ of Section 9 lying west of the right-of-way of the L. and N.W. Railway Company's right-of-way, and all that part of the NW ¼ of NW ¼ of Section 10 lying west of said right-of-way; all in Township 13 North, Range 6 West, and containing 122 acres, more or less." Dormon Collection, folder 1553.

⁹² Similarly, between 1932 and 1945 the Dormons conveyed mineral rights on their property in Bienville Parish (Section 7, Township 15 North, Range 6 West) and all parties agreed to a lease with Placid Oil in the 1940s. Dormon Collection, folder 1552.

The property was sold for \$250, and described as the undivided half interest in and to the west ½ of the northeast ¼ and that part of the east ½ of northeast ¼ lying west of the L & NW by right of way in Section 9 and 15 acres in the southwest corner of southeast ¼ of southeast ¼ in Section 4 and 2 acres in the northwest corner of northwest ¼ in Section 10 lying west of L & NW by right of way, all in Township 13 North, Range 6 West containing 135 acres more or less, with all buildings and improvements thereon situated and appurtenances thereunto belonging located in Ward 2 of Natchitoches Parish.

- 1944 Power of Attorney, 18 February 1944, recorded in Conveyance Book 193, folio 139. James H. Dormon to S. Parker Hillyer.
- 1945 Case No. 25361, Tenth Judicial District Court, Judgment, 24 May 1945. Virginia Dormon Miller, et al v. B.S. Swett, Clerk and Ex-Officio Recorder of Mortgages. Re: Mortgage, 9 October 1925, recorded in Conveyance Book 141, folio 414; re-inscribed, 14 November 1935, recorded in Conveyance Book 161, folio 90 of Mortgage Records of Natchitoches Parish. J.L. Bryan to Virginia Dormon Miller et al.⁹³
- 1945 Mineral rights, recorded 28 June 1945 in Conveyance Book 197, folio 219. Caroline Dorman [sic] et al, to J.O. Evans et al.
- 1947 Mineral rights, recorded 6 February 1947 in Conveyance Book 201, folio 462. Caroline Dorman [sic] et al to H.H. Evans.

The following year, Dormon described Briarwood as “my own place is a 100-acre natural woodland, with two small streams and a pond. I grow most of my iris in natural bogs, as that is easier for me.” There was one bog behind the house, fed by a stream, and crab apple walk in back of the house as well; she also had a rock garden around this time. To ease watering in the bogs, Dormon terraced the slopes above, with logs for retaining walls.⁹⁴

- 1952 Royalty Deed, recorded 11 September 1952 in Conveyance Book 212, folio 344. Caroline Dorman [sic] et al to Marshall H. Carver.

⁹³ The property was mortgaged for \$700 (and later paid for); it was described as a tract of land in Natchitoches Parish containing 135 acres: ...[consisting of] (more or less) fifteen acres in southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 4; also two acres in extreme northwest portion of northwest quarter of northwest quarter of Section 10 and all that portion of northeast quarter of Section 9 lying west of the L & [N]W Railroad, all being located in Township 13 North, Range 6 West. Dormon Collection, folder 1323.

⁹⁴ Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Eylars, 20 July 1948, Dormon Collection, folder 69; Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Oscar Shanks, n.d. [1947], Dormon Collection, folder 107 (crabapple); Caroline Dormon, 22 February 1948, Dormon Collection, folder 349 (rock garden); Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Karnopp, 11 December 1949, Dormon Collection, folder 155 (terrace).

For \$150 the sisters granted mineral royalty interests to the following: south 15 acres of the west 30 acres of the southeast 1/4 of southeast 1/4 of Section 4; also, a certain parcel or tract of land containing 2 acres, northwest 1/4 of Section 10; also, all that portion of the northeast 1/4 of Section 9, lying west of the Louisiana & Northwest Railroad, all lying in Township 13 North, Range 6 West, and containing in the aggregate 135 acres, more or less.

1953 Deed, recorded 1 June 1953 in Bienville Parish,⁹⁵ and recorded 2 June 1953 in Conveyance Book 219, folio 165. Virginia D. Miller to Caroline C. Dorman [sic].

Briarwood at this time was described as that certain tract of land together with all buildings and improvements thereon located, situated in Ward Two of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, and being all that part of northeast 1/4 of Section 9 lying west of the right of way of the Louisiana and Northwest Railway Company's right of way and all that part of the northwest 1/4 of northwest 1/4 of Section 10 lying west of said right away; all in Township 13 North, Range 6 West and containing 122 acres, more or less, and known as "Briarwood." The sale was made in consideration for \$250.00.

1953 Power of Attorney, recorded 18 December 1953 in Conveyance Book 220, folio 325. Virginia D. Miller to Caroline C. Dorman [sic].

After Miller's accident, the legal papers were drawn up to give Dorman power of attorney rights. In September, Miller "appoint[ed] my beloved sister, Caroline Dormon, my true and lawful attorney." She signed with a "X" and the clerk noted by her mark that the signer "herein is blind." The power of attorney document was recorded in December of 1953.

1954 Application for Homestead Exemption, recorded March 1954.⁹⁶

1955 Judgment, February 11, 1955, recorded in Conveyance Book 221, folio 628. Virginia D. Miller to Caroline C. Dormon, George Dormon et al., Ben S. Dormon, Jr.⁹⁷

Each receives one-fourth interest in Virginia Dormon Miller's "other properties"; Briarwood was described adjutant to this document as "that certain tract of land... situated in Ward Two of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, and being all that part of NE 1/4 of Section 9 lying west of the right-of-way of the [L & NW] Railway."

⁹⁵ Dormon Collection, folder 1548.

⁹⁶ Caroline Dormon applied for the exemption on 120 rural acres noted as "W 1/2 of NE & that part W of L & A Rwy of NE of NE & that part W of L & NW Ry W of SE of NE Sec 9 & 2 ac in NW cor of NW of NW W of L & NW Ry Sec 10-13-6." The assessment on Briarwood was \$720 in 1953 and \$880 in 1954; Dormon accounted for the difference in value as "cut over land increased." Dormon Collection, folder 1553.

⁹⁷ See also Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

1971 Will, 27 September 1971, probated 29 November 1971 and recorded in Conveyance Book 301, folio 705. Establishment of the Dormon Nature Preserve on 122 acres.

"I will and bequeath to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, Inc., my home place, known as "Briarwood," which is 120 acres of forest land, with the house and all improvements thereon, in Ward 2 of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana."

1972 Will & Judgement of Possession, probated 9 April 1974 and recorded in Conveyance Book 317, folio 214, 681.⁹⁸

1976 Will, recorded in Conveyance Book 331, folio 8, 24. Kathleen E. O'Brien to Caroline Dormon, et al.⁹⁹

1995 Deed, recorded 15 May 1995 in Conveyance Book 501, folio 710. Dorothy Lee Nichols Hughes et al, and Thomas David Nichols to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, Inc.¹⁰⁰

The Hughes' donation included twenty-four acres, more or less, described as the south sixteen acres of the northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ and the north eight acres of the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of northwest $\frac{1}{4}$; the two tracts were divided by the line dividing the northeast and southeast quarters of the northwest $\frac{1}{4}$.

2. Chronology Outline:

a. Periods of Landscape Development

- i. "Wilderness" to 1859
- ii. The agricultural era 1859-1921
- iii. The garden 1921-1971
- iv. The preserve 1971-present

Briarwood is located in the Kisatchie hills, an area with undulating topography covered with pine and mixed hardwood trees. The land was settled for agricultural pursuits both subsistence and for-profit, for military purposes, by

⁹⁸Note: This relates to the will of Janie Wiggins Stephens; one of her heirs is Mrs. Ollace Stephens Dormon. Beyond that, the connection to Briarwood is as of this writing unclear. - vbp

⁹⁹Monetary gift.

¹⁰⁰Deed references Natchitoches Parish Land Records, October 1992, Conveyance Book 478, folio 453, and Natchitoches Parish Land Records, January 1931, Conveyance Book 166, folio 562. The estimated value of the donation is approximately \$32,253.90, based on land value of \$7200.00 (24 acres at \$300.00 per acres) and timber value of \$25,053.90. While a matter of public record, the donors wished to avoid any undue attention their gift may have attracted at the time. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1 July 1995).

logging industries, and around railroad centers in the last part of the nineteenth century.

The Native Americans vacated Kisatchie by 1800; evidence of their occupancy comes by way of artifacts such as the arrowheads collected by Dormon and seen at Briarwood, and by way of the Drake Salt Works. Similarly, the Spanish period is seen through an archaeological lens, at the Old Spanish Lake Lowlands (now occupied by the Caddo-Addai Native American community but threatened by development along Interstate 49) and at Los Adaes, a 1716 fort situated on the ridge line of the pine covered hills in the western parish. In 1803, when Louisiana was purchased by the United States, the Kisatchie area was – or was soon to be – characterized by farmlands. By the 1880s, it was lumbering, sawmills, and railroads that shaped Kisatchie, producing railroad towns like Campti, Flora, and Robeline. Remnants of the agricultural era settlements do survive, like those at Briarwood and Readheimer; evidence of the farm era buildings is predominantly archaeological, however. Extant cultural landscape resources include the road traces, railroad beds, and cemeteries. Briarwood contains all of those aspects.¹⁰¹

Development of Kisatchie was hard-going. The land was not well suited to farming, much less ornamental gardening, and so the people who settled there were those who had to. The region is one associated with poverty and a sparse, isolated population, better known for its vast reaches of pine forests than for its plantations. In reaction to the pine products industry that was ravishing the forests by the early decades of the twentieth century, conservationists galvanized by Dormon called for the woods' protection. Dormon's efforts culminated first in purchase rights for the forest, a Department of Agriculture declaration of the national forest in June of 1930, and ultimately in the establishment of Kistachie National Forest in 1936.¹⁰²

The garden era of Briarwood, between 1921 and 1971, is best described by Dormon herself. In 1947, Dormon insisted that she did not have a "show place." She, rather, grew iris "to learn something about them. They constitute one of the great botanical mysteries – the unbelievable variations in size, form, and color make classifying extremely difficult. But I am also testing them out for horticultural purposes, and hybridizing. [...] Yes I have the space, and an ideal spot in which to grow these plants – but you forget one important item – Labor."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Lucy Lawliss, Cari Goetcheus, and David Hasty, "A Cultural Landscape Overview for the Cane River National Heritage Area," Report March 1998, pp. 14-22.

¹⁰²Cole, pp. 65-66; Gerald W. Williams, PhD., National Historian, USDA Forest Service, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication 21 March 2004.

¹⁰³Caroline Dormon to C.S. Milliken, Arcadia, California, 18 May 1947, Dormon Collection, folder 121.

Most of the buildings that have been part of the Briarwood landscape for the last century and a half are no longer standing. The large house built by Dr. Benjamin Sweat stood at the current northern property line, just above the Nora Garden. On the Readheimer plantation property there was a house as well as a Commissary and mill; this land was donated to the nature preserve in 1995 but the buildings are gone. The Dormon summer cottage where Caroline Dormon was born is marked only by a clearing of trees and two large trees that stood beside the wide porch steps.¹⁰⁴ An oak marks the house's accompanying carriage house. Caroline Dormon and her brothers used to climb the tree as children, employing the roof of the carriage house. Other small houses, such as the one lived in by Nora Patterson, and the site of a pumphouse along the old railroad tram can only be pointed out by Richard Johnson (fig. 4).¹⁰⁵

b. Landscape Shapers/Creators

- i. Caroline Dormon
- ii. Richard and Jessie Johnson

On 1 January 1968 Caroline Dormon drafted her last will and testament, declaring "the property known as Briarwood, consisting of [sic] 120 acres [sic], more or less, in Ward 2, Natchitoches Parish, is to become a preserve. It shall be known as the Caroline Dormon Natural Area. Not one tree is to be cut, unless dead. It will be administered by a Board, [...] Richard L. Johnson, Route 1, Saline, Louisiana, will be forest supervisor, superintending the removal of vines and shrubs that are pests. [...]"¹⁰⁶ Through her will, Dormon ensured her desire that the property remain protected and her wish that her beloved plants, trees, and birds continue to flourish there.

c. Owners/Managers/Associated Groups

- i. Joshua Prothro¹⁰⁷
- ii. Benjamin Sweat/ Harriet Trotti Sweat¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴Dormon recalled during rainstorms at "our little old house" that she and her brothers Ben and George would make houses out of quilts and chairs along the porch. Caroline Dormon, 11 July 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 922.

¹⁰⁵Dormon noted the pumphouse was built in 1958. Caroline Dormon, [1958], Dormon Collection, folder 53. In 1960 she noted that she had "spent every penny [she] could rake and scrape on Nora's house – and it still leaks!" Caroline Dormon, 28 November 1960, Dormon Collection, folder [1960-1971 diaries/notes].

¹⁰⁶Dormon Collection, folder 1108, will (transcript).

¹⁰⁷Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1861, Conveyance Book 63, folio 38-40.

¹⁰⁸Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1872-1900, Conveyance Book 66, folio 660; Conveyance Book 68, folio 32; Conveyance Book 68, folio 43, 397; Conveyance Book 70, folio 527; Conveyance Book 76, folio 29; Conveyance Book 85, folio 643-44; Conveyance Book 87, folio 206, 207, 652; Conveyance Book 104, folio 316. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1 April 1986); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1 July 1986).

- iii. James A. Dormon/ Caroline Trotti Sweat Dormon¹⁰⁹
- iv. Heirs of J.A. Dormon and C.T. S. Dormon¹¹⁰
- v. Caroline C. Dormon¹¹¹
- vi. Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve¹¹²

Dormon inherited her portion of the Briarwood acreage from her parents, acquiring her siblings' parcels over time.

d. Builders/Laborers

- i. Slaves
- ii. Tenant farmers
- iii. Patterson family (Nora Patterson and children)
- iv. Friends of Caroline Dormon
- v. Youth Conservation Corps
- vi. Camp Beauregard Correctional Facility
- vii. Volunteers

Since 1861, the lands known as Briarwood have worked by its owners and their laborers, paid and unpaid. These include Caroline Dormon and her grandparents, and the families with whom they contracted - or had a contractual obligation towards. In 1920 and 1921, Caroline Dormon and her sister Virginia Dormon Miller leased a house, with use of the "lot and buildings connected," on Briarwood proper to a tenant farmer named T.J. Woodall. In correspondence negotiating the arrangement, Dormon reveals that the house Woodall is to rent is already occupied; she does not, however, mention that tenant's name. Woodall's rent comes to one-fourth of the corn crop. He also grows cotton, keeps a potato patch, watermelon patch, and sorghum patch. He writes to Dormon that he would like to build a yard fence. She agrees, also authorizing cultivation inside the "big field" but not in the calf pasture. Woodall clears brush and collects wood on the property, taking it to Saline for sale.¹¹³ A neighbor later recalled that the tenant

¹⁰⁹ Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1888-1906, Conveyance Book 85, folio 644; Conveyance Book 102, folio 322-23; Conveyance Book 108, folio 321; Conveyance Book 114, folio 203-04; Conveyance Book 118, folio 590; and Dormon Collection, folder 1551.

¹¹⁰ Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1909-14, Conveyance Book 126, folio 438-439; Conveyance Book 137, p. 222; Conveyance Book 144, folio 107-08; Conveyance Book 172, folio 132; Conveyance Book 193, folio 139. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1 July 1986).

¹¹¹ Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1915-54, Conveyance Book 138, folio 104-105; Conveyance Book 141, folio 521-22; Conveyance Book 219, folio 165; Conveyance Book 220, folio 325; Conveyance Book 221, folio 628; Dormon Collection, folder 1553. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1 October 1986).

¹¹² Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1971, Conveyance Book 301, folio 705; Conveyance Book 317, folio 214, 681; Conveyance Book 501, folio 710.

¹¹³ Dormon Collection, folder 327 1-C-2.

house was occupied by the Clarence Lindsey family and later by another family, that of Tom Meeks.¹¹⁴ While Caroline Dormon lived at Briarwood, she had the assistance of the Patterson family, as well as friends and neighbors.

Since becoming a nature preserve, workers are mostly volunteers - helping on Tom Sawyer Days or for special projects. The latter includes the efforts of the Northwestern University students, who buried a water line as well as crews from the Camp Beauregard Correctional Facility who installed an irrigation line.¹¹⁵

e. *Landscape Occupants/Users*

- i. Hobos
- ii. Louisiana and Northwest Railroad
- iii. Evans mineral rights¹¹⁶
- iv. Nature Preserve visitors

In the 1993 *Newsletter*, Richard Johnson reminisces about the Louisiana and Northwest Railroad Company's extension to Natchitoches. The new tracks passed along what is now the eastern boundary of the nature preserve, just a couple hundred yards from where the Dormon family's summer cabin was. With the railroad came hobos, or nomadic "survival experts" as Johnson recalled. In exchange for sweet potatoes, these hobos helped Johnson become a better outdoorsman. The hobos lived in "crude shelters" put up along the railroad tracks; other structures associated with the railroad were the two sidings - one at the present front entrance on Louisiana State Highway 9 called Harper's Spur that was also a store and the other two miles south called Strange, after the depot agent. Strange's was also a post office. To ride the train, a white flag placed on the tracks signaled the engineer to stop.¹¹⁷

The Old Louisiana and Northwest Railroad Tram at the southeastern edge of the property stopped running in 1940s. It was built in 1905 by the Natchitoches Railway & Construction Company, and the tram ran from McNeil, Arkansas to Natchitoches, and back every day.¹¹⁸ The Old Sparta Road was used through

¹¹⁴ Louisiana State University, Hill Memorial Library, Special Collections, MSS. 3180 (Recollections, 1977, prepared by Gladys Britt, "Sketches of Miss Caroline Dormon"). Census records could possibly clarify the dates of tenure; this avenue should be pursued.

¹¹⁵ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 28, no. 1 (1 January 2000); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 29, no. 1 (1 January 2001).

¹¹⁶ Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1919-52, Conveyance Book 168, folio 355; Conveyance Book 197, folio 219; Conveyance Book 201, folio 462; Conveyance Book 212, folio 344; and Dormon Collection, folder 1553.

¹¹⁷ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 21, no. 2 (1 April 1993).

¹¹⁸ References to the railroad are found in various newsletters, as well as acknowledgment of the Evans' generous gift that returned the railroad right-of-way to Briarwood proper. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 5, no. 2 (April 1977); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 21, no. 2 (April 1993); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 22, no. 3 (July 1994).

World War II, but when automobiles fully replaced horses, the road was abandoned.

When Caroline Dormon was in residence, she disparaged the condition of the roads into Briarwood at various times, saying that she “live[d] on a sand hill, and a violent rainstorm can do heavy damage. My winding drives are only lightly graveled, and wash badly [...]”¹¹⁹ She warned her friend Ike Nelson not to visit then because “all [the] drives are IMPASSABLE.” Dormon explained that in spite of enormous effort on the part of Jim, Nora, and herself, that it was for naught. The gravel and clay resembled “mud pies” rather than routes of egress.¹²⁰

Dormon may have chaffed at being “fenced in” by the inclement weather, but she was not adverse to Briarwood’s seeming inaccessibility to the uninvited and relished its remoteness. She observed that even her friends could not tell someone how to find her; for example, Dormon wrote to Mrs. Nelson in 1937 that “Miss Cammie cannot tell you exactly how to come to my house. Of course if she is along, she can show you the way. But when you come, you will see why it is difficult to give directions.”¹²¹ Her instructions to Hugh Redding almost twenty years later echoed those to Nelson. Dormon provided landmarks to guide them, but seemed surprised as she wrote directions that everything around Briarwood sounded as if it were abandoned. She instructed that once safely past the *deserted* store and *unused* railroad, they were to look for a dirt road, and then a wood gate, and finally follow the curving pathway to her cabin.(emphasis mine) To help Redding, she offered to “stick up a sign saying “Dormon” where you turn off the highway. [... She warned him, however, that she did] NOT keep it up all the time, [...]”¹²² Visitors to the nature preserve today, however, have the benefit of highway signs, a well-marked entrance gate, and a maintained roadway to help them find their way to Briarwood (fig. 5).

2. Historical Summary:

Caroline Coroneous Dormon was born in 1888 at Briarwood, where her parents James A. and Caroline Trotti Dormon kept a summer home.¹²³ Briarwood originally entered the family in 1859 when Dr. Benjamin Sweat purchased a plantation consisting of 560 acres from Joshua Prothro. Sweat relocated his family – including his wife

¹¹⁹Caroline Dormon, “Acts of Providence,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B; see also, Caroline Dormon to Frank E. Chowning, 3 May 1953, Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve; Caroline Dormon, 16 January 1960, Dormon Collection, folder [diaries/notes 1960-1971].

¹²⁰Caroline Dormon to Ike Nelson, Saturday, n.y., University of Louisiana - Lafayette.

¹²¹Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Nelson, 22 January 1937, University of Louisiana - Lafayette.

¹²²Caroline Dormon to Mr. Hugh Redding, The Forester, Kisatchie National Forest, 25 September 1954, Dormon Collection, folder 372.

¹²³ Dormon Collection, folder 1089.

Harriett Trotti Sweat and their daughter Caroline Trotti and a number of slaves from Harriett's grandfather's Briarwood Plantation on the Edisto River in South Carolina – to the “new” Briarwood Plantation of Natchitoches and Bienville Parishes in the Louisiana sand hills. At this time, the area was sparsely settled. A band of highwaymen terrorized the roads, which followed ancient buffalo and Native American migratory routes. The Readheimer plantation community centered around the mid nineteenth-century homestead, on property now owned by the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. Although no buildings remain, the site contained a large house, an overseer's house, a commissary where women wove material for Confederate uniforms during the Civil War, saw mill, grist mill, and cotton gin.¹²⁴

In the economically-troubled 1870s, the Sweats sold off several parts of the Briarwood Plantation. The remaining acreage passed to their children, and eventually only Caroline Trotti Sweat Dormon with her husband James A. Dormon owned land in the area. While her siblings sold their portions to pay taxes, Caroline, who was a published novelist, and her husband, who was a lawyer, added to their Natchitoches Parish holdings.¹²⁵ When they died, their property known as Briarwood passed undivided to their five living children: A.B. George, James L., Benjamin Scriven, Virginia Trotti, and Caroline Coroneous.

Around 1916, Caroline Dormon and her older sister Virginia moved to Briarwood. Their parents' house at Arcadia, Louisiana, had burned, and their brother A.B. George had died. Virginia purchased James's interest in the property and Caroline purchased Ben's. The sisters had a small two-room clapboard house built.¹²⁶ In 1933, Dormon described this dwelling as a “rough camp shack, in the wild woods.”¹²⁷ The

¹²⁴ Richard L. Johnson, personal communication with the author, 2003; Caroline T. Dormon, *Under the Magnolias*. (NY: Abbey Press, 1902). The Readheimer family migrated to the upland South in the mid-nineteenth century; their property is now the western extension of the nature preserve. While none of the structures built there are extant today, archaeologists conducting a GIS survey noticed an earthen berm where one of the streams was impounded to power a grist mill. Some of the buildings, such as the Commissary, stood well into the post-bellum period and there are artifactual remnants scattered along the trails. Brian Cockrell Archaeologist, NSU Cultural Resource Office, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, March 2004. It is hoped that the locations of the building sites and artifact debris will be recorded. Note: the Readheimer plantation is not the same as the Readheimer community that stretches south of the preserve along Louisiana State Highway 9, despite lending its name to the area. This area nearby the plantation site developed with the lumber industry after the war when the pine forests were being clear-cut; the timbering activities brought the railroad in which further sustained growth in the sawmill community. When the forests were cleared, the railroad went away most likely gone by the 1930s. The present Readheimer community is the legacy of that era's commercial center.

¹²⁵It is unclear if these purchases were made for sentimental or investment reasons. In the *Newsletter*, Richard Johnson suggests it was sentiment that prompted the Dormons' land acquisitions. He wrote, “Caroline also realized Briarwood was precious and retained her portion even when times were hard, taxes high, and her husband was ‘land Poor.’ She was the only one to do so.” *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, 14, no. 2 (1 April 1986).

¹²⁶ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1 January 1992).

¹²⁷ Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Oscar Shanks, June 1933, Dormon Collection, folder 262.

building still required maintenance and in 1937 Dormon noted they had to put a sill under the house.¹²⁸ The same year, Dormon wrote of “ceiling the end room [...] seems to be an endless job, and I am so tired of the clutter.”¹²⁹ The outbuildings associated with this residence are gone: the smoke house, barns, chicken coop, and greenhouse.¹³⁰ During the early 1920s, T.J. Woodall lived at Briarwood as a tenant farmer, perhaps in this cabin, while Virginia and Caroline were in Shreveport and Natchitoches, presumably on teaching assignments.¹³¹ Virginia Dormon briefly married George Miller, but the marriage ended in divorce. Caroline Dormon never married, for that would have required her to give up her control of the land and landscape.¹³²

Throughout Caroline Dormon’s life, and as she took charge of the property, Briarwood became less and less agricultural and more and more of a landscape garden. It was Virginia Dormon Miller who practiced farming at Briarwood. Miller’s agricultural pursuits were a small-scale endeavor, one that perhaps could be characterized as subsistence. Her efforts focused on an orchard and vegetable garden. Miller also raised chickens and a cow; all were kept close to the house. Although a teacher by training, Miller was also a home extension agent and was willing to try commercial ventures. She ran the Briarwood Camp for Girls in the early 1930s and briefly sold canned vegetables under a Briarwood label. She also collaborated with her sister-in-law Ruth Dormon in Wild Gardens, selling native and cultivated plants. The native species they peddled were Cherry Laurel, Crabapple, Wild Sweet Olive, Dogwood, Redbud, Fringe Tree, Yaupon, Cyrilla, Magnolia, Hydrangea, Live Oak, Parsley Haw, Black Haw, Wax Myrtle, Polygonella, Yellow Jessamine, Wild Roses, Red Maples, Sloes and other wild plums,

¹²⁸ Caroline Dormon, 1 January 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

¹²⁹ Caroline Dormon, 14 January 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

¹³⁰ Regarding the greenhouse, Dormon wrote to Ike Nelson that if she “lived until fall” she would have a greenhouse, built most probably of plastic, and so wanted to try a Mandeville plant and to try *A. evansae* again. Caroline Dormon to Ike Nelson, 3 March 1960, and Caroline Dormon to Ike Nelson, n.d., University of Louisiana – Lafayette. In November of 1962, Dormon gleefully wrote Nelson “And I’ve got my greenhouse — just a little home-made one, but what a joy!” Caroline Dormon to Ike Nelson, 4 November 1962, University of Louisiana – Lafayette. Regarding the smokehouse, Dormon wrote in 1927 that she had Nora do the washing and before she was half-through it began raining. Nora had to “move under the smokehouse shed and finish there. I had brought some of the things in the house and was drying them by the fire.” Caroline Dormon, 14 January 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

¹³¹ They were both teachers. See, for example, Mrs. Dixie Tyler, “Memories of Caroline Dormon Recalled,” *Natchitoches Times* (14 July 1977): 12B.

¹³² Blend discusses Dormon’s reluctance to marry as well as her rejection of female domesticity and her contemporaries’ mottos of the “conservation of womanhood, the home and the child” for herself; however, Dormon cultivated the rhetoric of the female - as nurturer, caretaker, protector of life - when on the lecture circuit, a venue often sponsored by garden clubs, promoting conservation causes. See Blend, pp. 56-57, 59-60.

Dormon was not without a sense of humor about her femininity, and it shows in her fleeting, and self-deprecating, reference to her physical appearance in 1937. Dormon wrote, “now the hawks are hovering over sister’s poor little chickens. She had eight, [...] So, the last few days, I have been making a scarecrow, and hanging it out on the clothesline. I try to make it resemble me as much as possible. The first day I succeeded so well that it startled me every time I looked out that way. I caught myself thinking, ‘Well wonder what I’m doing foolin’ around out there?’” Caroline Dormon, 2 February 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

Euonymus, Dwarf Viburnums, and Witch Hazel. The cultivated plants were Quince, Spirea Thunbergia, Red Spirea, Forsythia, Magnolia Fuscata, Red Crepe Myrtle, Single Gardenia, Eleagnus, and American Pillar Rose.¹³³ Wild Gardens, a name inherited from their sister-in-law Ruth Dormon, briefly continued selling iris bulbs after Miller's death in 1953.

Despite Virginia Dormon Miller's entrepreneurial experience, the sisters did not manage their endeavors at Briarwood alone. In fact, Nora and Tom Patterson and their children were the most permanent hired help for Virginia and Caroline.¹³⁴ All of Nora Patterson's children were born at Briarwood, and she helped Caroline Dormon in her gardens nearly everyday; one of those gardens was later named for her. Tom Patterson had a sow and a horse, thereby contributing to the agricultural nature of Briarwood, but it was Nora Patterson who was integral to Dormon's efforts at the preserve. Dormon, for example, often wondered how Nora Patterson, who was large and strong, could be so gentle among the flowers.¹³⁵ Although Caroline Dormon designated one of her gardens as the Nora Garden, she did not allow for autonomy in gardening.¹³⁶ Caroline Dormon directed Nora Patterson's every move, as she did with all her assistants. This was no small task as friends and neighbors provided plenty of manpower at Briarwood. The Pattersons ultimately cared for Dormon herself, particularly after Virginia Dormon Miller died in 1953, leaving first Nora and then her daughter Dosia to cook for Caroline.¹³⁷

Caroline Dormon was more interested in the idea of wildness than her sister. She, for example, used the ground where Virginia Dormon Miller's chicken coop once stood for planting *Eryngium* that preferred acidic soil. Caroline Dormon, moreover, seemed to appreciate the fruit trees for their aesthetic qualities, coordinating her daffodils to match her pear trees, rather than for their offerings of food.

Upon Dormon's death in November of 1971, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve took over Briarwood, with Sudie Lawton as President and with Richard L. Johnson as a specially-trained curator. The transition from private estate to nature preserve required some changes, but in general, Briarwood remains true to the plan and to the conservation philosophy as established by Caroline Dormon.

¹³³ Dormon Collection, [Bottom of Box of] Folders 207-224.

¹³⁴ Johnson remembered Nora in the *Newsletter* as a tribute to her after she died. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1 July 1992).

¹³⁵ See for example, Caroline Dormon, 9 March 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

¹³⁶ In 1956, Dormon refers to working in the "Nora Garden." Caroline Dormon, 6 September 1956, Dormon Collection, folder 18.

¹³⁷ LSU, MSS. 3180 (Britt, "Sketches of Miss Caroline Dormon"); not completely a loss in the kitchen, in 1937 Caroline Dormon wrote that she made quince jelly and quince honey. Caroline Dormon, 3 January 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 977.

PART II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. Influences

While known for her advocacy of land conservation, particularly relating to the establishment of Kisatchie National Forest, and sometimes known by the moniker “the mother of Kisatchie,” Caroline Dormon viewed Briarwood differently. Dormon maintained Briarwood as a natural environment, but enhanced much of it with her flowering plants, with the bog and pond, and other plant materials gathered and propagated there. Accessibility to Briarwood’s wonders came by way of the paths running through the property that Dormon guided visitors along pointing out plant species nearby.¹³⁸ The nature preserve borders the national forest, but with so much of herself vested in Briarwood, Dormon decided not to have it annexed to Kisatchie. Dormon also kept Briarwood from becoming part of a land conservation trust, such as the Audubon Society, though she was aware of, and counseled, such groups. Instead, Dormon insured Briarwood of a continued personal, or intimate level of care such that as she gave to the site by leaving it in the hands of those who knew her well and understood her beliefs.

B. Landscape Features

Today the property consists of about 140 acres; pine trees define the landscape’s appearance. The soil is sandy and acidic, although Caroline Dormon noted clay deposits to the south.¹³⁹ Topographically, the nature preserve appears as a series of small hills, with elevations increasing in the northwest portion of the property. The southern and eastern boundaries follow the path of Louisiana State Highway 9, while the northern edge aligns with the plat grid east to west and the western border was expanded as a result of the twenty-four acres acquired from the former Readheimer Plantation.¹⁴⁰

1. Spatial Organization

The Briarwood of Caroline Dormon and Virginia Miller consisted of about 122 acres and was roughly triangular in shape. Today, as then, one arrives from Louisiana State Highway 9. Visitors are directed west through the Briarwood entry gate, down Caroline Dormon Road, passing the Frog Pond on the left and passing through the Dark Place before coming to the parking area located between the Headquarters Building and the Visitor Center. The main sites for visitors- the Log House, Grandpappy Pine Tree, Wings Rest Pond, and the Bay Garden- are located near the center of the property.

¹³⁸David Snell recalled such adventures at Briarwood in his article for the Smithsonian; see pp. 28-32.

¹³⁹Caroline Dormon, “Plant Native,” n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 837. She wrote, “I live in the Longleaf pine belt, with its deep sand; yet, only three miles below me there is a little creek bottom with rich clay, [...]”

¹⁴⁰Natchitoches Parish Land Records, Plat Map, 199-; Natchitoches Parish Land Records, 1995, Conveyance Book 501, folio 710.

2. Land Use

The primary land use of Briarwood is as a place to grow and protect plants for conservation and study by the public. Most of the preserve is wooded, with a number of flower gardens and a few buildings that allow for the management of the land as a nature preserve. Richard and Jessie Johnson live on-site in the Headquarters Building and receive no salary for their work with the plants, although they do have one paid employee, Cassandra Daniels. The Johnsons maintain both the gardens and trails, and they tour groups of visitors through the preserve on golf carts.¹⁴¹

3. Topography

The topography of Briarwood is slightly hilly with the higher elevations generally in the northwest. The paths of creeks indicate lower elevations, with all waterways draining to the south. The largest, named the Dormon Branch, runs from Wings Rest Pond southward to the Beech Garden Swamp, and eventually joins with the stream, Eightmile Creek. Un-named creeks running from the Frog Pond and the Bay Garden meet to the southwest of the Bay Garden, before meeting with the Dormon Branch. In the Beech Garden Swamp, located in the southwestern corner of the property, the Dormon Branch meets Readheimer's Mill Creek running from the west. The Charlotte Collins Trail, along the southwestern property edge, is an especially flat section of the nature preserve. One of entries to this trail is along the former Louisiana and Northwest Railroad bed.¹⁴² The Nora Garden is a terraced area, and the third of the three pines of the writing cabin's name lies in the ground on the hill, protecting the hill from erosion.¹⁴³

4. Vegetation¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹The donation of the golf cart is first mentioned in 1978, and a reality by April of 1979. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 3 (July 1978); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 7, no. 2 (April 1979).

¹⁴²The trail is named for Charlotte H. Collins, who first visited Briarwood in 1979, announcing to the Johnsons that she had come "to experience Briarwood." Collins especially liked the Pileated Woodpeckers, and enjoyed learning "the historic and medicinal values of each [plant] species." Her last visit was in 1983; in 1987, the Johnsons learned Collins willed her estate to Briarwood. Northwestern State University, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Vertical File ("Park Donation from Visitor Is Special," *Natchitoches Times* 29 October 1987, 10A); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1 October 1987); Brian W. Cockrell, Archaeologist, NSU Cultural Resource Office, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication 30 March 2004.

¹⁴³In 1982 Richard Johnson observed "to my left stood the lone stone chimney of the "Three Pines Cabin." [...] Built [...] for Caroline Dormon, to find isolation, to write and paint, this one room log cabin stood until the mid-1950s. Now, only the chimney, the three towering pines and memories remain." *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter* 10, no. 1 (1 January 1982).

¹⁴⁴*Hortus Third: A Concise Dictionary of Plants Cultivated in the United States and Canada*, ed., Liberty Hyde Bailey and Ethel Zoe Bailey (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976). Only the Latin names for the plant materials at Briarwood that are followed in parenthesis by the associated common names of each were verified using *Hortus Third* by Paul D. Dolinsky, Acting Chief, HALS.

Briarwood's vegetation contains hundreds of species, mostly from Louisiana and the South, but also sent from Japan and New Zealand. In 1990, there were over eight hundred taxon represented at Briarwood.¹⁴⁵ The vegetation most in evidence are pine trees, and one specimen, called Grandpappy, may be the largest specimen of *Pinus palustris* in the whole of Louisiana. Caroline Dormon noted the following plants as being located "over the place": *Quercus rubra* (Red Oak), *Quercus alba* (White Oak), *Fagus grandifolia* (Beech), *Castania floridana* (Chinquapin), *Carya alba* (White Hickory), *Carya buckleyi* Arkansas (Black Hickory, Hill Hickory), *Hydrangea quercifolia* (Oakleaf hydrangea), *Itea virginica* (Kitten-tails, Virginia Willow), *Hamamelis virginiana* (Witch hazel), *Liquidambar styraciflua* (Sweetgum), *Aronia arbutifolia* (Red Chokeberry), *Prunus mexicana* (Wild Plum), *Persea borbonia* (Red bay), *Sassafras officinale* (Sassafras), *Rhus copallina* (Sumac), *Rhus aronmatica* (Fragrant Sumac), *Rhus Vernix* (Poison Sumac), *Ilex opaca* (American Holly), *Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon), *Euonymus Americana* (Burningbush), *Acer rubrum* (Red maple), *Aesculus pavia* (Red Buckeye), *Rhamnus caroliniana* (Indian Cherry), *Vitis rotundifolia* (Muscadine), *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia Creeper), *Cornus florida* (Flowering Dogwood), *Kalmia latifolia* (Mountain Laurel), *Vaccinium* (Huckleberry), *Vaccinium arboreum* (Winter Huckleberry), *Polycodium* (Deerberry), *Diospyros virginiana* (Persimmon), *Symplocos tinctoria* (Sweetleaf), *Halesia diptera* (Silverbell), *Fraxinus Americana* (White Ash), *Chionanthus virginicus* (Fringe Tree), *Gelsemium sempervirens* (Yellow Jessamine), *Callicarpa Americana* (Beautyberry), *Callicarpa americana alba* (White Beautyberry), *Bignonia capreolata* (Crossvine), *Cephalanthus occidentalis* (Buttonbush), *Viburnum acerifolium* (Arrowwood), *Viburnum nudum*, (Nannyberry), *Viburnum scabrellum* (Arrowwood), and *Viburnum rufidulum*. (Southern Black Haw).¹⁴⁶

Today, most of these plants remain common at Briarwood. The Preserve also has a number of *Asclepias incarnata* (Swamp Milkweed), *Leucothoe axillaris* (Fetterbush), *Lilium michauxii* (Turk's Cap), *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Poplar), *Magnolia macrophylla* (large-leaved Cucumber Tree), *Platanthera clavellata*, *Polygala polygama* (Milkwort), *Prenanthes barbata* (Rattlesnake Root), *Prunella vulgaris* (Heal All), and *Tipularia discolor* (Cranefly Orchid) scattered in several places.

The Bay Garden contains over one hundred species of plants appropriate for its boggy location.¹⁴⁷ It is the primary location of iris at Briarwood, and the irises are laid in beds bordered by timbers and marked by name. A rubber industrial conveyor belt covers

¹⁴⁵ Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter, vol. 18, no. 2 (1 April 1990).

¹⁴⁶ Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve.

¹⁴⁷ Caroline commented that "Not all gardeners own bogs, so I wanted to find out just what Louisiana irises would do under all conditions. This is a well-drained site, a long way from any stream. It gets full sun until about one o'clock. Deep rows were ploughed (they could be dug), and filled with leaf-mold. A sprinkling of 4-12-4 was worked in, with a little of the native soil, which is acid sandy loam. The seeds were planted and covered lightly with peat moss and sand. That was all. [...]" Caroline Dormon, "Native Iris Journal 1945," *Home Gardening*, p. 128, in Dormon Collection, folder 789.

the pathways, preventing visitors from sinking into the bog. The plant material found in the bog includes: *Acorus americanus* (Sweet Flag), *Aletris aurea* (Yellow Colicroot), *Amianthium muscotoxicum* (Fly Poison), *Asclepias perennis* (Milkweed), *Ascyron stans* (St. John's Wort), *Aster lateriflorus* (Michaelmas Daisy), *Befaria racemosa* (Tarflower), *Boehmeria cylindrical* (Bog Hemp), *Boltonia asteroides*, *Cephalanthus occidentalis* (Buttonbush), *Chelone glabra* (Turtlehead), *Chelone lyonii* (Turtlehead), *Cicuta maculara* (Water Hemlock), *Cliftonia monophylla* (Buckwheat Tree), *Conradina canescens*, *Coreopsis rosea* (Tickseed), *Crinum americanum* (Spider Lily), *Cyrilla parviflora* (Leatherwood), *Cyrilla racemiflora* (Leatherwood), *Drosera brevifolia* (Dwarf Sundew), *Eriocaulon decangulare* (Pipewort), *Eryngium prostratum* (Eryngo), *Eupatorium fistulosum* (Boneset), *Eupatorium ivaefolium* , *Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Thoroughwort), *Forestiera ligustrina*, *Fothergilla gardenii* (Witch Alder), *Fothergilla major*, *Gentiana saponaria* (Soapwort), *Gordonia lasianthus* (loblolly Bay), *Helenium fleuosum* (Sneezeweed), *Helianthus atrorubens* (Dark Eye Sunflower), *Hexastylis speciosa* (Wild Ginger), *Hibiscus coccineus* (Mallow), *Hibiscus dasycalyx*, *Hibiscus moscheutos* (Common Rose mallow), *Hydrolea quadrivalvis*, *Hymenocallis caroliniana* (Spider Lily), *Hypericum virginicum* (St. John's Wort), *Hypoxis hirsuta* (Star Grass), *Ilex cassine* (Dahoon), *Ilex myrtifolia*, *Ilex verticillata* (Winterberry), *Iris brevicaulis* (Lamance Flag), *Iris gigantiflora*, *Iris nelsonii*, *Iris tridentata*, (Pursh Flag), *Iris virginica* (Blue Flag), *Iris x Louisiana*, *Kalmia angustifolia* (Sheep Laurel), *Kosteletzkya virginica* (Seashore Mallow), *Lachnanthes caroliniana* (redroot), *Lacnocaulon anceps*, *Leiophyllum buxifolium* (Box Sand Myrtle), *Leucothoe racemosa* (Grey Fetterbush), *Leucothoe recurva* (Red Twig Fetterbush), *Litsea aestivalis* (Pondspice), *Lonicera sempervirens* (Trumpet Honeysuckle), *Ludwigia alternifolia* (Rattlebox Loosestrife), *Ludwigia bonariensis*, *Lycopus virginicus* (Bugleweed), *Lyonia ferruginea* , *Lyonia ligustrina* (Male Berry), *Lyonia lucida* (Tetterbush), *Magnolia virginiana* (Sweet Bay), *Marshallia grandiflora* , *Marshallia tenuifolia*, *Melanthium virginicum* (Bunchflower), *Micranthemum umbrosum*, *Mikania scandens* (Climbing Hempweed), *Mimulus alatus* (Monkey Flower), *Orontium aquaticum* (Golden-Club), *Pachysandra procumbens* (Allegheny Spurge), *Phlox glaberrima* (Smooth Phlox), *Pinckneya bracteata* (Fever Tree), *Pinus glabra* (Cedar Pine), *Pluchea camphorata*, *Pluchea foetida*, *Pogonia ophioglossoides* (Rose Pogonia), *Polygala nana* (Milkwort), *Pontederia cordata* (Pickerel Weed), *Ptilimnium capillaceum*, *Rhexia alifanus* (Meadow Beauty), *Rhexia mariana*, *Rhexia virginica*, *Rhododendron Arborescens* (Smooth Azalea), *Rhododendron coryii*, *Rudbeckia laciniata* (Coneflower), *Rudbeckia mophrii*, *Samolus parviflorus* (Underwater Rose), *Sarracenia alata* (Yellow Trumpets), *Sarracenia psittacina*, *Sarracena leucophyll*, *Sarracena minor* (Hooded Pitcher Plant), *Sarracena purpurea* (Common Pitcher Plant), *Sarracena rubra* (Sweet Pitcher Plant), *Sarracena x hybrids*, *Scutellaria integrifolia* (Skullcap), *Solidago salicina* (Goldenrod), *Solidago sempervirens* (Seaside Goldenrod), *Spilanthes ameriana*, *Staphylea trifolia* (American Bladdernut), *Stokesia laevis* (Stokes' Aster), *Taxodium ascendens* (Cypress), *Tovara virginiana*,

Viburnum nudum (Smooth Withe-rod), *Xyris iridifolia* (Yellow-eyed Grass), *Zenobia pulverlenta*, and *Zephyranthes atamasco* (Atamasco Lily).¹⁴⁸

Iris are also found by the Frog Pond, especially *Iris fulva* and *Iris virginica*. The Frog Pond is also home to *Sabal minor* (Louisiana Palmetto), and it dries up in the fall.

The vegetation near Wings Rest Pond most notably includes the *Pinckneya bracteata*, which likes its toes in the water. Also found there are: *Alnus serrulata* (Alder), *Cliftonia monophylla* (Buckwheat Tree), *Habenaria repens* (Fringed Orchid) *Leucothoe racemosa* (Drooping Leucothoe), *Myrica heterophylla* (Myrtle), *Orontium aquaticum* (Golden-Club), *Pinus glabra* (Cedar Spruce), *Platanthera blepharioglottis* (Orchid), *Platanthera ciliaris*, *Pontederia cordata* (Pickerel Weed), *Rhododendron Serrulatum* (Azalea), *Sparganium Americana* (Bur Weed), *Stokesia laevis* (Stokes' Aster), *Viburnum cassinoides* (Withe-Rod), and *Viburnum nudum* (Smooth Withe-Rod).

The area around the Visitor Center is the second most diverse area at Briarwood after the Bay Garden. It has over fifty different species.¹⁴⁹ These are: *Callirhoe papaver* (Poppy Mallow), *Cenothus americanus*, *Cladrastis kentuckyii* (Yellowwood), *Clitoria mariana* (Butterfly Pea), *Conradina verticillata*, *Cooperia pedunculata*, *Coreopsis major/verticillata* (Tickseed), *Crataegus brachyacantha* (Hawthorn), *Crataegus uniflora*, *Echinacea laevigata* (Cone Flower), *Echinacea pallida*, *Echinacea purpurea* (Purple Cone Flower), *Echinacea* (Cone Flower), *Erigeron pulchellus* (Robin's Plantain), *Gaultheria procumbens* (Wintergreen), *Geranium maculatum* (Wild Geranium), *Hamamelis vernalis* (Witch Hazel), *Helianthemum caroliniana*, *Helianthemum corymbosum*, *Heterotheca mariana*, *Heuchera americana* (Alumroot), *Hymenopappus*, *Iris cristata* (Dwarf Crested Iris), *Iris verna* (Dwarf Iris), *Kalmia latifolia* (Mountain Laurel), *Liatris aspera* (Blazing-Star), *Lonicera flava* (Yellow Honeysuckle), *Monarda* (Wild Bergamot), *Myrica cerifera* (Wax Myrtle), *Oenothera fruticosa* (Sundrops), *Oenothera heterophylla*, *Phlox divaricata* (Wild Sweet William), *Prunus gracilis* (Oklahoma Plum), *Quercus imbricaria* (Shingle Oak), *Rhododendron Periclymenoides* (Pinxterbloom), *Rhynchosia latifolia*, *Ribes echinellum* (Currant), *Ribes odoratum* (Buffalo Currant), *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* (Coneflower), *Salvia coccinea* (Texas Sage), *Salvia greggii* (Autumn Sage), *Silene stellata* (Starry Champion), *Silene subciliata*, *Silene x hybrid*, *Silphium gracile* (Rosinweed), *Sisyrinchium rosulatum* (Blue-eyed Grass), *Solidago odora* (Goldenrod), *Solidago ulmifolia*, *Taenidia integerrima* (Yellow Pimpernel), *Tephrosia virginiana* (Goat's Rue), *Vaccinium crassifolium* (Creeping Blueberry), *Vaccinium myrsinites*, and *Vaccinium x Rabbit Eye*. Close by, the Old Garden has another twenty some. The vegetation here includes: *Aesculus parviflora* (Buckeye), *Aquilegia canadensis* (Wild Columbine), *Comptonia peregrina* (Sweet Fern), *Coreopsis intermedia* (Tickseed), *Croton alabamensis*, *Croton*

¹⁴⁸Plant list from Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve.

¹⁴⁹Plant list from Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve.

capitatus, *Eryngium yuccifolium* (Rattlesnake Master), *Heliopsis helianthoides* (Sunflower), *Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon), *Illicium floridanum* (Purple Anise Tree), *Magnolia ashei* (Ash Magnolia), *Magnolia cordata*, *Oenothera pilosella* (Sundrops), *Onosmodium virginianum*, *Parthenium integrifolium*, *Phlox paniculata* (Perennial Phlox), *Polygonatum biflorum* (Small Solomon's Seal), *Polymnia uvedalia*, *Rhododendron chapmanii* (Chapman's Rhododendron), *Rudbeckia nitida* (Coneflower), *Sageretia minutiflora*, *Salvia farinacea* (Mealy-Cup Sage), *Sapindus drummondii* (Soapberry), *Solidago auriculata*, *Stewartia malacodendron* (Silky Camellia), *Thalia dealbata*, and *Tradescantia ohiensis* (Spiderwort).

The Wildflower Meadow is about one acre in size, thick with flowers waist-high that bloom in succession.¹⁵⁰ Plants here include: *Allium stellatum* (Prairie Onion), *Callirhoe papaver* (Poppy Mallow), *Cupressus arizonica* (Arizona Cypress), *Gaillardia aestivakus*, *Gaillardia pulchella*, *Heterotheca subaxillaris*, *Liatris graminifolia* (Blazing Star), *Linum sp.* (Flax), *Lythrum sp.* (Loosestrife), *Oenothera fruticosa* (Sundrops), *Oenothera heterophylla*, *Physostegia digitalis* (False Dragonhead), *Psoralea simplex* (Scurfy Pea), *Pyrrhoppappus carolinianus*, *Quercus arkansana*, *Rudbeckia alismaefolia*, *Rudbeckia hirta* (Black-Eyed Susan), *Ruellia humilis*, *Schrankia microphylla* (Sensitive Brier), and *Senecio tomentosus* (Groundsel).

The Shagbark Hickory Area is marked by the following: *Amorpha canescens* (Lead Plant), *Amorpha fruticosa* (Bastard Indigo), *Aster novae-angliae* (New England Aster), *Gordonia lasianthus* (Loblolly Bay), *Physostegia longisepala*, *Physostegia virginiana*, *Pycnanthemum albescens*, *Rosa palustris* (Swamp Rose), *Salix humilis* (Prairie Willow), *Salix tristis*, *Senecio aureus* (Golden Groundsel), and *Vernonia noveboracensis* (Ironweed).

Around the Log House is a grassy lawn, a break from the regular canopy of trees. Unique vegetation to this area includes: *Aesculus parviflora* (Buckeye), *Cercis Canadensis* (Redbud), *Dirca palustris* (Wicopy), *Iris verna* (Dwarf Iris), *Sophora affinis*, and *Spigelia marilandica* (Indian Pink).

¹⁵⁰ Caroline Dormon, "Our Vanishing Wild Flowers (And Why They Are Vanishing)," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 832. Wildflowers were particularly important to Dormon and she noted in this article that "only one who has lived with the wild flowers for fifty years can appreciate how rapidly they are going. As a child, I saw the wild gardens in the Longleaf pine hills --- they are practically gone. [...] We can all gather seeds of lovely native species, and plant them in favorable spots. We can never bring back a virgin forest of Longleaf pine, but there is much that we can do to, [...], bring back Louisiana's vanishing wild flowers." She also said that "the flower that has brought Louisiana more fame than any other is the fabulous Louisiana Iris. It once grew in colorful masses within the city limits of New Orleans. Most of these have surrendered to the encroachment of civilization. [...] unfortunately, [the iris] is a temperamental plant, and efforts to bring it into cultivation are largely responsible for its rapid disappearance from the wild."

Plants unique to the landscaping around the Writer's Cabin include: *Aster aromatica*, *Ilex coriacea* (Large Gallberry), *Isotria verticillata* (Green Alderling), and *Zanthoxylum clava-herculis* (Southern Prickly Ash).

The garden at the Headquarters Building contains many small shrubs including: *Alophia drummondii*, *Heterotheca pinifolia*, *Polygonella americana* (Jointweed), *Rubus* Sp. (Bramble), and *Salvia azurea* (Blue Sage).

Castanea dentate (American Chestnut) is found near the Education Building; *Cladrastis kentuckyii* in the Nora Garden; *Clematis glaucophylla*, *Erythronium albidum* (White Dog-Toothed Violet), *Nemastylis geminiflora*, *Verbescina helianthoides*, *Veronicastrum virginicai* in the Triangle Bed; and *Juglans nigra* (Black Walnut) and *Lonicera sempervirens* (Trumpet Honeysuckle) in the Parking Area.

Magnolia unifolisa is found on the property donated by the heirs of May Nichols.

The Dark Place is characterized by oaks, *Melanthium virginicum* (Bunchflower), *Verbesina occidentalis*, and *Zephryanthes atamasco* (Atamasco Lily). The trail along the old Louisiana and Northwest Railroad Tram is home to *Sagittaria latifolia* (Wapato) and *Saururus cemus* (Water Dragon). *Decumaria barbara* (Climbing Hydrangea), *Myrica inodora*, and *Xanthorhiza simplicissima* (Shrub Yellow-Root) are located at the Ford Crossing.

Jessie Johnson considers the following to be pests: *Acer negundo* (Box Elder), *Ambrosia*, *Artemisia vulgaris* (Mugwort), *Cardamine pensylvanica*, *Erechtites*, *Facelis retusa*, *Laminum amplexicaule*, *Mazus japonicus*, *Phyllanthus urinaria*, *Soliva pterosperma*, and *Vicia sp.* (Vetch). Johnson also observes that in the preserve: *Ilex opaca* (American Holly), *Magnolia grandiflora* (Southern Magnolia), and *Mitchella repens* (Partridgeberry) are dominant and widespread species. In addition, Briarwood has a few specimens of: *Pinus palustris* (Longleaf Pine), *Prunus angustifolia* (Chickasaw Plum), *Prunus serotina* (Black Cherry), *Quercus macrocarpa* (Bur Oak), *Rhus vernix* (Poison Sumac) and *Tilia Americana* (American Linden).

5. Circulation

There is essentially one main route through the nature preserve, named for Caroline Dormon, and various trails and cart paths cut through for visitors' and maintenance accessibility concerns. Neither the road nor the trails and paths are paved; all follow the topography of the preserve. (figs. 6-8)

Visitors enter from Louisiana State Highway 9 onto Nature Preserve Road.¹⁵¹ Nature Preserve Road joins up with Caroline Dormon Road for a small distance - about 420 meters - and then bears right. Nature Preserve Road runs northwest through the preserve proper and continues into the adjoining privately-owned property. Caroline Dormon Road runs from the Old Briarwood Plantation Cemetery through the Briarwood Gate, becoming the main road through the nature preserve.¹⁵² A Utility Road cuts into the grounds, connecting to Louisiana State Highway 9 and terminating where it meets Caroline Dormon Road, just past the Frog Pond. The road continues from the Frog Pond through the Dark Place, then bears left to the Visitor Center, the Headquarters Building and the parking area and then follows the line of The Old Sparta Trace. The Old Sparta Trace continues southwest through the property; as it crosses through the hillier portions, the trace resembles a sunken road. After crossing the Dormon Branch, Holly Ridge Road, which leads to the Writer's Cabin, loops around and eventually meets back up with the Old Sparta Trace, but off of the grounds of the preserve.

The Charlotte Collins Trail begins at the Bay Garden, runs parallel to Dormon Branch, the meets up with the old Louisiana and Northwest Railroad Tram trail, which runs parallel to Louisiana State Highway 9, crossing the Utility Road and eventually meeting Nature Preserve Road.

6. Water

Water runs from the Twelve Acres Bog into the dammed Wings Rest Pond. From the pond, the Dormon Branch runs south of the Bay Garden, where it then meets the intermittent or wet-weather stream coming from that location; the stream originating at the Bay Garden joins the one from the Frog Pond before meeting up with the Dormon

¹⁵¹ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 3 (July 1978). Here Johnson observes that Louisiana State Highway 9 has been rebuilt. While by sometime in the 1960s, State Road 6 was discontinued. A note to that effect was filed with a description of Briarwood, putting Dormon there for fifty years, and so a date was extrapolated (1916+50= mid 1960s). Dormon Collection, folder 1109.

¹⁵² The cemetery is not located within the boundaries of the preserve. Richard Johnson said that it is believed that the cemetery began when the Sweat family arrived, as one of their slaves had died en route. Others preserved the body with salt until he or she could be properly interred. Sweat gave the slaves a small plot of land on the plantation for use as a cemetery, which gave rise to the present burial ground. Brian Cockrell, Archaeologist, NSU Cultural Resources Office, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, March 2004. More information about the cemetery appears in the April 2001 *Newsletter*: "On [the original Briarwood plantation] was a cemetery [...] for the slaves of Dr. Sweat, Dr. Edgerton and Laurence Patterson. After the Civil War and emancipation the descendants continued to use this cemetery until the late 1940s. Because of its significance to Briarwood I asked the present owners, Willamette Industries Inc., [about] the possibility of donating the cemetery to Briarwood. I thank Clyde Knox their District Forester for helping us win the Willamette's approval. We look forward to working with descendants of the Tobin, Patterson, Nolley families, and others in preserving this historic place." *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter* 29, no. 2 (1 April 2001). Above-ground evidence of the "Old Briarwood Plantation Cemetery" consists of about twenty modern headstones; the cemetery is enclosed by a wire fence. It was in use throughout the twentieth century. Site visit, 2003.

Branch (fig. 9).¹⁵³ The Dormon Branch then runs southwest into the Beech Garden Swamp.

Readheimers Mill Creek also runs into the Beech Garden Swamp, but from the northwest, coming in past the Bluff. May Branch meets Readheimers Mill Creek upstream of this point, near the second intersection of the Old Sparta Trace and Holly Ridge Road, on property not yet acquired by the nature preserve. Richard Johnson hopes the foundation can acquire the piece directly south of the 1995 Hughes-Nichols donation because as a watershed, it is free of human habitation.

7. Buildings and Structures

There are seven extant structures on the grounds of the nature preserve today. They are located in the center of the property, in three general clusters or groups. The Visitor Center, Headquarters, and Equipment buildings are in one area, just across Caroline Dormon Road from these buildings is the second group, consisting of the Environmental Educational or Interpretative Center and Caroline Dormon's Log House. The final cluster is the Writer's Cabin, or Three Pines Cabin, and adjacent Necessity Cabin located west of the other two groups and off of Holly Ridge Road.

The Log House, built in 1950 for Dormon as her residence, now serves as the Caroline Dormon Museum. It has a gable roof and four rooms inside: two bedrooms, a kitchen and a living area, plus a bathroom and closets and hallway between Caroline Dormon's bedroom and the kitchen. It has a full front porch (rock floor) and a full screen back porch (cement floor). Caroline Dormon designed it, and she selected the logs for it herself, from Briarwood trees.¹⁵⁴ In 1950-51, Dormon insured the structure for \$1000 and

¹⁵³ The *Newsletter* mentions the ponds in its 1987 edition as well as a well dug to help combat the summer droughts in 1980. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1 January 1987); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1 October 1980). Dormon herself observed that "[she] would not have a country place without a stream. It lends some nameless enchantment to the woods. Today walked down into the little dell through which runs the 'Roadway Branch.' There the trees are very large and tall, open beneath. When tired or distraught, discouraged and blue, when nerves are too taut, this cool gloom always casts a spell upon me. It is like falling into tender, gentle hands. Please God, don't let anybody take my woods away from me!" Caroline Dormon 2 September 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 922.

¹⁵⁴ Caroline Dormon, "Homo Sapiens," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B. Dormon wrote that "my forest is not quite 'virgin,' but it gives that effect. Over the years some trees have been taken out, [...] Then my log cabin is built of my own pines, which I personally selected. The straightest ones went into the building, then others had to be sold to pay for construction. But these trees were spotted about here and there, and are missed by me alone." Commenting on the progress of construction, Dormon wrote in 1950 that she had gotten some men "from the river to peel logs for my cabin, as they would ruin if not attended to." Caroline Dormon to Mrs. Oscar Shanks, [25 February 1950?], Dormon Collection, folder 155.

Dormon built other structures on the property, namely her writer's cabin, what she called the "Three Pines Cabin." See W.R. Hine, Supt. Of Forestry to Miss Caroline Dormon, Extension Forester, Chestnut, LA, 4 August 1928, Dormon Collection, folder 356.

In 1949, Hine sent Dormon a copy of "Building with Logs," and passed on landscape architect Winton

its contents for an additional \$1000. The policy covered a "one-story, frame, shingle roof, one-family dwelling occupied by the owner, situated six miles from Chestnut, Louisiana [... and] household furniture and personal effects while contained in the above described property."¹⁵⁵ Dormon's neighbor said that John Hines of Goldonna built the house for her, that Joseph Smith made some of the furniture for the house, and that R. Louis Johnson added a cement porch to the structure.¹⁵⁶ (fig. 10)

The Headquarters Building was built in 1975-76. It was designed by Natchitoches architect E.P. Dobson, Jr., and the contractor was George Allbritton of Robeline. The following companies donated materials: Acme Brick Co., Shreveport; Acme Cement Co., Natchitoches; Almond Brothers Lumber & Supply, Coushatta; Anthony Lumber Industries, Mansfield; B & F Lumber Co., Natchitoches; Bodcaw Lumber Co., Jena and Coushatta; Bolinger Lumber Co., Bossier City; Campti Lumber Co., Continental Can Co., Hodge; Custom Builders, Inc., Natchitoches; Dowden Roofing & Metal Co., Natchitoches; Howard Lumber Co., Natchitoches; Kelly-Weber & Co., Natchitoches; Lacaze Sheet Metal Co., Natchitoches; Louisiana Pacific Co., Winnfield; Long Sheet Metal Co., Natchitoches; Martin Timber Co., Castor; Natchitoches Lumber Yard, Natchitoches; Western Kraft, Campti; Willamette, Natchitoches and Ruston; and Woodard & Walker, Taylor. The windows came from Warroad, Minnesota. It has a wood shake hipped roof with a central rock chimney, skylights and sliding doors to a back porch. It has three bedrooms, a kitchen, laundry room, attached garage, large living/meeting area, and office. Richard and Jessie Johnson have lived here since its completion.¹⁵⁷ (fig. 11)

The Visitor Center was under construction in 1983. The structure retains the basic, two-room footprint of the house Caroline Dormon and her sister Virginia Dormon Miller had constructed when they moved to Briarwood, and could possibly be dated to as early as 1916. The Visitor Center also reused the central chimney, made of brick masonry, that once heated the sisters' house. The Visitor Center consists of two main rooms, one of which is a screened-in porch, and has bathrooms for the visitors. Outside,

Reinsmith's recommendations for using well-seasoned logs and treating them with pentachlorophenol; Reinsmith also suggested "that the roof be overhung so that it will protect the logs from the weather." W.R. Hine, Assistant Regional Forester, Atlanta, GA, to Miss Caroline Dormon, Saline, LA, 14 December 1949, Dormon Collection, folder 359. This would have been in preparation for the new residence, erected in the following year(s).

The Log House received a new roof in the late 1970s and it was pictured in the January of 2002 *Newsletter*. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 1977); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1 January 2002).

¹⁵⁵Dormon Collection, folder 1324.

¹⁵⁶LSU, MSS. 3180 (Britt, "Sketches of Miss Caroline Dormon"). Note: R. Louis Johnson was Richard L. Johnson's father.

¹⁵⁷*Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 3, no. 4 (October 1975)- vol. 4, no. 3 (July 1976); Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, 13 August 1975, Longue Vue House and Gardens, New Orleans.

there are cement picnic tables designed and built by Jessie Johnson's brother-in-law.¹⁵⁸
(fig. 12)

In 1987 the nature preserve received a \$5,000 grant from the Gannet Foundation, that was matched by a donation from Dorothy Milling, to rebuild Caroline Dormon's writing cabin, which she called the "Three Pines Cabin" after the three pine trees nearby.¹⁵⁹ The cabin Dormon had erected on the property was gone by the mid-1950s. The present structure, called the Writer's Cabin, is a replica of the ca. 1928 original used by Dormon. Richard Johnson took measurements of the cabin ruins and then resurrected it, but of termite-treated wood, according to those plans in 1988. It is a one-room log cabin on a log foundation; the original stone chimney was reused.¹⁶⁰ A "chalet de necessity" was built in 1994 to provide a bathroom and kitchenette for guests (writers/researchers) staying at the cabin.¹⁶¹ (fig. 13)

The 60' equipment building with 20' ell near the Headquarters Building was built in 1988 for a cost of \$6495.48. It is made of aluminum and used for maintenance vehicles (tractors) and golf cart storage.¹⁶² (fig. 14)

The Environmental Education (Interpretive) Center was completed in 1999, funded through a \$93,000 grant from the COYPU Foundation. Richard Johnson drew the plans for the building (in consultation with educators), and it is used for school groups, seminars and plant sales. It has bathrooms, a large kitchen and meeting area inside. The building was erected using frame construction, its floor made of concrete, and is covered by a gable roof.¹⁶³ (fig. 15)

¹⁵⁸ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 11, no. 2 (April 1983); this edition also features an under-construction photograph of the Visitor Center. Two years earlier, the *Newsletter* reported on the plans for the Visitor Center – a 18' x 36' footprint, with a front porch and back deck – designed to house an assembly room and restroom facilities. It was to be constructed on the site of a house located there prior to 1971. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 9, no. 3 (July 1981). The "finishing touches" were put onto the building by April of 1985. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 13, no. 2 (April 1985).

¹⁵⁹ One of the pine trees died in the early 1970s, around 1973, and so the name was altered. Visitors were confused because there were no longer three trees by the "Three Pines Cabin." Richard Johnson, Curator, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 20 May 2004.

¹⁶⁰ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 15, no. 1 (January 1987). Johnson mentioned in the 1982 *Newsletter* that the Foundation hoped to restore this cabin, and reported that work was underway in 1987. The cabin is featured subsequent newsletters, with two illustrating it both as-rebuilt and it in the 1930s. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1 January 1982); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 15, no. 3 (July 1987); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 16, nos. 3-4 (July-October 1988); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1 July 1993). See also, Dormon Collection, folder 346 (1-C-3).

¹⁶¹ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1994).

¹⁶² *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 16, no. 2 (April 1988). The *Newsletter* reported that ground was broken and the plans were drawn as early as 1985. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 13, no. 2 (April 1985).

¹⁶³ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 27, nos. 1-3 (January-July 1999).

8. Small-scale Elements

Small-scale elements at Briarwood include plant labels (carved onto wood), an entrance gate made of wood bearing the name Briarwood, small bridges over streams and over the Wings Rest Pond dam, cement benches that wrap around large pine trees, cement picnic tables, and birdbaths.¹⁶⁴ (fig. 16)

9. Views/Vistas

The attitude of those at Briarwood is for all to see and rejoice in the small details of nature, and Caroline Dormon's skill in flower and bird illustration and blueprinting is proof of that philosophy. However the sand hills are small and the vegetation is thick throughout the preserve, and so Briarwood lacks both created and incidental views. In spite of this, the Wildflower Meadow, the Wings Rest Pond, the front of the Log House, the chimney side of the Writer's Cabin, and the road are favorite vistas for photographers.

10. Other- Fauna

Briarwood is rich in animal life as well as plant life. Caroline Dormon's manuscript, "The Trouble I've Seen," discusses many of the animals who posed threat to her wildlings: rabbits, raccoons, armadillos, hogs, crayfish, deer, crayfish, "vile lubber grasshoppers", and humans all made the list. Other less threatening animals present at Briarwood include salamanders, five-striped skunks, anoles, box turtles, frogs, snakes, countless insects, and a host of birds that even today attract birdwatchers.¹⁶⁵

C. Date of Site Visit

The historian was on-site between June 27th and August 14th, 2003.

D. NRHP/NHL Status

Neither National Register of Historic Places nor National Historic Landmark documentation of Briarwood have been completed.

PART III. INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

¹⁶⁴ The fence was replaced by the entrance gate sometime before April of 1998, and a Briarwood sign was made for the railroad at Chestnut by April of 1978. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 2 (April 1978); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1 April 1998).

¹⁶⁵ Caroline Dormon, "Friends and Enemies of the Garden: Enemies," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 759; Caroline Dormon, "The Four-Footers," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B; Caroline Dormon, "They Are Garden Plants," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 870.

A. Summary Analysis

Richard and Jessie Johnson were specially trained by Caroline Dormon to care for Briarwood, and since 1971, they have scrutinized every decision regarding changes at Briarwood, posing the question, "What would Caroline do?" They have made minimal changes, building only to better provide for the public. Of the structures on-site, only Caroline Dormon's Log House can be said to retain integrity although Dormon would probably recognize the reconstructed Three Pines Cabin, or Writer's Cabin as it is known today. The Johnsons have maintained the gardens, and have continued to add plants to the collection augmenting it just as Caroline Dormon did during her lifetime. Locations of garden sites, such as the various bogs and ponds, have not changed; alterations generally tend to be in plant material however in keeping with Dormon's preferences and with species that have a documented presence at Briarwood.

In the years after Dormon died, changes to Briarwood are noted in the annual *Newsletters* (1973-2003) of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve; the *Newsletters* generally chronicle the type of plant material or activity, however, specific locations within the preserve are noted only intermittently. Another account of changes to the Dormon-era landscape comes from the Dormon Collection, folder 91. Together these sources catalogue events that could be said to effect the integrity of the historic landscape, and include the following:

- 1972 - Re-establish the Bay Garden with donations of Louisiana irises from Barbara Nelson, Charles Army, J.K. Mertzweiller, Sidney and Inez Conger, Marvin Granger, Laurie Reid, and Frank Chowning.
- 1973 - Continue work in the Bay Garden, clearing it out, raking in humus, putting logs down as borders; fifty new varieties of Louisiana iris, including those developed at Briarwood like "The Khan" and "Saucy Minx" as well as the "Wheelhorse" donated; other plant materials added were native orchids, the native tree orchid Green-fly, yellow Lady's Slipper orchids, and a grove of *Magnolia macrophylla* to arrive in the fall.
- 1974 - Add to native azalea collection with trip to Georgia; also bring back mountain laurels; receive as gifts: *Rhododendron maximum* and *Rhododendron roseumelegans*; Friendship Oak; Louisiana iris "Mary S. DeBaillon"; and *Magnolia macrophylla*; add Star Anise and Mountain Laurel to trail; receive seedling Longleaf Pines and seeds; receive daylilies for parking area; introduce Shadow Witch orchid and Leatherwood to wild gardens; receive native violets, Snowbell, white-berried dogwood, *Viburnum Apalachicola*; Girl Scouts clear area known as the Bluff and plant small trees there, also plant Cardinal flowers and transplant the Christmas ferns to this spot at base of hill.
- 1975 - Building the Headquarters.
- 1976 - Paint the new house (Headquarters); dig field lines for septic tank; work in Bay Garden; volunteers from the US Forest Service removed abandoned fences and built a new trail,

whereas the Park Service contributed road work and pruning; receive as gift the azalea *alabamense*.

1977 - Completion of the Headquarters-residence structure; improve the entrance road to allow the passage of buses; note Youth Conservation Corps built a retaining wall; water line buried; note presence of two tiny seedling yellow Lady's Slipper orchids, *Cypripedium calceolus*, in the Bay Garden as a result of the pollination program begun four years ago; receive a truck-load of plants including Japanese maples as well as a donation of land that consists of the abandoned right-of-way for the Louisiana and Northwest railroad that borders the preserve.

Plans for the next five years include developing this area as a walking trail as well as repairing the log house, building a new fence for preserve, creating a new entrance road so all traffic is all one-way, doubling the present foot-paths, providing means of travel for those who can't walk, i.e., golf cart, restoring the flower garden behind the house, enlarging the Bay Garden to two times its present size, restoring the Dark Place, rebuilding the Three Pines Cabin, and installing an irrigation system.

1978 - Louisiana State Highway 9 rebuilt; add plant material including spice bush, ladies tress orchid, nutmeg hickory; irrigation pump; trails widened for use by golf carts.

1979 - Begin collection of old roses and preliminary land preparation by Horticulture Club for rose garden; undertake a summer trip to Pennsylvania to collect plants, including Skunk Cabbage; go on a seed gathering trip to Arkansas; receive as gift three native *Magnolia pyramidatas* and several herbaceous plants; receive as gift twenty-five yellow native azaleas from Alabama; receive as gift wildflower seeds including Lady Lupine, *Lupinus villosa*; acorns of Bur Or Mossy Cup Oak; Bur Oak, *Quercus macrocarpa* and possibly northern red oak acorns from Missouri; Texas bluebonnet, *Lupinus subcarinosus*; ladies tress orchid, *Spiranthes odorata*, nutmeg hickory nuts, *Carya myristicaeformis*, bulbs, and 100 Dixie Deb a Louisiana Iris; note presence of a well pump large enough for irrigation and two new Briarwood signs on Louisiana State Highway 9.

1980 - Add plant material through fall planting trip and donations; these include shrubs, roses, assorted herbaceous plants, seeds, bulbs, native azaleas, and *Magnolia cordata*; begin year with gift of greenhouse frame and pots, etc.; Dr. Richard J. Stadtherr of LSU Department of Horticulture brought select specimens, some just released by the National Arboretum.

1981 - Continue work on the Roses-of-Yester-year Garden and the picnic area near the Visitor Center; break ground for the Visitor Center; make progress on reclaiming the old railroad area; add plant material including *Stewartia malacodendron*, Bonnie dogwood, two pink dogwoods, and Louisiana bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis* which was endangered from a logging operation; add a three tier birdbath made of native sandstone rock.

1982 - Continue restoration of iris garden with new beds and with new walkways; hope to start planting roses this year; hope to add to collection of native azaleas; note framework going up on Visitor Center; receive as gift four native Oakleaf Hydrangea *Hydrangea quercifolia x Snowflake*; pink flowering poppy mallow native to South Dakota; red flowering clematis of Texas; add: yellow Anise Tree, *Illicium parviflorum*, *Magnolia asheii*, *Rhododendron chapmanii*, *Rhododendron bakeri*, *Kalmia hirsuta*, *Rhododendron atlanticum*, *Rhododendron oblongifolium*, White Cedar, *Chamaecyparis thyoides*, *Ilex opaca*, and *pinus virginiana*.

Reflect on accomplishments of the last ten years: Restoration and expansion of the Bay Garden; placement of hundreds of rare and beautiful shrubs and trees all over the preserve; acquisition of a golf cart; installation of an irrigation system; acquisition of tractor/power equipment; completion of the Headquarters; and acknowledgment that now able to propagate from own stock.

1983 - Note number of native species planted and surviving at Briarwood at fifty-three; Visitor Center due for completion in April of 1984; discover *Calopogon pulchellus* orchid growing at Briarwood, meaning now have sixteen species of native orchids on-site; create the Louisiana Native Plant Society and in doing so realize another of Dormon's dreams - this for a state wide wildflower society; receive \$300 from the Briarwood Horticulture Society for purchase of native azaleas not available in area; note rescued Louisiana bloodroot bloomed this year.

1984 - Note desire to add *Lilium catesbaei* to the Bay Garden for a late August bloom; note the planting of materials paid for by Briarwood Horticulture Society.

1985 - Note the occurrence of an attack of southern pine beetles and subsequent tree loss; re-bed the Louisiana iris or essentially re-plant the Bay Garden; note plans for a trip to Aiken, South Carolina for more plants, plans to add more than a hundred plants including some "first times," and plans to build a birdwatcher's trail to the lower pond; break ground for equipment building; add rare species to Briarwood, including: Parrot Pitcher-plant, *Sarracenia psittancia*; Arkansas Oak *Quercus arkansana*; and *Crataegus uniflora*; bulbs of *Lilium catesbaei*; *Thalia dealbata*; natives: Carolina Magnolia-vine *Schizandra coccinea*; *Philadelphus hirsutus*, *Rhododendron catawbiense insularis* and *Rhododendron chapmani*.

1987 - Schedule construction on the Writer's Cabin, formerly known as the Three Pines Cabin, for the summer months; select logs to be used for the building.

1988 - Host an Open House to show off restoration of log house, new equipment building, and Writer's Cabin.

1989 - Acquire plant materials from Aiken, South Carolina.

- 1990 - Receive gift of a Louisiana Iris; note gratitude for the previous donation of an irrigation pump.
- 1992 - Create new Louisiana iris garden on the hillside behind the Visitor Center (not a bog); repair trail in this area with mixture of clay and gravel; install view point at the pond using flat ironstone rocks; re-do the upper parking area east of the log house; plant sea oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium* at outer perimeter of curved steps leading up to Writer's Cabin; plant native azaleas *Rhododendron canescens* on nearby hill; note loss of a sweetgum behind the Visitor Center.
- 1993 - Rebuild and improve the main trails making them more level and free of "scenic roots"; plan to vacuum leaves from bottom of pond to use for compost; at eastern boundary, plant golden clubs *Orontium aquaticum* and summer sweet *Clethra alnifolia* in marsh where spring flows from the cut-bank and next year plan to start mountain laurels *Kalmia latifolia* on steep bank there; replace aggressive species with more desirable natives such as the *Magnolia virginiana* throughout the preserve.
- 1994 - Continue construction of the "Chalet de Necessity" by the Writer's Cabin; build new trail through the Baygall area, which is a mecca of bog plants, sweetbay *Magnolia virginiana*, blackgum *Nyssa sylvatica*, pines and hollies; make a corduroy base of small logs to support the dirt trail; re-locate two wildlife shelters (formerly known as brush piles) from this area; plant Christmas ferns in beds along the Fern Walk behind the Visitor Center; cover new earth work on pond dam with mosses.
- 1995 - Spend summer trail building; finish the Highline Trail to juncture with old railroad/tram trail; this area must be kept open because of the powerline and so planted with sun loving perennials; receive donation of land, with uncommon native plants, plus oaks, hickories, and Adder's tongue orchid, *Malaxis unifolia* growing on it; transplant green and gold groundcover, *Chrysogonum virginanum var. australe* to the Writer's Cabin area on Tom Sawyer Day; build small bridge across stream above Wings Rest Pond to complete the Baygall trail; receive log fern *Dryopteris celsa* to plant in fern area; plant May blooming azalea *Rhododendron X May Pink* near fern beds; work on the landscape display garden by the Visitor Center; plan to convert wet weather stream to year-round by installing a pipe from nearby spring; plan to have short walking trail through here; repair, build, and plant are winter-time tasks.
- 1996 - Receive Distinguished Merit Award from the Society of Louisiana Irises, an organization of which Dormon was a charter member and that was instrumental in helping re-establish the Louisiana irises for the Bay Garden in 1973 and 1974.
- 1997 - Express gratitude for existing irrigation pump; note discovery of the Crested Coral Root orchid, *Hexalectis spicata*, growing in hillside sand pit; receive plants on wish list as

donations; Tom Sawyer Day plans include cleaning around the Bigleaf Magnolia area near the log house.

- 1998 - Plant more native azaleas; note presence of a new rail fence at front entry gates (Northwestern State University students led by Karen Cole do the work); note loss of some pines due to high winds.
- 1999 - Dedicate the new interpretive center, called the Environmental Education Center; restore part of the Nora Garden at the Dark Place by clearing out wisteria.
- 2000 - Note the running of the irrigation pump at the upper end of Wings Rest Pond non-stop because of the drought; fill Frog Pond with water from Wings Rest Pond; install new irrigation line (Camp Beauregard Correctional Facility crews do the work); note existence of a new wood fired stove; recall discovery of one plant of Lunar Fern, *Botrychium lunariodes*, in the Wildflower Meadow - now have several more.
- 2001 - Continue work on the exit road, which will be a "all-weather" dirt and gravel surface; remove underbrush from west hillside by Wings Rest Pond; bury water line (Northwestern State University student-volunteers do the work).
- 2002 - Note how the hillside east of the Visitor Center is covered in large white oak trees and how a mower was acquired to maintain said hillside; note this area to tie in with handicap accessible trail planned for the old railroad tram that borders east boundary of the preserve; continue the road building work and transplanting of seedling azaleas to the new entry; plants used for the new entrance include ferns, trilliums, and mayapples as understory plantings to make area look like it's been there forever; plant *Magnolia macrophylla*, re-furbish wildlife shelters throughout the preserve.

B. Integrity of Landscape Features

1. Organization

Briarwood remains essentially as Caroline Dormon left it, and is defined not by sweeping views or ornamental gardens but rather by the abundance of Shortleaf and Loblolly Pine trees and hardwoods and a few Longleaf Pine trees, plus trails meandering through the forest to the natural marshes, man-made ponds, and wildflower meadows. The forest is the overall organizing physical feature of the preserve and provides the preserve's most distinctive visual association - being at once its ground, vertical and overhead lines of sight. Caroline Dormon Road meets with the Old Sparta Road and is the main thoroughfare through the grounds; trails follow the natural topography. Although there are buildings within the preserve, they do not serve to subdivide the property instead are merely nestled into the surrounding landscape. While much effort is exerted to ensure the natural look of the preserve, the Johnsons - as did Caroline Dormon

- manipulate the landscape through weeding, transplanting, and cultivation of certain species and delight in its ephemeral qualities when new flowers appear. The changes may alter the landscape from that which Caroline Dormon touched, but follow the precedent she established and leave the spatial organization of the nature preserve intact.

2. Land Use

Briarwood is still mostly used as a place to study and appreciate nature. As a nature preserve, it differs somewhat from a private individual's garden in the amount of explanatory guidance and direction. Throughout Caroline Dormon's lifetime, Briarwood lost most of its use as a farm, and Caroline led its return to a forest state. In 1920, tenant farmer T.J. Woodall grew crops of corn, cotton, watermelon, potatoes and sorghum, and kept a calf pasture. Chickens were also kept, but in her later years, Caroline planted *Eryngium* in the site of the chicken coop, taking advantage of the alkaline soil caused by the chicken manure. Virginia Miller kept a cow through 1937 at least, the calf-pasture being the site of the headquarters' building. Miller planted a vegetable garden each year (during the first twelve days of the year) behind the current visitors' center. She also maintained an orchard of peaches, pears, and other fruits, although her sister preferred to eat vegetables. Nora Patterson worked for Caroline Dormon as her housekeeper and garden helper, while Patterson's daughter Dosia worked as her cook. Dormon herself made jelly out of quince, a tree that grew naturally at Briarwood, and that was typical of her affinity for the natural. Her plantings were not arranged neatly in beds but in organic groupings, so that they appeared to be unplanted. The exception to this was the Bay Garden. Iris had to be planted in beds because they need new dirt every three years, and Caroline Dormon's competitive hybridizing of the iris required careful organization. During Dormon's last years, her iris did not receive the attention they needed to thrive in the Bay Garden. When Briarwood opened to the public, the iris had to be replaced. Cuttings from plants originally grown at Briarwood were gathered from Dormon's friends and admirers, and so returned to Briarwood's gardens. The Bay Garden was also expanded from an "Oklahoma-shape" to a rectangle by the Johnsons. The Johnsons have maintained other gardens started by Caroline Dormon, namely the Wildflower Meadow and the Old Garden. Caroline Dormon kept rock gardens as early as 1937, and the traces of rock gardens (i.e., the rocks) can be found behind the Visitor Center and on the hill between the log house and Wings Rest Pond.

Briarwood land, over the years, has been put to more utilitarian and public ends than its reputation as Caroline Dormon's sanctuary would imply. Granted right-of-way access in 1905, the railroad was built through the eastern edge of Briarwood. The railroad bed now forms part of eastern boundary of the preserve. The railroad was abandoned by

1950.¹⁶⁶ On occasion, beetle infested pine trees needed to be removed; in those instances, Dormon would consent to some pulpwood cutting. One such cutting took place around 1960. Dormon also leased rights for mineral mining and the harvesting of natural gas from time to time in the twentieth century.¹⁶⁷ In addition, there were Miller's entrepreneurial activities such as the girls camp, canned vegetable business, and Wild Gardens nursery at Briarwood.¹⁶⁸ These activities conflict with the non-profit nature of the foundation entrusted with the natural preservation of the property, and so they have been replaced with field trips for school groups and garden clubs, hiking and bird watching.

3. Vegetation

Garden plantings behind the Visitor Center survive from the 1930s, some trees from the 1890s and probably longer, such as Grandpappy, the Longleaf Pine which is over two hundred years old. Jessie Johnson puts most of her work into the Visitor Center Garden and the Bay Garden; Johnson says that she could work in the Bay Garden every day and still have work to do. These gardens have been restored, and new plants added to them just as Caroline Dormon continuously introduced new material to Briarwood. As a whole, Briarwood is probably more densely planted than during Caroline's lifetime because plants have matured and because, as Richard Johnson says, "both Jessie and Miss Carrie plant three plants where there should be only one." Caroline herself admitted as much, writing in "How Trees Do Grow!" that "even with [her] long experience with trees and shrubs, [she has] often been guilty of over-planting."¹⁶⁹

4. Circulation

¹⁶⁶The Chestnut-Natchitoches part of the line was abandoned in 1921; service to the Gibsland-Chestnut portion stopped in 1950. Between Chestnut and Black Lake, Louisiana State Highway 9 follows the former railroad bed. Cuts for the railroad are evident along Louisiana State Highway 6 south of Grand Ecore. The 1910 Natchitoches Depot is now City Hall. *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter* 22, no. 3 (1 July 1994).

¹⁶⁷Regarding pulpwood cutting, Caroline Dormon observed that "the road has dried off enough for the pulpwood cutters to resume. I am glad for they will have to quit very soon. I must get debris cleared up and road worked before the spring flood of company." Caroline Dormon, 16 January 1961, Dormon Collection, folder [1960-1971 diaries/notes]. When necessary, Dormon used the lure of pulpwood cutting to get contractors to commit to coming out to Briarwood to haul beetle-infested pine trees away. She would typically allow no more than what would make up a full load to be cut at one time. There was, then, no extensive tree cutting for commercial use at Briarwood. Jessie Johnson to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 4 August 2004.

Although leasing the rights to the land, Dormon ran off the seismic crews. She did not allow surface drilling or mining. Moreover, during World War II, the army requested permission to run maneuvers on Briarwood land. Dormon refused. In the late 1950s, Dormon also forbade the "sage brush maneuvers" from taking place at Briarwood. For this she incurred some ill-will. Jessie Johnson to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 4 August 2004.

¹⁶⁸Dormon Collection, folder 1388; Dormon Collection, folder 1094.

¹⁶⁹Caroline Dormon, "How Trees Do Grow!" n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 825B.

Louisiana State Highway 9 is still the only public approach road, although the older Sparta Trace was used up until World War II. Today the Old Sparta Road or Trace joins Caroline Dormon Road within the grounds of the nature preserve.

Early in the Foundation's history, the *Newsletter* cautioned visitors to remember the trails such as the one named for Charlotte Collins were trails, not "elaborate paths."¹⁷⁰ Over the years, volunteers such as those participating in the Youth Conservation Corps of the Forest Service and those showing up for Tom Sawyer Day helped create, maintain, and shape the trails winding through Briarwood. These activities included widening the entrance road to accommodate bus traffic, making an exit road so traffic could be one-way only inside the gates, bridging a stream enroute to the Bay Garden on Baygall trail, and preparing a trail along the former railroad bed.¹⁷¹

5. Water

The only man-made water forms at Briarwood are the Frog Pond and Wings Rest Pond.¹⁷² The Frog Pond was a "borrowing pit" made from taking dirt out of the ground which then filled with water. Wings Rest Pond was made by damming Dormon branch in 1925, and it serves as the water source for irrigation. Briarwood has at least a mile of irrigation water line.¹⁷³

6. Buildings and Structures

Of the structures standing on Briarwood today, only one dates to the Dormon period although two have strong ties to her occupancy. The Log House is essentially as Dormon left it. The current Visitor Center was erected on the footprint of the Dormon sisters' first house, and the Writer's Cabin a reconstruction of Dormon's own writing cabin, the Three Pines Cabin. Chimneys in the Visitor Center and Writer's Cabin were reused.

¹⁷⁰ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 2 (March 1973).

¹⁷¹ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1977); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 4 (October 1978); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1 April 1995); *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 29, no. 4 (1 October 2001).

¹⁷² Caroline Dormon, "By All Means Have a Pond," n.d., Dormon Collection, folder 731. Dormon wrote of Wings Rest that she named it as an invitation to the birds. She also noted in this article that the pond was ten years old and "no other thing has ever given us more pleasure [...] the dam is so clothed in ferns, grasses, and wild flowers as to be indistinguishable. Nothing pleases me so much as when visitors say, 'Oh, did you make your pond? I thought it was natural!' [...]."

¹⁷³ *Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter*, vol. 28, no. 1 (January 2000). Locations of the water lines, irrigation ditches, and pipes should be pinpointed. As of now, there is no GIS data or descriptive textual information with which to map these lines.

The Log House, where Dormon moved in 1950, is in good condition. Most of the furniture is intact and the building itself was restored in 1988. Dormon's garage and greenhouse – associated with this era of her life at Briarwood – are no longer extant.

7. Small-scale Elements

Now Briarwood is marked by several entry signs, the highway signs erected in 1980, but that was not true in Caroline Dormon's day. Dormon valued her privacy, although at times she placed a sign near the road saying "Dormon" if she expected company on that day, to help new visitors find their way. As a result of rainy weather she might put a sign out, "Road out. Walk in."¹⁷⁴

8. Views and Vistas

Even though Briarwood is located in the sand hills, Louisiana's highest elevation is a mere 5--- feet above sea level, and thus the views and vistas are not dramatically grand. Yet Caroline Dormon did plan her plantings to create certain effects. She planted wild azaleas to line the driveway, hoping for their branches to meet above the road. She kept a wildflower meadow and planned the winding path between her house and Wings Rest pond. Near the log house, she attempted to have only white daffodils growing under the pear trees that all bloomed white at the same time. She also had ideas about what plants worked together, considering color as well as growing needs. She wrote Mrs. Hill of Woodville, Alabama with iris suggestions for a suggested color palate.¹⁷⁵ She thought white flowers looked fine with colored iris, and often suggested plants as appropriate background for the iris. Her Bay Garden, unlike many iris gardens, was designed to have several depths of plants.

9. Other- Fauna

Caroline Dormon almost always had either a cat or dog as a pet, but otherwise, Briarwood is still rich in wild life. Balancing the two was sometimes difficult as Dormon once observed that "we have to keep cats here, because the wood rats are so plentiful, and so outrageous" but she admonished her cat Tusie for catching birds.¹⁷⁶ Other times, she noted how her dog Dusty sounded the alarm if a copperhead was nearby.¹⁷⁷ By 1963, she

¹⁷⁴Or note "bad road, walk in"; Caroline Dormon, 2 April 1961, Dormon Collection, folder [1960-1971 diaries/notes].

¹⁷⁵Dormon Collection, folder 152.

¹⁷⁶Caroline Dormon, 4 May 1937, Dormon Collection, folder 922.

¹⁷⁷Caroline Dormon, 15 April 1961, Dormon Collection, folder [1960-1971 diaries/notes]. Similarly she told a story about her Eskimo malamute who warned her of a rattlesnake that crawled under the screen door and was trapped there. This was repeated in a 1978 newspaper article, James Register, "Caroline Dormon Lived As Lady of Wilderness," *The Natchitoches Times* (23 November 1978): 5B.

fretted that Tigre, just wounded, would be her last pet as there were too many heartaches
– “something always happens to both dogs and cats.”¹⁷⁸

C. Period of Significance

Caroline Dormon lived full-time at Briarwood between 1916 and 1971, developing the site as a naturalistic garden.

D. Summary Statement of Significance

Briarwood's primary significance is as the home of Caroline Dormon (1888-1971), writer, artist, gardener, and naturalist. Dormon was the first woman hired by the forestry division of the Louisiana Department of Conservation, and some like to say she was the first woman employed by the U.S. Forest Service.¹⁷⁹ The 120 acres Dormon inherited from her family became her garden, where she amassed a collection of 160 native plants of Louisiana; grew and introduced new strains of Louisiana iris; and experimented with growing plants from Japan and New Zealand. The author of many books and articles, Dormon only felt comfortable making claims about what she herself had observed; in this respect, Briarwood was of primary importance to Dormon's work.

Since Caroline Dormon's death, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve has run Briarwood as a Nature Preserve open to the public. Richard and Jessie Johnson have served as curators and caretakers, maintaining the gardens and making changes to the landscape only when necessary for the operation of the Preserve. Today Briarwood contains over eight hundred different taxon of plants, including forty-eight rare or endangered species.

Secondary significance comes from Briarwood's history as a plantation, and its location along the Old Sparta Road, an ancient buffalo trail and migratory road of both Native Americans and European Americans and along the Louisiana and Northwest Railroad tram.

¹⁷⁸Caroline Dormon, 26 November 1963, Dormon Collection, folder [1960-1971 diaries/notes].

¹⁷⁹Larke, p. 12. Caroline Dormon herself doubted this credit line; as she wrote to Mary Belle in 1935 as an answer to question 12, “In 1921 or '22, the editor American Forestry Magazine stated that I was the only woman employed in forestry work in the United States ...but I don't know whether or not that was correct. This I do know: that several years ago I was elected Associate Member of the Society of American Foresters — one of three women in the United States to be so honored.” Dormon Collection, folder 1089. Moreover, the Forest History Society web-site highlights women working for the Forest Service in the early twentieth century. These pioneer figures were Angela Janszen Burke, who worked in Washington, D.C., Edna Bay, Alaska, and Six Rivers National Forest in California, beginning in 1933; Dr. Eloise Gerry, a scientist interested in southern pines, who worked for the Forest Service despite it being “no place for a woman,” between 1910 and 1954; and Margaret March-Mount, who worked at Bighorn National Forest in Wyoming in 1913 and championed the “Pennies for Pines” children's conservation crusade. She retired in 1943. Other women employed by the Forest Service were Edna Crocker and Annie Hoyle.

PART IV. METHODS/SOURCES/ RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Research Method/Assumptions/Delimitations

As an inaugural project for the Historic American Landscapes Survey, this project was guided by the dialogue surrounding the proposed guidelines for documentation, here the working outline for historical narratives. Scheduled as a traditional HABS summer project, just over half of the twelve-week assignment was spent on-site so that the historian could experience the landscape, record the existing conditions, and conduct the necessary archival research and oral interviews. The remaining time was spent writing up the findings and augmenting the primary research with secondary source materials needed for a contextual understanding of the place.

Archival sources relating to Caroline Dormon are plentiful but address the nature preserve indirectly, mostly concentrating the development of specific plant types, such as the iris, and not the shaping of the nature preserve itself. Archives studied for this project include those at Northwestern State University, Louisiana State University, University of Louisiana - Lafayette, Long Vue House and Gardens, and Briarwood. Land records of Natchitoches Parish were investigated; the courthouse documents were augmented by materials in the Caroline Dormon collection at Northwestern State University. Oral interviews with Richard and Jessie Johnson, as well as others studying Briarwood, were conducted. Repositories tapped for contextual sources include the Library of Congress, Department of Interior Library, Department of Agriculture, Society of American Foresters, and the Forest History Society archives at Duke University.

B. Materials Reviewed/Source List/Bibliography

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2. Repositories

a. Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve:

Dormon, Caroline. "Native Trees and Shrubs Growing at Briarwood ** Louisiana," list.

Dormon, Caroline. Letters to Frank Chowning, E.O. Edgerton, Mem Leatherman, Mrs. Oscar Shanks, and Lutch Stark;

Johnson, Jessie. List of plants of Briarwood, ca. 2003;

Johnson, Richard. Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve Newsletter, 1972-2003;

Johnson, Richard. Map of Briarwood (hand drawn); and

Scrapbooks (4).

b. Longue Vue House and Gardens, Archives.

c. Louisiana State University, Special Collections.

d. Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center:

Caroline Dormon Collection, 1912-77: diaries, letters, newspaper clippings, articles, manuscripts, deeds, leases, etc;

Map Collection (1194, 1756);

Melrose Collection, 1724-1948; and

Judge R.B. Williams Collection.

e. University of Louisiana- Lafayette, Louisiana Room:

Ira Schreiber Nelson Collection, 1912-65; and

Macmillan Collection, 1940-72.

3. Interviews

Richard and Jessie Johnson, June-August, 2003

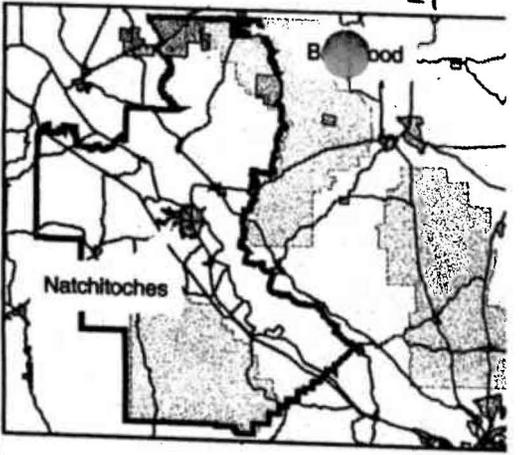
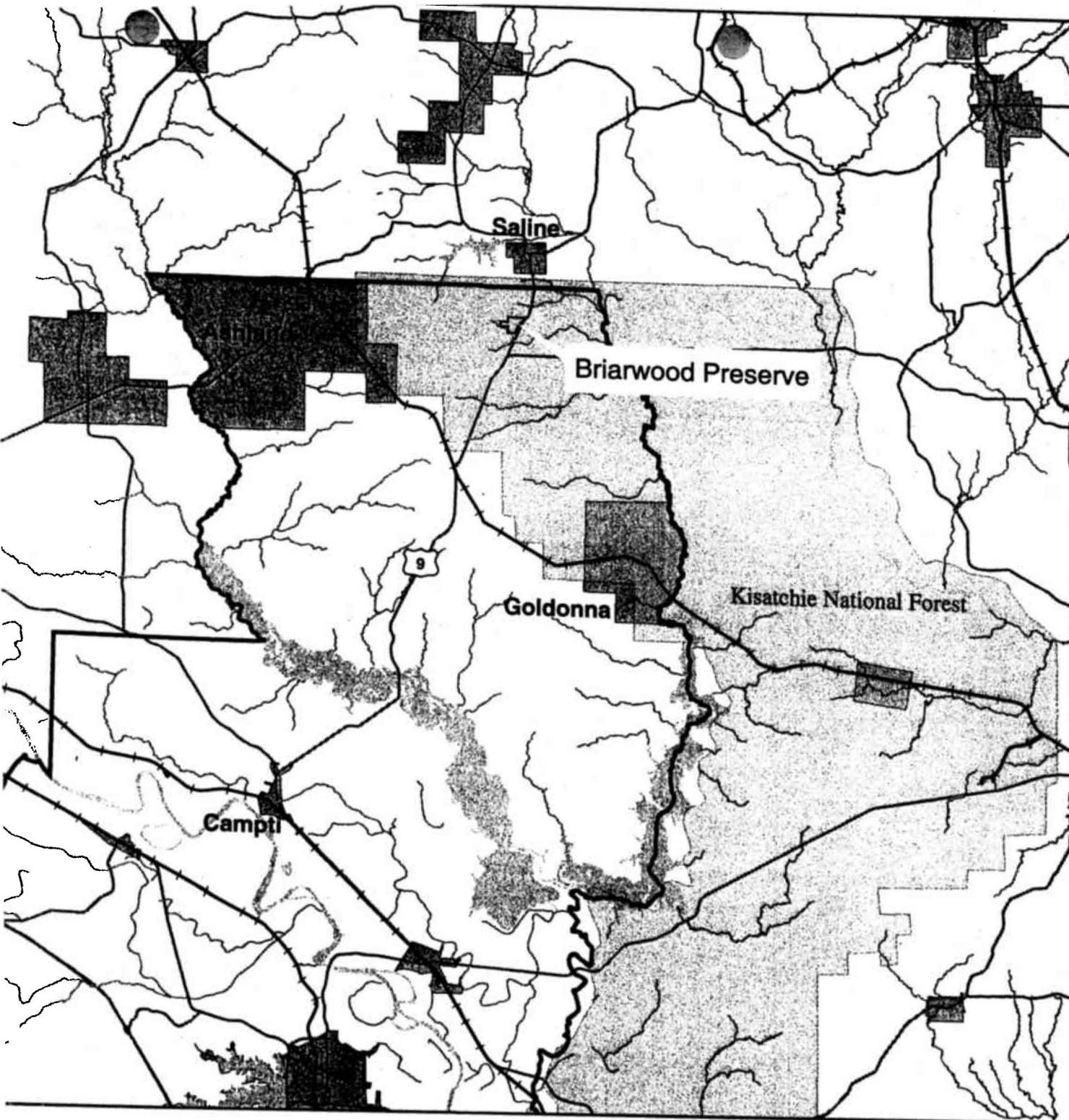
C. Future Research Recommendations

More detailed research on the Louisiana iris could be done using the resources of Northwestern State University of Louisiana Watson Memorial Library, as well as an examination of the land conservation movement in the early twentieth century to better understand Caroline Dormon's place in social and scientific studies. Correspondence with W.W. Ashe should be examined as well. Moreover, a study of the gardens Dormon planned or was consulted about such as those at Long Vue, Hodges Garden in Many, and the hospital grounds in Pineville, should be undertaken and contrasted with what Dormon did for herself at Briarwood. Specifically for Briarwood, aspects of the physical history or chronology should be explored further, moving beyond who was on the land to what they did there to shape it. That information

was not found within the Caroline Dormon papers at Northwestern State University or at Briarwood, only hints of it appeared in those documents as well as in the land records of Natchitoches Parish.

Figure 1. Historic Briarwood, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. Map by Deidre McCarthy, Cultural Resources Geographic Information Systems, National Park Service, 2004.

Figure 2. Closer view of Historic Briarwood, in Natchitoches, Parish, Louisiana. Map by Deidre McCarthy, Cultural Resources Geographic Information Systems, National Park Service, 2004.



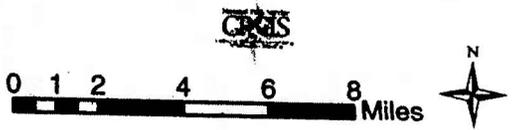
Historic Briarwood

Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana

National Park Service
 Historic American Buildings Survey
 Historic American Engineering Record
 Historic American Landscapes Survey

Natchitoches Parish

- Railroads
- Rivers
- Major Roads
- Briarwood Preserve
- Lakes
- Parks
- City Boundaries
- Natchitoches Parish



Historic Briarwood Natchitoches Parish

- Railroads
- Rivers
- Briarwood Preserve
- Lakes
- City Boundaries
- Natchitoches Parish

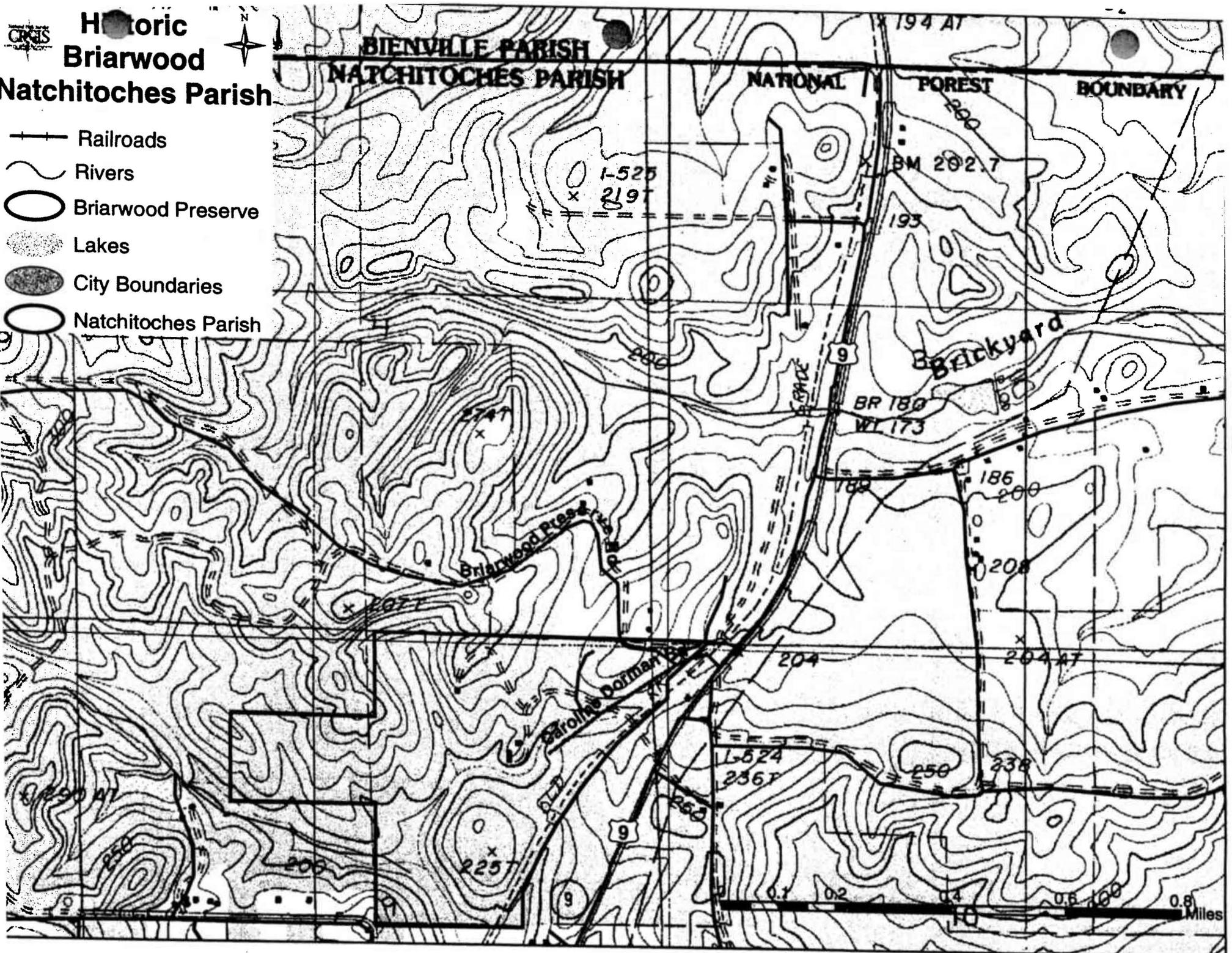


Fig. 3 View of the Wild Garden at Longue Vue in New Orelans, Louisiana (Photograph by
RAH, 2003)



Fig. 4 Sketch Plan of Briarwood, after map drawn by Richard L. Johnson. (Drawing by Virginia B. Price, HABS, 2003)



Fig. 5 View looking to entrance gate of the nature preserve grounds
(Photograph by RAH, 2003)

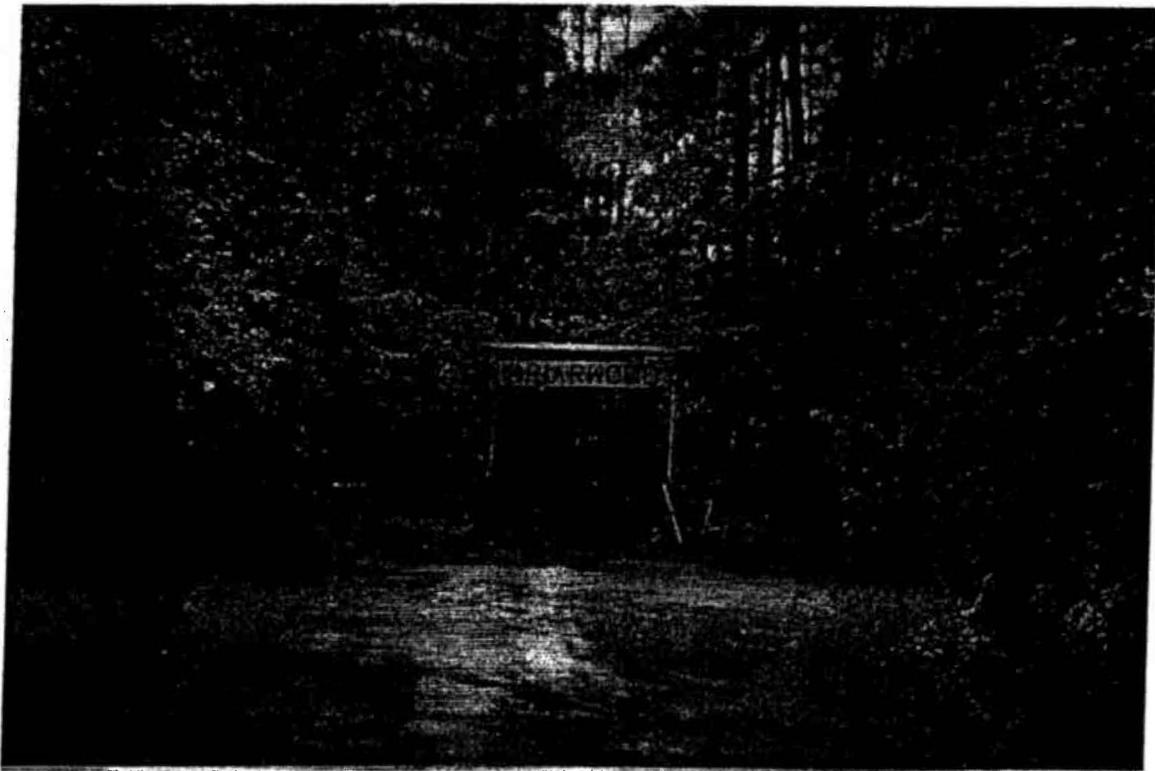


Fig. 6 View of the Louisiana and Northwest Railroad Tram Trail inside the nature preserve grounds (Photograph by RAH, 2003)



Fig. 7 View along trail running behind the Visitor Center (Photograph by RAH, 2003)

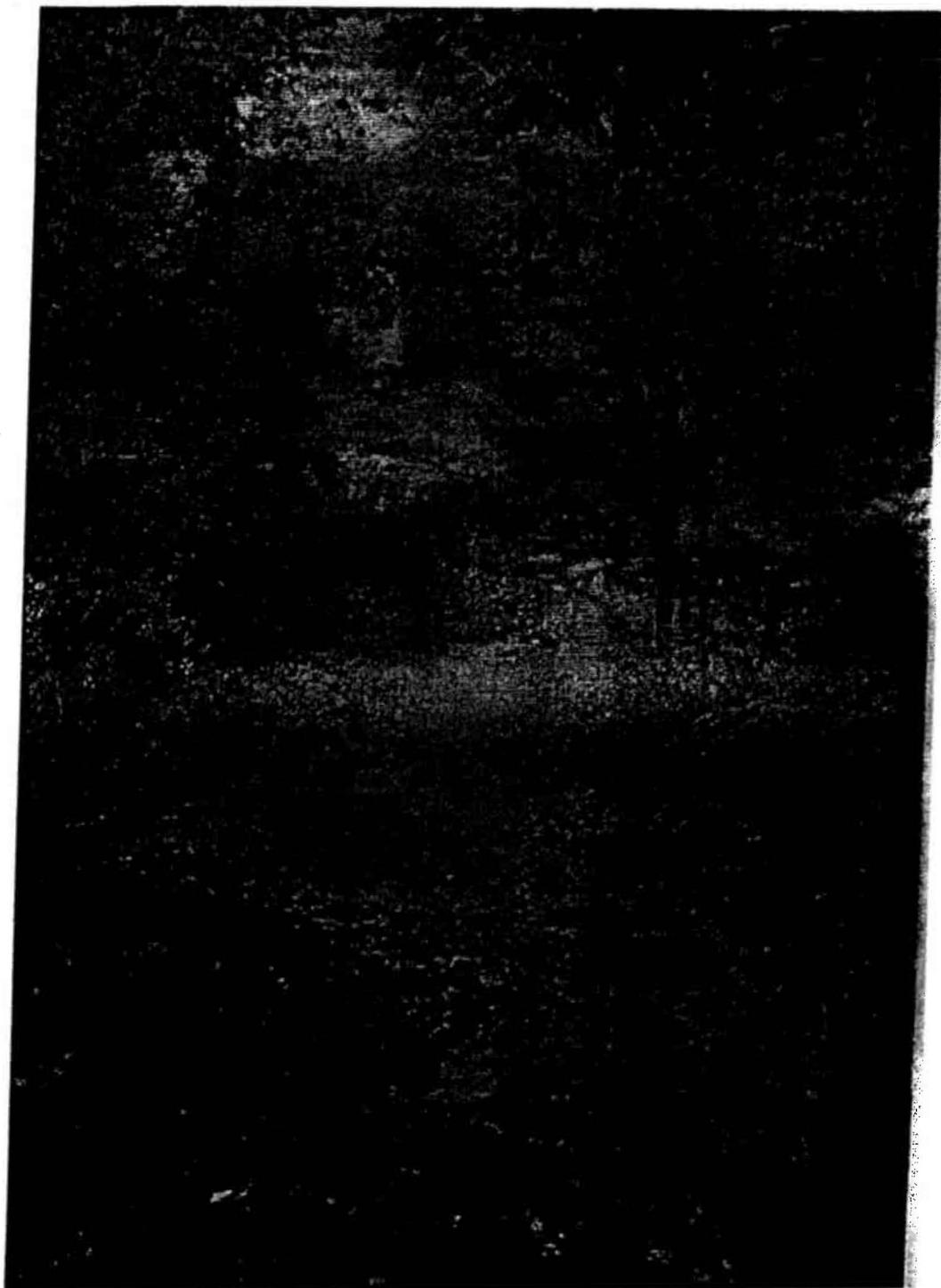


Fig. 8 Trail at Briarwood (Photograph by RAH, 2003)

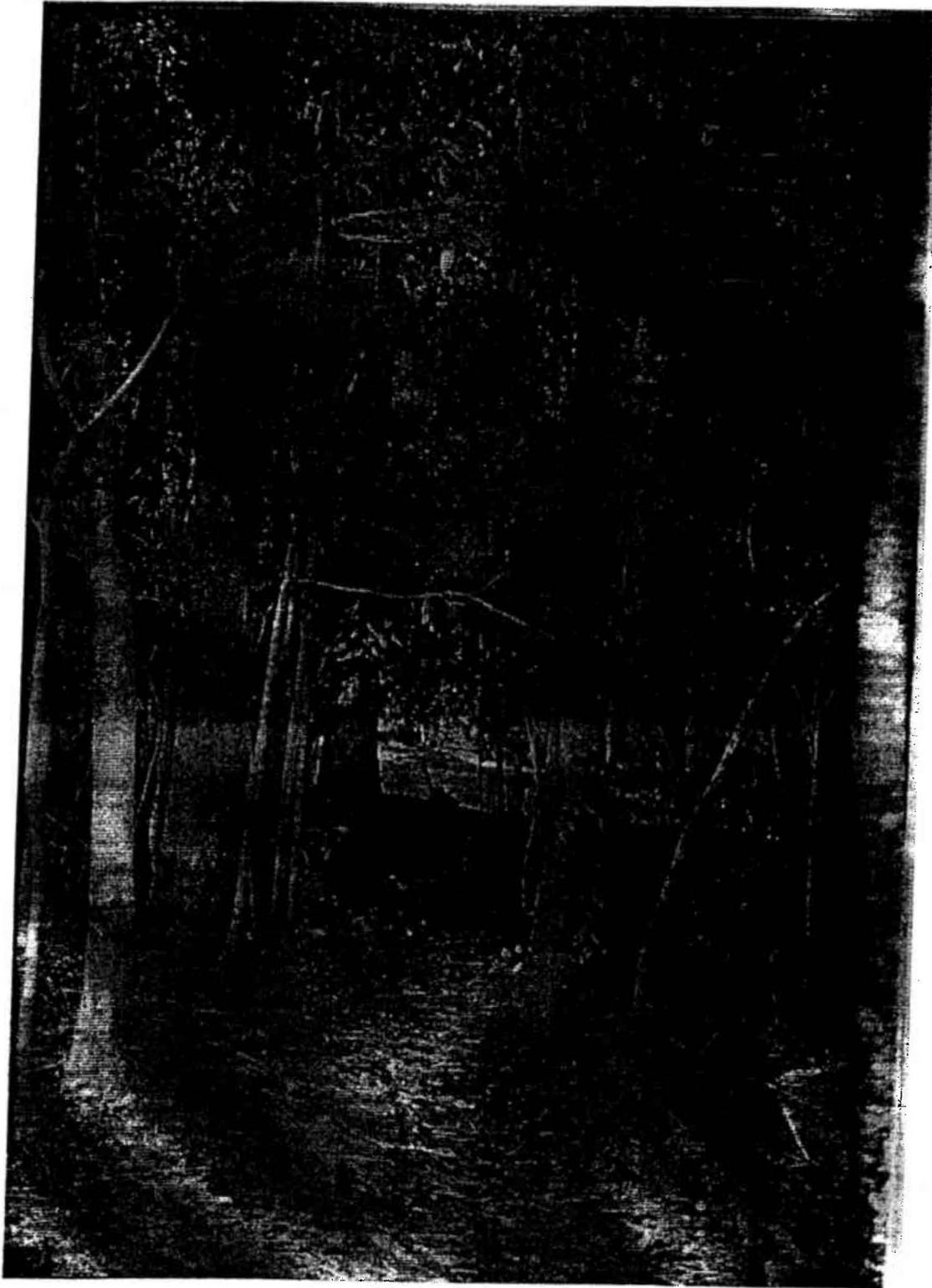


Fig. 9 View of Frog Pond (Photograph by RAH, 2003)



Fig. 10 Caroline Dormon's Log House (Photograph by RAH, 2003)



Fig. 11 View looking to the Headquarters Building (Photograph by RAH, 2003)



Fig. 12 View behind the Visitor Center (Photograph by RAH, 2003)

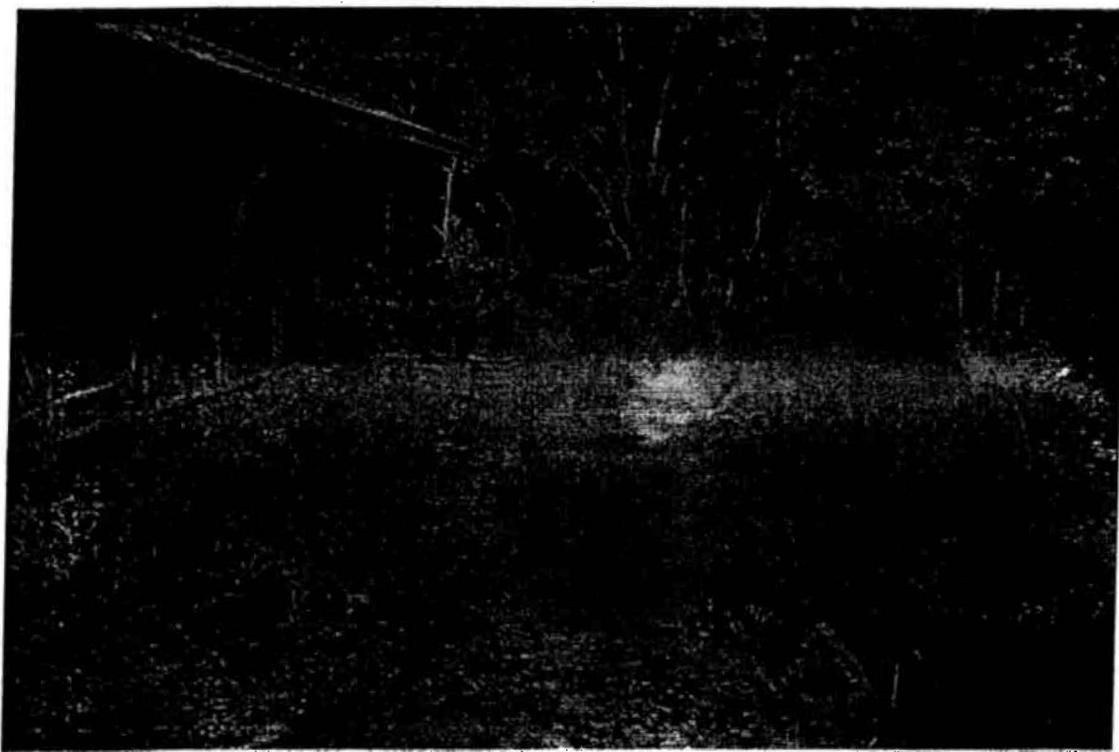


Fig. 13 View of Three Pines Writing Cabin, with Necessity Cabin in foreground. (Photograph by RAH, 2003)



Fig. 14 View of Garage & Shed (Photograph by RAH, 2003)

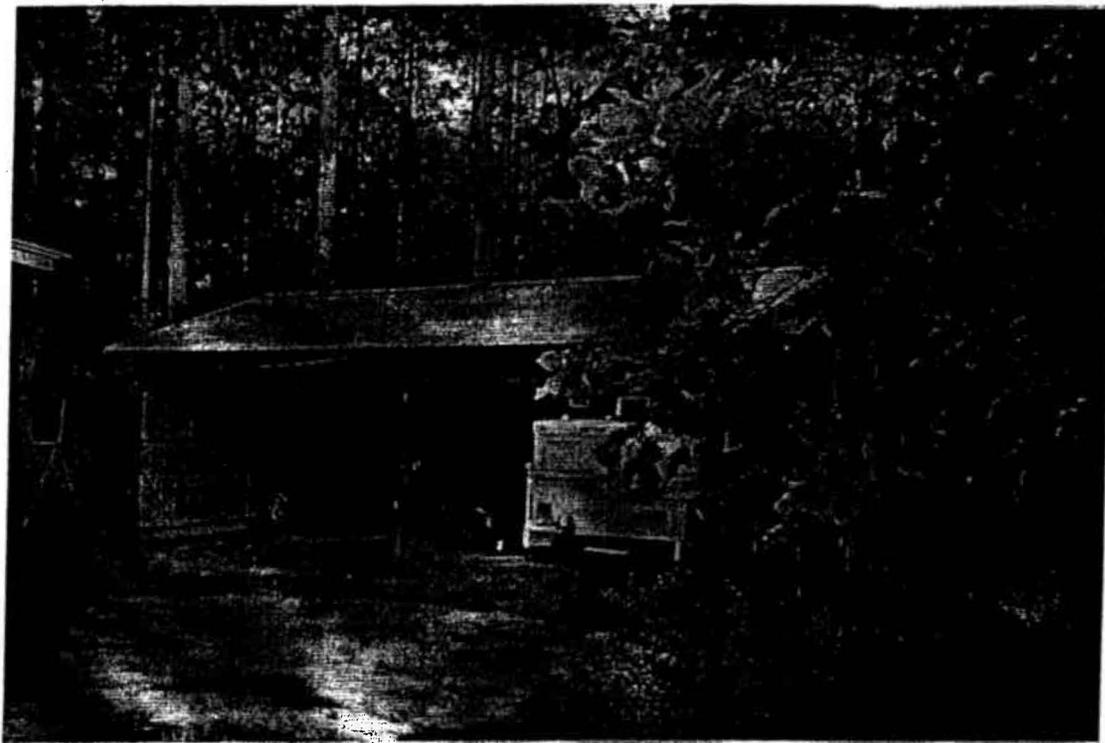
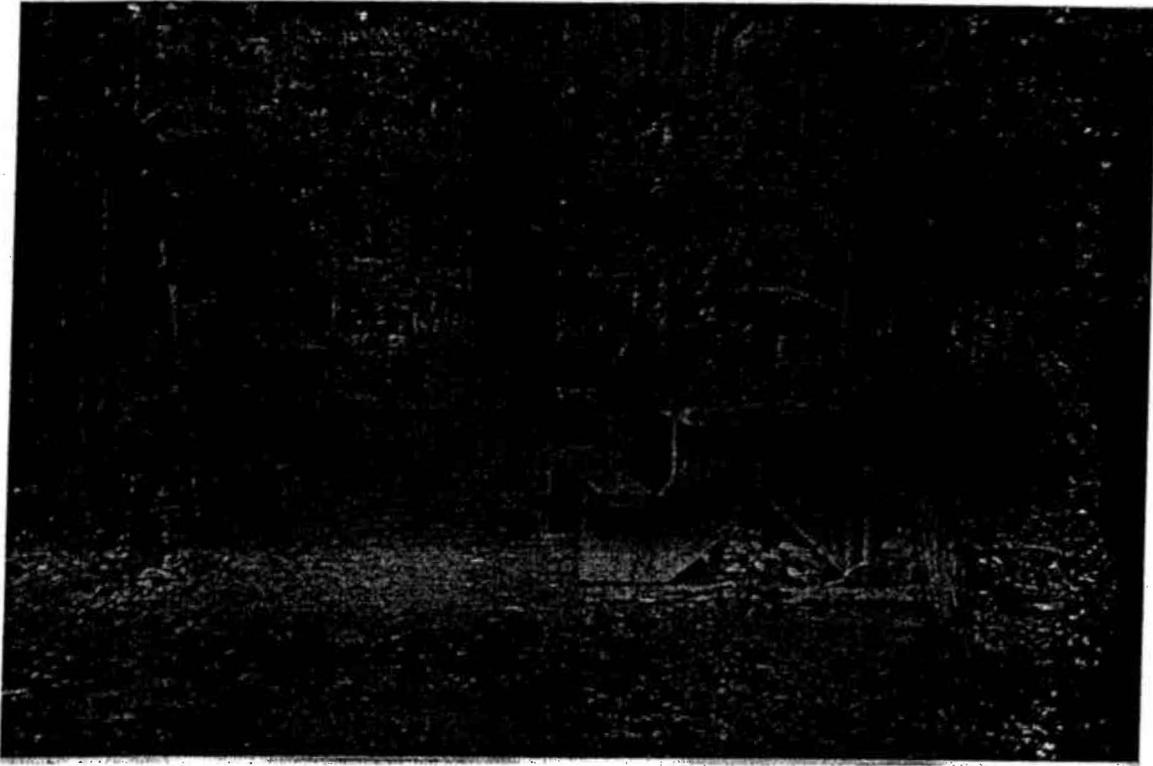


Fig. 15 View of the Environmental Education (Interpretive) Center (Photograph by RAH,
2003)



Fig. 16 View of picnic tables at Briarwood (Photograph by RAH, 2003)



ADDENDUM TO:
BRIARWOOD: THE CAROLINE DORMON NATURE PRESERVE
(Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve)
Cane River National Heritage Area Commission
216 Caroline Dormon Road
Saline
Natchitoches Parish
Louisiana

HALS No. LA-1
LA-1

PHOTOGRAPHS

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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