

Describe the present and original (it known) physical appearance

The Alexis LaTour House (1835-7) is a story-and-a-half bousillage Creole house located in the parish seat of Ville Platte. Despite a number of alterations, the house retains enough of its original architectural character to merit listing on the National Register.

The LaTour House began in 1835 as a small cottage one room wide and two rooms deep, with a front gallery. In 1837 two more rooms were added along with an American central hall. The new enlarged house had something of a Greek Revival look with a more or less symmetrical facade and a central doorway with transom and side lights. The house also had numerous traditional Creole features such as an exterior staircase, bousillage construction, beaded clapboarding, exposed beaded ceiling beams, and beaded ceiling boards. In addition, the 1835 part of the house had an unusual looking mantel with cove moldings, panels, and a large central lozenge motif. Other mantels in the house were more conventional with panels and pilasters, but they too had a curious style.

In about 1900 a pair of large Queen Anne Revival dormers were added front and rear, along with a large rear wing. In addition, many of the windows and doors were replaced and the hall ceiling and garret were sheathed in narrow gauge beaded board. Finally, the front staircase was replaced.

In recent years many of the downstairs rooms have been resheathed in either plywood paneling or bagasse board. In addition, all of the gallery columns were replaced and scroll brackets were added.

#### Assessment of Integrity

There is no doubt that the LaTour House has had more than one set of columns since it was built. Taken without the brackets, the present solid wood gallery posts are probably fairly close to the original columns. Of course, the brackets are easily removable. In our opinion, the house is still easily recognizable for its early date and style. It still retains its basic Creole cottage shape as well as its bousillage construction. Moreover, it retains vital decorative features such as mantels and copious beading. Even with the loss of some of its original details, it is still the most richly detailed early house in the parish. (See Item 8.)

To the rear of the house is a small nondescript shed which may or may not be fifty years old. Because it does not relate to the architectural significance of the main house, it is listed as a non-contributing element.

Specific dates                    1835-37  
Builder/Architect                Builder: Alexis LaTour

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criterion C

The LaTour House is locally significant in the area of architecture as an early and important structure within the context of Evangeline Parish.

Evangeline, once the northwestern part of Imperial St. Landry Parish, broke off to form its own parish unit in 1910. According to the historical record, settlement began in the late eighteenth century, and by the mid-nineteenth century the area was fairly well populated. Ville Platte (where the LaTour House is located) was incorporated in 1858 and is the parish's oldest town. Little is known of Evangeline's early architecture, but presumably there was the usual mix of Creole structures and structures combining Creole and American features such as the LaTour House. This, of course, was the typical architectural pattern for French parishes during the period 1820 to 1860.

It should be noted that very little survives in Evangeline Parish from before about 1880. Of the handful of early structures that do remain, the LaTour House is certainly the finest. As far as the State Historic Preservation Office can determine, all of the other earlier structures in the parish are humble one or two room cabins of indeterminate date with little or nothing in the way of architectural detailing. By contrast, the LaTour House is as large as a medium size plantation house of the

period. Moreover, it is well detailed, with decorative mantels, beaded clapboards, exposed beaded ceiling beams, and beaded ceiling boards. Clearly it is the architectural landmark of the parish.

Historical Note:

It is said that Ville Platte was named in the parlor of the LaTour House, which could be true, but is very difficult to document.

Major Bibliographical References

Conveyance Records, Evangeline Parish.