

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Hunt, John S., House
Other Names/Site Number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 1231 South First Street
City or town: Hodge State: LA County: Jackson Parish
Not for Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Kristin Sanders, State Historic Preservation Officer Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

4. National Park Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Federal

Category of Property (Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	2	Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.):

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: brick

walls: wood and composite material (mostly likely asbestos)

roof: asbestos and asphalt shingles

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and non-contributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The John S. Hunt House sits on a wooded lot at the corner of South 1st and Hunt Streets in Hodge, Jackson Parish, directly next to what is now called the WestRock Plant. The one-story, simply-styled dwelling cannot be seen clearly from the street because numerous trees obscure it. Constructed in 1916, the house served as the primary residence of John S. Hunt, one of the founders of the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Mill. Later, as the mill expanded, changed owners, and produced other goods besides lumber, the house served as the residence of two of the plant's managers. The building occupies the primary corner of a neighborhood consisting of modest dwellings, most or all of which the Hodge Mill's leadership constructed for its workers. The John S. Hunt House remains recognizable from the period of significance, despite being covered in composite siding, which obscures the historic wood siding underneath, and undergoing other minor renovations.

Narrative Description

Setting and Site

The Village of Hodge exists near the western edge of Jackson Parish in north Louisiana. It sits southwest of the intersection of Louisiana Highway 147 and U.S. Route 167, which runs from Abbeville, Louisiana, to Junction City, Arkansas.¹ Hodge, home to just 373 people as of 2021 population estimates, is closely linked to Jonesboro, Louisiana, the seat of and largest municipality in the parish.² The two communities are located approximately three miles from one another.

Hodge Village should not be confused with the communities of North Hodge and East Hodge, which as the names suggest, sit north and east of Route 167, respectively. Route 167 and South 1st Street in Hodge run parallel to one another, separated by a grassy median. Hunt Street runs perpendicular to these two roads and separates Hodge's residential neighborhood from the WestRock plant. The John S. Hunt House sits on a

¹ "Overview Map of US 167 in Louisiana," Google Maps, accessed July 19, 2022 via [U.S. Route 167 - Wikipedia](#).

² Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in the United States: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021 (SUB-IP-EST2021-POP), [City and Town Population Totals: 2020-2021 \(census.gov\)](#); "Hodge, Louisiana," accessed July 18, 2022, [www.wikipedia.org](#). [Hodge, Louisiana - Wikipedia](#)

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

block bound by 1st and 2nd Streets on the east and west, Hunt and Oak Streets on the north and south.

The House, the contributing resource on the subject property, sits at the intersection of South 1st and Hunt Streets on a wooded and grassy lot. Set back from the front of its lot and surrounded by large trees and landscaping, passersby can barely see the one-story dwelling from either Route 167 or South 1st Street. However, one can gain a better view of the building by looking at it from the side, where it sits relatively close to Hunt Street.

In addition to the main house, the property also features two detached buildings. The first is a front-gabled, single-room building that could have had a variety of uses, including guest quarters, but likely originally served as a garage. The other is a shed-roofed structure that appears to have been used for storage or as a workshop. The former garage faces Hunt Street and sits on the property line; it is highly visible. The shed sits directly behind the main house and is not visible from the street. Based on historic aerial images, the two outbuildings appear not to have been present on the property during the period of significance; therefore, they are non-contributing.

A short driveway, accessible via Hunt Street, exists between the main house and the former garage. Interestingly, an alley wide enough for vehicles is extant at the rear of the property. This alley runs through the middle of the block and appears to serve as a secondary street that allows vehicular access to the back yards of all the residences facing South 1st and 2nd between Hunt and Oak Streets.

House – general

The John S. Hunt House sits on a foundation consisting of both a brick chain wall and short brick piers; both are extant under various portions of the building. The moderately-pitched roof of the main house features brown asbestos shingles in a diamond pattern and terra cotta tiles along the ridges. In contrast, the porch roof features rectangular asphalt shingles. The roof, which features exposed rafter tails along most of the building, is hipped but flares outward dramatically over a wraparound porch. Wooden swings suspended by chains hang at each corner of the porch. A paved walkway extends from the sidewalk along South 1st Street to the four brick steps leading to the front porch. The entire building is clad in composite siding, which is likely made of asbestos. The siding is laid in a rectangular pattern that gives the illusion the building is clad in stone or wide bricks. Historically, the building featured an L-shaped footprint in which a portion of the building extended outward toward the rear of the property. This portion of the building features a gabled roof.

House – Front Façade

The front façade is symmetrical, and features centered French doors flanked by single multi-lite doors. Flanking this entrance are pairs of four-over-four, wood-framed windows. Six simple, classical columns support the dramatic porch roof along the front of the building.

House - North Façade (Hunt Street Façade)

The north façade features a total of five wood-framed, four-over-four windows – two pairs and one single. On this side, the wraparound porch terminates between the first pair of these windows and the single window. At the end of the porch sits a set of wooden steps.

House - South Façade (Oak Street Façade)

The south façade also features five wood-framed, four-over-four windows – two pairs and one single. The opening in which the single window sits has either been shortened, or a too-long replacement window has been added to this opening. As a result, the window looks odd. The bottom sash overlaps with the upper sash, resulting in this window appearing to feature four-over-two glazing, a pattern that likely never existed on

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

this building historically. The rear portion of the south façade features a set of French doors that lead to three concrete steps. Finally, at the rearmost part of this façade are three multi-lite casement windows.

House – Rear

Historically, the John S. Hunt House had an L-shaped footprint created by extending the southern end past the plane of the building toward the rear of the property. It is unknown whether the portion extending to the rear was an addition; it appears to be an addition from the interior but seems to be part of the original structure from the exterior. Builders later constructed an addition along most of the rear, though, which filled in some of the space between the long and “short” portions of the building. As a result of this work, most of the original rear elevation is not visible from the exterior. The addition, which serves as a screened porch, features a shed roof and a single screen door. It does not feature any windows; only screens separated by wooden framing exist to protect this space from the elements.

The original rear elevation, which is now enclosed by the added-on porch, includes a rear entry configuration that matches the one on the front; it is composed of a set of French doors flanked by single, multi-lite doors. This elevation also features a single door opening next to the main entrance; the opening features a historic wood door with oval glazing. An identical oval glass door can also be found on the interior side wall of the rear porch; this wall is one of the exterior walls of the “long” portion of the building.

One portion of the original rear elevation is not covered by the screen porch addition and is, therefore, still visible from the outside. It features a four-over-four, wood-framed window.

The long section of the rear does not feature any openings except for a louvered vent directly underneath the gable roof. This is the only roof on the building that does not feature exposed rafters. A gable-roofed dormer featuring louvered vents exists on the rear of the main roof above the screened-in porch.

Side Enclosure

On the Oak Street side of the building, a portion of the wraparound porch was closed in to create an additional room within the house. From the exterior, this enclosure presents as a small rectangular box tucked underneath the porch roof. The “box” features one four-over-four window and two doors – a multi-lite single door facing the front of the property and a screen door facing the rear. The multi-lite door is visible from the front of the house; it appears as a secondary entrance set back from the plane of the front façade. The screen door opens to a set of concrete steps that lead into the grassy side yard. The side yard is enclosed by wire fencing.

The original south façade is intact inside the enclosure. The portion obscured by this enclosure features a pair of multi-lite French doors, similar to those on the front and rear of the house, and a four-over-four, wood-framed window.

Interior

Floor plan and layout

The John S. Hunt House’s historic interior can best be described as a six-room box with a “tail.” The “tail” houses the seventh room. The center of the box features a double parlor or parlor and dining room separated by an ornate fireplace. Five additional rooms – three on one side and two on the other – flank the double parlor. The building features no hallways; the rooms open directly into one another, most from multiple entry points.

The parlor features painted gypsum board walls and the previously-mentioned ornate fireplace; two cased openings flank the fireplace. The second room, which may have been a dining room, features wallpaper and

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

wainscoting. These two main rooms feature a cased opening on each side wall; the openings lead to the other rooms within the house.

On the Hunt Street side of the house, the room off the parlor was likely a bedroom historically because it features a closet and bathroom. This room has been stripped of its historic materials, and its bare wood walls and ceiling are now exposed. However, remnants of historic materials, possibly cheesecloth or muslin, are extant. The bathroom features tile and textured walls of an unknown material. The room immediately behind the stripped room and off to the side of the dining room serves as the kitchen. The kitchen features wallpaper and wainscoting; it also features a walk-in pantry.

On the Oak Street side of the house, the room off the parlor features fiberboard paneling painted blue. This may have been used as a bedroom as well because it also features a closet and bathroom. However, the closet and bathroom are directly accessible via the room behind them as well – the room immediately to the side of the dining room. This room appears to be a library because one of its walls is lined with built-in shelves containing several books. The library's walls are covered by painted fiberboard paneling and an acoustic tile ceiling. The bathroom and closet between the library and the "blue bedroom" are covered with wallpaper; the bathroom also features tile wainscoting in addition to the wallpaper.

A doorway on the library's rear wall leads to the seventh room, which could best be described as an office. This room has a considerably different "feeling" and appearance from the other rooms, even though it features some of the same materials. It features fiberboard paneling and an acoustic tile ceiling. This room is also accessible via the rear porch addition, where a wooden and glazed door on the porch's interior wall leads directly inside it.

As previously mentioned, a portion of the porch on the Oak Street side of the house was enclosed. This "box," as it was described, is located off the side of the "blue bedroom." It is a utilitarian space devoid of ornamental features except for the windows and doors that compose the original exterior openings. It is unknown what use this room had, although it is possible it served as storage or perhaps a space to house plants during the winter months. Its walls are textured.

Features and materials

In addition to each room's wall materials, which were previously described since they vary from room to room, the John S. Hunt House features wood flooring that appears to be original. This is extant everywhere except for the office and kitchen, which feature linoleum or a similar material. All the millwork within the house is painted; the casing around openings and doors appears to be original. The baseboards may also be original, but they are basic and not particularly noteworthy; there are electrical sockets in most, which is an alteration if the boards are historic. Most of the rooms feature crown molding, which may be a later addition. Five-paneled doors are extant through the house; these are all painted as well. The bathroom fixtures appear to be historic; the kitchen cabinetry, although not particularly noteworthy, appears to be at least 50 years old. The walls of the pantry feature painted beaded board. The ceilings feature various materials; most are smooth and likely feature wallboard. As previously noted, ceilings in other rooms are finished with acoustic tiles, while the kitchen features a paneled wood ceiling.

Assessment of Integrity

Despite some cosmetic changes that have been made during the last several decades, the John S. Hunt house retains a great deal of integrity. The house remains in its original location, retaining integrity of location. Despite alterations to the adjacent mill, the house retains its historic setting in a small mill-adjacent residential neighborhood. The changes made to the exterior of the house are relatively minor and easily reversible. Although the building is clad in non-historic siding, the historic wood siding is extant underneath, and the newer siding does not dramatically alter the appearance of the building.. The addition of the screened-in porch and enclosure of a portion of the porch left the original exterior facades and their features intact. On the interior,

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

the historic floor plan remains intact. Only the materials within the building, such as wall coverings, have been changed, but these are easily removable.

Overall, the building still very much appears to be an early 20th-century vernacular house.

Former Garage (Non-Contributing)

The multipurpose building, now being used for storage, features a front-gabled roof with exposed rafter tails. Primarily clad in the same composite siding as the John S. Hunt House, the building's front facade features a centered paneled and glazed door flanked by two aluminum-framed windows. It appears this building was once a garage based on the appearance of the front façade, which looks like infill of a very wide opening. The side elevation closest to South 1st Street has a single door opening, but the other side features no openings. The rear façade features a wood-framed four-over-four window and a five-paneled wooden door. The interior is open, features finished walls and a ceiling, a concrete floor, no central air conditioning, and is wired for electricity. Based on aerial photographs, the garage was constructed between 1955 and 1956, outside the house's period of significance.

Shed (Non-Contributing)

The shed features unpainted wood siding and a shed roof; the roof features exposed rafter tails and wide side eaves. Its front façade features two multi-lite, wood-framed, full-length windows on either side of the entry door. The door is centered and made from the same siding as the building; only the wooden framing surrounding the door and hinges make it obvious it is a door instead of just a portion of the façade. The rear features an interesting window; it appears to be a casement window turned on its side. Hinges are extant along the "top" of the window (which is actually its side), and it appears the window actually swings outward from the bottom.

The shed features a lean-to addition in poor condition. The addition exists at the rear of the shed but is leaning and appears unstable. A corrugated metal roof covers it; its sides are composed of the same wooden siding as the shed, but the rear is open and covered by a sheet of unknown material, likely some type of canvas.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
X	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

Criteria Considerations:

	A	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
	B	Removed from its original location
	C	A birthplace or grave
	D	A cemetery

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

E	A reconstructed building, object, or structure
F	A commemorative property
G	Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Industry

Period of Significance: 1916-1930

Significant Dates: n/a

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): Hunt, John S.

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): n/a

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): unknown

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance begins in 1916 when the house was constructed and ends in 1930, when the Hunt family left the house and moved to Shreveport.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): n/a

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The John S. Hunt House in Hodge, Jackson Parish, LA, is significant under Criterion B at the local level in the area of Industry. This building served initially as the living quarters for one of the founders of Hodge's lumber mill and, later, as a house for a couple of the later plant's employees and managers. It is arguably the most intact building associated with the original business and the only dwelling remaining that has a direct link to the historic lumber mill's principals. The house sits directly across the street from the existing plant; its position at the corner of South First and Hunt Streets indicates its importance within this community. The current mill, which has changed a great deal over time, dominates the landscape here, while a five-block residential area consisting of modest one-story houses sits to the south of it. This residential area consists primarily of historic modest "mill houses" laid in neat rows that the original lumber company constructed for its workers. The Hunt House sits at the primary corner of this neighborhood, closest to the plant, facing the main highway, US-167. The mill houses sit behind and to the south of it. Although the Hunt house is a somewhat plainly styled single-story building, it is arguably the grandest of the dwellings in this neighborhood. It features centered brick entry steps leading to a wide porch that wraps the building, large paired windows, a centered entry composed of French and multi-lite doors, and a roof supported by simple classical columns. Although some of the mill houses share a few of its features, they present as functional buildings. By contrast, the John S. Hunt house, built for one of the mill's founders, presents an image of comfort and leisure.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Brief history of Hodge

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

Hodge, a village housing approximately 370 citizens, is located in southwestern Jackson Parish, Louisiana.³ It is considered part of the “Ruston Micropolitan Statistical Area” and is closely linked to Jonesboro, LA, a larger town about two miles south of Hodge.⁴ However, the village should not be confused with Jonesboro-Hodge, East Hodge, or North Hodge, which locals consider to be distinct and separate communities. However, it should be noted that, in 1942, Hodge and Jonesboro are said to have once shared the longest unbroken sidewalk in the world, according to Ripley’s Believe-It-Or-Not.⁵ According to a 1933 article in the Alexandria Town Talk newspaper, in 1903, Hodge was named in honor of Otis E. Hodge, one of the founders of the local mill, for which this nomination provides a history.⁶ Jackson Parish is located in north central Louisiana.

Louisiana’s Historic Lumber Industry

The following information is taken from a Historic Context titled “The Louisiana Lumber Boom, c. 1880-1925,” written by Donna Fricker of Fricker Historic Preservation Services, LLC for the Louisiana SHPO. Some extraneous language that doesn’t apply to this nomination has been removed:

Context Summary

Prior to about 1880, timber production in Louisiana was fairly small, meeting local needs. Mills and logging were confined largely to areas along waterways. By contrast, the so-called second phase of lumbering, the industrial phase, was huge in its output. “These were the days of giant trees, giant mills, and giant lumbermen,” notes Louisiana lumber historian Anna C. Burns (“Frank B. Williams: Cypress Lumber King,” *Journal of Forest History*, July 1980). In 1880, Louisiana ranked thirtieth in the United States for the dollar value of its timber product. By 1900, it ranked tenth in the nation, and by 1920, second. In some years in the 1910s the state led the country in timber production.

Several factors came together to make industrial lumbering possible:

1. the availability of large tracts of timberland at low prices
2. demand for lumber and the exhaustion of sources in the Northeast and the Midwest
3. the arrival of railroads
4. technological improvements in removing lumber from the forests and swamps.

The lumber boom’s impact on Louisiana is seemingly beyond exaggeration. Fueled largely by out-of-state capital, the lumber boom fundamentally changed the look of the state. With a policy of “cut out and get out,” priceless natural resources were lost by the millions of acres. Large sections of the state, in a relatively short period of time, became vast “stumpscapes” of barren cutover land as rapacious mill owners moved on to yet another stand of virgin timber elsewhere in the country. Some 4.3 million acres of Louisiana virgin timber had been clear cut – a land area roughly the size of the state of New Jersey. As George Alvin Stokes aptly concludes in his 1954 dissertation (“Lumbering in Southwest Louisiana”): “The rapidity with which big-time lumbering had entered Louisiana was matched by the speed of its departure.” The early to mid-1920s is generally given as the ending date for the great lumber boom, for it is then when almost all of the big mills had run out of timber and closed down. Particularly hard hit were western Louisiana parishes, such as Vernon, which had the most timber to lose. Here it took only about twenty years to consume the forest. It was “short

³ Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in the United States: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021 (SUB-IP-EST2021-POP). [City and Town Population Totals: 2020-2021 \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/popest/data/totals/totals.html).

⁴ “Hodge, Louisiana,” www.wikipedia.org.

⁵ “Jonesboro Plan Post-War Projects,” Alexandria Town Talk, Alexandria, Louisiana, March 10, 1942, 1, accessed July 19, 2022 via “The History of Jackson Parish, Louisiana,” www.facebook.com. [March 10, 1942 Longest... - The History Of Jackson Parish Louisiana. | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com); Juanita Jones Busbice, “Hodge: The Company-Owned Town,” *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996, 9.

⁶ “Hodge, Louisiana,” accessed July 19, 2022, *Town Talk*, Alexandria, Louisiana, August 30, 1933, 6, accessed via Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/213607848>.

Hunt, John S., House

Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA

County and State

but intense” notes Steven Smith of the lumber boom in Vernon Parish (*A Good Home for a Poor Man: Fort Polk and Vernon Parish, 1800-1940*, 1999).

Importantly, it was the industrial phase of lumbering that far and away had the greatest impact on the built environment of Louisiana. New components were added to the landscape – most notably, huge industrial plants with a sawmill at the center and scores of purpose-built company towns. And existing towns where lumber companies located were largely rebuilt due to the attendant prosperity. But today, of the thousands of historic buildings and structures that once existed to directly represent the lumber boom, probably less than five percent survive. Many, perhaps most, were gone long ago.⁷

Timeframe

Generally, the life of a mill was 20 to 25 years (sometimes only about 15). This, the second phase of lumbering in the state, was a natural choice for the focus because it was far and away the most important chapter and the one that made a dramatic impact on the built environment. Of course, no historical development ends abruptly. The lumber industry in Louisiana did not come to an abrupt halt circa 1925, but the boom years of large-scale industrial lumbering that remade the state’s landscape did end then. Lumber historian George Alvin Stokes describes what followed as the “peckerwood mill” phase – i.e., small, often portable mills with the timber hauled by trucks. Also, a few smaller sawmills (small being a relative term) from the golden age of industrial lumbering had enough timber to survive into the post-boom years. Two are known to the author of this document. The mill in Flora (Natchitoches Parish) closed in 1944. More remarkable is the Crowell Lumber Company mill at Longleaf, which did not close permanently until 1969. (This longevity is an important factor in the survival of the historic mill and very important machinery, as detailed below.)⁸

Types and Distribution of Timber

In 1880, at the dawn of the great lumber boom, forests covered an estimated 85% of Louisiana’s land area (some 22 million acres). Hence there were few parts of the state not exploited for their timber, the exceptions being the southwestern prairies and the coastal marshes. Virtually every parish had at least one mill, and many were dominated by sawmill landscapes.

Most of the trees in Louisiana were southern pine, with longleaf pine (also known as yellow pine) being particularly plentiful and valuable. The trees in these magnificent virgin stands of timber were often 150-200 years old.

Longleaf pine was found in pure stands (often 100% pure) in three large areas: western Louisiana, central Louisiana, and the eastern portion of the Florida Parishes. “The longleaf forests were remarkable for their clean, open appearance, almost entirely free of undergrowth,” writes George Alvin Stokes in his 1954 dissertation “Lumbering in Southwest Louisiana.” “The forests themselves were a logger’s dream – clear and open – promising the cheapest and most rapid of logging operations.”

Cypress, dubbed the “wood eternal,” was king in the swamps of southern Louisiana. With the largest cypress inventory in the United States, Louisiana led the nation in cypress production in the first two decades of the twentieth century. That said, there were not as many major cypress mills in Louisiana as pine simply because less of the state was swampland than forested.⁹

⁷ Donna Fricker, *Historic Context The Louisiana Lumber Boom, c.1880-1925*, Fricker Preservation Services, LLC, accessed July 19, 2022, 1, www.louisianahp.org. Microsoft Word - lumberhistoriccontextmaindocument (state.la.us) or https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/historic_contexts/The_Louisiana_Lumber_Boom_c1880-1925.pdf.

⁸ Fricker, 2.

⁹ Fricker, 5-6.

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

Out-of-State Lumbermen and Other Interests

To a large extent out-of-state capital fueled the great Louisiana lumber boom. While it is typical to refer to this as a “Northern” invasion, that label is a bit too general. The out-of-state ownership was just as likely to be in Kansas City or St. Louis, or sometimes in adjacent Texas or Arkansas. To be sure, there were many locally owned mills in Louisiana, but the industry was dominated by companies headquartered elsewhere – large companies that sometimes owned several mills in Louisiana as well as other states.

Lumber manufacture, writes George Alvin Stokes (“Lumbering in Southwest Louisiana”) “became the great nomad among American industries, driving from one virgin forest to another like a threshing machine from one ripe wheat field to the next.” When the forests of Maine were depleted, lumbermen then moved on to New York, then Pennsylvania, then into the Great Lakes region. When the supply there was depleted (in about twenty years), they turned their eyes to southern states such as Louisiana.

Add to this demand the tremendous availability of untouched timber in large blocks at bargain prices. Huge tracts of land in Louisiana were virtually given away, sometimes for as little as 45 cents per acre. Historian Thomas D. Clark (*Greening of the Land*, 1984) gives the following examples in Louisiana of “unusually large” timber purchasers: N. B. Bradley, Bay City, Michigan, 111,188 acres; F. H. Head, Chicago, 109,645 acres; and J. B. Watkins, Douglas County, Kansas, 145,335 acres.

A change in federal public land policy made these purchases possible. In 1866, it was reported to Congress that there were 6,228,103 acres of surveyed but unsold federal land in Louisiana. In that year, Congress passed the Southern Homestead Act, which was intended to make this land available at a nominal charge to “poor people.” Congress repealed the law in 1876, opening public acreage in the South to any and all cash buyers.

This made possible, observes Louisiana historian William Ivy Hair (*Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 1969), “the monopolization of Louisiana land by lumber and other non-farming interests.” Between 1880 and 1888, continues Hair, “the great majority of Louisiana land sold went to just fifty individuals or firms who purchased over 5,000 acres each. Of these, forty-one were Northerners who obtained a total of 1, 370,332 acres.” Among them was industrialist Jay Gould, who owned a “sprawling timber empire” (Hair) in northern Louisiana.¹⁰

Coming of Railroads

Louisiana had very few railroads prior to the Civil War (only 335 miles of track in 1860). The boom years for railroad construction were between 1880 and 1910, when almost five thousand miles of mainline track were laid (from 652 miles of track in 1880 to 5,554 in 1910). This transformative growth opened up previously sparsely settled parts of the state, created new towns, and made possible timber extraction on an industrial scale.¹¹

The Industrial Plant

The industrial lumbering process consisted of:

1. cutting the trees
2. transporting the cut trees to the sawmill
3. cleaning the logs
4. sawing them into usable lumber, drying to remove moisture and sap
5. planing to remove the saw kerf marks and create flat-surface finished lumber
6. grading to sort lumber for quality.

¹⁰ Fricker, 7.

¹¹ Fricker, 8.

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

In pine timber operations, timber was cut and hauled on cables to a train traveling on a temporary rail line (known as a "dummy line"). Cut trees were hauled to the dummy line via steam powered winches on a device known as a skidder (invented in 1883). They were then loaded onto special flat cars via a steam-powered log loader. At the sawmill, the logs were off-loaded into the mill pond (photo 4). The mill pond formed the center of operations for virtually all pine timber industrial plants. Mill ponds were usually created by digging for an artificial lake and then damming a local stream. From the pond the logs were brought into the sawmill via a chute and a steam-powered chain conveyor.

Cypress was more challenging to remove from its natural habitat. In the cypress timber operations of southern Louisiana, workers arrived on small boats (pirogues) to cut timber in the swamp. An amazing 1927 silent film on the Frank B. Williams Cypress Mill operations in Patterson at the city's Louisiana State Museum shows timber fallers (or "swampers") cutting the trees from a pirogue. In the early days lumbermen floated cut logs from the swamps to major streams during the annual spring floods. The invention of the skidder (1883), the introduction of barges called pullboats (1889), and the building of "dummy" railroad lines into the swamps (beginning in the early 1890s) revolutionized the industry, making possible large-scale industrial lumbering. The skidders were located either on the pullboats, or when rail lines were present, on a flat car. When pullboats were used (rather than railroads), cypress logs were organized into rafts and floated to the cypress mill, which was often located on a body of water.

In both pine and cypress operations the immersion in water, be it via a mill pond or a natural swamp lake, was crucial. It made large numbers of logs easy to move around, and thus helped manage the supply of incoming logs for cutting. Immersion also cleaned the logs, removing mud and gravel which could ruin saw blades or otherwise damage the sawing and conveyor machinery. Once the logs had reached the sawmill, the internal process did not differ greatly between pine and cypress operations. In general, the sawing operation involved two building types:

1. the sawing building itself
2. one or more boiler houses that provided steam to power the various sawing operations.

Boiler houses were usually contained within high brick walls to separate them from the sawing buildings, fire being a constant danger in any lumber facility. Be it with fire-tube or water-tube boilers, the steam production system was always wood-burning. A favorite fuel was timber scraps and sawdust from the sawing operation. Boiler houses usually had a separate, and fire-proof, chamber for storing sawdust. Many also had steel conveyors to bring the sawdust from the sawing building to the sawdust storage area. All boiler houses were serviced by smoke stacks, often of metal and held in place by guy wires, though some stacks were of brick.

Smokestacks were frequently equipped with spark-screens at the top (another fire preventative). Finally, the risk of fire was also minimized by the fact that stacks usually rose to considerable height.

Sawmills were usually constructed of heavy timbers to absorb the vibrations of the machinery. The sawing area was often on the second story, and was well roofed over, but largely open on the sides. The lower story usually contained power steam pipes, belt-drive machinery and the all important tubular oil lubricant system to keep the machinery running smoothly.

In the sawing building the first operation was the so-called "cut-off," using a circular saw of vast diameter to cut the incoming logs to the desired length. The newly cut logs were then fastened to carts mounted on steel tracks. These carts were moved back and forth by steam pistons (called "shot-guns") to pass the logs through another set of circular saws. With each pass another plank was sawn off. Following this, the planks were conveyed via steel rollers to a third set of circular saws. These were edger saws designed to cut off the bark and produce the finished planks.

Freshly cut planks were then conveyed to the dry kiln, usually a brick building with long

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

heating chambers. Here the lumber was dried using super-heated steam which, at such a temperature, takes on the characteristics of hot compressed air. The drying process removed moisture and any remaining tree sap.

If finished smooth surface lumber was desired, the planks were then conveyed to the planing mill which often had its own power plant. These, too, were usually two stories and of heavy timber construction, with mechanical planing machinery on the upper floor actuated by belts driven by one or more steam engines below. The lower machine room also had its own lubrication system.

Planks were planed smooth. This differs from the modern practice in which rough planks are mechanically sanded. Finished planks were then conveyed to lumber sheds to be stored, generally by grade, and kept for sale or shipment.

These various buildings were often linked via transport systems, either plank thoroughfares or train rails. Wood was conveyed via special carts called "hogs" which operated by mule power, and later by diesel tractors.¹²

The Purpose-Built Company Town

The impact of industrial lumbering on the Louisiana landscape was staggering to say the least. In addition to the incalculable loss of vast virgin tracts of timber, there was a furious spurt of building. Whole new towns – company towns built by lumber companies – mushroomed on the landscape. They were particularly plentiful in the pine industry, and within that industry, particularly plentiful in western and central Louisiana. Although certainly present, company-built towns were not as common in the cypress industry. According to Louisiana cypress lumbering historian Ervin Mancil, most cypress mills were located in or near pre-existing towns ("An Historical Geography of Industrial Cypress Lumbering in Louisiana," 1972 dissertation).

Company towns existed for the sole purpose of producing lumber. Generally, everything was built and owned by the company – housing, churches, schools, hospital, commissary, etc. As George Alvin Stokes observes in "Lumbering in Southwest Louisiana": "Babies were born in company hospitals, housewives bought their groceries at a company store, and families lived in houses built and owned by the company. Few towns ever existed in Louisiana with a greater singleness of function than those devoted to lumbering."

As the timber played out in the 1920s, Louisiana began to almost immediately lose its purpose-built lumber company towns, one-by-one. With a cut-out and get-out policy, lumber companies either dismantled towns or left them to soon become ghost towns. The Library of Congress holds poignant pictures taken in the 1930s of the remains of the once large mill town of Fullerton in Vernon Parish. Only a wall or two of major buildings remained.

"Oblivion was the usual fate of the strictly sawmill town after the local timber supply was exhausted," writes John Michael Caldwell in his thesis "The Forest of the Vintage: A Geography of Industrial Lumbering in North Central Louisiana" (University of Oklahoma, 1975). He quotes from a 1923 fictional description of an abandoned "Nameless Town":

No wonder the hotel was empty, the bank closed, the stores out of business; for on the other side of the railroad, down by the wide pond that once had held beautiful, fine-grained logs of Louisiana longleaf pine, the big sawmill that for twenty years had been the pulsing heart of what was now Nameless Town was already sagging on its foundations, its boilers dead, the deck stripped of all removable machinery. A few ragged piles of graying lumber were huddled here and there along the dolly-ways in

¹² Fricker, 8-9.

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

the yard where for years lumber had been stacked by the million feet, waiting to be sent into thirty states and half the countries of the world. The mill had sawed-out.¹³

End of information taken from "The Louisiana Lumber Boom, c. 1880-1925"

Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company

Beginnings

Jackson Parish and the community that would eventually become Hodge "came to the attention of a number of young lumbermen" around the turn of the 20th century.¹⁴ According to a 1909 article in an industry trade journal called *American Lumberman*, which is posted on the Texas Transportation Archive's website, north Louisiana was replete with longleaf and shortleaf yellow pine at this time, which made it fertile ground for those connected with the lumber industry.¹⁵ One of these enterprising men, Otis E. Hodge (hereafter referred to as "O.E."), had been associated with the Arkadelphia Lumber Company, operating at Greysonia, Arkansas. O.E., born in 1874 as the son of a farmer, learned the lumber business here and at the Dry Run and Eagle Lumber Companies, also in Arkansas.¹⁶ After acquiring this experience, he determined that an unusually advantageous opening could be had by someone who was financially able to go in and buy some of the good shortleaf in Louisiana's Jackson and Bienville parishes and undertook to organize a company for that purpose.¹⁷ He found, however, that the undertaking was a large one from a financial standpoint and that he would have to interest others in order to swing it.¹⁸ Therefore he enlisted the help of fellow loggers who had trained with him in Arkadelphia - Robert W. Huie, Charles E. Neeley, James B. Baker, and John S. Hunt, the only Louisiana native of the group.¹⁹ Along with O.E., these southern-born entrepreneurs represented the five primary partners in the Huie-Hodge Lumber Company.²⁰ The company received its charter on February 25, 1901, and immediately built a plant at Hodge. The plant at that time was comparatively small, but it began active operation at once, processing soft pine exclusively.²¹

The Mills

The mill at Hodge was not the Huie-Hodge cohort's first facility. In 1899, the partners constructed and operated a temporary mill in Jonesboro, then called Macedonia. They operated in Macedonia for two years along with another partner, J.L. Williams, who would leave town in 1901 when the area experienced a typhoid outbreak. The transition this year to Hodge also attracted another partner, C.A. Bowman, who invested \$50,000 to incorporate the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Co. in Hodge. The Huie-Hodge conglomerate did not last long in its original form, and in 1903, O.E. and Hunt sold their shares (or were bought out depending on the source) and started a series of temporary sawmills, including one in Calvin, Louisiana.²² Despite O.E. and Hunt's absence from the company, though, it continued to thrive. Two years later, in 1906, O.E. and Hunt came back into the fold and bought out Huie and Neeley's interests. O.E. and Hunt then became

¹³ Fricker, 10.

¹⁴ "Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd.," *American Lumberman*, May 8, 1909, 68-83, accessed via Texas Transportation Archive July 19, 2022, www.ttarchive.com. [Profile of the Huie-Hodge Lumber Company at Hodge, Louisiana c. 1909. Texas Transportation Archive Historical Notes \(ttarchive.com\)](http://www.ttarchive.com)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83; Nicholas Ducote, "Hodge-HuntStory (HHLC-S)," Hunt Family Documents & Photographs, accessed July 19, 2022, www.huntfamilyhistory.com. Hodge-Hunt Story (HHLC-S) (huntfamilyhistory.com).

¹⁷ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83; Ducote.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83.

²² [Ducote; John H. Dennis, interview by Mark E. Nackman for Columbia University's Oral History Department, April 28, 1975, transcript, 12.](http://www.huntfamilyhistory.com)

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

the co-owners of the Huie-Hodge Lumber Company.²³ The partners changed the name of the company to the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company.²⁴

Under O.E.'s and Hunt's leadership, the conglomerate quickly expanded beyond Hodge. In 1902, the partners purchased a plant in Danville, Louisiana, about 12 miles southwest of Hodge.²⁵ The Danville mill proved especially beneficial since it processed hardwoods, adding a line of business to the operation²⁶. In 1904, the Danville mill acquired a planer, which increased its daily capacity from 75,000 board feet to 125,000 board feet. Workers used the planer to process hardwoods into high-quality edge grain floorboards, which the company sold in northeastern markets and those near Chicago.²⁷ Nine years later, in 1911, the company purchased a third mill in Bienville, Louisiana, a small village located about 20 miles northwest of the primary mill.²⁸ Another mill in Walsh, Louisiana, a "tiny hamlet built by other logging interests around 1907," came under Hodge-Hunt's ownership, but sources do not provide much information about this mill.²⁹

The Railroad

By 1911, Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company had linked all its mills along the North Louisiana and Gulf Railroad, which enabled better access to railroad resources.³⁰ The North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad is a historic southern short line established to move lumber and related traffic.³¹ The railroad began in 1901 after the incorporation of the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company, Ltd. The first portion of the line was completed the following year, in 1902, connecting the Hodge mill and the one at Danville. When the company acquired the Bienville plant in 1909, they also linked it to the line. By 1911, after a \$107,000 investment, the railroad linked the entire Hodge-Hunt conglomeration, which included a 16-mile line between Danville and Walsh.³²

The railroad became a subsidiary of the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company; the company formally incorporated it in 1906 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the conglomerate. The rail line grew over time by taking over small, unincorporated logging lines and adding them to its system.³³ By 1911, the North Louisiana and Gulf Railroad, which connected all the Hodge-Hunt mills, interchanged with the large Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (Rock Island) at Hodge, which had a southerly line extending from Little Rock, Arkansas, through southern Louisiana at Eunice.³⁴

Hodge-Hunt used these systems to access its main retail markets, which were in "Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio," and half of the timber was sent to wholesale markets in the southwestern states, where new construction was booming.³⁵ The construction allowed them to choose rates competitively from several carriers—including the Louisiana Northwestern, Queen & Crescent, Cotton Belt, or Texas & Pacific systems. The new construction opened Hodge-Hunt up to "a better rate Ohio river

²³ [Ducote](#).

²⁴ Gill Hoffman, "Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd. (1901-)/North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad (1906-present)," Mississippi Rails, accessed July 19, 2022, www.msrailroads.com. msrailroads.com/NL&G.htm; Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83"; John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 13; Busbice, "Hodge: The Company-Owned Town," 8.

²⁵ Adam Burns, "North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad, March 14, 2022, accessed July 19, 2022, www.american-rails.com. [North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad: History, Roster, Pictures \(american-rails.com\)](http://www.american-rails.com); Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ducote.

²⁸ Burns; Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83.

²⁹ Burns

³⁰ [Ducote](#)

³¹ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83

³² [Ducote](#)

³³ [Burns](#)

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ [Ducote](#)

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

crossings" and would "increase its shipments into Kentucky."³⁶ It also gave Hodge-Hunt better access to box cars, which were in short supply. With the new railroad routes secured in 1911, Hodge-Hunt upgraded the capacity of two of their mills by 1912.³⁷ In Hodge, it increased from 100 million board feet ("Mbf") in 1910 to 150 Mbf in 1912, and in Bienville, it increased from 40 Mbf in 1910 to 42 Mbf in 1912.³⁸ Before the new construction on the N.L. and G., the Bienville mill relied solely on the Louisiana and Northwestern Railroad, and the Hodge mill relied on the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific railroad.³⁹ The Railroad's final growth occurred in the late 1940s when the railroad picked up a section of a former Louisiana & North West line.⁴⁰ Over the years, the NL&G's traffic always remained based on timber products with connections to two Class Is and short line L&NW.⁴¹

Selective Cutting and Reforestation

The following section is taken directly from a document called "Hodge-Hunt Story" found on a Hunt family website administered by Nicholas Ducote. Text has been added where needed to explain some references in the narrative:

Despite recommendations from the U.S. Forest Service to clear-cut timberland as late as 1918, Hodge-Hunt practiced an early form of reforestation known as selective cutting on some of its land. Although Hodge-Hunt began selective cutting during the same time period as Henry Hardtner at Urania (fifty miles southeast of Hodge), Hodge-Hunt did not publicize their work. Most likely, the idea for selective cutting at Hodge originated from J.L. Williams. In 1897, two years before coming to Macedonia with O.E. Hodge, Williams approached Arkansas lumberman P. G. Gates with a novel idea for timber management. Gates was then president of the Eagle Mills Lumber Company near Bearden in Ouachita County (Arkansas). Williams asked Gates to set aside 5,000 acres of his holdings for selective cutting practices.⁴²

According to the Grant County Museum (Sheridan, Arkansas), Williams' experiment succeeded and he gained a reputation in the region for his novel approach to timber management.⁴³ Williams joined O.E. Hodge's Macedonia operation in 1899, but only stayed until 1901. Nevertheless, in Williams' short time working with O.E. Hodge, he may have lobbied again for selective cutting.

In 1909, the *American Lumberman* profile of Hodge-Hunt confirmed their early experiments with selective cutting, or "practical forestry," as the *Lumberman* called it:

[T]he officers of the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company have developed an interest in Practical forestry; that is forestry of the sort that will pay the owner of cutover timber lands and the manufacturer. Accordingly experiments have been undertaken to determine just how long it will take and what it will cost to grow shortleaf pine of commercial value. It is too early to predict what the outcome of these tests will be, but an examination of the land cut over six or eight years ago shows that the second growth is coming up rapidly and some of it should be ready for the ax in twenty years.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ [Burns](#)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ducote.

⁴³ "Grant County, Arkansas," accessed July 18, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. [Grant County, Arkansas - Wikipedia](#);

"Grant County Museum," accessed July 18, 2022, www.grantcountymuseumar.com; "Sheridan, Arkansas," accessed July 18, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. [Sheridan, Arkansas - Wikipedia](#).

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

If Hodge-Hunt possessed cut-over land with eight years of growth in 1909, it means they started their experiments by 1901. In a 1975 interview with a Columbia University Oral History Department researcher, John H. Dennis described the company's reforestation process. John Hunt hired Dennis to work at the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company in the late 1920s.⁴⁴ He worked there for nearly 50 years until his retirement in 1972, after Hodge and Hunt sold the company to the Advance Bag and Paper company and throughout the plant's various other owners.⁴⁵ Dennis also bought and lived in the John S. Hunt House from 1956 to his death in 1994.⁴⁶ Dennis explained that his father-in-law, Harvey F. Lewis (the woods superintendent), "would not clear cut, [but would] leave to every forty acres of land a certain number of seed trees that would make seeds and reforest naturally." Dennis claimed that "farther south they clear cut the land [and] they wouldn't leave nothing" but if they cut trees for saw timber, they would "always leave seed trees." If Hodge-Hunt began this practice from their beginning, it would have been one of the first second-growth forests in Louisiana. In 1922, Hodge-Hunt Lumber co-signed one of the first reforestation contract with the State of Louisiana.

In the 1900s, Henry Hardtner of the Urania Lumber Co was popularizing this technique of selective cutting, or "natural reforestation." Rather than deliberately planting timber, Hardtner was convinced that letting the forest "naturally" re-grow would be efficient. After meeting with Hardtner, the Great Southern Lumber Co. of Bogalusa revised his natural reforestation method to resemble "artificial reforestation," a method that soon gained widespread acceptance across the nation. However, the method used by Hodge-Hunt more closely resembles Hardtner's "natural reforestation," than the "artificial" planting of Great Southern Lumber. It is possible that Hardtner and Hodge or Hunt interacted through any of a number of local and regional institutions, such as the Southern Pine Association, Masonic Lodges, and Louisiana state government.

No concrete numbers exist for the land under reforestation, but multiple pieces of evidence point to Hodge-Hunt having an early reforestation program, which could have been as much as 20,000 acres. This fact alone makes Hodge-Hunt Lumber a pioneer in reforestation and selective cutting. Every history of Louisiana lumber mentions Henry Hardtner and the vast reforestation of the Great Southern Lumber Company, but Hodge-Hunt deserves equal attention. In 1922, Hodge-Hunt participated in the first statewide reforestation program in the United States – Louisiana's reforestation contracts – with Great Southern Lumber and Henry Hardtner. In 1926, the *Times Picayune* described Hodge-Hunt as having 40,000 acres of cut-over land, which they were marketing to home seekers in a feature promoting the growth potential of Ruston. Six months later, when Hodge-Hunt sold, they owned 60,000 acres timberland. Hodge-Hunt's primitive reforestation readied the second-growth forests for Southern Advance by 1927. When it became clear in the mid-1920s that pulp could be made profitably from southern pine, Hodge-Hunt (they changed their name in 1921) already possessed large swaths of second-growth timber (possibly as much as 28,000 acres). After fifteen to twenty years of growth, the second-growth timber would be suitable for pulp and paper production.⁴⁷

End of section taken from "Hodge-Hunt Story"

Management, working conditions, and amenities

In 1909, which was still during the early days of the mill's operation, John M. Brown, a name not previously mentioned in existing documents, was serving as president of the operation. By his time, Hunt had assumed the role of vice-president of Hodge-Hunt; he also served as superintendent of the mill at Bienville.

⁴⁴ John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 5.

⁴⁵ John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 5, 8-10, 15, 17, 21-22, 55-57, 59-60, 66, 70-72, 74-75, and 77-78.

⁴⁶ [John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 38](#); "John H. Dennis (1904-1994)," accessed July 18, 2022, www.ancientfaces.com.
[John H Dennis \(1907 - 1994\) - Hodge, LA \(ancientfaces.com\)](#).

⁴⁷ Ducote.

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

O.E. was the company's largest stockholder at this time but did not hold any executive office.⁴⁸

Hodge was said to be "noteworthy for the absence of friction that usually exists among the different elements in a mill town."⁴⁹ The 1909 *American Lumberman* article stated:

The company's work is conducted with the utmost regularity. This in large measure is due to the measures taken for the general, religious and moral training of the company's employees. Mr. Hodge is a firm believer in the theory that the morale of the employees of any business is largely what it is made by the environment and conditions under which men work. He believes, of course, that it is wise to hire the best men when they can be had, but long experience in the business has taught him that even these will not show the highest efficiency unless they are entirely satisfied with the treatment they receive from their employer and the conditions surrounding them. The company has therefore seen to it that the proper educational and other facilities are maintained, so that the families of employees have just as good an opportunity for a common school education as they would in a larger place. The Hodge school, under the direction of a principal and assistant, has forty-five pupils enrolled. The majority of the dwellings are owned by the company and are well constructed and roomy. Several employees, however, own their homes. The company has constructed a church, a lodge hall where the Woodmen hold regular meetings and a number of small store buildings in addition to the commissary, also operating a commodious hotel which takes care of a considerable transient trade in addition to furnishing accommodations for those of the employees who, not having families, are not assigned to company houses. This hotel differs from most of its kind, in that the food served to all alike is such that traveling men and other transients are entirely satisfied with the accommodations they get, a test supreme. The commissary at Hodge carries a stock of general merchandise averaging about \$14,000 in value. Its annual sales amount to approximately \$55,000. The company employs an able physician and surgeon, who attends to the medical needs of the population.⁵⁰

Other sources do, indeed, confirm that Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company established several facilities that would provide its employees with a sense of community outside of work. This was especially important considering that most of the workers came from other states and regions of the country, including the northeast.⁵¹ At least one worker relocated from Europe.⁵² This led to fast growth in the area, and in its prime, Hodge was home to approximately 2,000 residents.⁵³

According to the remembrances of Juanita Jones Busbice, a former resident of Hodge whose father worked as a master mechanic at the company during the "sawmill days," the firm ran a commissary, the Commodious Hotel where one "could get a good Sunday dinner . . . for 25 cents," and a school.⁵⁴ The ground floor of the Masonic Lodge housed the school initially until the company constructed a one-story

⁴⁸ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83.

⁴⁹ Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd., 68-83

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 26-28. Busbice, "Hodge: The Company-Owned Town," 8.

⁵² Juanita Jones Busbice, "Mystery Surrounds Austrian's Brief Hodge Residency." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996.

⁵³ Leslie L. Crowson, "The Biggest Little City in the South." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996, 12.

⁵⁴ John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 4-5; Frank C. Stewart, "Frank C. Stewart Photograph Collection," accessed July 19, 2022, www.huntfamilyhistory.com. [Frank C. Stewart Photograph Collection \(huntfamilyhistory.com\)](http://www.huntfamilyhistory.com); Busbice, "Hodge: The Company-Owned Town," 8.

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

wood frame building that accommodated seven classrooms.⁵⁵ The company also built a church that was considered a “union” church because Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians held services there each Sunday, with a preacher from each denomination taking a turn at the pulpit. Officers and Sunday school teachers served regardless of denomination, and the company helped pay the preachers’ salaries.⁵⁶

Busbice continued, stating that “nearly all” the mill houses were painted “box car red because that was the cheapest kind of paint.” She also said that two separate neighborhoods of mill houses existed – one on either side of the railroad tracks and that a “black community was located near the mill pond.”⁵⁷ The mill houses mentioned in the article still exist today; they are modest dwellings, and most have been modified with the addition of vinyl or other non-historic siding but have retained their overall form.

The company and its workers compensated the doctor mentioned in the American Lumberman article for approximately \$1 a month for an unlimited number of visits.⁵⁸ As for the employees, their wages were paid in cash.⁵⁹

John S. Hunt’s House

Although Hodge was named in honor of O.E., he never actually lived in the town, choosing instead to reside in Ruston.⁶⁰ However, his partner, Hunt, lived in the village, and in 1916, he had the home at 1231 First Street South constructed as a residence for himself, his wife, Martha, and their two sons.⁶¹ The house was described in 1996 in the following manner:

Graceful columns, French doors, and a capacious swing adorn the home built in 1916 for sawmill magnate, John E. Hunt (sic), of Hodge-Hunt Lumber Co., Inc. The house, built from lumber planed at the mill, has 12-foot ceilings. Wide doorways allowed the passage of Mrs. Hunt’s hospital bed through the house. Those who knew her say she was bedridden after being injured in a buggy accident.⁶²

Evidently, the buggy accident occurred before 1916, and builders constructed the house with extra-wide hallways to accommodate Martha’s bed. In addition, the dwelling also featured “porches all around and wide doorways so that Mrs. Hunt could be wheeled into the fresh air.”⁶³

The Hunts lived in the home for approximately 14 years.⁶⁴ They moved to Shreveport in May 1930, where Martha died two weeks later at 54.⁶⁵ By 1940, John S. Hunt was widowed and living in Monroe at the Hotel Frances, a property in which he was an investor.⁶⁶ According to Busbice, he helped build the hotel with

⁵⁵ Busbice, “Hodge: The Company-Owned Town,” 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “1930 United States Federal Census for John S. Hunt,” accessed July 19, 2022 Ancestry.com.

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4584879_00568?usePUB=true&_phsrc=faL15&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pld=34871759; “Martha McGill Stewart Hunt,” *obituary*, Find a Grave, accessed July 19, 2022, www.findagrave.com. [Martha McGill Stewart Hunt \(1875-1930\) - Find a Grave Memorial](http://www.findagrave.com)

⁶⁵ “Marath McGill Steward Hunt,” *obituary*.

⁶⁶ “1940 United States Federal Census for John S. Hunt,” accessed July 19, 2022 Ancestry.com.

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/M-T0627-01437-00188?usePUB=true&_phsrc=faL16&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pld=123799227; Ducote;

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

funds from the sale of the mill in Hodge.⁶⁷ The Hotel Frances, located downtown at the corner of Jackson and Harrison Streets, was constructed in 1932. In its heyday, the 11-story building was advertised as “the finest in the south, and boasted 250 air-cooled rooms and four air-conditioned dining rooms.”⁶⁸ Hunt was still living at the hotel in 1945 when, at the age of 72, he became ill and was taken by train to St. Louis, where he died within 24 hours of arrival.⁶⁹ He is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.⁷⁰

Subsequent occupants of Hunt’s house include the previously referenced John Dennis family who occupied the home from 1956 to the mid-1990s and the Johnny Michaud family. Both Dennis and Michaud worked at the plant in Hodge after it ceased operating as a lumber mill and became a paper mill.⁷¹ Michaud was one of the son’s of Steve Michaud, a manager at the plant after it operated as a paper mill. Steve Michaud is credited as being one of the most successful managers at the plant and a leader within the village.⁷²

O.E. Hodge’s and John S. Hunt’s legacy

O.E. and Hunt, invested their profits into other interests in North Louisiana. In 1901, O.E. organized a branch of First National Bank in Ruston and served as its president. The bank operated in Ruston until 1986. Sometime in the 1910s and 1920s, the two leaders opened up two land and realty companies – Hodge Land Company and Hodge & Hunt Realty Company. It was common then for a large lumber firm like Hodge-Hunt to purchase and manage timber tracts and cut-over land sales through a subsidiary. In 1910, Hunt served as a director of the State Bank of Winnfield, where he lived through World War I, and purchased ninety-nine shares in their stock in 1906 and 1907. Eventually, both men moved to Ruston and began investing there.⁷³

Their success in the lumber business gave entrepreneurs substantial wealth to invest. Occasionally, an investment failed or lost money, but most of the companies they touched succeeded (at least during their lifetimes). Moreover, unlike the northern and eastern speculators decried in traditional interpretations of southern lumber development, O.E. and Hunt re-invested much of their profits locally. Given the scope and magnitude of O.E.’s investments compared to Hunt, he likely possessed two or three times the wealth of his business partner. Unfortunately, however, records of O.E.’s personal wealth are nowhere near as comprehensive as those that exist for Hunt. Alex.T Hunt, Jr., Hunt’s grandson, discovered a collection of his grandfather’s financial information during an interview in 2013. These records provided comprehensive information on Hunt’s wealth, but the profile of O.E.’s wealth is based exclusively on newspaper and trade journal coverage. As a result, the following information focuses primarily on the former, although he invested with O.E. on many projects.⁷⁴

Between 1916 and 1920, Hunt purchased 15 shares in Jonesboro Drug Co. and another 47 in the Bank of Winnfield. Between 1923 and his death in 1944, Hunt made a plethora of relatively small investments: Kilgore Lumber Co. of Arkansas (100 shares), Boy Scouts of America, Ouachita Valley Council (5 shares), Guaranty Bond and Finance Co. (75 shares), Bank of Winnfield (10 shares), Jackson Gin, Ice and Cold

“Monroe Watch it Grow!,” *Monroe Morning World*, June 19, 1930, accessed July 19, 2022, via “Hotel Frances Est. 1931,” www.familyhistory.com. [Francis-Hotel-Newspapers.pdf](https://www.familyhistory.com/Francis-Hotel-Newspapers.pdf) (huntfamilyhistory.com).

⁶⁷ Busbice, “Hodge: The Company-Owned Town,” 8.

⁶⁸ “Monroe’s Beautiful Hotel Frances,” *advertisement*, accessed July 19, 2022 via “If you grew up on the southside of Monroe, La” [www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/265160346845149/photos/1246078592086648?_rdr). https://m.facebook.com/265160346845149/photos/1246078592086648?_rdr

⁶⁹ “John Hunt Dies In St. Louis, Mo.,” *Monroe News-Star*, September 27, 1945, accessed July 19, 2022 via www.newspaperarchive.com. [Monroe News Star, Sep 27, 1945, p. 1 | NewspaperArchive®](https://www.newspaperarchive.com/Monroe-News-Star-Sep-27-1945-p-1-NewspaperArchive/).

⁷⁰ “John Smoker Hunt,” Find a Grave, accessed July 19, 2022, www.findagrave.com. [John Smoker Hunt \(1873-1945\) - Find a Grave Memorial](http://www.findagrave.com/John-Smoker-Hunt-1873-1945-Find-a-Grave-Memorial).

⁷¹ John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 5, 8-10, 15, 17, 21-22, 28 45, 49, 52-57.

⁷² Busbice, “Hodge: The Company-Owned Town,” 8; Crowson, 12; John H. Dennis Interview transcript, 5, 8-10, 15, 17, 21-22, 28 45, 49, 52-57.

⁷³ Ducote.

⁷⁴ Ducote.

Hunt, John S., House

Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA

County and State

Storage (63 shares), Bird Process Gasoline Co. (five shares), North Louisiana Dairy Products (5 shares), Vicksburg Bridge and Terminal Co. of Delaware (10 shares), FADA Radio and Electric Club (100 shares), Millhaven Gas Co. (1,250 shares), Ruston Golf Club (1 share), Delta Air Corp. (840 shares), and a \$45,000 war loan a few months before his death. During this time, he also invested in Citizen's Bank and Trust Co. of Ruston (1922), Hodge & Hunt Realty, and nearly \$470,000 in the West Virginia Oil and Gas Co. of Monroe (1932). West Virginia Oil dealt in North Louisiana mineral rights and likely other investments not enumerated in the accessible public record.⁷⁵

Located within Louisiana but outside the Ruston-Jonesboro-Winnfield corridor, two of Hunt's most significant investments, the Belle Chasse Land Co. (1921, 1924) and the Jackson-Harrison Co. (1930), illustrated his evolution as a businessman later in his career. They represented investments in new industries and geographic locations for Hodge and Hunt: the previously mentioned Hotel Frances in Monroe and real estate south of New Orleans in Belle Chasse. Hodge and Hunt owned substantial portions of both Belle Chasse Land Co. and Jackson-Harrison.⁷⁶

Advance Bag and Paper and Hodge Canning Company

The Hodge-Hunt lumber firm prospered for twenty-five years (1901-1926) under Hodge and Hunt's leadership. In 1926, according to Busbice, "Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company was approached by representatives of Advance Bag and paper Company of Maine about purchasing their land and timber holdings. These holdings comprised 72,671 acres of timberland and 20 miles of N.L.&G. railroad."⁷⁷ The partners agreed to sell while still staying on as acting board members and management, and the following year, in 1927, the new owners broke ground on the construction of a paper mill located west of the railroad tracks from the former Hodge-Hunt lumber mill.⁷⁸ The company, which called this branch of its operations "Southern Advance Bag & Paper," continued to employ hundreds of people.⁷⁹ These included many women from "the North" who were "persuaded to come and help the Southern girls learn to operate the bag plant."⁸⁰ The influx of women resulted in the construction of a women's dormitory to house the new employees.⁸¹ The company also built a men's "bunkhouse" and a large dining hall at this time.⁸²

Other changes made at the time include the establishment of a ball park and grandstand near the Hodge Elementary School, the establishment of a band and the construction of a bandstand in the First Street Park, the installation of tennis courts and a golf course, the establishment of a dairy barn, and construction of a country club, saltwater pool, and recreation center. The recreation center, funded at least in part by the employees who each contributed \$50, included a movie theater, skating rink, billard hall, bowling alley, basketball court, barber shop, and beauty parlor. The company also organized a baseball club called the "Wa-ha" team.⁸³

The name Wa-ha came from a local brand of canned tomatoes. In 1934, Advance Bag and Paper established a canning factory in an old building, a dry kiln, left from the sawmill. Women employed at the company peeled

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996 and [interview with John H. Dennis by Mark E. Nackman of the Columbia University Research Office, conducted 4/28/75](#)

⁸⁰ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁸¹ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996 and [interview with John H. Dennis by Mark E. Nackman of the Columbia University Research Office, conducted 4/28/75](#)

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

tomatoes grown by local farmers for 5 cents a bucket. This portion of the company was incorporated as the Hodge Canning Company, which operated until 1947.⁸⁴

Other amenities established in Hodge for the benefit of the company's workers and residents included a clinic. During the lumber mill days, the company doctor worked in an office at the mill and made house calls. However, by the time Southern Advance took over, the company-hired doctor directed his own fully-staffed clinic, and the company supplied him with a two-story house which is still extant today; it sits behind the John S. Hunt House. The wood-framed school, which a new facility had replaced, was converted into a ballroom, while the Advance Shopping Center was established.⁸⁵ The shopping center was created from the upgraded company store, and it served in some ways as the area's first "mall" because "with a few exceptions, you could go from one store to another without getting outside."⁸⁶ It included a grocery, drug store, café, feed store, ice plant, and filling station. It also evidently featured a department store that housed men's, "ladies," shoes, furniture, gifts, children's, and hardware departments.⁸⁷ In addition, Hodge saw the addition of more churches to accommodate various Christian denominations. Baptists, Catholics, and African-Americans each built their own churches, while Methodists took over the "union" church building established by Hodge-Hunt.⁸⁸ However, none of these congregations possessed the funding necessary to keep the churches going, so Southern Advanced set up a system to provide money to each to keep them operating.⁸⁹

At this time, the company also began remodeling the old mill houses. According to Busbice, Southern Advance refurbished them every five years, and some of the upgrades involved adding indoor plumbing and natural gas heat.⁹⁰ During the lumber mill days, the homes were heated with free "ends" from the mill, which were burned in wood and coal stoves. The houses rented for approximately \$15 or \$20 a month.⁹¹

New houses were also built at this time, but it is unclear if the company constructed them for the workers or if individuals built their own homes. As Busbice stated, Second, Third, and Fourth Streets, which had once been the location of a cotton field, "were opened for houses to be built."⁹²

The documentation available provides scant information about African-Americans who may have worked for either Hodge-Hunt or Southern Advance. Except for Busbice mentioning that a black community existed by the mill pond and John Dennis stating that African-Americans built their own church "in the east side," no other information is provided about housing and working conditions for Black employees of either company.⁹³ It is assumed that African-Americans were not provided rooms at the boarding houses or the hotel but were provided company housing in separate neighborhoods – either east of the railroad tracks or south of the other mill houses, where the mill pond would have been located.

A 1928 map of Hodge provides a hand-drawn overview of how the Village of Hodge was laid out. This would have given a "snapshot" of the community right after the lumber mill was vacated and the new paper mill was constructed but before most of the improvements listed above would have occurred. It shows Main Street running north and south while the railroad approached from the east, where it veered north just before reaching

⁸⁴ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996 and "Hodge Canning Company, Inc. Louisiana Business filings from Louisiana Secretary of State https://coraweb.sos.la.gov/commercialsearch/CommercialSearchDetails.aspx?CharterID=60687_39C057C502

⁸⁵ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996 and [interview with John H. Dennis by Mark E. Nackman of the Columbia University Research Office, conducted 4/28/75](#)

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁹⁰ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996 and [interview with John H. Dennis by Mark E. Nackman of the Columbia University Research Office, conducted 4/28/75](#)

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

Main Street and then running parallel to it. The Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company sat east of Main Street and southeast of the railroad track. The sawmill pond was located southeast of the plant, while the lumberyard sat northeast of it. Three separate residential neighborhoods flanked the plant and the lumber yard while a straight row of houses lined East Street, which separated the pond from the mill.⁹⁴

Southern Advance sat angled on a large plot on the west side of Main Street, across from and north of the old lumber mill. The First Street Park separated it from a six-block residential area that was partially empty. At the same time, company-owned buildings, including the Girl's Dormitory, school, shopping center, and the Union church, surrounded it. John S. Hunt's house sits at the head of this residential area.⁹⁵

Robert Gair Co., Continental Can, West Rock, etc.

Southern Advance Bag & Paper operated in this manner until the mid-1950s. In 1955, it sold its holdings to the Robert Gair Company. As part of this transaction, Hodge ceased being a company town. The particulars of this sale are unknown, but documents state that during this same year, all the mill houses were offered for sale to the occupants for between \$2,000-\$8,000.⁹⁶ John Dennis, Southern Advance's financial superintendent, bought John S. Hunt's house for \$8,000.⁹⁷

The following year, in 1956, Robert Gair Co. sold out to Continental Can of New York, which in 1970, invested \$100 million to modernize and expand the plant.⁹⁸ Continental Can operated the plant until 1984, when it sold the facility to Stone Container.⁹⁹ In 2011, Rock-Tenn Company took over ownership of the facility.¹⁰⁰ Four years later, in 2015, Rock-Tenn, which was itself the result of a merger, merged with MeadWestvaco to form WestRock.¹⁰¹ In 2017, WestRock embarked on a \$200 million expansion to keep the plant, which employed approximately 450 workers, competitive.¹⁰² The expansion was aided by a State of Louisiana tax rebate incentive package; the state was said to offer this package because of the plant's importance to the region and because of "stiff competition" from WestRock plants across the South.¹⁰³ According to the area's elected leaders, the project created "stability for the largest private employer in Jackson Parish," which is "the economic engine of an entire region."¹⁰⁴ Governor John Bel Edwards stated in 2017, "WestRock's Hodge mill has played a vital role in the Jackson Parish economy for nearly 90 years."¹⁰⁵

WestRock is the largest employer in Jackson Parish, with an annual payroll of approximately \$28 million, and is a significant economic driver for Jackson Parish and surrounding areas, contributing several hundred million dollars in economic impact annually to the region. The mill also supplies power distribution services to the

⁹⁴ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996

⁹⁷ [interview with John H. Dennis by Mark E. Nackman of the Columbia University Research Office, conducted 4/28/75](#)

⁹⁸ North Central Louisiana's Pine Country Back Roads, "Swinging Through the Years," August, 1996 and "Continental Can Plans Expansion" June 12, 1970. [CONTINENTAL CAN PLANS EXPANSION - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

⁹⁹ "Smurfit-Stone Container," accessed July 19, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smurfit-Stone_Container.

¹⁰⁰ "Rock Tenn," accessed July 19, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RockTenn>

¹⁰¹ "City Business Staff Reports, "Paper mill in north Louisiana getting upgrades," New Orleans City Business, October 18, 2017, accessed July 18, 2022, www.neworleanscitybusiness.com. [Paper mill in north Louisiana getting upgrades | New Orleans CityBusiness](#); "Gov. Edwards And WestRock Announce Commitment to Hodge Mill," Louisiana Economic Development Newslist, October 18, 2017, accessed July 19, 2022, www.opportunitylouisiana.com. [Gov. Edwards And WestRock Announce Commitment To Hodge Mill | LED News | Louisiana Economic Development \(opportunitylouisiana.com\)](#); Hilburn, Greg. "UPDATE: Hodge paper mill upgrade saves thousands of jobs," *The News Star*, October 18, 2017, accessed July 19, 2022, www.thenewsstar.com. [Hodge paper mill upgrade saves thousands of jobs \(thenewsstar.com\)](#).

¹⁰² Hilburn.

¹⁰³ "Gov. Edwards", LED; Hilburn.

¹⁰⁴ Hilburn.

¹⁰⁵ "Gov. Edwards", LED

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

Village of Hodge and wastewater treatment services to Hodge, North Hodge, and East Hodge.¹⁰⁶ In 2018, the Mayor of Hodge, Gerald Palmer, said, "WestRock is an integral part of the Village of Hodge's economy and represents the lifeblood of our community. Our community was founded as a paper mill town. WestRock is not only the largest employer in Hodge, but the paper mill also provides utility services for our community. This investment ensures the future of Hodge."¹⁰⁷

Today, the only buildings still standing that represent the old "company town" days before the mill was sold in 1955 are the mill houses, the Catholic Church, the third incarnation of Hodge Elementary School (which replaced the wood-framed building), the doctor's office, and the doctor's house located at the corner of Hunt and 2nd Streets, directly behind the John S. Hunt House. Further research might support the nomination of a National Register multiple-property submission or district for the town.

Criterion B: Industry

The John S. Hunt house is locally significant under Criterion B in the area of industry as the building most directly associated with Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company's founders in the company town they founded. The 1916-1930 period of significance includes much of the operation of the Hodge-Hunt lumber mill and the beginnings of the Southern Advance Bag & Paper mill, which was a precursor to the current iteration of the mill that remains the primary economic driver of the area. The lumber mill created the town of Hodge, which did not exist before the partners decided this area would serve as an ideal location for timber processing. Their vision and efforts led to the creation of an entire community that is still extant today. The financial impact of the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company remains in effect, as evidenced by the paper mill that employs hundreds of Louisiana citizens and serves as a significant economic driver in the state. This impact results directly from the enterprise the Huie-Hodge and Hodge-Hunt partners created.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

9. Major Bibliographical Resources

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- "1930 United States Federal Census for John S. Hunt," accessed July 19, 2022 Ancestry.com.
https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4584879_00568?usePUB=true&_phsrc=faL15&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pld=34871759.
- "1940 United States Federal Census for John S. Hunt," accessed July 19, 2022 Ancestry.com.
https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/M-T0627-01437-00188?usePUB=true&_phsrc=faL16&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pld=123799227.
- "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in the United States: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021 (SUB-IP-EST2021-POP)," accessed July 18, 2022, www.census.gov. [City and Town Population Totals: 2020-2021 \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/popest/data/totals/totals.html).
- Burns, Adam. "North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad, March 14, 2022, accessed July 19, 2022, www.american-rails.com.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

[North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad: History, Roster, Pictures \(american-rails.com\).](#)

Busbice, Juanita Jones. "Hodge: The Company-Owned Town." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996.

Busbice, Juanita Jones. "Mystery Surrounds Austrian's Brief Hodge Residency." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996.

City Business Staff Reports, "Paper mill in north Louisiana getting upgrades," New Orleans City Business, October 18, 2017, accessed July 18, 2022, www.neworleanscitybusiness.com.
[Paper mill in north Louisiana getting upgrades | New Orleans CityBusiness.](#)

"Continental Can Plans Expansion," *New York Times*, June 1970, accessed July 19, 2022, www.nytimes.com. [CONTINENTAL CAN PLANS EXPANSION - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\).](#)

Ducote, Nicholas. "Hodge-HuntStory (HHLC-S)," Hunt Family Documents & Photographs, accessed July 19, 2022, www.huntfamilyhistory.com. [Hodge-Hunt Story \(HHLC-S\) \(huntfamilyhistory.com\).](#)

Fricker, Donna. *Historic Historic Context The Louisiana Lumber Boom, c. 1880-1925*, Fricker Preservation Services, LLC, accessed July 19, 2022, www.louisianahp.org. [Microsoft Word - lumberhistoriccontextmaindocument \(state.la.us\).](#)

"Gov. Edwards And WestRock Announce Commitment to Hodge Mill," Louisiana Economic Development Newslist, October 18, 2017, accessed July 19, 2022, www.opportunitylouisiana.com. [Gov. Edwards And WestRock Announce Commitment To Hodge Mill | LED News | Louisiana Economic Development \(opportunitylouisiana.com\).](#)

"Grant County, Arkansas," accessed July 18, 2022, www.wikipedia.org.
[Grant County, Arkansas - Wikipedia.](#)

"Grant County Museum," accessed July 18, 2022, www.grantcountymuseumar.com.

Hillburn, Greg. "UPDATE: Hodge paper mill upgrade saves thousands of jobs," *The News Star*, October 18, 2017, accessed July 19, 2022, www.thenewsstar.com. [Hodge paper mill upgrade saves thousands of jobs \(thenewsstar.com\).](#)

"Hodge Canning Company, Inc.," Louisiana Business filings, accessed July 19, 2022, www.sos.la.gov.
https://coraweb.sos.la.gov/commercialsearch/CommercialSearchDetails.aspx?CharterID=60687_39C057C502

Crowson, Leslie L. "The Biggest Little City in the South." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996.

"Hodge, Louisiana," accessed July 18, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. [Hodge, Louisiana - Wikipedia.](#)

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

"Hodge, Louisiana," accessed July 19, 2022, *Town Talk*, Alexandria, Louisiana, August 30, 1933.
Accessed via Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/213607848>

Hoffman, Gill. "Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd. (19011)/North Louisiana & Gulf Railroad (1906-present)," Mississippi Rails, accessed July 19, 2022, www.msrailroads.com. [Mississippi Rails \(msrailroads.com\)](http://www.msrailroads.com).

"Huie-Hodge Lumber Co., Ltd.," *American Lumberman*, May 8, 1909, accessed via Texas Transportation Archive July 19, 2022, www.ttarchive.com. [Profile of the Huie-Hodge Lumber Company at Hodge, Louisiana c. 1909. Texas Transportation Archive Historical Notes \(ttarchive.com\)](http://www.ttarchive.com).

"John H. Dennis (1904-1994)," accessed July 18, 2022, www.ancientfaces.com.
[John H Dennis \(1907 - 1994\) - Hodge, LA \(ancientfaces.com\)](http://www.ancientfaces.com).

[John H. Dennis, interview by Mark E. Nackman, April 28, 1975, transcript, Columbia University Research Office, Oral History Department.](#)

"John Hunt Dies In St. Louis, Mo.," *Monroe News-Star*, September 27, 1945, accessed July 19, 2022 via www.newspaperarchive.com. [Monroe News Star, Sep 27, 1945, p. 1 | NewspaperArchive®](http://www.newspaperarchive.com).

"John Smoker Hunt," Find a Grave, accessed July 19, 2022, www.findagrave.com.
[John Smoker Hunt \(1873-1945\) - Find a Grave Memorial](http://www.findagrave.com).

"Jonesboro Plan Post-War Projects," *Alexandria Town Talk*, Alexandria, Louisiana, March 10, 1942, accessed July 19, 2022 via "The History of Jackson Parish, Louisiana," www.facebook.com.
[March 10, 1942 Longest... - The History Of Jackson Parish Louisiana. | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com).

"Martha McGill Stewart Hunt," *obituary*, accessed July 19, 2022, www.findagrave.com.
[Martha McGill Stewart Hunt \(1875-1930\) - Find a Grave Memorial](http://www.findagrave.com).

"Monroe Watch it Grow!," *Monroe Morning World*, June 19, 1930, accessed July 19, 2022, via "Hotel Frances Est. 1931," www.familyhistory.com. [Frances-Hotel-Newspapers.pdf \(huntfamilyhistory.com\)](http://www.familyhistory.com).

"Monroe's Beautiful Hotel Frances," *advertisement*, accessed July 19, 2022 via "If you grew up on the southside of Monroe, La" www.facebook.com.
https://m.facebook.com/265160346845149/photos/1246078592086648?_rdr

"More Facts About Hodge's First 100 Years." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996.

"Overview Map of US 167 in Louisiana," *Google Maps*, accessed July 19, 2022 via [U.S. Route 167 - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_167).

"Rock Tenn," accessed July 19, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RockTenn>.

"Sheridan, Arkansas," accessed July 18, 2022, www.wikipedia.org. [Sheridan, Arkansas - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheridan,_Arkansas).

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

Stewart, Frank C. "Frank C. Stewart Photograph Collection," accessed July 19, 2022,
www.huntfamilyhistory.com. [Frank C. Stewart Photograph Collection \(huntfamilyhistory.com\)](http://www.huntfamilyhistory.com).

"Smurfit-Stone Container," accessed July 19, 2022, www.wikipedia.org.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smurfit-Stone_Container.

"Village Incorporates 1928-The Paper Mill Era Begins." *Pine Country Backroads*, August, 1996.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 32.272872	Longitude: -92.725149
2. Latitude:	Longitude:
3. Latitude:	Longitude:
4. Latitude:	Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Hunt, John S., House
Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries correspond to the current property boundaries of 1231 South First Street, which encompass the historic property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Krystal Cox
organization: Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation
street & number: 1051 N. 3rd St.
city or town: Baton Rouge state: LA zip code: 70802
e-mail: kcox@crt.la.gov
telephone:
date: June 2022

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: John S. Hunt House
City or Vicinity: Hodge
County: Jackson Parish
State: Louisiana
Name of Photographer: Krystal Cox
Date of Photographs: June 18, 2021

- 1 of 24: East (front) elevation and front walk, camera facing west
2 of 24: East (front) elevation, camera facing northwest
3 of 24: Southeast corner showing enclosed portion of porch, camera facing northwest

Hunt, John S., House

Name of Property

Jackson Parish, LA

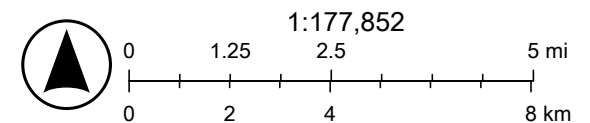
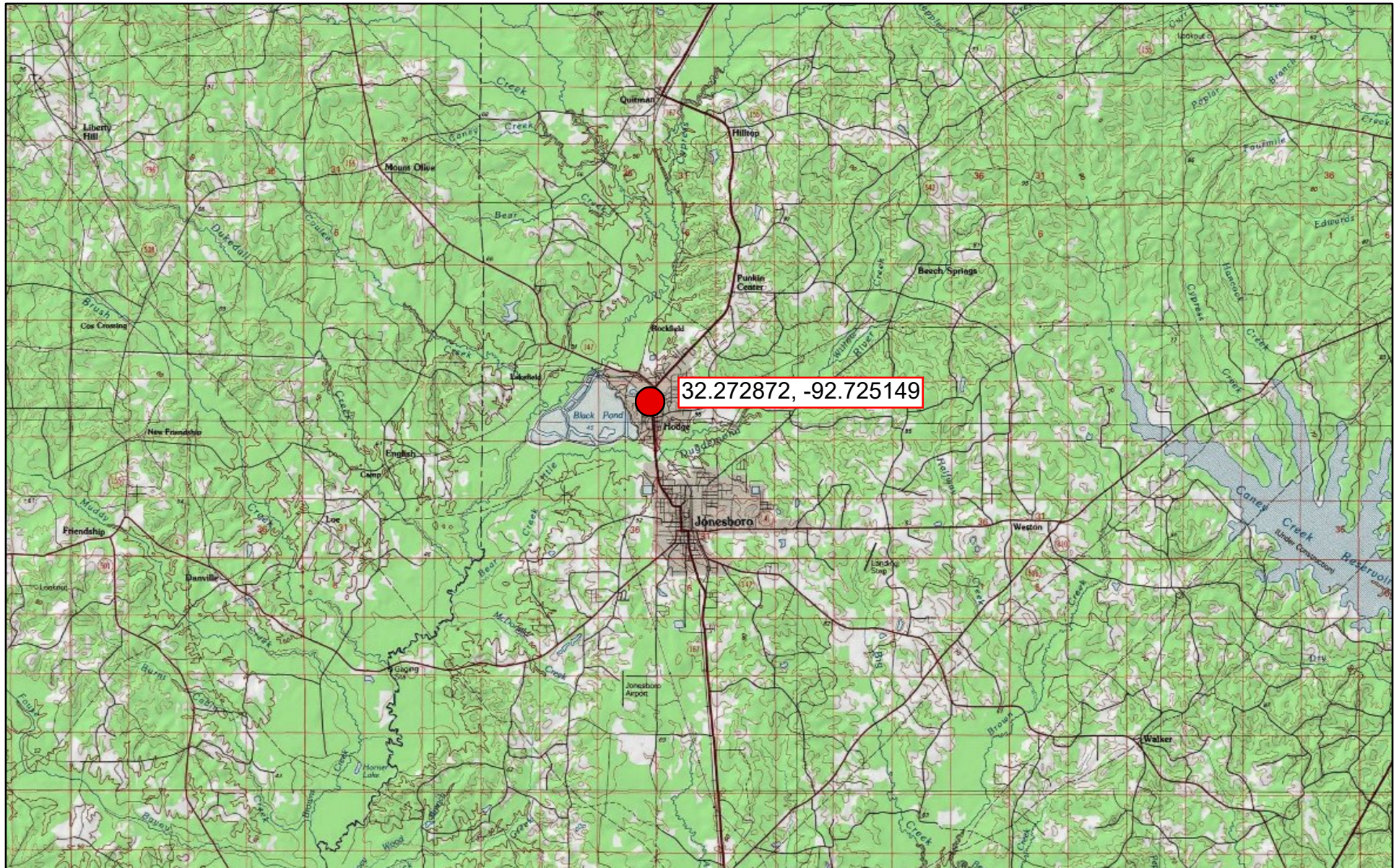
County and State

- 4 of 24: South elevation of house, camera facing northeast
- 5 of 24: Northwest corner of house, camera facing southeast
- 6 of 24: North elevation and yard, camera facing southeast
- 7 of 24: Northeast corner of house and front porch, camera facing southwest
- 8 of 24: Northeast corner of house, camera facing southwest
- 9 of 24: Shed outbuilding, camera facing southeast
- 10 of 24: Shed outbuilding, camera facing north
- 11 of 24: Garage outbuilding, camera facing northwest
- 12 of 24: Garage outbuilding, camera facing northeast
- 13 of 24: Central hall interior, camera facing west
- 14 of 24: Northeast room, camera facing northeast
- 15 of 24: Northeast room looking toward bathroom, closet, and entry hall; camera facing southwest
- 16 of 24: Southeast room, camera facing southeast
- 17 of 24: Southeast room and enclosed porch, camera facing southwest
- 18 of 24: Rear central hall looking toward kitchen, camera facing northwest
- 19 of 24: Rear central hall, camera facing southeast
- 20 of 24: Southwest room looking toward double-sided closet and bathroom, camera facing east
- 21 of 24: Addition looking toward southwest room, camera facing east
- 22 of 24: Kitchen, camera facing northwest
- 23 of 24: Rear porch, camera facing southeast
- 24 of 24: View toward mill from house, camera facing northeast

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

John S. Hunt House, Jackson Parish, LA



Copyright:© 2013 National Geographic Society, i-cubed



Disclaimer:

This map has been developed from the best available sources. No guarantee of accuracy is granted, nor is any responsibility for reliance thereon assumed. The parcel lines shown are considered a graphical representation of the actual boundaries. The Assessor's office is in no way responsible for or liable for any misrepresentation or re-use of this map. Distribution of this map is intended for information purposes and should not be considered a guarantee.

Jackson Parish Assessor's Office

Glen Kirkland, PLS, CLA
Assessor for Jackson Parish

0 30 60 Feet



ASSESSMENTS
JACKSON PARISH ROADS
PARISH
TOWNSHIP/RANGE
SECTIONS
QUARTERSECTIONS
QTR_QTRSECTIONS
SUBDIVISIONS
LOTS
BLOCKS



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14



Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17



Photo 18



Photo 19



Photo 20



Photo 21



Photo 22



Photo 23



Photo 24