

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: Medard Nelson Home and School
Other Names/Site Number: La Rionda Cottage; Correjolles House
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 1218 Burgundy Street
City or town: New Orleans State: LA County: Orleans
Not for Publication: Vicinity: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

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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	
2		Buildings
		Sites
	1	Structures
	1	Objects
2	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:

6. Function or Use

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

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

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7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.):

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: brick

walls: stucco

roof: slate

other: wood (shutters)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing 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 La Rionda-Correjolle House was built circa 1810 by Antonio La Rionda. It was first described in the 1812 act of sale to its second owner Jeanne Quessart as a "new brick house of four apartments, and a rear gallery with two closets and a cellar, the whole roofed with tiles."¹ It is a classic example of an early Creole cottage. It is located in the lower, historically more residential, end of the New Orleans Vieux Carré. Of masonry construction, plaster over brick, with wooden shutters, it reflects a Spanish colonial influence. The single story cottage, 30 ft wide and 40 ft deep, is composed of four square interconnected rooms, with an open loggia across the rear flanked on each side by a small "cabinet". An alley runs along its right side.² Its double pitched slate roof is gabled at its sides; the ridge is parallel to the street; an abat-vent extends over the banquette. Two chimneys, one on the front slope of the roof, one on the rear, serve fireplaces in each of the four principal rooms. The simple grace of its form, proportion, and decoration distinguish it from later more elaborate renditions of the Creole cottage.

Behind the cottage is an open courtyard 40 feet deep arranged in a traditional parterre, with a fountain at the center. Across the rear of the courtyard is a typical one room deep, two story dependency, with a one room deep, one story extension across its rear. At the second floor a cantilevered covered balcony overlooks the courtyard. The dependency is also of masonry construction, with a slate roof on the two story portion, and a metal one on the one story extension. To the right of the dependency a narrow alley leads to the rear courtyard which extends 90 feet to the end of the property. Some of the buildings present during the period of significance are no longer extant, and the property has seen other modifications including alterations to the buildings and the addition of a swimming pool behind the dependency. Despite these alterations, the property has a sufficient degree of integrity to remain eligible for listing in the National Register.

Narrative Description

The cottage is single story and built at the property line along the quiet predominantly residential lower end of Burgundy Street. The cottage is of stuccoed brick, sitting close to the ground on a brick foundation. With a

¹ Wilson, Samuel. "The Architecture of Colonial Louisiana, Collected Essays of Samuel Wilson," La Rionda Correjolle House. Center for Louisiana Studies, 1987. p.363; NONA, Acts of M. Lafitte, Vol 2, f.269, Dec. 14, 1812.

² Historically, there was an alley also running along its left side, on the property of an identical contemporaneous cottage also built by La Rionda (Wilson, 363); the house to the side, and others, were razed around 1940 to create the Cabrini playground.

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roof facing the street and gables to each side, the cottage presents the “low dormer-less profile of early Creole cottages.”³ Abutting the cottage to the east is the extensive Cabrini playground created by the Works Progress Administration in 1940. To the west, separated by a narrow alley, is the two story town house built by the architect Francois Correjolles for his wife around 1830.⁴

Along the front of the cottage are four equally spaced openings. Two are French doors towards the middle, each a single step up from the sidewalk; and two are casement windows, one to each side. All four openings (like all other exterior openings on each facade of the cottage) are protected by heavy battened wooden shutters, supported by iron strap hinges and secured from the inside by iron bars. Above, the “subtle double pitch of the roof”⁵ gives way to an abat-vent, supported by simple iron bars, providing shade and shelter to the banquette. Immediately below the abat-vent, an elegant compound masonry moulding provides the only decoration.

On the gabled side of the building facing the playground are two casement windows. On the gabled side facing the alley are a casement window and a French door accessing that alley; above them is a single, and the only, opening to the attic.

At the rear of the cottage, at its center, is a loggia - an outdoor living space, recessed under the roofline, and admitting to the courtyard through a pair of arched openings. To each side of the loggia is a vertical pair of small casement windows, one above the other, each pair reflecting the original interior division of a two level service space known as a “cabinet.” Each cabinet is accessible from the adjacent rear room.⁶

Opening the front shutters and entering the cottage from the street, transomed French doors and casement windows admit to a pair of connected rooms, one to each side; these two rooms in turn lead to another pair of connected rooms, one to each side. There are no hallways. The four square rooms are virtually identical; each has an elaborate wraparound boxed fireplace along the central wall; each has a casement window along the outside wall (except for French doors to the alley from the right rear room); each room connects to its two neighbors by French doors (except the two rooms on the left connect through a wide transomed opening without doors).⁷ Each of the two rear rooms accesses a cabinet and also opens to the loggia through shuttered French doors; the loggia in turn opens to the courtyard through two arched openings. On each side of the cottage, the openings align from the front door, through each succeeding room and door and then through the arches of the loggia to provide a view of the courtyard beyond.

Throughout the cottage and the loggia, the 10.5 foot tall ceiling is made of wide beaded boards supported by exposed heavy beaded joists. The interior plaster walls are painted or lime-washed. The floors are brick.⁸ The interior casings and moldings surrounding the doors and windows are Greek Revival (reflecting a change subsequent to the construction of the cottage in 1810).⁹ The fireplaces are elegantly boxed and paneled. The inside surfaces of the shutters, in distinction from the plain outside battens, are similarly paneled. The cottage’s roof, originally tile, is supported by a Norman truss of heavy hand hewn timbers, numbered and pegged, with blocks gracefully fashioned even though concealed from view.

³ Heard, Malcolm, “*French Quarter Manual, An Architectural Guide to New Orleans Vieux Carré.*” Univ. Of Mississippi Press, 1997. p.28.

⁴ Wilson, 365.

⁵ Heard, 28.

⁶ Today, one cabinet is a bathroom with both windows intact. The other cabinet now accommodates a staircase to the attic; its upper window is intact; its lower window has been closed. The staircase was constructed in 2007; there was at that time no evidence of a pre-existing staircase, only a hatch to the attic.

⁷ There are indications that this opening changed over time. The wall in which it is placed is framed not masonry like all other walls. Heard (p.28) shows only a small door like the other internal openings. The 1940 HABS drawings by Richard Koch (Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC), HNOC.org), which are the likely source for a similar drawing in *Louisiana Architecture, 1714-1820* (Daspit, Fred; Center for Louisiana Studies, 2004. p 144) show a wide opening with pocket doors.

⁸ The floors are built on the ground; there are no floor joists. The brick floor likely dates to the 1940 restoration.

⁹ “...interior details are fine examples of period moldings and cornices.” Daspit, 144. Confirming its early construction, Wilson notes the “rather low ceilings, smaller doors and windows and finely detailed moldings,” but also notes that “much of the woodwork was changed to conform to the Greek Revival taste.” Wilson, 364. Daspit similarly notes that “the ceilings are low, doors and windows are small but interior details, changed from the original to Greek Revival style, are fine examples of period moldings and cornices.” Daspit, 144.

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The cottage has long been recognized as distinctive. Samuel Wilson relates that “Burgundy Street...contains many interesting and important old houses, many of which are of the small cottage type. Of these few are older or more interesting than the one at 1218-20 Burgundy known as the La Rionda cottage.”¹⁰ Fred Daspit describes it as “one of the best known [cottages] in the city.”¹¹ The New Orleans Times Picayune has called it “one of New Orleans best examples of classic Creole cottage architecture.”¹² Reflecting this recognition, it is one of only a few residences in the Vieux Carré afforded a “blue” rating, second only to purple, and reserved for “unique or exceptionally fine examples of a particular style or period.”¹³

Restoration of the cottage, 1940

In 1940, the City of New Orleans together with the Works Progress Administration acquired the property together with the entire half square to the east. It razed all the buildings to the east of the cottage to create Cabrini playground. A rearmost building on the property, discussed below, was demolished, but the cottage itself and the dependency discussed below were each scrupulously restored under the direction of Charles Wicker, the first architect for the Vieux Carré Commission. Detailed drawings exist from that restoration.¹⁴

A principal effort was the restoration of the left (southeast) corner of the loggia and its adjacent cabinet to its original form incident to the removal at that corner of a 260sq ft (11' by 24') addition described as an “enclosed porch.”¹⁵ Samuel Wilson thus wrote in 1953 that the “house appears from the outside much as it did when it was first built with the exception of the tile roof which was long replaced by one of slate.”¹⁶ The same may be said today. The interior is likely also little changed. The Greek revival detailing was added at some point, likely the mid 19th. century; the cabinets were certainly rearranged in some way; and the opening between the two rooms on the left side likely went through some alteration.¹⁷

Front Courtyard

The front courtyard accessed through the arched loggia openings, and also by the side alley, is roughly 40 feet deep. On each side of the courtyard is an 8 foot masonry wall, separating the property from the open playground to the left, and from several overlooking dependencies to the right. After the 1940 restoration, this courtyard was laid out in a parterre as four sections of evenly divided garden, separated by brick walkways. To the parterre the 2007 restoration added a central cast iron and brick fountain.

Dependency

Across the rear of the front courtyard stands a galleried two story, one room deep dependency, at the back of which is a one story, one room deep extension. The dependency is described by Daspit as “of plastered brick with a chisel roof, parapet walls, centered shuttered doors and flanking shuttered windows. The cantilevered gallery is a study in delicacy with four tall slender Tuscan columns divided by a simple balustrade with square balusters.”¹⁸

¹⁰ Samuel Wilson, *The Architecture of Colonial Louisiana, Collected Essays of Samuel Wilson*, La Rionda Correjolles House, Center for Louisiana Studies, 1987. 363

¹¹ Fred Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture 1714-1820*, (Center for Louisiana Studies, 2004) 143

¹² New Orleans Times Picayune, August 15, 2005, p. B5

¹³ Vieux Carré Commission and New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission guidelines.

¹⁴ Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC); also accessible at the Vieux Carré Digital Survey, HNOC.org, via a search for 1218 Burgundy. Most but not all the HNOC documents regarding the property are on line.

¹⁵ The demolition of that addition is documented in the 1940 HABS drawings. HNOC. That addition first appears in plan form in an 1842 plan. New Orleans Notarial Archives (NONA), Folio 12, Plan Book 11, January 7, 1842

¹⁶ Wilson, 364. It should be noted, however, that photographs from the 1930s (HNOC) show wooden steps to each front door rather than the brick ones that appeared after the 1940 restoration.

¹⁷ No changes were made to the exterior in a 2007 restoration, except that the closed up lower window of one cabinet was reopened. No changes were made to the interior save the addition of a staircase within one cabinet.

¹⁸ Daspit, 144

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The 1812 act of sale describes this building only as “.....in the yard [is] a kitchen likewise of brick and roofed with tiles.”¹⁹ An 1828 inventory, incident to the sale to its third owner, the architect François Correjolle, relates that behind this kitchen “was a storeroom” which Wilson describes as “the lean-to addition which still exists.”²⁰ All subsequent plans of the property²¹ show an unvarying footprint for this dependency, consonant with both the two story portion and the one story addition/lean-to, as do photographs²² taken before the 1940 restoration. Accordingly it is likely that some, if not all, of the dependency dates to 1810, and most likely all of it predates 1828.

Like the cottage the dependency is constructed of plaster over brick, two bricks thick rather than three in the cottage. The shutters are a lighter board and batten without the interior paneling of those in the cottage. The exterior doors, two facing the front courtyard, two on the gallery, and one in the alley, are all French. So too are the interior doors. The windows flanking the doors, and those to the rear on the second floor, are double-hung, not casement. The floor is brick. Unlike the cottage the ceilings have conventional joists, now exposed, except in the addition/lean-to where again there are beaded heavy beams. The two story roof is slate; the addition’s is metal.

This dependency was restored in 1940 along with the cottage and likewise under the supervision of Charles Wicker. An exterior staircase, running at a right angle to the building along the left courtyard wall, was removed and replaced by the current interior staircase, winding on the left to the second floor. Enclosures on the gallery were removed and the gallery restored. The two first floor rooms and their separate fireplaces were joined into a single room with a single monumental fireplace. On the second floor, two separate rooms, originally accessible only from the gallery, were arranged into a hallway, a bathroom, and a single room. In the 2007 restoration the second floor was further rearranged into a single open space with a bathroom. The one story addition to the rear has gone through multiple iterations: at the time of the 1940 restoration it was roofless with only side wall standing; after the restoration one portion was fully enclosed and one portion became a shuttered porch.²³ During the period of its ownership by the City of New Orleans, that porch was enclosed by casement windows; in the 2007 restoration, one of those casement windows was converted to a French door.

Rear Courtyard

Accessible through the dependency or by an alley to its right, the rear courtyard extends approximately 90 feet to the rear property line. This space was reborn as a courtyard when it was included with the purchase of the property from the City of New Orleans in 2007. It is now enclosed on three sides by a wall, a fence, and an abutting building. The courtyard includes a swimming pool and a utility and bath shed made of barge board.

From 1940 to 2007 - when the cottage and dependency were owned by the City of New Orleans for administrative and recreational purposes - this portion of the original lot of record was entirely open space incorporated within the open space of the playground. In the 1980s and 1990s the City of New Orleans abandoned many of its recreational programs, including those at the Cabrini playground. The cottage and the dependency were badly vandalized and became squats. In 2007 the city sold the property at auction, including the cottage, the dependency, and the balance of the original lot of record enabling the original rear courtyard to be reincorporated with the property.

Rear Building 1 (Demolished)

The 1812 sale from La Rionda to Mme Quessart makes no mention of any buildings beyond the dependency described above, and specifically none that would have been in the rear courtyard. The 1828 inventory, connected to the sale to François Correjolle, however, discloses not only the dependency with its lean-to but also “across the second rear yard another storeroom.”²⁴ An 1842 plan and survey of the property reflect the

¹⁹ Wilson, 363; NONA, Acts of M. Lafitte, Vol 2, f.269, Dec. 14, 1812.

²⁰ Wilson, 365

²¹ NONA, Plan Book 11, Folio 12, Jan 7, 1842; Sanborn maps, 1885, 1896, 1908; HABS 1940.

²² New Orleans Historic Collection, 1218 Burgundy.

²³ ²³ HNOC HABS drawings and photographs.

²⁴ Wilson, 365

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footprint of exactly such a building across the rear property line.²⁵ The 1940 HABS drawings reflect that same footprint across the rear property line and include detailed drawings of the building consistent with construction between 1810 and 1828.²⁶ As Wilson relates, that building along the rear property line “was demolished when the playground was established,”²⁷ and the entire rear courtyard portion of the property then incorporated into the open space of the playground. The cottage and the dependency were reserved for administrative and recreational purposes.

Rear Building 2 (Demolished)

At the time of the 1940 restoration, the only buildings recorded on the property were the cottage and the dependency (both restored) and the building across the rear property line (demolished) - all the same as shown in the 1842 plan, and as also appears on an 1885 Sanborn map. On Sanborn maps from 1896 and 1908, however, an additional free standing building is shown within the rear courtyard, additional to the building across the rear property line. That building was evidently constructed between 1885 (when it doesn't appear on the Sanborn map) and 1896 (when it does) and removed sometime between 1908 (when it still does) and 1940 (where it is not noted in the restoration and associated drawings) .

Assessment of Integrity

The two extant buildings at 1218 Burgundy are indisputably the home of Medard Nelson, almost intact in terms of the seven aspects of integrity, and also the location of his school.

The evidence concerning the exact location of the school room(s) used by Medard Nelson within the buildings at 1218 Burgundy does present some uncertainty. But a careful review of that evidence suggests the possibility that the front building, the cottage, was the locus for the school and the school room(s), and that the functioning of the school also extended to the dependency in addition to the non-extant rear buildings. First hand evidence demonstrates that the two buildings, the cottage and the dependency, would be and in fact have been immediately recognizable to anyone from the time period as both Medard Nelson's school and his home.

Various plans and maps are inconclusive. On the 1896 Sanborn map for the first time appear the words “Negro Day and Night School” at 1218 Burgundy.²⁸ Those words are overlaid across the footprints for the cottage, the dependency and the newer building that for the first time appears in the rear courtyard, but not over the rearmost dependency dating to the early 19th century. On the 1908 Sanborn map, the words “colored school” appear overlaid only on that newer building in the rear courtyard.²⁹ The Sanborn captions might be construed as designations of particular buildings as “the school”, but they might equally be construed as merely suggesting that this lot was the location for “the school.” The 1940 HABS drawings show no building in the rear courtyard, which had presumably been already demolished, but identify the then still existing, and soon demolished, rearmost dependency as “school.”^{30 31} These shifting designations for the “school” may suggest that the referenced sources simply lacked accurate first-hand information about the precise location of a “Negro” or “colored” school room(s) within the larger premises.³²

²⁵ NONA, Plan Book 11, Folio 12, January 7, 1842.

²⁶ HNOC.org

²⁷ Wilson, 365

²⁸ Sanborn, 1896

²⁹ Sanborn, 1908

³⁰ HABS, HNOC

³¹ Daspit, writing after the HABS drawings, and relying on them, repeats the identification of the rearmost dependency as “school house.” But he also mistakenly dates that building to 1887-1896, the period between Nelson's acquisition and the appearance of the mid courtyard building on the 1896 Sanborn map. Daspit is almost certainly wrong. The rearmost building predates 1842. See the discussion under §7 architecture.

³² Medard Nelson's school has been little noted by the preservation community. Wilson, writing in 1953, makes no mention of it. Nor does Daspit.

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Neither of Médard Nelson's biographers, Joseph E. Arceneaux, Jr.³³ and Jari Honora,³⁴ who both wrote extensively about the school, speak to the precise location of the school room(s).

There is, however, a first-person account from Danny Barker. Born in 1909, Barker attended the school as a first and second grade student around 1915. He described the school in a 1989 interview conducted by the clarinetist Dr. Michael White:³⁵

White: Where did you go to school?

Barker: I went to Medard school. I went to private school from kindergarten...not kindergarten, from first grade through second grade.

White: What was the name of that school?

Barker: It was a private school. Nelson Medard school. There's a public school named after him back here. He had a private school at Burgundy and Barracks. I ever told you about that?

White: No.

Barker: Burgundy and Barracks. They send exceptional kids there, extra talent....***They had this little school there in the building. You'll see the building.*** You know where that playground is at Barracks?

White: Yeah.

Barker: ***That first house there, going uptown?***

White: Um-hm.

Barker: ***That the first house. That front room was his school.*** Had about what? 60 students in there.

Elsewhere - in his own book - Barker evokes the school room in these terms: "About a hundred and fifty students³⁶ attended the school and we all sat in one big room, on wooden benches at long tables. Mr. Medard sat below a high window on a high desk and ruled and taught with iron discipline."³⁷ Recalling that the two left rooms of the cottage have a wide opening between them, and that the 1940 restoration documents that the rear wall at the left cabinet had been extended perhaps 11 ft to embrace an "enclosed porch," Barker's recollection of a single space in the cottage, "that front room," as being the school is a possibility. It is also consistent with a recollection of Arceneaux: "on her return from the market she [Mrs. Nelson] always waved to the students of the class as she walked across the courtyard to the kitchen [the kitchen was located in the dependency]. As I sat in the glass enclosed classroom, I can picture her now."³⁸

Beyond the precise location of the students, other information suggests that the school extended to spaces beyond an actual "schoolroom". Danny Barker describes female students being sent elsewhere to be disciplined by Nelson's wife, "now you go to my wife."³⁹ "He would send female students ***across the courtyard*** with instructions, 'Tell Madame to do her duty.'⁴⁰ Barker also describes that Nelson's wife used her kitchen to prepare hot lunches for the students. "They'd be ***back there*** cooking, because you got a meal there for a nickel. Red beans and rice. Small piece of pickled pork on it. Little hot meal. Don't have to bring no lunch there if you want."⁴¹ "His wife and daughters cooked and served hot meals...and after you drank two glasses of water and ***brought your plate to the kitchen*** and washed it, you could buy shelled peanuts and homemade cake and candy. The food was great because he and his family were served out of the same pots."⁴²

³³ Arceneaux, Joseph E, Jr., *Biography of Prof. Medard Nelson, 1850-1933*. privately published, 1987, accessible at Xavier University and Southern University libraries, New Orleans. Arceneaux was a grandson of Médard Nelson and a student at the school.

³⁴ Honora, Jari C, "Médard Hilaire Nelson (1850-1933) and the Role of the Layman of Color in Catholic Creole Louisiana." Paper presented at American Educational Research Association. April 9, 2011.

³⁵ White, Michael, "Interview of Danny Barker." Archives Center, National Museum of American History, July 21-23, 1992. p.19.

³⁶ Arceneaux, at 25, describes the class as 75 students, which seems more in accord with the likely space, and in accord with Barker's own description to Michael White, "Had about what? 60 students in there."

³⁷ Barker, Danny, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville*. Continuum New York, 1998. p. 91

³⁸ Arceneaux, 45.

³⁹ White, Barker interview at 21.

⁴⁰ Honora, Jari C, "Médard Hilaire Nelson (1850-1933) and the Role of the Layman of Color in Catholic Creole Louisiana." Paper presented at American Educational Research Association. April 9, 2011. Unnumbered p.9, before n.17.

⁴¹ White, Barker interview at 21.

⁴² Barker, Danny, 92.

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“[T]he school could honestly be called a family business,”⁴³ with daughter Angelina teaching catechism and music, son Francis assisting in teaching, and wife Marie cooking and disciplining. It was the family school within, and as part of, the family home and thus implicating spaces beyond any individual school room(s).

The ease with which Danny Barker in 1989 visually describes to Michael White the school and the room, and his lack of qualification, supports that the buildings that remain today, from the exterior and the interior, would be immediately recognizable as the Medard Nelson school and home to anyone from the period of significance, 1887-1933. They meet “the basic litmus test of being easily recognizable to someone who was familiar with them during their historic period of significance and retain enough integrity of location and setting to convey their significance.”⁴⁴ They are thus appropriate for designation.

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.)

X	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	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
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.): Education

Period of Significance: 1887 - 1933

Significant Dates: 1887, 1933

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

⁴³ Honora, unnumbered p10, after n.22.

⁴⁴ “Education in Louisiana”. Prepared for State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation, by Laura Ewen Blokker, Southeast Preservation, Greensburg, Louisiana. May 15, 2012. p 34

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Architect/Builder (last name, first name): La Rionda, Antonio

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance spans the years in which Medard Nelson lived and operated a school at the property.

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 Médard Nelson home and school is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of education. From 1887 and continuously until his death in 1933, Médard Hilaire Nelson, an African-American man born of free people of color, and an educator esteemed within the Creole community, ran a rigorous private academic school that admitted both black and white students. He did so in the buildings at 1218 Burgundy Street where he lived with his wife and 7 children, and where he died.

Médard Nelson conducted his school at a time and in a place when political, social, and legal forces were arrayed against and hostile to the education of African-Americans, and during which defiance of Jim Crow and segregation courted danger and death. Medard Nelson's school is the only identified extant African-American private school building⁴⁵ from post-Reconstruction New Orleans, and the only school known to have admitted both black and white students. The school's uniqueness, and Médard Nelson's success in sustaining it, reflects the racial oppression in the post-Reconstruction south but just as importantly the resilience and accomplishment of one man who fought to maintain the dignity and promote the equality of black Americans.

Nelson is a pre-eminent figure in the African-American history of New Orleans; the home and school where he taught and lived is a landmark not only to his accomplishment, but also to the determination and survival of Creole tradition and culture in segregated post-Reconstruction New Orleans.

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

Education in New Orleans, and free people of color

From early in its colonial history, the relations between the races in New Orleans engendered a class of free African Americans, predominantly of mixed race, known as *les gens de couleur libres* or free people of color, also termed Creoles. They were workmen, tradespeople, craftsmen, merchants, and professionals. They were in many cases slave owners themselves.⁴⁶ By the time New Orleans was acquired by the United States, they were a large, prosperous, and influential segment of the New Orleans population. In an era when there was no public education, free people of color could afford to and did provide a private education for their children - in church schools, private schools, and sometimes in France. They were a community that maintained "near universal literacy."⁴⁷

American control of New Orleans following the Louisiana purchase in 1805 slowly eroded the status of free people of color. Laws were enacted prohibiting interracial marriage, requiring segregation in theaters, limiting

⁴⁵ The number of private African American schools during the Jim Crow era is unclear. Asked this question, Walter Stern, author of *Race and Education in New Orleans*, (LSU Press, 2019) by email related, "I know anecdotally of a handful of private schools for African Americans in Jim Crow-era New Orleans - the Bush School, Gilbert Academy (which was located where De la Salle is today for example - but this was not a topic I examined in detail."

⁴⁶ Brook, Daniel, *The Accident of Color*. Norton, New York, 2019. p.17

⁴⁷ Brook, 17.

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inheritances, requiring registration, and prohibiting the instruction of slaves in reading and writing.⁴⁸ When New Orleans finally created a public school system in 1841 it was specifically excluded African Americans.⁴⁹ Slowly “the rising tide of American racism” reached into the old customs of colonial New Orleans, and culminated in Dred Scott, abolishing citizenship for all African Americans.⁵⁰

Despite the early denial of public education, the ante-bellum Creole community continued to support education. At least 8 private schools for African Americans were functioning in the 1840s and 1850s, all of which were in the Creole neighborhood at the edge of the Lower French Quarter in a Treme and Marigny.⁵¹ While most private academies functioned within residential buildings (as would Médard Nelson’s), a freestanding private school for African Americans, L’Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents, opened in 1848 pursuant to the bequest of Marie Couvent, a free woman of color, and with the support of the Creole community.⁵² Reflecting the vitality of the Creole community, that school has been called “the nursery for revolution in Louisiana” and “the springboard for black advancement within New Orleans.”⁵³

The Civil War heralded improved educational opportunity for all African Americans, both the previously enslaved and the free people of color. But that opportunity did not last long. During the war itself, the Union occupation in 1862 extended public but segregated education to African Americans. After the war the 1868 Louisiana Constitution required that public education extend to African Americans and prohibited segregated schools.⁵⁴ New Orleans vigorously resisted such integration, but in 1870 integrated schools finally came.⁵⁵ In 1874 the White League instigated violence at both the Upper Girls High School and Lower Girls High School.⁵⁶ In 1877 Reconstruction ended with the compromise election of Rutherford Hayes. The resulting restoration of white Democratic power in Louisiana brought an immediate end to school integration in New Orleans and an immediate underfunding of all public schools. The 1879 Louisiana Constitution eliminated that requirement of school integration thus ended school integration. The steady slide to segregation and Jim Crow had begun, segregation that would be enforced legally in the courts and extra-legally by white vigilantism.

Segregation was confirmed by the Supreme Court in 1896 with Homer Plessy’s failed court challenge and was fully enshrined in the 1898 Louisiana Constitution with its mandate of school segregation.⁵⁷ This slide to segregation was particularly painful for New Orleans Creoles like Nelson who lost their unique social and legal status and found themselves worse off than before the War and now subject to the same oppression as the formerly enslaved.⁵⁸

The resulting separate but unequal public educational “opportunity” for African Americans lay somewhere between vastly inferior (within a system that was itself inferior) and nonexistent (for many years there would be no public secondary education whatever for blacks). The clear policy of the state was to restrict, if not deny, the education of its black population, and keep it segregated.

In this setting African Americans, and particularly the community of formerly free persons of color, sought a private education and, with it, the preservation and advancement of their status in the community.

⁴⁸ Brook, 24.

⁴⁹ Brook, 24. “The African American Experience in Louisiana”, Prepared for the State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation by Laura Ewen Blokker, Southeast Preservation, Greensburg, Louisiana, May 15, 2012, p 19.

⁵⁰ Brook, 24-25

⁵¹ Stern, Walter, *Race and Education in New Orleans*. LSU Press 2019, pp 33-35.

⁵² Stern, 15-23.

⁵³ Stern, 16, and the sources cited therein at fn. 9

⁵⁴ Stern, 42

⁵⁵ Stern, 44

⁵⁶ Stern, 44-45

⁵⁷ “Education in Louisiana”. Prepared for State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation, by Laura Ewen Blokker, Southeast Preservation, Greensburg, Louisiana. May 15, 2012. pp.22-24

⁵⁸ Regarding the almost unique place of New Orleans Creoles in the resistance to Jim Crow, see Brook, Daniel, *The Accident of Color, A Story of Race in Reconstruction*. Norton 2019.

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Médard Nelson in the Creole community

Médard Hilaire Nelson was born in New Orleans in 1850, a free person of color, one of thirteen children.⁵⁹ His parents ran a grocery in the French Quarter. His ancestry was described by his grandson as “blacks of the West Indies, Choctaw Indians of Louisiana, and Frenchmen from France.”⁶⁰ Like the two previous white owners of 1218 Burgundy, Madame Quessart and François Correjolle, his West Indies connection was likely St. Domingue and the flight from the slave rebellion. This background placed Nelson and his family squarely among the Creole class, *les gens de couleur libres*, with rights and privileges by custom at least that distinguished them from the enslaved, and later from the formerly enslaved.

Nelson early gravitated to St Mary’s church in the French Quarter, where he became an altar boy and later a sacristan, living in the Archbishop’s residence.⁶¹ Nelson’s interest in learning and in the church made him a favorite of the Archbishop. The Archbishop arranged for him to go to France to further his education and to study for the priesthood. Nelson pursued his studies for several years, became fluent in a number of languages, and travelled extensively. Upon the death of his parents in 1872, Nelson returned to New Orleans. It was then he made his choice to pursue a vocation in education rather than the priesthood, a “decision to serve what he perceived as the greater public good...During the tumultuous era of Reconstruction, less than a decade after the end of slavery, Nelson saw his life’s work as having more catholic impact in the classroom than at the altar.”⁶²

Out of respect for his education and learning Nelson was known in the black community as “Professor.” His death in 1933 headlined the black newspaper, “The Louisiana Weekly.” Front and center were his photograph and these captions: “Ends Service;” “ Prof. Medard H. Nelson, famous educator and scholar passed away...; “Noted Scholar Succumbs.” The article continued, “Professor Nelson was one of the highest educated men of his time, having attended school in Baltimore, Md., London, England, and Paris, France. He also studied Portuguese in Portugal and took up the Italian language in Italy. He was famous as a linguist and has taught many persons to speak French, English, Italian, Greek, Portuguese and Latin, being equally at home in any and all of them mentioned. For 60 years Prof. Medard as he was affectionately called by his many pupils taught school. For 46 years he conducted a private school day and night at his late residence.”⁶³

That school and that residence was at 1218 Burgundy, from 1887 until his death in 1933.

In segregated post-Reconstruction New Orleans recognition of Nelson’s accomplishment and stature extended even into the white community. Under the caption, “Prof. Nelson’s School,” the Times Picayune in 1900 gave this account: “A large and appreciative audience gathered Monday night at Economy Hall on Ursulines Street to witness the first public exhibition given by the pupils of Medard H. Nelson’s Classical and Commercial School. Although for the 28 years of its existence this institution has been justly held in high esteem by the colored population of this city and many of its best representatives have been educated in its day or night classes, Prof Nelson as a gentleman of the old school had always been opposed to holding any formal public exercises. His first departure, however, met with success....”⁶⁴

In 1915, through his work with Mother Katherine Drexel of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People and his acquaintance with Archbishop Blenk, Médard Nelson was instrumental in the founding of what became Xavier University, the first historically black Catholic university in the Americas. His successful advocacy was a response to the State of Louisiana’s decision to take away Southern University, the

⁵⁹ Smith, Norman R, *Footprints of Black Louisiana*. XLibris 2010. p.11

⁶⁰ Arceneaux, Joseph E, Jr., *Biography of Prof. Medard Nelson, 1850-1933*. Privately published, 1987, accessible at Xavier University and Southern University libraries, New Orleans.

⁶¹ Honora, Jari C. “Médard Hilaire Nelson (1850-1933) and the Role of the Layman of Color in Catholic Creole Louisiana.” Paper presented at American Educational Research Association. April 9, 2011. Note 7 at unnumbered p.5.

⁶² Honora, unnumbered pp6-7.

⁶³ Obituary, June 17, 1933, Louisiana Weekly. p.1, “M. H. Nelson, Noted Scholar Succumbs.” Nelson’s death was also noted in the New Orleans Item, June 11, 1933, p.4.

⁶⁴ Times-Picayune, July 11, 1900, p.11

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historically black public university in New Orleans, and move it to Baton Rouge. For many years, his granddaughter was the Registrar at Xavier.⁶⁵

In 1939, just six years after Nelson's death, the Orleans Parish School Board, guardians of Jim Crow segregation, named a black school in his honor. It did so recognizing that, "During his sixty years of teaching he was very prominent in raising the educational standards of the people of his race."⁶⁶ That school continues to this date.

The Medard Nelson School, private, rigorous, and integrated

Private

There is little documentation of Nelson's earliest teaching years. Arceneaux recites that Nelson "accepted a teaching position in the school system and taught in the public schools of Bay St Louis and New Orleans for a few years."⁶⁷ The New Orleans City Directory in 1874 lists him as operating a private school within his residence on Dauphine Street in the French Quarter.⁶⁸ A roll book, dated 1876, with entries starting in 1878 and ending in 1898, confirms the continuity of his teaching.⁶⁹ And the 1900 Times Picayune article refers to his school existing for 28 years, or back to 1872. It is probably significant that Nelson's earlier years in the teaching profession came during Reconstruction when integrated schools were permissible.

But it was in 1887, 10 years after the end of Reconstruction, that Nelson bought the property at 1218 Burgundy from the heirs of its third owner François Correjolle; from then until his death in 1933 he made it his school and the home to himself, his wife and their 7 children.⁷⁰ Nelson described his school as "Medard H. Nelson's Day and Night School." He taught between 35 and 70 students at a time. It was a private school, charging a monthly tuition. A 1909 school pamphlet set the terms between \$1.50 and \$4.00 per month (today about \$40 to \$110), "all payments must be made in advance. No vacations."⁷¹ Nelson had a strong religious upbringing and experience, and though it was not a parochial school, the program respected Catholic traditions. "The day began with a prayer which was said three times a day,"⁷² and the school pamphlet acknowledged, "Daily Catechism for Children. This Catechism is Free of Charge."⁷³ Older students read Old Testament history in Latin, and younger ones studied Christian morality in French. The school received regular visits from the Archbishop and it was listed by the church as a private but Catholic school.⁷⁴ While there is no data regarding non-Catholic students (the neighborhood was overwhelmingly Creole and Sicilian, both almost certainly Catholic), Nelson's declared inclusiveness suggests he would have accepted non-Catholics.

Rigorous, in academics and discipline

It was a remarkable school. The academic curriculum was rigorous. Taking students as young as age 4, the school covered 10 grades. A pamphlet from 1909 survives and shows the course of study.⁷⁵ English, French, Spanish and Mathematics were taught daily from the first year (with daily dictation and practice of the French and Spanish languages); Latin was added from the fifth year on (including Virgil, Cicero, Horace, and Tacitus); Greek was added in the 7th year; mathematics progressed from arithmetic to algebra to geometry to

⁶⁵ Smith, pp 11,114 ("He encouraged the archbishop to invite the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to establish a Catholic college for blacks in this city. He sat on the Board of Directors to help establish the first Catholic University in the western hemisphere." p.11; "[A] group of Black Catholics, led by Medard Nelson, an educator and devout Catholic, petitioned the archbishop...to provide an institution of higher learning for Black Catholics living in New Orleans."); Robert Meyer, J., *Names Over New Orleans Public Schools*. Namesake Press, 1975. "([H]is advocacy of a Catholic college mainly for Negroes in New Orleans prompted the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People to found the present Xavier University...157); Letter, Onelia Sarpy (granddaughter) to Dutch Morial (Mayor) August 4, 1983, HNOC., not on line, ("He (Nelson) played a part in having the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to come here through Archbishop Blenk.")

⁶⁶ Meyer, 157

⁶⁷ Arceneaux, 24

⁶⁸ Honora, unnumbered page 6 and n. 11. Soard's Directory for the City of New Orleans, 1874.

⁶⁹ "Medard Nelson School Records 1876-1898," Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University Library.

⁷⁰ It is not surprising that Nelson found property on Burgundy St. Already by 1805, Burgundy Street was two-thirds African America and by the 1830's the area was known as the quadroon Quarter. "The African American Experience in Louisiana," p18

⁷¹ Arceneaux, pamphlet following p. 30

⁷² Arceneaux, p 27.

⁷³ Arceneaux, pamphlet, following p.30

⁷⁴ Honora, notes 24 and 25

⁷⁵ Arceneaux, pamphlet, following p.30

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trigonometry. Included also were rhetoric, geography, ancient history, modern history, Louisiana history and civil government. And music (solfege) and bookkeeping 3 times a week. A comparison of the curriculum of Nelson's school suggests that Nelson's students were several years ahead of their peers in other schools.⁷⁶

Médard Nelson was a traditionalist with rules and discipline "comparable to the strict military schools." Each day began with a check of hands and shoes for cleanliness; anybody missing a tie was given a ribbon to place around his neck.⁷⁷ "The use of the rattan became the great persuader...The same repetitious outcry was made as the rattan... came down with force on his tense trembling buttocks. 'Yes sir, Mr Medard, I'm not going to do that again.'⁷⁸ As Danny Barker would later put it, "Put your head between his legs like that...take that rattan, zhaaat, zhaaat, zhaaat..." And it was no different for the girls. 'You don't want to understand and keep your mouth closed, now you go to my wife,' and tell her to do her duty....And the girl goes. Wife take them in there, and she has some of them rattans too. She'd raise up them girls' dress and put their head between her legs..and bust them across their ass.'⁷⁹ "You soon learned that you were not only there to learn the RRR's but also there to build a good, strong, character."⁸⁰ "He ruled and taught with iron discipline."⁸¹

Barker gives perhaps the best testimonial, "When you attended Medard's school that was something special. Parents boasted that their children went there because you received special training but a lot of people thought his methods were too severe."⁸²

Integrated

The most startling fact about Nelson's school was that it accepted both black and white students. Notwithstanding the legal and extralegal mandate of segregation, the evidence overwhelmingly establishes that the school was integrated, "open to all without discrimination: being racially mixed with Blacks, Whites, students from the islands, rich and poor. Students whose parents could not afford the monthly tuition were welcomed."⁸³ It has long been regarded as the first integrated school in New Orleans - which is to say the only known integrated school in the years after the end of Reconstruction in 1877, and with it the end of New Orleans brief experiment with school integration, and the only known one in the years following up until *Brown v Board of Education*, itself not enforced in New Orleans until 1960.

The Historic New Orleans Collection's Vieux Carré Digital Survey ⁸⁴describes 1218 Burgundy as "said to be the first 'mixed school' in New Orleans." A letter from Onelia Sarpy, granddaughter of Nelson, to Mayor Dutch Morial, August 4, 1983, begs Morial to preserve the building and recites that "it was the first mixed school in the city."⁸⁵ The Louisiana Weekly obituary cited earlier added that Nelson "has taught many white persons and colored."⁸⁶ Arceneaux adds his own personal experience documenting integration: "My buddy Charles Gelanso, an Italian received his share of the rattan."⁸⁷ Honora writes that Nelson educated "hundreds of New Orleanians, black and white, immigrant and native-born, rich and poor, old and young alike."⁸⁸ Discussing the names in Nelson's roll book Honora writes, "He taught both whites and blacks with no distinction made as to race. Pauline Giguel was a widowed white woman in her fifties when she entered the school. In the 1880s more and more Sicilian names can be found on his roll."⁸⁹ No other New Orleans school - public, parochial, or private - has been noted to have served both black and white after the end of Reconstruction.⁹⁰

⁷⁶ Honora, n. 26

⁷⁷ Arceneaux, 28

⁷⁸ Arceneaux, 24-25

⁷⁹ White, Michael, "Interview of Danny Barker." (Archives Center, National Museum of American History, July 21-23, 1992) 20-21.

⁸⁰ Arceneaux, 28

⁸¹ Barker, Danny, "Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville," (Continuum, New York, 2001)

⁸² Barker, 93.

⁸³ Arceneaux, 24. Honora, before n 15

⁸⁴ Vieux Carré Digital Survey, HNOC.org

⁸⁵ HNOC, documents for 1218 Burgundy.

⁸⁶ Louisiana Weekly, *ibid*

⁸⁷ Arceneaux, 26

⁸⁸ Honora, unnumbered page 7 after n. 14.

⁸⁹ Honora, n. 15; "Médard Nelson School records, 1876-1898", Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University Library

⁹⁰ It is impossible to prove the negative - that there were no other integrated schools after Reconstruction - but the fact is none have been noted, particularly none in the study, *The African-American Experience in Louisiana*, see n.49; nor in the study "Education in Louisiana", see n.44, nor in "Race and Education in New Orleans, see n.45 and 51.

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Médard Nelson knew the perils of his choice. He advised a low profile. Danny Barker provided a firsthand account to Tom Sancton about the fear of white reprisals and Nelson's advice. Barker related "[My family] they'd say, 'Go on about your business.' Or they'd tell us, 'That's white folks business. You don't want to get involved in that.'" Nelson reinforced this notion. "Prof. Nelson would tell us, 'Those people - the whites - they control everything. You have to calculate your ideas to keep them to a certain level. Don't have too much ambition. You must use special tactics. You shouldn't be over aggressive.' You know, we couldn't even play in this school. They didn't want the noise to annoy white neighbors. At 3 pm, Prof Nelson would tell me, 'Master Barker, go home. Don't stop and wait for your friends.' He didn't want to attract attention to the school. There was a lot of fear among whites at that time about teaching blacks."⁹¹ Barker remembered, "It was very dangerous to educate Negroes right after the Civil War. His first students were of all races and included children of well-to-do parents, so therefore he wasn't molested. Also he was known and visited by many professors and educators...and had private classes at night for white students."⁹²

The students reflected Nelson's Creole community and the birth of jazz. Among Nelson's students at the school were the famed banjo player Danny Barker (whose recollections are quoted above and preserved in a recorded interview by Dr Michael White)⁹³; clarinetist George Lewis, banjo player George Guesnon, and violinist Charles Elgar.⁹⁴ And Jazz was alive in the Nelson household. At home there were weekly sessions with Medard Nelson on the cornet; Dr. Leonard Bechet, brother of Sidney Bechet, on the trombone; Richard Gabriel, future son-in-law on the bass; son Joseph on the drums; and a friend on banjo.⁹⁵

The school drew from a Creole class that sought the best in education and respected the school's "reputation for academic excellence."⁹⁶ "His students were above normal and usually turned out to be high achievers."⁹⁷ The famed Louisiana civil rights lawyer A.P. Tureaud,⁹⁸ as a child briefly attended the school. His biographer gave this account, and in doing so attests to Tureaud's personal knowledge that the school was integrated: "Alex [A.P.] learned of the Medard Nelson School from his Italian neighbors who were students there...He enrolled in the Medard Nelson School as an evening student. Medard Nelson, owner and instructor, was a Creole of French and Indian ancestry. Professor Nelson, as his students respectfully called him, was admired for his intellect and his successful teaching strategies. His students, who were mostly Creole and white, worked in family businesses during the day and attended school at night. Professor Nelson operated an integrated school despite laws prohibiting them....Alex dropped out of the Nelson School after only one week."⁹⁹

Medard Nelson's surviving roll books lists the hundreds of students that passed through his school at 1218 Burgundy between 1888 and 1898. They reflect the diversity of his students. They also reflect Nelson's Creole French culture, annotated in French, for example, regarding absences ("*malade*", "*hors de ville*"), and accounts ("*me doit*", "*reçu à compte*")¹⁰⁰

That roll book also reflects that for six months between November 1897 and July 1898, an Adolphe Plessy was a student. This was likely Homer Adolphe Plessy, who challenged Jim Crow as the plaintiff in Plessy v

⁹¹ Sancton, Tom, *Songs for My Fathers, a New Orleans Story in Black and White*. Other Press, 2010. p197-98

⁹² Danny Barker, pp.93-94

⁹³ Danny Barker, Interview by Michael White, July 21-23, 1992, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

⁹⁴ Honora, unnumbered page after n.21; Barker, interview by White, p. 20.

⁹⁵ Arceneaux, 40

⁹⁶ Arceneaux, 35

⁹⁷ Arceneaux, 26

⁹⁸ A.P. Tureaud was instrumental in the litigation that led to the desegregation of the New Orleans schools in 1960. Stern, 196-97,209.

⁹⁹ Emmanuel, Rachel, and Tureaud, A.P. Jr, "A More Noble Cause, A.P. Tureaud and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Louisiana," (LSU Press, 2011) 19-20

¹⁰⁰ "Médard Nelson School records, 1876-1898", Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University Library

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Ferguson, the pivotal Supreme Court case that upheld segregation. His and Nelson's Creole social circles would certainly have overlapped.¹⁰¹

Nelson ran the school continuously from 1887 at least into the 1920s, and, on a reduced scale, until his death in 1933 at home in his four poster bed in the front bedroom, attended by his grandson and biographer, Joseph Arceneaux. The funeral procession started at his home at 1218 Burgundy Street, proceeded to a high requiem mass at Holy Redeemer, and ended with interment at St Louis Cemetery No. 2.¹⁰²

At the 1939 ceremony for the naming of a school in his honor, his son presented a photograph with the following inscription:

The education of children and of underprivileged persons, regardless of their racial identity, was dear to his heart. This was with him an obsession: an obsession to which he devoted 60 years of his life. In behalf of his children and his children's children, to perpetuate the fond memory of my father, I make this presentation.¹⁰³

The Louisiana Division of Preservation study, Education in Louisiana suggests that post Reconstruction, "There were no surviving non-denominational private schools for African Americans identified during this project. Any such property would likely be eligible for the National Register for its role in providing quality education, to African Americans, particularly non-Catholics, as an alternative to the poor public education during segregation."¹⁰⁴ The Medard Nelson School clearly satisfies this test, and its extraordinary defiance of segregation and Jim Crow only makes the case more compelling.

Conclusion

Despite the harshness of Jim Crow, the Creole community of New Orleans, *les gens de couleur libres*, never resigned themselves to the fate to which the white majority sought to condemn them. Médard Nelson, his school, and his students, exemplified by Homer Plessy, A.P. Tureaud, and Danny Barker, are a compelling paradigm of their determination, their struggle, and their pursuit of excellence, dignity, and ultimately freedom during a long dark time of racism and reaction. Médard Nelson's life well represents Creole resistance to Jim Crow as "New Orleans's Creoles of color came to constitute a lost battalion, fighting on as if they had never forgotten the telegram that their side had already conceded defeat."¹⁰⁵

The uniqueness of the school and of the African-American man who made it his home are inseparable testaments to the deep commitment and character of the Creoles. The house, the school, the home at 1218 Burgundy is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

<h3>9. Major Bibliographical Resources</h3>
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¹⁰¹ The city directories from 1894-1899 list no Adolphe Plessy but do list Homer Plessy in 1898 and Omer A. Plessy in 1994. Homer Plessy's given middle name was Patris but later records show his middle name as either Adolph or the French equivalent, Adolphe, after his father. His father Joseph Adolphe went by Adolphe but had died in 1869. Medley, Keith. "We as Freeman, Plessy v Ferguson." Pelican 2015. pp. 21-23.

¹⁰² New Orleans States. Obituary, June 11, 1933.

¹⁰³ Arceneaux, 127.

¹⁰⁴ "Education in Louisiana", p.43

¹⁰⁵ Brook, 257.

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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 # LA-192

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: _____

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(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 29.963860 | Longitude: -90.063650 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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

In the square bounded by Burgundy, Barracks, Dauphine and Gov Nicholls Streets, a single roughly rectangular lot fronting approximately 32' on Burgundy, and approximately 193' deep. It is bounded along the rear side and along its the northeast side by the Cabrini Playground, and along its southwest side by a series of buildings and courtyards.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

They reflect the lot on which Medard Nelson's home and school were located.

11. Form Prepared By

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e-mail: jwreed@bellsouth.net
telephone: (504) 450-0144
date: February 9, 2020

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

Medard Nelson Home and School
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Name of Photographer:

Date of Photographs:

- 1 of 26: Front elevation from Burgundy Street, camera facing east
- 2 of 26: Front elevation from Burgundy Street, camera facing south
- 3 of 26: Northeast elevation of main building, camera facing southwest
- 4 of 26: 1218 Burgundy and adjacent lot from Barracks Street, camera facing southwest
- 5 of 26: Front courtyard and rear porch of main building, camera facing northwest
- 6 of 26: Front elevation of dependency, camera facing southeast
- 7 of 26: Front elevation of dependency, camera facing southeast
- 8 of 26: Rear elevation of dependency, camera facing north
- 9 of 26: Rear courtyard and rear elevation of dependency, camera facing northwest
- 10 of 26: Front room of main building, camera facing southeast
- 11 of 26: Front room of main building from dining room, camera facing west
- 12 of 26: Dining room, camera facing southeast
- 13 of 26: Dining room and added stairs, camera facing south
- 14 of 26: Kitchen of main building, camera facing northwest
- 15 of 26: Kitchen of main building and cabinet converted to restroom, camera facing southeast
- 17 of 26: Front bedroom of main building, camera facing southeast
- 18 of 26: Front bedroom of main building, camera facing east
- 19 of 26: Second floor of main building, camera facing southwest
- 20 of 26: Rear porch of main building, camera facing southwest
- 21 of 26: First floor interior of dependency, camera facing west

Medard Nelson Home and School
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

22 of 26: First floor interior of dependency, camera facing northeast

23 of 26: First floor rear room of dependency, camera facing southeast

24 of 26: First floor kitchen of dependency, camera facing southeast

25 of 26: Second floor front gallery of dependency, camera facing southwest

26 of 26: Second floor of dependency, 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.

Medard Nelson Home and School
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

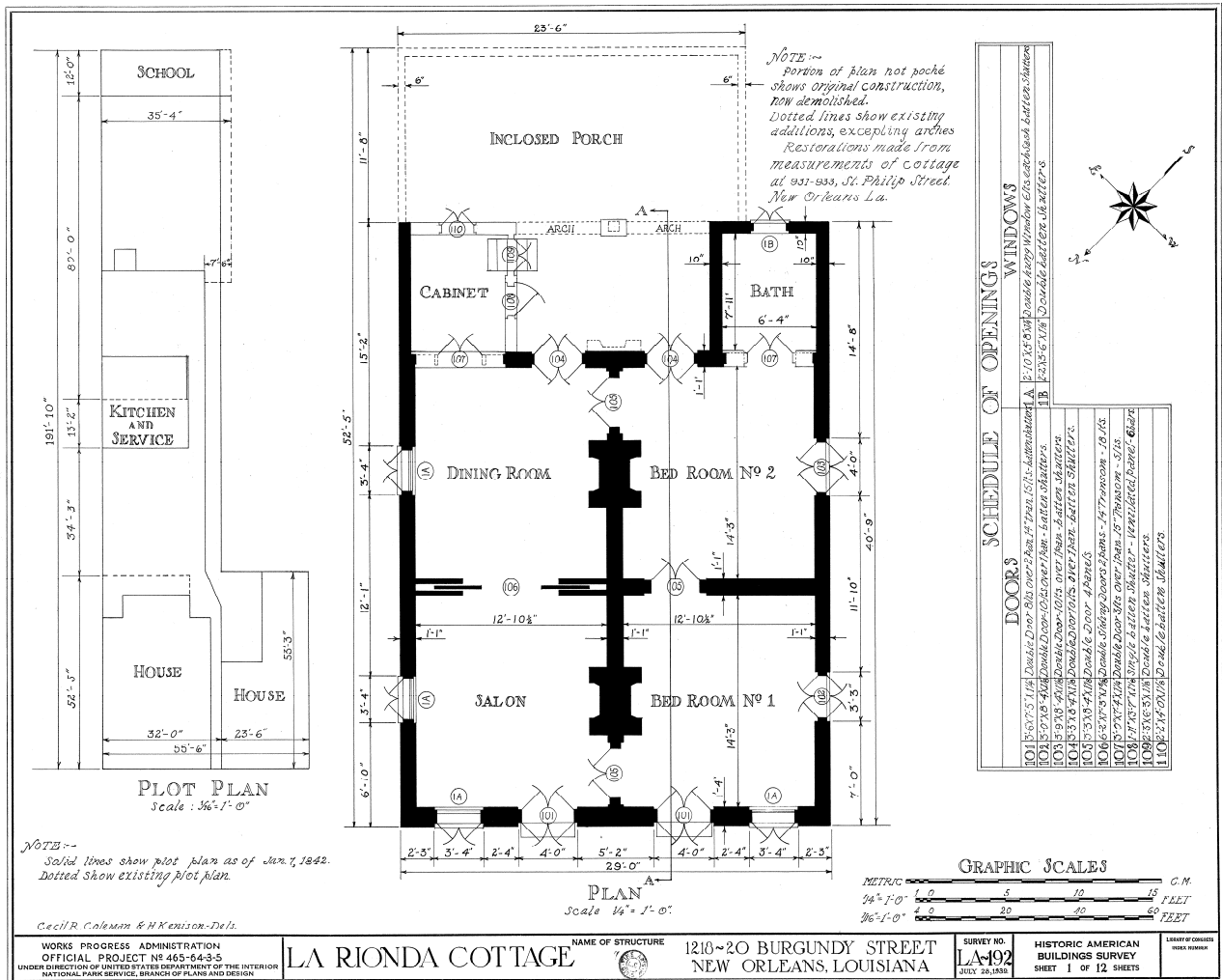


Figure 1: HABS sheet 1 of 12

Medard Nelson Home and School
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

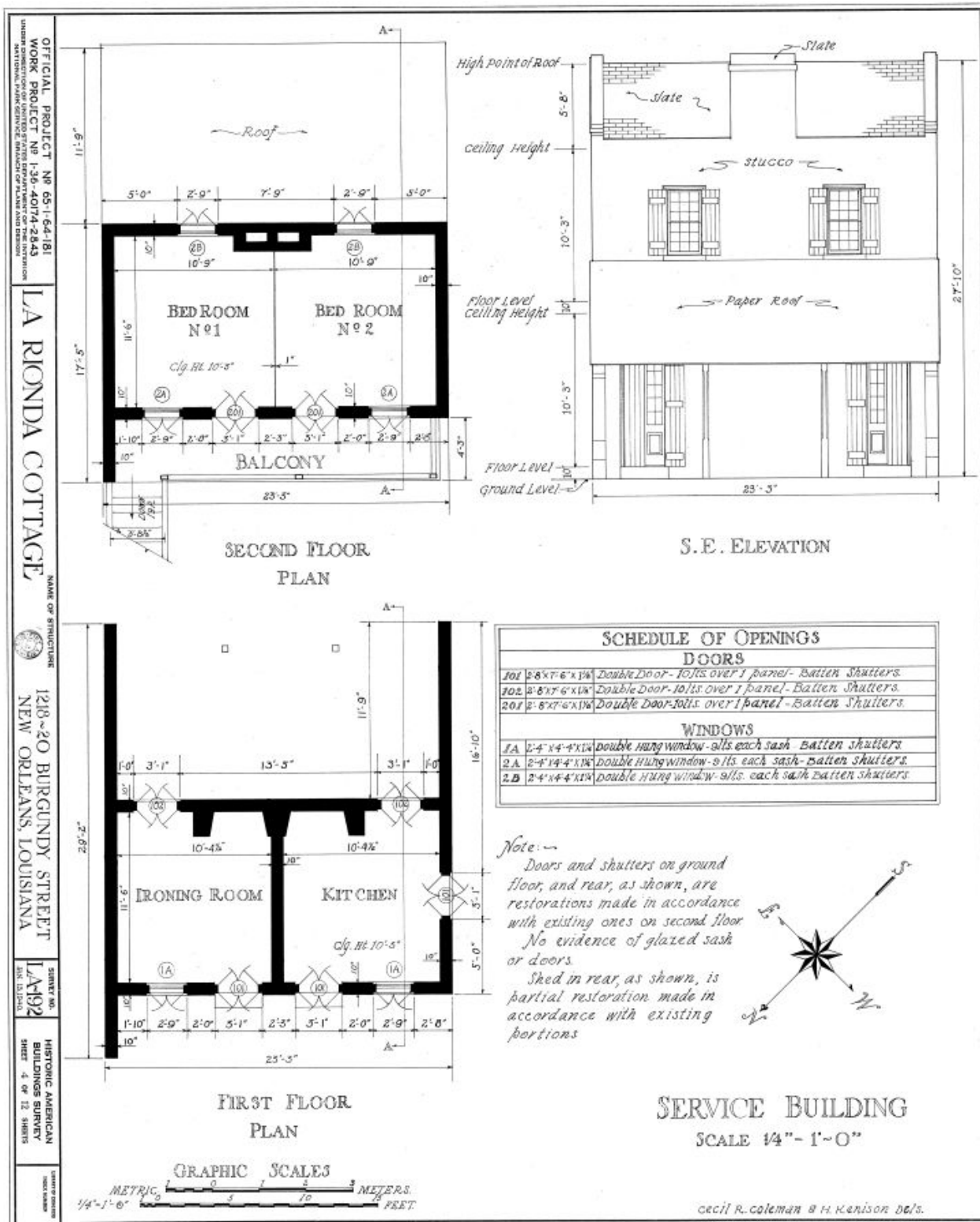


Figure 2: HABS Sheet 4 of 12

