

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ferry Place Plantation is set on some of the highest ground in the Sicily Island area. It overlooks Lake Louis from the north shore and consists of a plantation house, a small scattering of surviving outbuildings, and a significant deposit of pre-historic archaeological remains.

1. Ferry Place Plantation Archaeological Site

The Ferry Place Plantation contains abundant evidence of pre-historic occupation. The known archaeological remains consist of seven earthen mounds and one extensive intact midden area. Other unknown and subsurface material likely exists.

The site is located on the western edge of Lake Lovelace (Lake Louise) and extends from Hooter Bayou north approximately one mile along the lakeshore. Archaeological materials apparently confined to the high ridge immediately adjacent to Lake Louis and is not found more than 300 meters west of the lake.

The Ferry Place Plantation archaeological site is located on Sicily Island at the western edge of the alluvial valley of the Mississippi River. Sicily Island is the southernmost extension of Macon Ridge, an elevated remnant of an old Mississippi River terrace that divides the drainage of the Ouachita and Tensas Rivers. Lake Lovelace and its southward continuation, Bayou Louise, are apparently an abandoned meander of the Tensas River. West of the site are the highlands of Sicily Island, known as the Catahoula Hills. It can be seen that the Ferry Place site is advantageously located on the boundary (ecotone) between the Mississippi alluvial valley and the highlands of Sicily Island. It is presumed that the pre-historic inhabitants recognized the advantages of living at this point where they could easily exploit each of these distinct environmental zones.

The site files of the Louisiana Division of Archaeology and Historic Preservation give two site designations for the Ferry Place site, Ct-1 and Ct-2. Site Ct-2, the Peck Mound site, is located in the vicinity of the Ferry Place Plantation house. This site consists of a group of five earthen mounds which were first reported by James Lord in 1933 (Ford 1935; refer to "Bibliographical References on Archaeology of Ferry Place"). Subsequently the site was visited by Emmett Chisum (1938), members of the Peabody Museum Lower Mississippi Valley Survey who made a sketch map of the site in 1964, and most recently by staff archaeologists of the Division of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. No excavations have been conducted at this site. However, surface collections have been made which produced ceramics ranging in date from the Middle Woodland Period (Baytown phase circa 400 A.D.) To the late Mississippi Period (circa A.D. 1400).

Four of the mounds at this site are low conical mounds ranging in height from 1 meter to approximately 1.5 meters and averaging 20 meters in diameter. One of the mounds, Mound D, (Fig. 1) has been largely destroyed by road construction. The others are apparently largely though somewhat lowered as a result of historic agricultural activity. The other mound, Mound E, is a large rectangular, truncated mound measuring approximately 3.5 meters high and 50 meters on a side at its base.

With the exception of mound D, all of these mounds are intact and exhibit only minor disturbance. These mounds are all being protected by the Peck family and are in lawn or are fenced off.

Initial interpretation would suggest that, in part, this site represents a Mississippian Period civic-ceremonial center. Mound E probably served as a substructure mound and was probably related to socio-religious or political activities. Some of smaller mounds may be associated with the large mound though some may be of an earlier date. Presumably all, or some, of these smaller mounds functioned primarily as burial mounds.

No evidence of an associated village is reported. However, one is expected to exist.

Site Ct-1, the Peck Village Site, is located adjacent to Lake Lovelace approximately 3/4 of a mile south of the mound group. Ford (1935) was also the first to report this site. He conducted test excavations here in 1933 (Ford 1935, 1936: 205-206) as did Chisum in 1935 (Chisum 1938). The Peabody Museum Lower Valley Survey visited and mapped the site in 1964.

The site consists of intact midden approximately 2 acre in size and having a depth of up to .75 meters. Ford's work (1935) indicated that the midden was stratified, containing Marksville (circa

A.D. 0 to A.D. :300) and Coles Creek (circa A.D. 800 - A.D. 1000) components. Chisum's work (1938) substantiates Ford's findings and additionally located several burials and evidence of a Marksville phase house structure. This represents the only reported structure for this phase in Louisiana.

Both excavations indicated that the midden was rich in ceramic and faunal and floral material.

Two earthen mounds are located near the Peck Village site. These mounds have only recently been reported by archaeologists from the Louisiana Division of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. One, designated Mound F, lies approximately 300 meters west of Ct-1. This conical mound is approximately 1.5 meters high and 15 meters in diameter. One historic burial (dated 1836) is located on top of the mound. Mound F is otherwise undisturbed. The date of this mound is unknown, though it may be associated with the Village site.

The other mound is located south of Ct-1 at the confluence of Hooter Bayou with Lake Lovelace. This mound is approximately 3 meters high and 20 meters in diameter. The mound was obviously truncated and presumably rectangular. However, it has been somewhat eroded and its shape is difficult to discern. Presumably this mound dates to the Mississippian Period (circa A. . D. 1000-1400) .

Mounds F and G are both intact and are currently protected by the Peck family.

2. The Plantation House

The house faces Lake Louise from a high point of land a few hundred yards distant. The present front yard is encompassed by a circular driveway.

The extant house, which dates from about the mid-nineteenth century, has a seven-bay front gallery and a central hall plan with double parlors. Each of the two front parlors has a door onto the front gallery which is flanked by windows. In the early twentieth century, a second floor was added with a front gallery of its own, new side windows were installed, and the present staircase in the central hall was built. In addition, a rear lean-to was built along with a side extension. The clapboarding, on the sides of the house was rearranged.

The house is constructed of heavy cypress timbers. Hewn and circular sawn joists run between massive sills and summer beams which are approximately two feet deep. The roof structure has been replaced. Though the wall studs are not visible, they are presumably about eighteen inches apart like the aforementioned joists. The entire structure is raised approximately four feet above the ground on brick piers.

At one time, the house was a one-and-one-half story, seven-bay, gallery-fronted, raised plantation house. Today the house presents the appearance of a two-story summer house with a pair of wide screened porches. But the basic form and the significant fenestration of the original plantation house survives and could be restored. The heavy, square, front-gallery columns, the front windows, the transom side doors, the transom side-lighted front door, the flushboard facade, and the exterior brick chimneys are original.

All the mantels are replaced. The replacements are by and large undistinguished with the exception of a marble Rococo Revival mantel in the right front parlor. The chair rail in the central hall appears to date from the mid-nineteenth century but is obviously reworked. A strange feature of the second floor is the two fan-lighted glass doors which provide access to the two main bedrooms. Although the present owner claims that these doors predate the early twentieth-century renovations, they make no sense in their present location. Also, the fanlights are slightly smaller than the doors beneath them. It is most likely that the doors and fanlights were taken from an older house sometime prior to the early twentieth century.

3. The Outbuildings

1) To the rear of the house is a two-story, pyramid-roofed pigeonier, with brick below and vertical board siding above. There are also several tin covered sheds .

2) Further distant from the house are two barns, both of which appear to date from the early twentieth century.

3) Near the house is a pair of plantation store buildings, both of which are long, narrow, gable-roofed frame structures with small front porches.

4) Four other residences have been built on the acreage by members of the family. These are relatively new, but they are low in scale and do not significantly affect the landscape. Only one, a house trailer, can be viewed as a significant aesthetic intrusion.

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John H. Lovelace, Sr.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ferry Place Plantation is significant in the area of pre-historic archaeology as an important archaeological site. It is significant in the area of "Exploration/Settlement" as one of the earliest plantations in the Sicily Island area, a plantation settled by the Lovelace family, who were among the first settlers of Catahoula Parish. It is also significant in the area of "APolitics/Government" as the home of W. S. Peck, Jr. (1873-1946), a prominent local politician and businessman during the first half of the twentieth century.

The two archaeological sites discussed in the "Description," Ct-1 and Ct-2, are here considered as a single archaeological entity. Together, these two sites represent a significant archaeological manifestation. The mounds and the midden area are essentially intact and therefore can offer a variety of archaeological data within meaningful contexts. Additionally, the archaeological remains represent a wide time span and presumably a variety of cultural expressions, thus offering the potential for the examination of culture change. This potential has already been demonstrated by Ford at the stratified midden (Ct-1) in terms of ceramic change.

The conditions of the midden at Ct-1 suggest that floral and faunal materials are well preserved and will yield information on the relatively little known subsistence activities of the Marksville and Coles Creek phases. Chisum's (1938) excavations indicate that Ct-1 contains information on Marksville phase structures and presumably will yield a variety of data concerning intra-site activity and organization.

The mounds at Ct-2 are possibly culturally associated and can provide information on intra-site activity, on mortuary customs, and on social stratification and organization during the Mississippian and, possibly, Woodland Periods. (See Brown 1971). The relatively undisturbed nature of these mounds emphasizes their potential for supplying contextual information.

The size and numbers of mounds at the Peck Mound site suggest its relative importance. Future research can be directed at a determination of this site's position in the regional settlement system.

In general, the Ferry Place archaeological site contains a relative undisturbed set of archaeological remains of varying age and representative of differing socio-cultural populations. In terms of research potential, it can be expected to yield contextual data on a wide variety of synchronic and diachronic cultural phenomena. There are no other prehistoric sites on the National Register in this area of Louisiana which provide this research potential.

The Lovelace family were among the earliest white settlers in Catahoula Parish. According to an article in DeBow's Review, "The family of Lovelaces settled on the Sicily Island in 1802, coming from Red River, a short distance below Alexandria, where they had been living several years." Another work states that Richard Lovelace obtained a grant of land in Catahoula Parish from Governor Gayoso "as early as 1796, and John Lovelace, Sr., received one about the same time or soon afterwards."¹

It was John Lovelace (1740-1816) who first established the Lovelace family at Ferry Place. His claim to the Ferry Place tract is documented by a "confirmative act" of 1811 which cites a "Riquette of the Claimant approved and signed by Valentine Layssard then Commandant of the Post

of Rapides on the 30th March 1796 with settlement and cultivation on and previous to the 20th day of December 1803. " Thus, John Lovelace was living on the Ferry Place tract by 1803.² His descendants own and reside on the land down to the present day. John Lovelace is listed in the 1810 census as head of a household consisting of seven whites and eleven slaves.³

John Lovelace died in 1816, and Ferry Place passed to his sons Richard Lovelace and John Lovelace, Jr. Richard L. Lovelace (1787-1826) is listed in the 1820 census as head of a household consisting of six whites and seventeen slaves. Apparently John Lovelace, Sr.'s wife Ann Hughson Lovelace (1792-1821) continued to live at Ferry Place until her death in 1821. John Lovelace, Jr. died unmarried in 1825, leaving Richard Lovelace the sole owner of Ferry Place as of that year.⁴

But Richard Lovelace and his wife both died in 1826. They had four small children who were placed in the care of Richard's brother George Lovelace. Of these four, only two survived past 1845. One of these was John H. Lovelace (1821-1891), who inherited Ferry Place.⁵ In the 1830 census there is an entry entitled "Estate of R. L. Lovelace," which consisted of a household of five whites and twenty slaves.⁶

According to family tradition, the house at Ferry Place was vacant much of the time for about three decades after the death of Richard Lovelace in 1826. During this period John Lovelace grew up, and then, once he had reached his majority, he built a "Steamboat Gothic" style mansion about a mile from Ferry Place. (This mansion burned in 1912.) Throughout this period the home at Ferry Place was maintained by the Lovelace family, especially by John Lovelace after he had grown up. Then from the mid-1850's it was his second home, and since it remained the center of his plantation, he resided there much of the time.⁷

According to the 1860 census, "J. H. Lovelace" owned a thousand acres of land, of which 500 acres were improved. The cash value of his farm was \$50,000, of his farm implements and machinery \$1,500, and of his livestock \$4,000. In the previous year his plantation had yielded 220 bales of cotton and 4,000 bushels of corn. Unfortunately, no figure could be found concerning the number of slaves he owned.⁸

Ferry Place apparently remained in the hands of John H. Lovelace until about 1876, when it was seized by the sheriff due to Lovelace's failure to pay taxes on it. Ferry Place was then purchased by Florence J. Peck (1845-1881), the daughter of John Lovelace and wife of W. S. Peck (1842-1910). They had been married at Ferry Place in 1868.⁹ The agriculture census of 1880 reveals something about the farming operations at Ferry Place as of that year. In 1880, W. S. Peck owned a thousand acres, of which a hundred were improved. The value of his farm was listed as \$5,000 and of his livestock \$350. The estimated value of all his farm production for the previous year was \$900. The farm had produced 20 bales of cotton, 200 bushels of corn, and 25 bushels of Irish potatoes during the previous year.¹⁰

With the death of W. S. Peck in 1910, Ferry Place passed to W. S. Peck, Jr. (1873-1946), who through his business and agricultural skills expanded its operations greatly. He also became a prominent business and political leader in this section of the state. A biographical sketch from the 1930's calls him "one of the outstanding personalities in the agricultural, commercial, educational and civic development of the parish." As of that time, the sketch stated, "Mr. Peck is the largest diversified farmer in his section, producing more different kinds of crops than any other planter in the parish. He is the only large planter that raises all his stock feed, and all meat consumed on his plantation is home grown. He employs between 130 and 140 families, and cultivates approximately 4,000 acres of land, owning 6,500 acres. On his property are four gins, one store, a complete saw mill and oat binder, a large grist mill, two churches and scores of other buildings. At last 150 head of work stock are kept in use through the crop season, and three tractors are used."

The sketch also stated that Peck had been president of Sicily Island State Bank since 1918 and had served in the State legislature from 1920 to 1928. From 1913 to 1920 he had been a member of the Tensas Basin Levee Commission. He was also president of the Sicily Island Gas Company. Peck had served as a delegate to the National Democratic Convention of 1920 and was chosen as one of nine master farmers in Louisiana in 1930.¹¹

In 1946, W. S. Peck, Jr. died, leaving a substantial estate. The home at Ferry Place is now owned jointly by two of his children - William S. Peck, III and Clarendon Peck.

NOTES

1. "Historical and Statistical Collections of Louisiana - The Parish of Catahoula De Bow's Review 12 (March 1852): 259; George M. Stafford, The Wells Family of Louisiana and Allied Families (Alexandria, La.: Standard Printing Co., 1941), p. 219.
2. Confirmative Act of 24 Oct. 1811, Catahoula Parish Records, copy in National Register file for Ferry Place, State Historic Preservation Office, Baton Rouge; Research Report by W. S. Peck, IV, located in Ferry Place file, hereinafter cited as Peck Report.
3. Census of 1810, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule, p. 138.
4. Peck Report; Census of 1820, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana Schedule, unpaginated
5. Succession of Richard Lovelace, copy in Ferry Place file; Peck Report.
6. Census of 1830, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule, p. 6.
7. Letter from W. S. Peck, IV to State Historic Preservation Officer, 26 September 1978; Peck Report.
8. Census of 1860, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule, p. 43; Agriculture Census, p. 13.
9. Tax Collector's Statement, 28 June, 1876, copy in Ferry Place file; Frederick W. Williamson and George T. Goodman, Eastern Louisiana: A History of the Watershed of the Ouachita River and the Florida Parishes (Louisville, Kentucky: Historical Record Association, n.d.), p. 1003, hereinafter cited as Williamson and Goodman, Eastern Louisiana.
10. Census of 1880, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Agriculture Census, Ward 2, p. 3
11. Williamson and Goodman, Eastern Louisiana, p. 1003.
12. Succession of W. S. Peck, Jr., copy in Ferry Place file.

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Chisum, Emmett

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1936 Analysis of Indian village site collections from Louisiana and Mississippi. Anthropological Study No. 2. Louisiana Geological Survey, New Orleans.

II. Other Bibliographical References

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Census of 1960, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule; Agriculture Census

Census of 1810, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule.

Census of 1830, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule.

Census of 1820, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule.

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"Historical and Statistical Collections of Louisiana - The Parish of Catahoula," De Bow's Review 12: (March 1852): 256-275.

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Succession of Richard Lovelace, copy in Ferry Place file.

Succession of W. S. Peck, Jr., copy in Ferry Place file.

Tax Collector's Statement on Sale of Ferry Place, 28 June 1876, copy in Ferry Place file.

Williamson, Frederick W.; and George T. Goodman, Eastern Louisiana: A History of the Watershed of the Ouachita River and the Florida Parishes. Louisville, Kentucky: Historical Record Association, n.d.