

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Oaks (c.1855) is a one story frame Greek Revival residence located in gently rolling countryside just west of the small community of Keachi. There have been some alterations, but none pose a serious integrity problem.

The tripped roof house has a conventional central hall plan with two rooms on each side. The five bay front gallery has square columns with typical 1850s capitals, end pilasters, and a full entablature. The entrance features an impressive aedicule style doorway executed on a grand scale. It is thirteen feet wide and has a particularly heavy entablature. Massive pilasters with molded capitals are complemented by more diminutive pilasters framing the door itself. The transom and sidelight muntins form a rectangular pattern. The front nine over nine windows feature jib doors complete with their original latches. The windows are shoulder molded with a pediment shaped top. Windows elsewhere are six over six with conventional square frames.

The Oaks originally had a rear gallery and a free-standing Greek Revival kitchen building located only one or two feet to the rear. The kitchen had its own gallery with an entablature and columns identical to the main house. In the late 1940s both galleries were enclosed and connected. (The gallery on the main house was obliterated except for the entablature, but two of the original four columns and a pilaster survive on the wing.) The resulting enclosed L-shaped gallery sloped to make the transition between the main house and kitchen. The present owners, who acquired the house in 1974, reworked the gallery floor, adding a step to make the transition. The two room kitchen dependency now contains a sitting room and a largely modern kitchen, but several original interior features remain, including two panel doors, simple door surrounds, an original pantry, and a chair rail with paneled wainscoting in the sitting room.

Noteworthy interior features of the main house include: (1) molded door and window surrounds with pedimented shape tops and shoulder molding; (2) pocket doors between the two rooms on the east side; (3) a chair rail in all of the rooms, with molded panels below in most cases; (4) two of the original four mantels. The one in the rear west room is very plain, while the one in the east rear room features a very heavy entablature, similar to the front doorway, and pilasters with inset panels with a round shape at the top. Doors are four panel and retain their original porcelain doorknobs and silver keyhole coverings in most instances. The central hall culminates in a wide rear doorway with a transom and sidelights like those on the front entrance.

Alterations (in addition to those previously mentioned):

- (1) A chimney has been lost on the east side (front room).
- (2) In 1988 an 1830s Greek Revival mantel salvaged from a local house was added to the west front room. (The original mantel, as well as the other missing one, were gone when the present owners acquired the house in 1974.)
- (3) A small bathroom was added on the west side between the chimneys.
- (4) The house was damaged by a tornado in November 1987 and three of the six front columns had to be duplicated. The corner column on the kitchen wing is also a duplicate. The reproduction columns are made of cypress.
- (5) The front gallery balustrade was also a tornado victim. The balusters were scattered all over the yard, and the top rail was damaged beyond repair. The balusters were collected, the top rail was reproduced, and the balustrade was reassembled.
- (6) The roof structure on the kitchen wing was completely destroyed by the

tornado and had to be reconstructed.

#### Assessment of Integrity:

The foregoing alterations have not had a serious impact upon the house's Greek Revival character. Two mantels have been lost, but this is relatively minor in comparison to the impressive array of surviving Greek Revival features. The three replacement columns on the front gallery duplicate the appearance of the originals, and the capitals are all original. It is unfortunate that the kitchen dependency gallery has been enclosed, but the appearance is evident from the surviving features and could be fully restored.

There is a modern frame garage located adjacent to the house. Of course, it is a non-contributing element.

#### Historical Note:

The Oaks was built c.1855 by Henry F. Fullilove. Fullilove sold the house to Silas F. Talbert and his wife, Bella Horn Talbert, in 1877. It remained in the Talbert family until c.1960, then remained vacant for a number of years, and was purchased by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Donald B. Fisher, in 1974.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Oaks is locally significant in the area of architecture because it contributes to the distinctly Greek Revival architectural heritage of DeSoto Parish.

DeSoto Parish was settled between roughly 1840 and the 1850s by individuals from South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and other nearby states. Of course, Greek Revival was literally the rage at the time, and DeSoto settlers embraced it with a vengeance. Although many examples from this architectural flowering have been lost, including the impressive Keachi Female College, an astounding number survive. Excluding New Orleans, DeSoto is one of three parishes considered to be major centers of Greek Revival architecture in the state. Whereas other parishes average about a half dozen Greek Revival residences, DeSoto boasts at least twenty, not to mention four churches, a temple fronted store, and a Masonic hall. Although a few of DeSoto's Greek Revival houses are impressive two story examples, none are "Gone With the Wind" piles. The one or one-and-a-half story examples tend to be galleried cottages (often with a tripped roof), although a few have a pedimented portico. It is also important to note that the Greek Revival in DeSoto was a rural phenomenon guided by local builders and carpenters who interpreted the style in their own way. This special heritage really represents the parish's architectural apogee. With the exception of a few landmarks, there has not been an architectural flowering in the parish since then.

In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, all surviving examples of the style are significant because they contribute to the parish's architectural identity as a center of Greek Revival architecture. Except for the five two story examples, it would be arbitrary to separate the other roughly comparable residences into gradations of importance. Distinguishing features of The Oaks are its Greek Revival gallery, impressive front doorway, front gallery windows with shoulder molding and pediment shaped tops, two mantels, and shoulder molding and pediment shaped door and window surrounds found throughout the interior. The Oaks derives additional distinction as the parish's only Greek Revival building with a styled Greek Revival dependency, albeit somewhat compromised by alterations.

#### Major Bibliographical References

Conveyance Records, DeSoto Parish.