

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Roseneath is a large two story frame Greek Revival plantation home located in a rural setting near the tiny community of Gloster. It has received relatively few alterations since construction.

The date for Roseneath requires some explanation. The house was built for William Bundy Means of South Carolina and has been occupied continuously by the Means family. The date passed down through the generations is 1846. The Register staff of the Division of Historic Preservation is very familiar with the development of the Greek Revival in DeSoto Parish and would probably have assigned an 1850s date based solely on the architectural evidence, although it is certainly not entirely conclusive. Most of the features could be 1840s or just as easily 1850s. The family date of 1846, however, seems too early for the front doorway and interior cornices. The former has Italianate brackets and capitals very similar to those on the doorway of a nearby house with a documented date of 1859. The richly molded interior cornices, with a layer of molding on the ceiling as well, are typical of 1850s houses and are basically transitional Greek Revival-Italianate. The strongest architectural evidence for an earlier date is the use of Federal-looking fluted door and window surrounds both upstairs and down on the main block, although it is not impossible for this feature to be found in an 1850s house out in the country. In short, the architectural evidence is not absolutely conclusive, and the 1846 date is not completely impossible for the house as a whole. This submission will use the family date with qualifiers regarding certain features, as previously mentioned. And, of course, the date has no impact upon the house's Register eligibility.

Roseneath's facade is dominated by a two-tier square column gallery. The first floor gallery has a full entablature, capitals with necking, and wooden jalousies. The second story gallery is unusually short and has simpler capitals. Both feature end pilasters. The side elevations are particularly distinctive because the front gable return is elongated to accommodate the wide front gallery. This gives a double pitch low-slung effect to the roof, at least at the front. To the rear of the linear main block is a massive two story wing, giving an overall L shape to the house. The wing originally had a two-tier gallery configuration on both sides identical to the facade. (It is now enclosed on one side.) Here again, elongated gable returns are used to accommodate squat first floor galleries. Jalousies are also found on the rear gallery. Roseneath also has a brick semi-raised basement, an unusual feature for a Louisiana plantation house.

The flushboard wall under the front gallery is symmetrically articulated with two six over nine floor-length windows on each side of an impressive aedicule style doorway. The window surrounds are fluted and feature bull's eye cornerblocks. The elaborate doorway has a heavy denticular cornice, two sets of pilasters, and molded panels beneath the sidelights. The more massive outer pilasters each feature a pair of intricately carved wooden Italianate brackets and a slender molded panel with a rounded top. The inside pilasters are not as large and are much simpler. Their molded capitals are very similar to those on the doorway of nearby Buena Vista, with a documented date of 1859. The transom and sidelights contain panes of stenciled glass, which are now badly faded and cracked in places. The gallery also features a high richly molded baseboard.

Like many other features of the house, the floor plan is most unusual. On each floor of the main block is a wide central hall and a secondary narrower hall at the rear, yielding an overall L shape. The central hall has one large room on each side. The staircase is set at the back of the central hall and ascends from the rear toward the front. The rear wing was originally one room wide and two rooms deep, but the enclosure of one of the galleries has allowed for additional rooms. There is no hallway in the rear wing.

The most memorable characteristic of Roseneath is the builder's copious use of fluted door and window surrounds with bull's eye cornerblocks on every opening of the main block, both upstairs and down. This elegant woodwork frames two side-by-side original closets in the rear

hallways on each floor. There is also an original closet underneath the staircase. The door and window surrounds on the rear wing ground floor are shoulder molded, while those upstairs are plain.

There are no less than four different types of mantels at Roseneath. The west parlor on the first floor has a handsome black marble mantel in a conventional aedicule style, while the room on the east has a vernacular wooden mantel with tapered pilasters with, in effect, cornerblock capitals. The two rear rooms on the ground floor have heavily proportioned wooden mantels in the conventional aedicule style. The four wooden mantels upstairs are identical and resemble the one downstairs in the east front room. However, the proportions are much heavier, the cornerblocks are more dominant, and the pilasters do not taper.

Other noteworthy interior features include:

- (1) high richly molded baseboards in the main block and simpler ones in the wing,
- (2) two panel doors on the main block,
- (3) fairly simple molded ceiling medallions,
- (4) decorative molded panels on the staircase, and
- (5) original unvarnished wooden floors in the main block.

Alterations to Roseneath include:

(1) The rear wing gallery on the west side has been screened in on the first floor and glassed in on the top floor. This was sensitively done behind the columns and balustrade with no loss of original features.

(2) The rear wing gallery on the east side has been completely enclosed, although the columns, pilasters, etc. are still there.

(3) An exterior staircase covered with latticework has been added at the rear corner of the wing.

(4) The original flooring has been covered in the rear wing.

(5) An aluminum awning has been added between the two middle columns on the front elevation (ground floor only).

Assessment of Integrity:

The above alterations are minor when one considers how much of this large house survives intact, including even shutters, unvarnished floors, stenciled glass, jalousies, etc. Of course, one wishes the rear gallery had not been enclosed, but at least it is reversible.

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

Roseneath is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is among a select group of five houses that represent the apogee of antebellum residential architecture in a parish

known for the Greek Revival style. It achieves this distinction because of its size, pretension, and impressive woodwork.

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. 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.

Of the twenty or so Greek Revival residences in DeSoto Parish, all but five are one or one-and-a-half story cottages. Although many of the latter are quite impressive, none have the monumental stature of the five large two story residences. In contrast to the more typical galleried cottage, Roseneath is the only example to feature a two-tier gallery across the front, not to mention one surviving two-tier gallery on a large rear wing. Roseneath also has quite an impressive array of noteworthy woodwork features, including: (1) fluted window and door surrounds with bull's eye cornerblocks on the facade and everywhere you look on the interior of the main block; (2) all of its eight original mantels; (3) a grand doorway complete with a denticular cornice, molded inset panels and even its original stenciled glass; (4) the type of richly molded cornice found on only the finer Greek Revival houses; (5) shoulder molded window and door surrounds in two rooms; and (6) a paneled staircase. It should be noted that Roseneath is the only example to feature fluted woodwork and one of only two houses pretentious enough to have a marble mantel.

Major Bibliographical References

Historic Structures Survey, DeSoto Parish. Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office.