

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Audubon Plantation House (c.1850) is a one-and-a-half story frame Greek Revival residence located in a rural setting in eastern East Baton Rouge Parish. While the house has suffered some alteration over the years, it retains its National Register eligibility.

Audubon has a central hall plan, two rooms deep, with a front and rear gallery. The front and rear parlors are linked by a set of pocket doors that still function. Each room has direct access to the galleries by means of French doors. The detailing is Greek Revival throughout. Both the front and rear galleries feature fully articulated entablatures. The front gallery posts are very elaborately treated with astragals and bolection molded panels. The front gallery also features a bolection molded paneled dado and clapboard sheathing. This clapboard treatment is unusual for the period, but it appears to be original. (Normally antebellum houses have flush board siding under the galleries.) The large pitched roof culminates in three front pedimented dormers. Noteworthy interior features include the staircase with its massive turned newel post, the elaborately molded baseboards, and the single aedicule style mantel. (At one time there were three others.)

Around the turn of the century much of the rear gallery was enclosed for a bathroom and service spaces. Later still the area under the staircase was enclosed for a closet. In addition, it appears that the two small windows on the side gables were added. Except for the previously mentioned pocket doors, all of the doors presently in the house are period salvaged replacements. Finally, all four of the chimneys have been rebuilt.

Despite these changes the house still retains much of its original interior detailing and most of its significant exterior detailing. Moreover, its facade and massing are virtually intact. Thus, in our opinion, Audubon still stands as an important example of a Greek Revival plantation house.

Specific dates c.1850
Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

Audubon is of local architectural significance as a rare and important example of a Greek Revival plantation house within the parishes of Ascension and East Baton Rouge. These two neighboring parishes are used as the context for significance because Audubon was originally in Ascension Parish, but the land was subsequently annexed into East Baton Rouge Parish.

These two parishes were once known for their sugar production, and their economy boomed in the thirty or so years prior to the Civil War. As a result, a goodly number of Greek Revival plantation houses were built, representing something of an architectural "flowering." But the area is now within the orbit of the expanding greater Baton Rouge metroplex, and in recent decades has lost much of its antebellum building stock due to decay and urbanization.

It is impossible to determine with certainty the exact number of Greek Revival plantation houses built in the two parishes in the three decades prior to the Civil War. But a reliable clue can be found in the 1860 census, which lists sixty-two large slaveholdings (fifty or more slaves) in Ascension and East Baton Rouge. In addition, there were numerous good size holdings of less than fifty. Given the foregoing, it would be safe to conclude that there were scores of Greek Revival plantation houses and cottages in the two parishes on the eve of the Civil War. However, as far as the State Historic Preservation Office can determine, there are only about ten remaining examples. Hence Audubon is of special importance in the area's architectural heritage. In addition, most of the other surviving examples in the two-parish area are grand two story piles. Audubon is a Greek Revival cottage and hence is more representative of a typical plantation house of the period.

Historical Note:

The origin of Audubon is obscure. Attempts to establish a chain of title from before the late nineteenth century have thus far not been successful. The plantation is identified as Audubon in the Statement of the Sugar Crop for 1892. At that time it was owned by one Octavius Bullion and the

house was rented to a Dixon family. An 1890s photograph reveals that the house was in poor condition. For much of the twentieth century Audubon remained a rural rent house.

Major Bibliographical References

1890s photograph of Audubon in possession of owner.

Chain-of-title research at Ascension and East Baton Rouge Parish Courthouses.

Statement of the Sugar Crop Made in Louisiana, 1892.