

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Richland is set on one of the highest points of land in East Feliciana Parish from which it commands an impressive view of the surrounding rolling farmland. There are no outbuildings standing. There are no intrusions in view of the plantation house, and as a result the essential character of its setting remains intact. The front lawn is encompassed by two broad parterres formed of clipped hedges, which are separated by the central front path. To the rear of the house are groves of trees and a family cemetery.

The house itself faces south and has a central hall plan with double rooms on each side. This plan occurs on the first and second floors with one room on each side of the hall on the garret third floor. The chimneys and fireplaces are arranged in a way that might be expected in one of the larger Federal period farmhouses along the eastern seaboard. The first and second floor rooms have fireplaces, and all fireplaces are set against the side walls of the house.

Each side wall has a pair of chimneys symmetrically set and terminating in a Federal double chimney gable with gable parapet and central lunet. The front portion of the central hall on each floor is wider on the east side, to accommodate a graceful three-quarter turn winding stair. There is a large double parlor on the west side of the hall which appears to have been two separate rooms at one time. Although this is not evidenced by the floor boards, a beam cuts the long room in half, and cuts through the cornice, suggesting that at one time it may have been partitioned. Today it is one room. Two bathrooms have been created (one on the second floor and one on the third floor) by partitioning off one end of the central hall. But the partitioning was done with sensitivity in terms of moldings, doors, and materials. (Two parlor doors from the ground floor were apparently installed in the second floor bathroom). So the work had no dramatic effect upon the second and third floors or upon the ground floor.

The present owners added a one story wing on the east side which contains a kitchen, den, bathroom, and family room. Because the wing is constructed with brick pillars and shallow pitch roofs, it blends in well with the old house. In addition the wing is low in scale and consequently does not interfere with the massing of the building.

The house is constructed of brick bearing walls with pit sawn joists approximately 18" on center.

Although the gable ends of the house are articulated in Federal style, many of the other features of the house were inspired by the Greek Revival. These include the handsome Tuscan colossal order pedimented portico, the rear pedimented and pillard vestibule, the dormers, and the exterior walls whose stucco is scored to resemble cut stone. The doors are large with two vertical panels and the door frames have simple molded boards with corner blocks. Each mantel is of wood with pilaster strips, an entablature, and a molded shelf. The double parlor mantels are replaced with more elaborate examples from the period.

SPECIFIC DATES	1830's (?)
BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Elias Norwood

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Richland plantation is one of the finest plantation houses in the Feliciana parishes. This can be seen in its wide central hall plan, its graceful winding stair, its colossal Tuscan order portico, its

cut stone appearance and its other classical features. The pedimented portico is particularly well proportioned and is a relatively unusual feature in the grander Louisiana plantation houses, where the peripteral style predominated.

In addition, the chimney gable ends, like the 22 story design and the floor plan, mark Richland as a house built distinctly under the English influence of the east coast rather than the Creole or French tradition. It therefore stands as an excellent representative of English cultural heritage of the Feliciana parishes.

One of the earliest settlers in the area of the present-day town of Norwood. In East Feliciana Parish was Major Sam Norwood, who arrived about 1806 with his six children, having migrated from South Carolina. They settled in the area of the Comite River and Richland Creek, in the vicinity of what was to become Richland Plantation.¹ According to numerous secondary sources the builder of the house at Richland was the Major's son Elias Norwood. The date of construction that is usually given is 1820, but since so early a date seems inconsistent with the home's architecture, it seems likely that an 1820 house was built and subsequently replaced by the present house, probably in the 1830's.²

Elias Norwood is listed in the 1820 Census as head of a household consisting of two adults (including himself) and three small children. In addition, he owned 17 slaves. His name also appears in an 1823 list of taxables for Feliciana Parish. By 1830 he was head of a household of six adults and five children and 65 slaves. In 1840 the figures were three adults, two children, and 91 slaves. There were 55 people employed in agriculture. It appears that Norwood's plantation was prospering.³

In 1845 Elias Norwood died, and his widow Catherine Chandler Norwood and their son Abel J. Norwood took over management of the plantation. Many years later, in the early 1880's, Abel Norwood, who was both a planter and a businessman, earned the title of "founder of the town of Norwood" by giving 75 acres of land and a right of way through his property to the railroad in return for the, railroad men's agreement that all passing trains would stop in the town.⁴

Catherine Norwood is listed in the 1850 Census as being 53 years old and owning \$103,000 worth of real estate. Two of her children were living with her. Abel J. Norwood, 32 years old and owner of \$51,333 worth of real estate, was head of the household next door. Figures under Catherine's name in the 1850 Agriculture Census and Slave Schedule indicate something about Richland in this era. The plantation consisted of 1300 acres, of which 800 were improved. She owned \$3340 worth of livestock, including 150 sheep and 200 swine. During the previous year, the plantation had produced 4000 bushels of corn, 2000 bushels of oats, 100 bales of cotton (400-pound bales), 300 pounds of wool, 1000 bushels of sweet potatoes, and 1250 pounds of butter. In 1850 Mrs. Norwood owned 109 slaves.⁵

By 1860 most of these figures had increased Mrs. Norwood now owned 3000 acres, of which 1000 were improved. She owned \$115,000 worth of real estate and \$235,000 worth of personal property There was \$7500 worth of livestock on hand including 200 sheep, 200 swine, and 210 cattle. The year before the plantation had produced 4000 bushels of corn, 275 bales of cotton (400-pound bales), and 2000 bushels of sweet potatoes. She owned 106 slaves, who resided in 24 slave dwellings.⁶

Mrs. Norwood survived the war. According to the 1870 Census, she was 72 years old and owned \$10,000 in real estate. She listed her occupation as "keeping house." Living with her was her grandson Joseph E. Norwood, a 31-year-old "farmer," the son of Abel J. Norwood.⁷

Mrs. Norwood probably died in the 1870's. Richland was inherited by her daughter Mary Eleanor, who was married to Dr. Lewis G. Perkins, a physician and also a prominent planter in his

own right. For a time Dr. and Mrs. Perkins lived at Richland, and the house remained in the hands of the Perkins family until 1920, when it was sold to Walter Cline. The house changed hands several mere times until 1955, when it was purchased by Charles E. Wilson, Secretary of Defense in the Eisenhower Administration. A magazine article from 1955 states, "The defense secretary's growing interest in plantation life turned into real enthusiasm last autumn when he was the hunting guest of Gov. Kennon. His interest was shared by Mrs. Wilson and in late March they announced plans to acquire the stately mansion." The present owners bought Richland from Wilson's estate in 1962.⁸

NOTES

¹H. Skipwith, East Feliciana, Louisiana, Past and Present: Sketches of the Pioneers (New Orleans: Hopkins' Printing Office, 1892; Reprinted by Claitor's Book Store), p. 47

²W. Darrell Overdyke, Louisiana Plantation Homes: Colonial and Antebellum (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1965), p. 162; Capital Region Planning Commission, Historical Landmarks in the Capital Region: Land Use Report No. 2A (July 1973), p. 22, hereinafter cited as Landmarks of the Capital Region; Zelma Engelhardt, "The House That Charlie Wilson Bought," Dixie, Times-Picayune States Roto Magazine, 15 May 1955, p. 7, hereinafter cited as Engelhardt, "House That Wilson Bought."

³Census of 1820, Louisiana, Feliciana Parish, Population Schedule, p. 57; 1823 List of Taxables in Mamie A. Rouzan, History of East Feliciana Parish Courthouse, booklet in Louisiana Room, LSU Library, Baton Rouge; Census of 1830, Louisiana, East Feliciana Parish, Population Schedule, p. 206; Census of 1840 Louisiana, East Feliciana Parish, Population Schedule, p. 18.

⁴East Feliciana Parish: 1924-1974, undated printed booklet, no publisher indicated, unpaginated, located in Louisiana Room, LSU Library, Baton Rouge, hereinafter cited as East Feliciana Parish.

⁵Census of 1850, Louisiana, East Feliciana Parish, Population Schedule, p. 453; Agriculture Census, 11th page for East Feliciana Parish; Slave Schedule, unpaginated.

⁶Joseph K. Menn, The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana--1860 (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 220-221.

⁷Census of 1870, Louisiana, East Feliciana Parish, Population Schedule, p. 377.

⁸Landmarks of the Capital Region, p. 22; East Feliciana Parish; Engelhardt, "House That Wilson Bought," p. 7.

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