

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Rosella Plantation House is located approximately 800 feet north of Bayou Lafourche and 1.9 miles west of the town of Raceland.

Rosella began in the early nineteenth century as a two-story, pitched roof house with four rooms to a floor. The rear rooms were much narrower than those in the front. At some time a two-story side wing was built. In the 1880's a two-story rear wing was built containing a carriage area on the ground floor. In 1956 the rear wing was substantially remodeled and the side wing was completely rebuilt, thus obliterating all evidence of its original date. Also in 1956 an interior stair was added to a rear corner of the main block, several windows were replaced, and a mantel upstairs was moved from one side of the central chimney to the other. At one time there was a mantel on each side.

The lower story is of brick and the upper story is of pit sawn frame construction. All the beams are beaded and exposed. Three sets of twelve light French doors open onto the main front gallery. These are surmounted by unusual transoms which have fourteen lights set in two rows. The original shutters remain as do all the wrought iron ram's horn hinges. The unusual columns have four sets of lamb's-tongue stop-chamfering each. This permits a separate chamfered length of column to coincide with the balustrade. Many of the other original windows and shutters have been lost over the years; however, one noteworthy fifteen over ten sash window remains in the attic gable.

The one remaining mantel is of the wraparound type. The fascia has a simple Adams design. An unusual feature of the mantel is its pilasters, which are fluted along the edges but not in the middle.

Assessment of Integrity:

Despite the described changes and additions, the features listed in Item 8 which contribute to Rosella's significance remain intact,

NB: A word of explanation is required concerning the alterations, In 1956 when the rear and side wings were renovated, new woodwork was milled to resemble the c.1814 millwork on the front.

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH:

Rosella Plantation House (c.1814) is a two-story Creole plantation house with exceptional detailing. It is located in an open rural setting near the town of Raceland. Despite several additions and alterations, the house retains those features which make it architecturally significant.

Specific dates c1814
Builder/Architect Builder--Jean Baptiste Thibodaux

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

Rosella Plantation House is architecturally significant on the state level as a noteworthy example of a two-story Creole plantation house for the following reasons:

1. Despite the changes, the house survives with a number of early features which are rarely found in even the oldest extant Louisiana plantation houses. These include the 12 light French doors, the transoms with their double rows of 7 lights, and the 15 over 10 sash window.
2. Many of the features show unusually fine and elaborate craftsmanship. These include the elaborately chamfered gallery columns and the ram's horn hinges. The columns are particularly significant inasmuch as the State Historic Preservation Office staff is not aware of another comparable example in the state. It is also noteworthy that all beams are beaded.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PROPERTY:

In 1810 Jean Baptiste Thibodaux signed a contract to purchase the land on which Rosella is situated. He paid for it in two payments, one in 1811 and one in 1812, and the present house was completed in 1814. Following Thibodaux's death, his wife married Evariste Lepine in 1825. Lepine enlarged the original tract of land and on the eve of the Civil War there were 74 slaves living in 9 slave quarters at Rosella. Sugar was the main crop and the remains of two sugar mills may still be seen on the grounds.

With the death of Natalie Martin Thibodaux Lepine in 1880, the plantation was acquired by her son, Oscar Lepine. Under this new owner, Rosella reached its peak of productivity. Lepine began growing cotton on the grounds and built a cotton gin to handle the crop. Rice and cattle provided additional income.

Oscar Lepine died in 1892, but the plantation was not divided among his children at that time because he had requested the property remain intact until his wife, Rosella Folse Lepine, died. Upon her death in 1935, her grandson, Dr. T. Benton Ayo, inherited a portion of the property. He is presently the sole owner.

Major Bibliographical References

Historical Sketch of Rosella Plantation Prepared by Elton Plaisance, Located in
Rosella Plantation House National Register File, La. State Historic Preservation Office.