

The Ledet House is a one story frame galleried cottage located in rural Lafourche Parish near Raceland. A restrained vernacular example of the Greek Revival style, it stands on the east side of Bayou Lafourche on Louisiana Highway 308. Although it has experienced alteration since its c. 1870 construction, the house remains eligible for National Register listing.

The origins of the Ledet House are somewhat uncertain. The building consists of two parts--a main block and a long, rectangular rear section. Although the current owners believe the main block to date to 1855 and the rear portion to be even older, architectural evidence suggests that the building was constructed all of a piece, probably during the 1870s. The main block is defined by a central hall plan with two rooms located on each side of the hallway. A steep, narrow enclosed staircase leads from the rear of the central hall to the attic. It is on and within the main block that the building's Greek Revival features are found. These include:

- 1) boxed gallery columns with simply molded capitals and bases. Such columns were often used on rural houses when round columns with elaborate Greek Revival style capitals were too difficult to build or expensive to purchase. Corner boards terminating each end of the facade match these boxed columns and capitals.
- 2) an entablature outlining the gallery roof. Although not specifically in the Greek Revival style, the gallery also features a decorative baseboard on the facade wall, shutters flanking each facade opening, and a cornice outlining the ceiling.
- 3) trabeated (post and beam) entrances, including a main entrance whose double doors, transom and sidelights feature a surround highlighted by shoulder molding. Identical shoulder molding is found on the interior side of this entrance, the exterior and interior surrounds of the facade's two pairs of secondary doors, and surrounding a set of pocket doors which separates the front section from the rear portion of the central hall.
- 4) two Greek Revival mantels. Although these have been somewhat altered (one by the addition of a scalloped board to the entablature, the other by the addition of teas relief silhouettes to the entablature above the supporting pilasters), their Greek Revival stylistic origin remains visible.

Other features of interest in the main block include the presence of French doors in the two secondary facade entrances mentioned above, operable transoms above interior doors, tall baseboards and a restrained interior cornice.

The architectural evidence suggests that the house's main block was originally separated from the rear wing by an open breezeway. This evidence consists of French doors, which were almost exclusively used on exterior walls, at the rear of the main block's central hall. The French doors open to a large rectangular dining room which connects to a rear kitchen. The dining room shows evidence of having been enlarged, for ghost marks where a wall was removed are visible in the floor. The location of this now lost wall is close to the rear of the main block, suggesting that an open breezeway may have once connected the two portions of the house. The dining room mantel shows a slight Italianate influence and may have been added in the late nineteenth century, perhaps at the time the room was enlarged. The dining room and kitchen are flanked by galleries; however, one of these has been completely enclosed and the other has lost a small portion to enclosure.

Additional alterations to the home include the following:

- 1) the previously mentioned application of decorative elements to the home's two Greek Revival mantels and the application of teas relief motifs to the Italianate mantel in the dining room.
- 2) the replacement of the attic windows, the loss of the home's chimneys as a result of Hurricane Betsy in 1965, and the enclosure of a large fireplace which formerly opened into the now modernized kitchen.
- 3) the addition of an Italianate balustrade to the front gallery in the 1880s or 1890s. This balustrade matches the one surviving on the still open side gallery, suggesting that both were installed at the same time. In addition, the original front central door has been replaced by a door in the Eastlake style. A storm door covers and protects the Eastlake door.

- 4) the construction of one small side wing serving as a bathroom on each side of the main block and the addition of a small shed roof room and a carport at the rear of the home.
- 5) the stripping of the dining room walls to reveal the wide flush cypress boards of which the walls are made, and the resheathing of the main block's walls and covering the ceilings with celotex.

Although the Ledet Home has received a fair amount of alteration, it remains a viable National Register candidate. The Italianate balustrade appears to be historic, and the side wings attached to the main block are small and unobtrusive. Meanwhile, the Greek Revival shoulder moldings and other features which give the home its architectural significance remain intact. As a rare example of the pre-Queen Anne Revival taste in Lafourche Parish (see Part 8), the house is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

Non-Contributing Element

Also standing on the property is a modern one-story, frame and metal two-car garage.

Significant dates	c.1870
Architect/Builder	unknown
Criterion C	

The Ledet House is architecturally significant on the local level as a rare example of the pre-Queen Anne Revival taste within Lafourche Parish. Although a restrained vernacular interpretation, the building is also one of the few remaining examples of the Greek Revival style in a parish where this style must have once been quite common.

Lafourche is one of Louisiana's earliest settled parishes. It was originally created in 1805, although settlement by immigrants from Spain, Germany, England, France and the Canary Islands began much earlier. Despite the parish's age, staff knowledge of the area indicates that the architectural patrimony of this mostly rural parish consists primarily of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Queen Anne style houses; bungalows; nondescript cottages and quarters houses; and twentieth century shotguns, outbuildings and commercial buildings. The loss of the parish's older architectural patrimony, which would have consisted of examples of the French Creole and Greek Revival styles, was the result of a new round of prosperity caused by, among other things, the re-emergence of the sugar industry at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time many of the region's older buildings were replaced with structures reflecting the popular styles of the late Victorian era.

To understand the magnitude of the parish's architectural loss and the importance of the pre-Queen Anne Revival style buildings which remain, one needs to have some idea of the numbers of these structures which once existed. Although exact numbers are not available, certain generalizations can be made given the settlement patterns of the parish. It was the French who first dominated the area architecturally; their ascendancy lasted until approximately 1820. Thus, it is fair to assume that Lafourche Parish once had a large number of French Creole buildings. The parish is currently being re-surveyed because its first review, completed in 1979, provided only partial coverage and is quite out-of-date. However, because this original survey covered all of Lafourche Parish's significant population centers and high probability sites, its findings can be taken as indicative of the entire parish's surviving Creole patrimony. The survey covered 1,100 of the approximately 3,000 historic structures now thought to exist in the parish and showed a total of 142 buildings reflecting some Creole influence. However, at that time less than ten (or one percent) survived with enough stylistic features or historic integrity to merit their identification as genuine Creole cottages. The overwhelming majority of the buildings identified as reflecting Creole influence were quarters houses which were "Creole" only in that they exhibited the general massing (umbrella roof and full facade gallery) of a Creole structure. It is quite probable that the new survey will show a number of these Creole-influenced buildings to have been lost in the past eighteen years.

After the 1820s the American Greek Revival style began to influence building patterns in Lafourche Parish. This influence would grow and then last until long after the end of the Civil War.

Some idea of the importance of the style can be gained by examining the census schedules of 1860. On the eve of the Civil War, there were thirty-seven large slave holdings (i.e., fifty or more slaves) in the parish. Of these, the average size per slave holding was 104.3 and only two involved individuals who did not reside in the parish. In addition, there were undoubtedly numerous slave holdings of less than 50. Given this information, it is fair to assume that there must have been numerous Greek Revival influenced plantation houses (probably at least 30), as well as a number of Greek Revival institutional and commercial buildings, in Lafourche Parish on the eve of the Civil War. Some of these examples would have been fairly large, while others would have been considered moderate or even small in size. However, few examples of the style survive today. Staff and the surveyor's knowledge of the parish indicates that of the approximately 3,000 buildings 50 years of age or older, only seven are substantial examples of the Greek Revival style. It is fair to assume that many of the smaller examples which once survived are also now lost. Sadly, the newly commenced parish survey so far confirms this assumption.

Against this background, the importance of the Ledet House emerges. Despite the unfinished condition of the parish historic structures survey, it is evident that French Creole and Greek Revival style buildings make up only approximately one percent of the historic structures surviving within Lafourche Parish. This makes the Ledet House, although a small, restrained, and somewhat late example of the Greek Revival style, part of a very limited collection of buildings representing the parish's pre-Queen Anne Revival taste. Thus, the home is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

Historical Note

The ownership of the land upon which the Ledet House stands is difficult to follow because so many parcels were sold back and forth over the years. The first reference to the land can be traced back to 1817, when Telesphort Toups Sr. and Leon Falgout purchased it from Jacques Caillouet. In 1821 the two partners divided their property; it is on the Falgout portion that the Ledet House stands. Shortly after the division Falgout sold his interest to Zenon Chauvin. Various parcels of land moved back and forth between the hands of Chauvin and Toups family members until 1876, when part of the old Falgout property was purchased by Paulin A. Ledet and his brother Joachim Prosper Ledet. The land then remained in the Ledet family for more than a century. Meanwhile, the Toups family continued to own the nearby parcel which came into their possession with the original division of property in 1821.

The current owners of the Ledet House are Richard J. Robichaux and Phyllis Toups Robichaux. Mrs. Robichaux is a descendant of Telesphort Toups Sr., while Mr. Robichaux is descended from Joachim Prosper Ledet.

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