

The Zephirin Toups, Sr. House (1866) is a one and one-half story frame dwelling in the French Creole style. It also features some Greek Revival decorative details. The Lafourche Parish dwelling stands near Thibodaux within a semi-rural subdivision which maintains its pastoral character. Despite alterations and a short move, the house retains its National Register eligibility.

The Toups House was originally located between Thibodaux and Raceland in Lafourche Parish's St. Charles community. It stood facing Bayou Lafourche on LA Hwy 308 and was surrounded by five or six massive live oak trees. Sugar cane fields stood to the rear of the property. In 1974 the house was threatened with demolition by an unsympathetic owner who planned to increase the amount of his land under cultivation. At this point the house was purchased by a descendant of Zephirin Toups and moved five miles via truck and barge to a new location within its original parish. It is certain that the house would have been lost had this move not taken place. The house now stands back from a gravel road on a large wooded and landscaped parcel which still has the feel of rural countryside. Thus, the new site, although in a semi-suburban area, is not at all inappropriate to the historic house.

Creole characteristics found within the Toups House include:

- 1) a Class III gabled umbrella roof,
- 2) bousillage walls,
- 3) three sets of French doors,
- 4) two wraparound mantels, one with a simple paneled overmantel, and
- 5) a floorplan which shows the influence of Creole geometry. The plan consists of two ranges of rooms flanked by front and rear galleries. The front range contains two rooms, the rear range three. The rear range's middle room is a bath converted from a former hallway which connected one front room to the rear gallery. The rear range also contains an original staircase leading to the attic.

The home's Greek Revival features include the gallery's paneled and molded pillars, matching corner boards, and the simple styling of the wraparound mantels. Other features of interest found in the house include a simple cornice in the parlor and on the gallery, tall gallery baseboards, simply molded facade door surrounds, six-over-six windows, and the home's original siding.

Alterations to the Toups House which occurred before the move include the conversion of one rear room into a kitchen, the installation of twentieth century double windows in this room, the addition of a closet to the front bedroom, the enclosure of one side of the rear gallery to create a small cabinet-like room, and the partial enclosure (two walls only) of the rear gallery's opposite side. These enclosures left a loggia-like space in the gallery's center.

Alterations associated with the move and restoration of the home are as follows:

- 1) the replacement of the home's original brick pier foundation by one consisting of three foot concrete piers, and the replacement of the home's end chimneys. The new chimneys incorporate the brick from the old. In addition, an unusual feature of the originals was recreated in the reconstruction. The chimneys stand just inside the side walls of the home, and the upper three quarters of the shafts are covered by clapboards. However, the lower quarter of each brick chimney is exposed.
- 2) the previously mentioned hall-to-bath conversion, which resulted in the closing of a door and window which opened onto the rear gallery; the conversion of one rear room into a study with a closet and built-in bookshelves; and the finishing of the attic as extra bedroom space,
- 3) the addition of the fourth wall to the partially enclosed cabinet-like space on the rear gallery, and the installation of masonite on the rear gallery's walls,
- 4) the installation of beaded board wainscot in the parlor, and the removal of a paneled overmantel from one wraparound mantel,

- 5) the boxing of the bottom of the gallery pillars and the installation of shutters on the windows, and
- 6) the addition of a large wing connecting directly to the rear cabinet/loggia-like area. The wing consists of one large room and a carport.

Despite the move and changes, the Toups House remains a strong candidate for National Register listing. The house stands at the same height as it did in its original location despite the replacement of its foundation piers. Except for the boxing of the front gallery's decorative pillars, the facade appears just as it did in 1866. Although the loss of one overmantel is regrettable, the mantel's wraparound configuration remains. The second mantel and overmantel, French doors, bousillage walls, core floorplan, and massing of the home are intact. Thus, the majority of the home's defining Creole features survive, and it is this Creole character upon which the architectural significance of the Zephirin Toups, Sr., House is based.

#### Non-Contributing Elements

Two additional buildings stand within the nominated area. The first is a small frame barn built from recycled parts. It is being counted as a non-contributing element because it is a modern structure. The second building is a frame outhouse. It is considered as a non-contributing element because it was moved to the site from another location, has no direct relationship to the Toups House, and is not individually eligible for the Register.

Significant dates	1866
Architect/Builder	unknown
Criterion C	

The Zephirin Toups, Sr., House is locally significant in the area of architecture within Lafourche Parish because survey data collected thus far indicates that it is one of only a limited number of houses which retain a strong enough Creole identity and sufficient integrity to merit Register listing.

Although Lafourche Parish was also settled by Spanish, German, English and Canary [eland immigrants, it was the French who dominated the culture and the architecture of the area before the Civil War. Thus, it is fair to assume that Lafourche Parish once had a large number of houses in the French Creole style. However, the parish's partially completed historic structures inventory indicates that most of these Creole houses have been lost or deteriorated to the extent that their integrity is compromised. The data from the surveyed region can be taken as indicative of the entire parish's surviving architectural patrimony because the completed area includes all of Lafourche Parish's significant population centers and high probability sites. The areas behind Bayou Lafourche and at the tip of the parish near the Gulf of Mexico consist of marsh land. Thus, settlement in Lafourche occurred primarily along the bayou, and the surveyed area encompasses both banks from the Assumption Parish line as far south as Golden Meadow.

The data shows a preliminary total of 142 houses (from over 1100, 50+ year old buildings surveyed to date) reflecting some Creole influence. However, the overwhelming majority of these buildings are quarters houses which are "Creole" only in that they exhibit the general massing (umbrella roof and full facade gallery) of a Creole structure. Less than twenty of the 142 houses are more substantial, and of these, less than ten survive with enough stylistic features or historic integrity to merit their identification as genuine Creole cottages. For example, several of the cottages have had their columns changed or have had later stylistic features added to their facades. Although the Toups House does reflect a slight Greek Revival influence, its Creole character still stands forth. This can be seen in its massing, bousillage walls, wraparound mantels, French doors, and Creole floorplan.

#### Historical Note

Information concerning the 1866 construction date was provided by current owner Philip J. Toups, Jr., who has completed extensive research on the family's history. This date has been accepted because it is believable given the architectural evidence.

The Toups family came to Louisiana in 1721 and settled on the German Coast some time before 1755. They relocated to Bayou Lafourche in 1817 and owned the same piece of property until some time after 1908. As mentioned previously, this parcel was not available for purchase when the house was threatened with demolition, forcing Philip J. Toups, Jr. to move the building in 1974. Nevertheless, the home has returned to the hands of the family which built it.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Historic Structures Inventory for Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

Leslie, Paul (surveyor of Lafourche Parish), telephone interview, May 1993.

Toups House information packet furnished by owner; copy in National Register file.