

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Carter House and its immediate grounds are surrounded by a pine forest area. The grounds contain a broad lawn area in which the house and a small irregular adjacent lake are set. The landscape features--shrubs, flower beds and the lake--are comparatively recent in origin. The house is approached by means of a dirt driveway which is almost on axis with the central front door. This is an impressive vista, and the boundaries of the nominated area have been drawn to include it. The boundaries also include the aforementioned grounds because although none of the outbuildings remain, the grounds are still free of intrusions and provide an excellent rural setting for the house.

Carter house itself has 1½ stories with front and rear galleries and a central hall plan with 2 rooms on each side. The old rear kitchen and dining room, which was a separate building, burned in the late 19th century. It was replaced by a kitchen and dining room wing on the rear of the house. These rooms have since been considerably altered, and a side entry, a cellar complex, utility room, and a port cochere have been appended to the wing. In addition the rear gallery of the house has been filled in and converted into a living room and guest bath. It must be noted that these additions occur at the rear of the house and do not significantly affect the view of the main entrance facade. Moreover the additions have been built in similar materials, with similar roof pitch and fenestration, to the old house.

The house is raised approximately three feet above the ground on brick piers. Sills are hewn 12" square with pegged construction at the corners, and some of the sills are 40 feet long. The house construction is entirely frame with exterior clapboard. However, one of the side walls has been replaced with brick. Because of excessive wear, all the floor boards have been turned over.

The house has a 5-bay front gallery and stucco work on the facade which is troweled and beveled to resemble cut stone. The columns are modern. Particularly noteworthy are the handsome arched federal dormers. The front door has a Greek revival transom and sidelights. There are four main fireplaces in the house, feeding into two interior chimneys. All fireplace mantels are provincial versions of the Adams type. Most of the interior doors are original. Windows are 6 over 6 with fixed lowered shutters and pintails.

SPECIFIC DATES                      c.1820  
BUILDER/ARCHITECT              Thomas Freeman

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As an early nineteenth-century house which was built by a free black man and lived in by an important local political figure, the Carter House is significant in the areas of black history and politics/government. It also has a degree of architectural significance.

The Carter House is situated on property acquired by James Rheem under a Spanish land grant in 1804.<sup>1</sup> In about 1817, a free black man named Thomas Freeman acquired the land.<sup>2</sup> Freeman's ownership and residence in the house are documented in a commissioner's report issued in 1820, which states, "Thomas Freeman is entitled to a section of land, situated in the Parish of Saint Helena on which he now resides as an actual settler by purchase from James Rheem."<sup>3</sup> The existence of such a report strongly suggests that Freeman built the extant house since "commissioner's reports" were issued only in cases in which a person had resided on and improved the land in question.

According to an article in the Hammond Vindicator published as part of their Bicentennial series on "Bloody Tangipahoa," Freeman was the first black man to record a legal transaction in the Greensburg District of east Louisiana. A logical extension of this statement is that Freeman was the first black man to own property in what is now Livingston Parish. The article states also that Freeman was a man of considerable substance and owned a large amount of property. The 1830 Census lists Freeman as the head of a household of free blacks consisting of two adults and five children.<sup>4</sup>

In 1838 Freeman sold the land (including the house) to W. L. Breed, an important local political figure.<sup>5</sup> Breed had been sheriff of St. Helena Parish when Livingston Parish was created in

1832. By 1835 he was state representative from Livingston, the first to represent the parish. He was elected state representative again in 1841 and regained the office of sheriff of Livingston Parish in 1843.<sup>6</sup> The 1840 Census lists Breed as head of a household consisting of eleven white persons and 54 black slaves.<sup>7</sup>

Breed died of pleurisy at Carter House on November 7, 1843. His obituary states that he was still sheriff and concludes, "The deceased was a true Republican and an honest man and at the time of his death, not only his parish but the state sustained a severe loss."<sup>8</sup>

Subsequent to Breed's ownership the property was acquired by George Richardson, a prominent planter and direct ancestor to the present owners. Richardson lived at Carter House until his death in 1858. His descendants have occupied the house and owned the property continually since that time.

Among the prominent members of the family to be connected with the house were: Judge Marcus Tuluis Carter, an early circuit judge for the Greensburg district; William Buckner Rownd, an early surveyor of Livingston Parish; Judge William Scofield Rownd, who served in the Louisiana legislature; Marcus Carter Rownd, a prominent local attorney; Simpson Harvey Sharp, Sheriff and Clerk of Court for Livingston Parish.

The house and grounds are still in the process of restoration by the present owners, Wiley H. Sharp, Jr. and Beverly Sharp Burgess, who hope to complete the task by the Parish Jubilee in 1980. Mrs. Burgess lives in the house with her two children Margaret and John, Jr., and her husband, the Honorable John R. Burgess, Sr., a practicing attorney in Livingston and city judge for the town of Walker.

The Carter House also enjoys a degree of architectural significance as a local example of a raised plantation house. Because of the modifications, architectural noteworthiness rests primarily upon some fine details. These include the federal dormers, scored stucco, and the mantels.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Exhibit of Private Land Claims for Greensburg District, p. 4, State Land Office, Baton Rouge.

<sup>2</sup>Emancipation Papers for Thomas Freeman, St. Helena Parish Records, Clerk of Court's Office, Greensburg; "Bicentennial Notes," Hammond Vindicator, June 26, 1975; James Rheem to Thomas Freeman, 20 Feb. 1817, St. Helena Parish Conveyance Records.

<sup>3</sup>Commissioner's Report, Certificate No. 615, Greensburg District Claim Papers, T75 R's 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7E, Book No. 18, State Land Office, Baton Rouge.

<sup>4</sup>"Bicentennial Notes," Hammond Vindicator, June 26, 1975; 1830 Census, St. Helena Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Freeman to W. L. Breed, 12 May 1838, Record of Sales Book, pp. 138-139, Livingston Parish Records.

<sup>6</sup>Lyman Briggs Papers, Mortgage No. 2738, St. Tammany Parish Clerk of Court's Office, Covington; The New Orleans Annual Advertiser for 1832 (annexed to the City Directory); The New Orleans Guide or General Directory for 1837; Journal of the Louisiana House of Representatives, 1837; Journal of the Louisiana House of Representatives, 1841; Records of Appointments, 1843-1846, State Archives, Baton Rouge; Southern Traveler, 12 Nov. 1843; Journal of the Louisiana Senate, 1861; New Orleans Directory for 1835.

<sup>7</sup>1840 Census, Livingston Parish, Louisiana Population Schedule, p. 286.

<sup>8</sup>Southern Traveler, 26 Nov. 1843.

<sup>9</sup>Numerous family records.

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Bicentennial Notes," Hammond Vindicator, June 26, 1975.

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1840 Census. Livingston Parish, Louisiana. Population Schedule.

1830 Census. St. Helena Parish, Louisiana. Population Schedule.

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