

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

The Cedars Plantation is an example of a typical early Louisiana bluffland house. The bluffland house type is a one-and-a-half story frame house with outside end chimneys, gallery, and ell. It is a variation of the dog-trot house type, because it has a wide central hall, although in the bluffland house the hall is enclosed.

Structural evidence, family tradition and deduction from known documents indicate that the main part of the house was built no later than the early 1840's, while additions and changes were made around 1870.

The basic floor plan of the Cedars Plantation consists of a central hall with two rooms on either side on the lower floor. The front rooms on either side of the hall measure 18' x 18' and have 9' 4" high ceilings. The rear rooms are smaller, even with the additions added in later years. Steep stairs in the front hall lead to the upper floor which has one room on either side of the hall. A kitchen ell extends to the right rear of the house. It was added around 1870. (For more information on the floor plan, refer to Sketch Sheets 1 and 2.)

The exterior of the main part of the house is sheathed in clapboards of milled cypress 1 1/2" thick and 6-3/4" wide with 6" to the weather. The kitchen ell has board and batten siding. The original roof had hand-split cypress shingles laid on wide random-width boards. These shingles are still present under the tin roof which now covers the house. Brick chimneys on either end of the house originally provided fireplaces for the upstairs and downstairs rooms in the front of the house, but these chimneys have been removed. Huge cypress blocks served as the original foundation of the house, but these have been replaced by stucco-covered brick piers. The front gallery originally had square cypress columns, but these were replaced by milled turned columns around 1870. Fifteen-light (9 over 6) windows are found on the lower floor. Except for a few replacements due to breakage, the 10" x 12" lights are still of the early bubble glass. Original cypress louvered shutters remain across the front and one side of the house. The heavy front door is surrounded by side lights and a transom overhead. Originally a solid four-paneled door, the upper panels were damaged in a storm and have been replaced with glass.

The sills of the house are of rough hewn cypress. The floor joists are also cypress and are notched on the ends to fit in the sills. The other major framing timbers are pegged with mortise and tenon joints, while square nails were used elsewhere. Rough 7" wide pine boards are used to seal the walls of the lower floor, while the upper floor has random-width rough pine boards on walls and ceiling. Flooring is of 5 1/2" wide heart pine boards.

The two front rooms have plain moulding on windows and doors, and all other woodwork is plain. Doors are heavy four-paneled doors, with all original thumb bolt hardware remaining. The hall stairway has hand-planed details. An unusual 18" wide plain pine board dresses the wall under the balusters and covering the cots of the risers. The balusters, hand rail and newel post are also plain. The stairs originally rose from the rear of the hall, but in 1952 were turned around so that they now rise from the front. Upstairs and downstairs mantels show influence from the Greek Revival and Victorian periods. The Cedars Plantation is surrounded by approximately four acres of land. A gravel drive encircles the house and there is a pond on the rear of the property. Trees consist of pecans, oaks, gums, mulberries and cedars. Outbuildings which still exist are a 24' x 16' frame carriage house, a 12' 3" x 10' log smoke house, a 10' x 12' frame milk house and a cotton house. The smoke house and milk house are still roofed in hand-split shingles. These outbuildings cannot be positively dated, although family tradition dates them to the pre-Civil War era. Other early outbuildings no longer exist, and a double carport, shop, and pump house have been added in more recent years. (See Sketch Sheet 3)

## SPECIFIC DATES BUILDER/ARCHITECT STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cedars Plantation is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places because of its significance to Morehouse Parish in the areas of Architecture and Exploration/Settlement.

The Cedars Plantation is architecturally significant because it is believed to be the oldest remaining house in Morehouse Parish and is the only early settler's house that remains in the Parish. Although the exact date of construction is not known, structural evidence, family tradition and deduction from known documents indicate that the main part of the house was built no later than the early 1840's, while additions and changes were made around 1870. The form and stylistic details are typical of the area and the time periods involved. Adding importance to the Cedars Plantation are its early outbuildings (carriage house, log smoke house, milk house and cotton house) which still remain. Also of significance is the fact that members of the same family have used the house as a home since it was first built. The present owner is the great granddaughter of John Williams who settled the land and built the house.

In 1828 John and Elizabeth Wooding Williams of Pittsylvania County, Virginia moved their family and possessions to 500 acres of land which John had acquired in the Prairie Jefferson section of the Ouachita Parish, Louisiana. These early settlers and their descendants contributed to the development of this section of Ouachita Parish which later became Morehouse Parish in 1844.

Settling along what was known as Gum Ridge for all the gum trees present, John and Elizabeth Williams built a single-room log cabin as their first home. In 1833 Williams added another 500 acres to his holdings. According to family tradition, soon thereafter slaves were sent with ox-drawn wagons on the twelve-day round trip to Natchez, Mississippi to procure milled timber and lumber to build a more suitable dwelling, which resulted in the present house. The original log house became a detached kitchen, but it has not survived to the present day. However, other early outbuildings which were added - a milk house, carriage house, smoke house and cotton house - still remain.

John Williams soon entered into the affairs of the settlement of Point Jefferson, a steamboat landing on the Boeuf River. He was a charter member of the Masonic Lodge, Brookville Lodge #161 F. & A. M. of the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana, which was established in the 1850's. According to family tradition, Williams acted as a Baptist lay minister when called upon in the absence of a circuit rider preacher. He supported the church financially and entertained visiting clergymen. John Williams died in 1856.

His son, Thomas Wooding Williams, inherited the family home and became a community leader. He served as a private in the army of the Confederate States of America, but was captured and held prisoner by the Union Army. He was paroled at Monroe, Louisiana on June 9, 1865. Thomas Williams served on several important committees when the Louisiana Baptist Convention was held at the Oak Ridge Baptist Church from June 30 - July 3, 1871. The convention attracted representatives from throughout the state, as well as from Arkansas and Mississippi. The Cedars was the scene of social activities planned for visiting clergymen and delegates. From 1879-1882 Thomas Williams served as a representative in the State legislature, representing Morehouse Parish.

Although the original acreage of the Cedars Plantation has been divided through inheritance and donation deeds to family members, the house itself, with its associated outbuildings, remains in use as a residence presently owned by the great granddaughter of John Williams.

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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### Secondary Sources

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