

The Jones House is a one story frame French Creole house with bousillage infill. A date of 1847 is inscribed under the stair leading to the attic. The house is located south of Natchitoches in an unspoiled rural setting on the west bank of the Cane River. The nearest hamlet is Melrose, located on the east bank. Although there have been various alterations over the years, the house easily retains the bulk of its Creole character and hence its Register eligibility.

As originally built, the Jones House had three roughly equal size rooms across the front and what appears to have been a three room rear range consisting of one long room flanked by cabinets which extended beyond the core (see plan). The eastern cabinet was accessible only from the gallery (the so-called "stranger's room" found occasionally in Natchitoches Parish). The gallery extended across the front and down the sides to join the cabinets. Although one would expect such a house to have had a tripped roof, the architectural evidence indicates that the present gable end roof is original.

Changes to the foregoing plan are as follows: It appears that sometime very early in the house's history the long rear room was subdivided to form two rooms. The wall in question features French joinery which is presently visible due to rotted wall boards which have been removed. Sometime in the early twentieth century one of the previously mentioned two rooms was subdivided to create a bathroom and small hallway and the side galleries and end portions of the front gallery were enclosed. As part of an in-progress renovation project, the current owner re-opened the galleries and then partially enclosed them to provide space for a bathroom and closet.

The house is finely detailed, including random width (6 to 8") beaded boards on the front and side galleries and interior walls, exposed beaded ceiling beams on the interior and the galleries, twelve light single leaf French doors opening into the side front rooms, eight light double leaf French doors opening into the central front room, and transoms over the French doors featuring a decorative geometric pattern. Handsome French wraparound mantel/overmantel sets are found in the three front rooms. Each features simple pilasters, a layered mantel shelf, decorative paneling, a cornice crowning the ensemble, and lozenge shaped designs, the latter being a favorite of Louisiana's French Creoles. The mantel/overmantel sets are very similar, with differences occurring only in the design of the decorative paneling on the overmantels and the location and number of lozenges. The mantel/overmantel sets in the central and eastern rooms are false grained, as are the baseboards, doors, and door and window surrounds. The false graining is in good to poor condition. (The woodwork in the western room has been painted over, and it is hard to tell if it was ever false grained.) Most of the original interior doors survive, featuring multiple panel designs typical of the period. Windows are six-over-six, with a few nine-over-nines.

The house appears to have survived largely unaltered until the early twentieth century, when the following changes took place:

- (1) As previously mentioned, a bathroom/hallway was created in the rear range, and the side galleries and end portions of the front gallery were enclosed.
- (2) The sides and rear were resheathed in narrow gauge clapboards.
- (3) The present simple round columns and concrete porch were installed.
- (4) A door was added to provide access to the "stranger's room" from the adjacent room.
- (5) The openings were completely reworked on the rear elevation and a rear gallery added.

At some time in the twentieth century double windows were added to the gable ends and multi-pane double doors were placed in the original opening on the rear wall of the central front room.

When the present owners acquired the house, it had been vacant for many years and was badly deteriorated in places. They have rescued the house from demolition by neglect and are currently restoring it for use as their home.

Work thus far includes:

(1) The early twentieth century rear gallery was removed. The rear wall was very badly deteriorated and was completely rebuilt. It is sheathed in replicated narrow gauge clapboards. The twentieth century windows and doors were reused.

(2) As previously mentioned, the side galleries and end portions of the front gallery were re-opened and then the side galleries partially enclosed. However, these enclosures are not immediately evident as such. Because the clapboards on the sides were badly rotted, they were removed roughly below the attic level. Then salvageable clapboards from the sides and rear were used to resheath this area, including the enclosed portions of the galleries. Hence there is no clear line in the clapboarding marking an enclosure. On the front of the enclosures, the original gallery baseboards and specially milled wide beaded boards were used.

(3) On the eastern side what was originally a window looking out onto the gallery has been changed to a door leading into the now enclosed space. On the western side the window is still in place, with various options under consideration.

(4) Wallpaper covering the original beaded board wall surfaces was removed, leaving countless tiny nail holes. These will be painstakingly filled in and the walls repainted.

(5) What gives every indication of being an original column was discovered imbedded in the wall of a back room. The owner is using it as a model for the front gallery. The work has not been accomplished as of this writing, although the columns have arrived.

Assessment of Integrity

Of course, any assessment of integrity must deal with the house as it appears currently, with the principal important work remaining being the front gallery. Even with the various alterations mentioned above, the house easily retains the bulk of its Creole character and is still one of the most important examples of the style in Natchitoches Parish. The only changes that have made an impact on the house's Creole character are the partial enclosure of the side galleries and the relatively slight adjustment made to the floorplan to create a bathroom in the rear range. The house's characteristic Creole floorplan survives largely intact, as do other features found on Creole houses such as bousillage infill, wraparound mantels/overmantels featuring lozenges, wide beaded wall boards on the interior and some of the exterior, exposed beaded ceiling beams, and French doors.

Significant dates	1847
Architect/Builder	unknown
Criterion C	

The Jones House is of local significance in the area of architecture as a particularly important example of Creole architecture in a parish known for the style. In short, it is a significant contributing resource to the parish's cultural identity as a center of French Creole architecture.

Natchitoches Parish is a French enclave in an otherwise Anglo-Saxon North Louisiana. It was a very early area of French settlement, with the town of Natchitoches being founded in 1714, only fifteen years after the founding of the colony and three years before New Orleans. Hence the parish had time to develop a significant Creole building stock. Also, it appears that the competing Greek Revival never gained much of a stronghold in the parish. Finally, Natchitoches Parish was bypassed by development in the mid-nineteenth century. These factors have left the parish with a fairly large number of examples in a comparatively small area.

The Jones House helps establish the significance of Natchitoches Parish as a center of the Creole style. It is particularly important for its three elegant mantel/overmantel ensembles, a feature found in only the most elegant and "upmarket" Creole houses in Louisiana. In this, it is in sharp contrast to the general trend in Natchitoches Parish of large, plain Creole houses with little in the way of intricate ornamentation. It is one of only two houses having mantel/overmantel ensembles. (The other is Melrose Plantation House, a National Historic Landmark.) Finally, it is the only known surviving house to have the lozenge shaped design so popular in Louisiana's French Creole architecture.