

Located in a rural setting on Bayou Boeuf near the small town of Lecompte, the Pegram Plantation House is a one story galleried wood frame residence in the Greek Revival style. Based upon the molding profiles, the house is being dated to c.1850. The well preserved residence retains almost all of its Greek Revival details on both the exterior and interior.

The house has the standard central hall with two rooms on each side, but also has a small room at each rear corner which extends beyond the main core. A broad hipped roof encompasses a gallery that spans the façade and then continues down the sides to end at the aforementioned small rooms. The small rooms each have their own door opening onto the gallery. Simple boxed Doric pillars feature molded capitals. They have an unusual configuration at each corner -- almost as if two pillars abutted. The gallery's entablature is paneled on the interior.

The many openings onto the gallery are either doors, six-over-nine sliphead windows (façade), or six-over-six windows. Their surrounds feature a handsome cornice with a cove molding and a pediment shaped top (be it ever so slightly). The central hall's front and rear entrances have the typical transom and side light treatment. The front side lights are unusual in that they are filled with red and green glass (some replaced).

The quite generously proportioned hallway is notable for its fully developed Greek Revival door surrounds. Each has pilasters with molded capitals, a smooth entablature, and a cornice with cyma reversa molding (but no pediment shape to the top). The same surrounds can be found in the home's two formal rooms: on the pocket doors between the two rooms, the doorways leading into the hall, and a shallow cupboard in the rear room. Openings elsewhere in the house are either plain or feature a fairly heavy molding profile. All of the original four panel doors survive; they too have a fairly heavy molding. The two surviving wooden mantels (also heavily molded) are typical of the period. They feature pilasters with molded capitals and bases, a smooth entablature with a pronounced cornice, and a plain mantel shelf. The home also retains its original high baseboards in the four main rooms. Windows in the two most formal spaces feature molded panels below.

The Pegram Plantation House has received the following modifications since construction:

- 1) The loss of the original balustrade.
- 2) The central hall's wainscot, with its medium gauge boards and heavily molded top, seems out of character for the space. Undoubtedly it dates from a later period (late 19th century).
- 3) There have been two additions. One is a small bathroom off a rear room. Spanning the rear elevation is a fairly shallow addition under its own hipped roof (partly enclosed; partly glassed in). The architectural evidence indicates there was never a rear gallery. (The entablature extends across the rear of the house above a clapboarded wall.) There are three original doors on the rear (including the central hall); they had to have stepped out onto something. One suspects there were small stoops for each door.
- 4) Some of the column shafts have been replaced.
- 5) The interior has been modernized with plywood paneling and tile ceilings (but not dropped). These cosmetic alterations will be removed as part of an in-progress restoration by new owners.
- 6) The two surviving chimneys have been removed at the roofline and two chimneys and mantelpieces have been lost.
- 7) Two small closets have been added (by furring out into the rooms).

Assessment of Integrity:

There are no integrity issues. With the exception of two mantels, the house retains all of its abundant Greek Revival character-defining details.

SIGNIFICANT DATES: c. 1850
ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown
CRITERION: C

Pegram Plantation House is a superior Greek Revival residence among a limited number of examples surviving in

Rapides Parish, a large area that once would have had many more.

On the eve of the Civil War Rapides Parish was about twice as large as it is today. It consisted of approximately 2800 square miles and possessed some of the richest cotton and sugar producing land in Louisiana. The 1860 census shows eighty-nine major slaveholdings in the parish, with only six involving absentee owners. (Major slaveholdings are defined as fifty or more slaves.) The average size of a slaveholding was 125, which was the highest in the state. Then there were numerous holdings of less than fifty. Of course, some of the best land was along the parish's various waterways, including Red River and bayous Boeuf and Rapides.

Given the foregoing developmental patterns, it is clear that there must have been over 100 plantation houses in Rapides Parish on the eve of the Civil War, most of which would have been in the wildly popular Greek Revival style. In addition, the parish seat of Alexandria would have had various examples of the style. But today there are only about a dozen in present-day Rapides Parish that retain sufficient integrity to convey their original character. (For the record, even if one took into consideration the larger area that made up Rapides in 1860, the number would be only one or two higher. The portions of the parish that were carved away in the late nineteenth century did not have much settlement prior to the Civil War.)

Surprisingly, given the obvious wealth of the area, all evidence points to Rapides planters building on a rather modest scale for the most part. Exceptions are Kent House (French Creole), Walnut Grove (Federal), and Lloyd Hall (Greek Revival-Italianate). Of the roughly dozen Greek Revival survivors, all but Lloyd Hall are galleried one story wood frame homes comparable in size to the candidate, or smaller. Most of these are quite simply detailed (i.e., plain mantels, plain door and window frames with no cornices, shoulder molds, etc.). The parish's most impressive Greek Revival woodwork is found at the candidate, China Grove (which has lost much of its original exterior character), Hardtimes Plantation House, Inglewood Plantation House, and Lloyd Hall (the latter being transitional Greek Revival/Italianate). As a particularly well-preserved, particularly good expression of the rural Greek Revival taste within Rapides Parish, Pegram Plantation House easily meets Criterion C at the local level.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rapides Parish Historic Structures Survey, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.