

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Ducros Plantation House (c.1860) is a two story, frame, Greek Revival structure located on Bayou Terrebonne approximately one-and-one-half miles south of the town of Thibodaux. Despite some alterations, the house retains its National Register eligibility.

Ducros is two rooms deep and five rooms wide, including a wide central hall. The staircase is set in a secondary passage off the hall. The complex floor plan is indented at the front corners to permit the front gallery to wrap around and terminate flush with the side walls. The rear corners are also indented, which leads one to suspect that the original intent was to have a rear gallery similar to the monumental front gallery. But according to local tradition, the house was never completed due to the onset of the Civil War. The architectural evidence seems to support this because in contrast to the classical unity of the front, the back has a disjointed jury built look as though it were "finished up" in a hurry.

The front features eight colossal paneled columns, a full entablature, and a low parapet with a central peak. The second story gallery has a cast-iron balustrade. All front openings feature shoulder molded surrounds. In addition, the entrance doors, both upstairs and down, are accented with cornices. All other openings are plain. The movable louver shutters appear to be original. Each of the side parapets features a central elongated tablet.

From the rear one can see the unusual roof configuration. Like many peripteral or semi-peripteral plantation houses, Ducros faced the problem of how to get rid of water on the roof while maintaining the desired "flat top" look on the exterior. This it accomplished by having two roofing systems. Behind the parapets is a continuous inward sloping shed roof. There is also a central hip roof which adjoins the shed roof, forming an internal drainage valley.

At one time the rear had a second story gallery, but this was removed in recent years. The awkward rear gallery roof, which comes down over the upper parts of the second story windows, is evidently original.

The interiors feature a combination of Greek Revival and Rococo Revival elements. Virtually all the doors are shoulder molded, and most of the mantels are in the conventional aedicule style. But in the major rooms the taste is more Rococo. Both the front south parlor and the central hall have richly scrolled and foliated ceiling medallions. The front south parlor also features a white carrara marble Rococo Revival mantel and a set of pocket doors leading to a rear parlor. The rear parlor has a similar mantel but in a richly patterned brown marble. The two major rooms on the north side of the house both have black marble mantels, one Greek Revival and the other Rococo Revival. All the major first floor rooms at Ducros feature fairly elaborately molded cornices. The upstairs rooms do not have cornices. The single flight staircase has rather thickly proportioned members, but nonetheless it appears to be original. The molding around the top of the newel is very typical of the 1850's, and the newel post itself has a paneled pattern which seems to echo the gallery columns.

Since construction there have been a number of changes made in the house. The first group seem to reflect a renovation project undertaken in the early Terrebonne years of this century:

- (1) Chair rails were added in the central hall and in a few of the other rooms.
- (2) Downstairs gallery windows were replaced with French doors.
- (3) A small room was added in the northwest corner of the first story.
- (4) A single story kitchen wing was added in the southwest corner.

- (5) A golden oak front door was added.
- (6) Bathrooms and closets were installed.
- (7) New front steps were built.
- (8) Much of the woodwork was false grained in oak. This work has an orange cast to it and may not be fifty years old.

More recent changes include:

- (1) The previously mentioned removal of the rear second story gallery floor
- (2) The replacement of the rear gallery columns.
- (3) The walling in of the staircase on the second story.
- (4) The installation of a brickwork effect under the central hall chair rail.
- (5) The installation of a metal sided addition to the kitchen wing.

Assessment of Integrity:

These changes are minor in comparison to the amount of important original fabric remaining. Moreover, Ducros still retains the features which establish its identity as a Greek Revival plantation house (i.e., the form, the gallery, the previously mentioned exterior details, etc.). It also retains the features which qualify it as a superior example (see Item 8).

Contributing and Non-Contributing Elements:

- (1) To the rear of the house is a contemporaneous brick shed which is listed as a contributing element. (The roof is more recent.)
- (2) To the north side of the house is a contemporaneous deteriorated brick shed. All that remains of the building is the wall to a height of about five feet. For this reason, it is listed as a noncontributing element.
- (3) Of course, the adjacent antenna tower is listed as a non-contributing element.
- (4) The two metal cisterns which flank the rear of the house are listed as non-contributing elements because they are probably not fifty years old. In any case, they add nothing to the architectural importance of Ducros.
- (5) Also located to the rear of the house is a frame garage-tractor shed. It is listed as a non-contributing element because it is probably less than fifty years old and does not contribute to the architectural significance of Ducros.

Specific dates               c.1860  
Builder/Architect         see historical note below

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criterion C

Ducros Plantation House is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of the finest examples among the few surviving Greek Revival residences in Terrebonne Parish. Terrebonne Parish developed during the first half of the nineteenth century as a center for the growing and refining of sugar. Like most of Louisiana's sugar parishes, the parish's economy boomed in the thirty years or so prior to the Civil War. As a result, during this period a large number of Greek Revival plantation houses were built which represented something of an architectural "flowering" for the parish.

The importance of Ducros within this context can be illustrated by examining the census schedules of 1860. On the eve of the Civil War, there were forty-four large slaveholdings (i.e., fifty or more slaves) in the parish. Of these, the average size per slaveholding was 115.2 and only six involved individuals who did not reside in the parish. In addition, there were undoubtedly numerous slaveholdings of less than fifty. Given the above, it is clear that there must have been numerous Greek Revival plantation houses and cottages in Terrebonne Parish on the eve of the Civil War (probably at least sixty). However, as far as the State Historic Preservation Office can determine, there are only six remaining examples. Consequently, Ducros is of special importance in the architectural heritage of the parish.

In addition, of the six which do survive, Ducros is one of the finest. It is one of only two which possess a two story front gallery. Moreover, it has high style features seldom found on area plantation houses. These include the cast-iron balustrade and the Rococo Revival marble mantels.

Historical Note:

Paul Stahls' Plantation Homes of the Lafourche Country reveals that there are numerous theories concerning the construction date of Ducros, with the earliest date given as 1823. For the record, the architectural evidence unquestionably indicates that Ducros is a product of the late 1850's-early '60's. The most plausible scenario given in the book attributes the construction of Ducros to the Winder family. In a 1930's interview the daughters of Van Perkins Winder said that their father died of yellow fever in 1854 and that their mother, Martha Grundy Winder, built the house after his death.

Major Bibliographical References

Louisiana Historic Structures Survey, Terrebonne Parish.

Stahls, Paul F. Jr. Plantation Homes of the Lafourche Country. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1976.