

CANE RIVER CREOLE
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

MAGNOLIA PLANTATION
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Cane River Creole National Historical Park (NHP) was established in 1994 to commemorate the long and complex history of early European exploration and settlement of the Red River Valley in northwestern Louisiana in the 18th century; the resulting interactions among the French, Spanish, African, and Indian peoples; and the subsequent development and evolution of Creole culture and plantation life along Cane River up to the mid-20th century.¹ Magnolia Plantation is one of two plantation units within the park owned by the National Park Service (NPS). As such it provides a center for the interpretation of both its own story and the history of the Cane River region.

The purpose of this Cultural Landscape Report is to research the history of the landscape of Magnolia, both inside and beyond the Unit's property boundaries, and to relate these findings to its present condition. Following this research, the significance and integrity of the historic landscape is evaluated, and recommendations made for its treatment and interpretation.

This report is one of a series of studies of the history of the property. Archaeological investigations were conducted in 1996 and published in 1999; an historical overview was also completed in 1996. Historic structure reports have been produced for many of the major buildings on the NPS holding, an ethnographic study has been prepared, and a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) study of the Big House was carried out in 2002.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND STUDY BOUNDARIES

This first part of this Cultural Landscape Report focuses on the history of the LeComte-Hertzog Plantation, beginning with the 1753 French land grant to Jean Baptiste LeComte, and continuing through its subsequent growth and development, until the period of agricultural mechanization in the 1950s, which transformed the pattern of settlement and the practice of farming in the Cane River region. Over time the LeComtes assembled a substantial amount of acreage on both sides

¹ National Park Service, *Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (Denver: NPS Denver Service Center, June 2000), iii and 21.

of the Red (Cane) River. When his grandfather Jean Baptiste died in 1834, Ambrose II at the age of 24 inherited the plantation developed on the land grant; his acquisition in 1835 of 960 arpents from the neighboring LaCour family marked the founding of Magnolia Plantation. In 1856, Ambrose II's daughter Atala married Matthew Hertzog, a neighbor whose mother was a Prud'homme. Ambrose gave his daughter a 40% interest in Magnolia; the newlyweds took up residence at Magnolia and thereafter the Hertzog name also became attached to the plantation.

By the onset of the Civil War, according to the 1860 census, Ambrose LeComte II was the largest slaveholder in Natchitoches Parish, holding 235 enslaved workers. He owned several plantations and other properties, which in total comprised 2,249 improved acres and 5,395 acres of woodlands and unimproved lands. LeComte was the largest producer of cotton in the parish, much of it coming from Magnolia, which was the most important of his properties. The brick two-story Big House at Magnolia was one of the finest outside of the River Road, and the brick slave quarters were among the finest in the South. The Civil War not only disrupted the business of the plantation, but also struck a direct and personal blow to the LeComte and Hertzog family when Federal troops burned the main house at Magnolia. The house was to lie in ruins for 30 years until the present house was built upon its foundations in the 1890s. This symbol of the "reconstruction" of the plantation signaled the recovery of its economic prosperity after the difficult years of the postbellum period.

After the war, some freed slaves had remained in residence in the quarters and worked as day laborers; but the majority moved to cabins along Cane River and worked as tenant sharecroppers. Magnolia evolved to meet the needs of a changing society and around 1870 Matthew Hertzog opened a plantation store to serve his tenants, day laborers and other people in the locality.

Ambrose LeComte died in 1883, and Matthew and Atala Hertzog obtained full control of Magnolia, which was now enlarged by the incorporation of Matthew's property. In 1891, it was further enlarged by the purchase of land that had belonged to Matthew's brother Henry Hertzog. So in the 1890s the plantation was substantially bigger than it had been in the antebellum period, and at about this time the Hertzog's invested in a new system gin, a further indication of their renewed prosperity as cotton planters.

In 1903, Matthew Hertzog died and Magnolia was divided between his children, Ambrose J. Hertzog and his sister Fanny Hertzog Chopin. Ambrose acquired the land upstream

from the Big House, and he purchased the plantation yards from his sister to keep them as the operational center of his portion. As Ambrose's share included the Big House, it retained the Magnolia name although its boundaries were quite different from those of his father's day or grandfather's time.

The arrival of the boll weevil in 1907 created severe problems for cotton farmers along Cane River, but most saw no alternative to continuing to focus on cotton as the staple crop. Although the costs of production rose and yields declined, a boom in cotton prices during the First World War rewarded their persistence.

Ambrose Hertzog died in 1921, and his elder son Matthew was appointed manager of the family-owned plantation. Matthew Hertzog II took over at a difficult time, at the end of the cotton boom and the beginning of a period of overproduction and unstable prices. Across the South, during the 1920s, tenant sharecroppers were leaving the land in hopes of finding a better life in urban areas, but this emigration was halted and in some places reversed by the onset of the Great Depression. As New Deal programs attempted to solve the problem of overproduction by restricting the acres that could be planted in cotton, Matthew Hertzog expanded the amount of land on the plantation devoted to the production of livestock, primarily beef cattle. Despite the hard times, those who remember this period, both in the Hertzog family and among their tenants, recall some good times. Matthew's brother, Ambrose Hertzog II, recorded some of these moments in an extensive collection of photographs and films.

The entry of America into the Second World War finally brought an end to the Depression, but it also opened new opportunities for tenant sharecroppers wishing to leave the land. Emigration motivated planters to accelerate the pace of mechanization, and by the 1950s it was clear that the old way of life was coming to an end. By the end of the 1950s, nearly all the tenant places on Magnolia were deserted and only those people working as day laborers or house servants remained, and their numbers were diminishing. The process of agricultural modernization was substantially complete by the mid 1960s, and the death of Matthew Hertzog in 1973, followed by the closure of the plantation store, marked the end of the old society of planters and tenants.

The NPS Unit contains only 18.25 acres of the historic 2,570-acre Magnolia Plantation, but within this small portion lies the heart of the working plantation including the general store, blacksmith shop, a decaying corn crib, pigeonier, hospital/overseer's house, eight brick slave

quarters, and the cotton gin barn, set amidst remnants of the landscape of the plantation yards - fences, fencerows, foot paths, persistent bulbs, and shade trees. But the Unit does not contain the Big House and its grounds, or any of the productive agricultural acreage of the plantation. The research for this Cultural Landscape Report, however, encompasses the entirety of the Magnolia property, because the Unit's meaning is integrally tied to that of the larger whole.

OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Chapters One and Two provide an overview of the regional natural setting and historical context for the plantation landscape. The geographic situation of Cane River with its humid, sub-tropical climate, the fluctuations of the river, and the fertility of its floodplain, created a landscape ideally suited for plantation agriculture. The waves of settlement by the French and Spanish, with their African slaves, and then Anglo-Americans and other Europeans created a culture of as much vitality and diversity as perhaps anywhere in colonial America. However, the region only became economically prosperous with the spread of cotton production following the invention of the cotton gin at the end of the colonial period.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five consist of a narrative history of the LeCompte-Hertzog Plantation or Magnolia Plantation. The authors of this report had the advantage of having access to a wealth of previous scholarship conducted through NPS contracts and by NPS staff previous to this study, including an overview by Dr. Ann Patton (Malone) Rose, who examined the history of Magnolia and the people who lived there.² Our report uses this earlier research but focuses on the story of the evolution of the landscape of the plantation and the relationship between the cultural history and the physical place. Original research was conducted in order to fill in gaps that existed in the landscape information. This included interviews with Betty Hertzog, mistress of the Big House, who shared her lifetime of experiences in the landscape of Magnolia, as well as a series of plats of Magnolia, account books, and other family documents. We also met with her cousin, Ambrose Hertzog III, who answered many questions about the landscape and provided access to part of his father's collection of photographs and films of the plantation. Archival collections that were searched include succession records in the Natchitoches Parish Court House, materials on Cane River in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center at Eugene P.

² Ann Patton Malone, "The Magnolia Plantation Overview" (Atlanta: NPS Southeast Region, Cultural Resources, 1996).

Watson Memorial Library at Northwestern State University of Louisiana, and the Prud'homme Papers in the Southern Historical Collection at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The presence in the Hertzog family collection of historic documents of surveys of the plantation distinguishes this study from our previous study of Oakland Plantation. An 1858 plat of the plantation is particularly valuable; it not only records major landscape boundaries and buildings, but also illustrates (in watercolor) smaller outbuildings and landscape features such as an orchard, garden houses, a potato field, and weather houses. This survey proved immensely useful in filling some of the gaps in the written documentation. Most importantly, it graphically documents the spatial arrangement of the plantation complex at the apex of its antebellum agricultural development.

In each chapter of the narrative history, the landscape characteristics of the plantation are discussed. The description is pieced together from an analysis of the written record, the archaeological findings, the 1858 plat and later maps, aerial photographs, family photographs and films, and the present-day landscape. A period plan accompanies the discussion, which shows landscape features for which there is adequate evidence to indicate form and location.

No historical research can claim to be complete, and new sources of information have the potential to expand or alter the picture presented in these period plans. At Magnolia, we know that new information will be forthcoming from at least three sources. First, Dr. Ann Rose has been compiling an oral history of Magnolia, which includes long interviews with members of the Hertzog family and their former tenants and employees. These interviews should add much useful detail about life on the plantation in living memory, and might provide some valuable information about the tenants' places. Second, further archeological work is already planned in and around the Quarters, which will expand our understanding of how this area has evolved over time. And third, the NPS has over thirty boxes of documents obtained from Magnolia Store. This collection has the potential to tell us a great deal about how the plantation was organized and operated during the long period of sharecropping and tenancy. The collection has not yet been inventoried and we have only been able to examine a few items.³ Until the complete collection is inventoried and analyzed, descriptions of the economic structure of the plantation remain tentative and probably raise as many questions as they answer.

³ Our selection was guided by Christina Miller, who has used the store records to study the economic status of tenants and croppers at Magnolia: Christina E. Miller, "Slavery and Its Aftermath: The Archeological and Historical Record at Magnolia Plantation" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2004).

A description of existing conditions in the Magnolia Unit is presented in Chapter Six. As in the previous chapters, this description refers to features both inside and outside the Unit. It is illustrated with a plan of the entire plantation based on a 1998 aerial photograph, and a detailed plan of the NPS unit using a survey conducted by the archaeological team. Photographs of current conditions taken by the research team in 2006 accompany the plans.

In Chapter Seven, the historical significance and integrity of the cultural landscape is evaluated using National Register criteria. This evaluation confirms the appropriateness of adopting the close of the 1950s as the date of the end of the period of significance – a recommendation made in the final version of the General Management Plan for the Park.⁴ In the years that have elapsed since 1960, the landscapes of the entire plantation and the NPS Unit have undergone considerable changes. Some of these changes are irreversible, but others can be reversed. In Chapter Eight, recommendations for the treatment of the landscape within the Unit are provided, plus suggestions for the interpretation of the larger historic landscape. These recommendations emphasize the importance of restoring the spatial organization of the plantation yards and Quarters, and the need to help visitors to understand the significance of these areas within the context of the landscape of the entire plantation and the Cane River region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Credits

This Cultural Landscape Report was written by Ian Firth and Suzanne Turner. Ian Firth wrote the sections that deal with the plantation system and the agricultural landscapes that it produced at Magnolia Plantation, and Suzanne Turner wrote the sections that address the narrative history of the LeComte and Hertzog families and their lives as played out on the landscape of Magnolia Plantation. Rachel Hildebrandt helped with the archival research and the development of the historical context. Krista Gridley, Beth Wheeler, and Joy Long, graduate students in the School of Environmental Design at the University of Georgia, drew the maps that accompany the text. Jennifer Plocher Wilkins, in the office of Joseph K. Oppermann, Architect, coordinated the production of this report.

⁴ National Park Service, *Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, (Denver: NPS Denver Service Center, January 2001), 5, 9 and 10.

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The authors would like to particularly thank Ms. Betty Hertzog, mistress of the Big House at Magnolia Plantation, for her extremely generous hospitality, and for sharing family documents and her experiences at Magnolia. Over the course of the two years during which field research for the report was conducted, she was always happy to invite us in, set up a room for us to work in, and feed us. We are also grateful to her cousin Ambrose Hertzog III, who also shared his memories of time spent at Magnolia, and provided us access to his father's collection of photographs and films of the plantation taken mostly during the 1930s and '40s.

We would also like to thank the following people for their help and advice:

Superintendent Laura Gates of Cane River Creole National Historical Park was always helpful during our site visits, and filled in many gaps in our information, as well as led us to important sources for research. Her commitment to the community and its cultural legacy ensures that the next generation will have access to an understanding of their heritage of which they can be proud. Members of her staff also provided valuable assistance: Dustin Fuqua, Curator of Collections, helped us track down documents for our research, and Facilities Manager Eric Ford and his colleagues provided useful feedback on the treatment recommendations.

Dr. Ann Patton Malone's work on the history of Magnolia and the people who lived there was an invaluable guide as we began our study. Dr. Bennie Keel made available surveys and other information collected during his archaeological work at Magnolia. Christina Miller's work with the records from the Magnolia Store for her Ph. D. dissertation made it possible to have access to these ledger books, arranged in a more orderly way than they might have been otherwise.

The librarians at several archival collections were very helpful during our searches; those at the Cammie G. Henry Research Center in the Watson Memorial Library at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, and at the Natchitoches Courthouse deserve a special mention.

This report was commissioned by the NPS Southeast Regional Office. Tracy Stakely of the Cultural Resources Division has been responsible for reviewing our work and guiding the project. Susan Hitchcock provided useful comments on early drafts.

CHAPTER ONE

REGIONAL SETTING

NATURAL SYSTEMS

At Grand Ecore, the Red River divides into two streams, which reunite some forty miles below; one of these, called the Cane River, which was formerly the principal channel, is now only navigable when Red River is running above its ordinary level; and the other, called Rigolet du Bon Dieu (streamlet of the good God), takes, at low stages, sometimes even the whole stream.

Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 1856

The location of Magnolia Plantation, near Cloutierville, some 18 miles south of Natchitoches, Louisiana, on the banks of the lower Cane River, today appears secluded, even isolated, despite the fact that a 20th century interstate highway runs nearby. What recommended this land to the earliest of European settlers in the region, and to the Native Americans who had first inhabited it, was its abundant natural resources—access to the river, rich alluvial soils, wetlands that supported bounteous populations of wildlife, and luxuriant forests of seemingly unlimited timber. And it was the riverine systems that were the initial impulse for exploration and settlement.

The Red River and its Floodplain

The Cane River is an old channel of the Red River, and the Red River is a tributary of the Mississippi. It was an important route for explorers and settlers moving westward, but its sinuosity and fluctuating water levels made navigation a challenge at times and impossible at other times. The landscape that an explorer ascending the river would have encountered would have been quite different from that of the coastal plain that he'd traveled up from. The river cuts through two lines of low hills, the Nacogdoches Wold, and the higher and more rugged Kisatchie Wold. The floodplain, which is enclosed to the east and west by these hills, is about 10 miles wide. Within this plain the Red River divides into several channels, one of which is the Cane River. And over time, the main flow of the Red River has migrated across the floodplain from west to east. From the 1760s to the 1830s, the Cane River carried the main flow, but thereafter

floods shifted the main flow into a channel on the eastern side of the plain called the Rigolet de Bon Dieu.

As the main flow migrated, the names of the channels changed as well: in the early years of the 19th century the Cane River was known as the Red River, and then in the second half of the 19th century, the Rigolet de Bon Dieu became known as the Red River. This migration left the Cane River open to steamboat navigation only in winter and spring.

In 1914, the Army Corps of Engineers converted the upper stretch of the Cane River into a lake, Cane River Lake, ending navigation permanently. And after a disastrous flood in 1927, the Corps of Engineers built large levees to confine the Red River in its eastern channel, thus stabilizing the river flow and its floodplain.⁵

Soils

The Red River carried immense amounts of sand, silt, and clay from upstream, and the depositions of these materials during the Pleistocene and Holocene periods gave shape to a landscape that would support subsistence and commercial agricultural production for centuries. Over geological time, the dynamic inundations of the floodplain produced rich alluvial deposits, natural levees and low stream terraces. The soils were formed from material brought down from the Great Plains of Texas and Oklahoma, giving many of them a characteristic reddish color. Some deposits tended to expand and shrink with changes in moisture levels, resulting in unstable banks. With seasonal floods, trees along these banks fell into the channel; this was the phenomenon that led to the creation of the Great Raft above Natchitoches.⁶

The Soil Conservation Service has classified the soils on the left bank of the Cane River in the location of Magnolia into five series: Roxana, Gallion, Moreland, Latanier, and Yorktown.⁷ They are distinguished primarily by texture and drainage characteristics.⁸ Along the natural levee, Roxana and Gallion soils are well-drained, loamy alluvium soils of considerable

⁵ A fuller account of changes in the river is provided in Ian Firth and Suzanne Turner, "Cane River and Creole National Historical Park, Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report, Part One" (Atlanta: NPS Southeastern Regional Office, 2003), 10-11; henceforth referred to as "Oakland Plantation CLR."

⁶ Bennie C. Keel, *A Comprehensive Subsurface Investigation at Magnolia Plantation* (Tallahassee, FL: NPS Southeast Archeological Center, 1999), 15, quoting G. B. Mills, *Of Men and Rivers: The Story of the Vicksburg District* (1978).

⁷ USDA Soil Conservation Service, *Soil Survey of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana* (USDA, 1990), map sheet 84.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 101-115.

depth and non-acidic in reaction. As a result they are highly fertile and provide the best agricultural soils in the parish. By virtue of the considerable width of the natural levee on the left bank of the river in this location, Magnolia is blessed with large areas of these soils. Found across areas standing further from the river and at slightly lower elevations, Moreland and Latanier soils have higher clay content. They are slow to drain and subject to flooding; nevertheless with appropriate flood control measures these soils can become prime farmland. Only the Yorktown soils are considered unsuitable for agricultural use, because they are often flooded for a large part of the year. At Magnolia, these are only found at Hertzog Lake, which appears to be an old drainage scar. Today it is the only part of the plantation that retains its natural forest and swamp vegetation.

Vegetation and Wildlife

This land is good and light, and appears disposed to receive all the culture imaginable.... It naturally produces beautiful fruit trees and vines in plenty; it was on that side muscadine grapes were found. The back parts have neater woods, and the meadows intersect with tall forests. On that side the fruit trees of the country are common; above all, the hickory and walnut-trees, which are sure indications of a good soil.⁹

The natural vegetation of the valley floor was a forest composed of a wide variety of hardwood species. The distribution of various plant communities was strongly influenced by variations in soil and drainage. The "battures" or riverbanks were occupied by trees tolerant of unstable conditions including black willow and sandbar willow (*Salix nigra* and *Salix interior*), cottonwoods (*Populus* species), American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), and sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). The better-drained soils of the natural levees were dominated by cherrybark oak (*Quercus rubra* var. *leucophylla*), overcup oak (*Quercus lyrata*) and cow oak (*Quercus prinus*), hackberrys (*Celtis occidentalis* and *C. laevigata*), American elm (*Ulmus Americana*), winged elm (*Ulmus alata*), pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). The bottomlands or poorly drained forestlands were home to tupelo gum (*Nyssa* species), swamp red oak (*Quercus falcata* var. *pagodaefolia*), swamp red maple (*Acer rubrum*), red ash and pumpkin ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica* and *F. profunda*).¹⁰

⁹ M. Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, facsimile of the 1774 edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 166.

¹⁰ Milton B. Newton, *Atlas of Louisiana: A Guide for Students* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 41-42.

So valued was the timber of the bottomlands that French land grants were surveyed in deep lots stretching from the riverbank across the floodplain to the backlands or swamp so that each grantee had access to both river transport and the timber of the forest. The favored wood for building was that of the Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, whose straight and tall trunks provided lumber resilient to the wet conditions of the climate. The forests provided habitat to a wide variety of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, opossum, skunk, swamp rabbit, gray and fox squirrels, and a wide variety of birds. Major predators were bear, panther, and wolf. But it was the fur-bearing animals that were of greatest interest to the early European settlers, including mink, fox, coyote, beaver, otter, and raccoon.¹¹ The backswamps were populated with alligators and a wide range of snakes and other amphibians. The Red River was an important migratory route for waterfowl in spring and fall, and the swamps provided homes for wood ducks, egrets, and herons. The rivers and bayous were teeming with bass, crappie, catfish, sunfish, carp, shad, and pickerel.¹²

These forests were also characterized by lush herbaceous growth at their edges, with sun-loving shrubs and small understory trees forming dense thickets. Some of the species found in these edge situations were wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), deciduous holly (*Ilex decidua*), and French mulberry (*Callicarpa Americana*). Vines as thick as human limbs climbed up the trunks of the tall trees of the forest, seeking light. These edge conditions combined with the vines gave the woodlands a nearly impenetrable appearance.

Areas that were clear, either as a result of a natural occurrence or through human activity, were often taken over by dense stands of river cane (*Arundo donax*), the plant that gave its name to the river and the region. These cane stands were much easier to clear for building or cultivation than was the native forest.¹³

Unlike the diverse forest of the floodplain, the Kisatchie Hills were originally covered with stands of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), with relatively few other species except along the streambeds.¹⁴ Longleaf pine is not as strong or resilient as cypress, but among the southern yellow pines, it is the highest-grade lumber, and the most resinous, making it particularly valuable for boat building. These pinewoods were inhabited by many of the same animals as the

¹¹ Fred B. Kniffen and Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Louisiana: Its Land and People*, rev. ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 87.

¹² Soil Conservation Service, 76.

¹³ Newton, 41-42.

¹⁴ Kniffen and Hilliard, 81.

bottomlands, but, in addition, they attracted bobwhite quail, wild turkeys, cottontail rabbit, and red-cockaded woodpeckers.¹⁵

Climate

The climate of the Red River region has been variously described as "mild,"¹⁶ and "temperate,"¹⁷ but humid subtropical seems much more apt for a place influenced by proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and with average daily maximums above 90 degrees F. during June, July, August, and September. This two-season climate - winter and summer - is largely responsible for the region's successful history of plantation agriculture, with a growing season of approximately 240 days. The last frost comes on or after March 26th and the first frost comes on or after October 24th in nine out of ten years.¹⁸ This climate is ideal for growing cotton as well as a number of other crops, although the area is still subject to arctic air masses that sweep down the Mississippi Valley in winter.

During the summer the sun shines 70% of the daylight hours, with an average relative humidity of 60% in mid-afternoon, rising to 90% during the night. This makes manual labor extremely challenging and dangerous, which is one reason that Europeans relied on African slaves to work in the cotton fields. Adding to the discomfort is heavy rainfall, averaging 50 inches per year. Winter and spring are typically the wettest, while summer is often peppered with afternoon thundershowers that almost literally "steam" some kinds of vegetation. Summer droughts are not uncommon. Hurricanes from the Gulf dump torrential rains and spawn occasional tornadoes in late summer and early fall. Weather is a major concern for today's farmers; it was much more so for the early planters who had so little knowledge of what to expect from the weather, and so much to lose if not prepared for its onslaught.

EARLY SETTLEMENT

From the confluence of Little river with Cane river, to Natchitoches, the land on both banks is generally cultivated, particularly the left bank, which presents a series of small

¹⁵ Soil Conservation Service, 76.

¹⁶ Miller, "Slavery and Its Aftermath," 19.

¹⁷ Keel, 15.

¹⁸ Kniffen and Hilliard, 19.

plantations, each having one field in front, and extending back 80 to 100 perches to the Cypress Swamps. The inhabitants are a mixture of French, Spanish, Indian and Negro blood, the latter often predominating, and live in small cottages on the banks and near the river.¹⁹

Few places in early America have had so many different groups of people pass through their landscape, each connecting with that landscape in a particular way, valuing a particular aspect of its nature or culture; and, for the most part, many of those people have stayed. It was the advantages of the region's natural physiography, shaped by its rivers, which first brought settlement. The striking hills rising out of the otherwise flat plain offered strategic bluffs for lookout points.²⁰ For the Native American, the land offered hunting grounds, indigenous nuts and fruits for gathering, fertile land for agriculture, abundant waterways for fishing, and high elevations for prospect and protection. Natchitoches takes its name from a tribe belonging to the Caddoan linguistic group. The name is thought to mean Chinquapin eaters, or those who ate a type of acorn indigenous to the region. Native Americans populated the area as early as 8,000 B.C.²¹ Although floods have obscured the archaeological record, there is evidence of several village sites in the valley. This indicates that there would have been clearing of some of the floodplain forest long before the arrival of the Europeans.

With the arrival of the first white explorers, beginning with Canary Islanders who came by way of Mexico in 1691, the relationship that the Native Americans had developed with this landscape began to change. They were probably forced to abandon some of their agricultural lands and to rely more heavily upon hunting and fishing. And trade became a means of communication and survival. The lookout points became trading posts and eventually military outposts.²²

In 1701 French explorers led by French Canadian brothers Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville and Jean Baptiste Lemoyne de Bienville arrived at the village of the Natchitoches. They were accompanied by their relative, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis. St. Denis demonstrated an aptitude for communicating with the Native Americans, and he eventually offered the Natchitoches tribe

¹⁹ Thomas Freeman quoted in Dan L. Flores, *Jefferson & Southwestern Exploration: the Freeman & Custis Accounts of the Red River Expedition of 1806* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 115-118. Little River in Freeman's account is the present-day Cane River and his Cane River is the present-day Old River.

²⁰ J. E. Guardia, "Historic Natchitoches, Louisiana, Its Two-Century Raison D'Etre," *The Journal of Geography*, (January 1934): 2.

²¹ Miller, 19.

²² Guardia, 2.

land near Lake Ponchartrain after floods had destroyed their village and crops. St. Denis, through his friendship with, and acceptance by the Caddos, became powerful in the region, and in 1714 returned with the displaced Natchitoches to found the settlement of Natchitoches for the French. He then headed to the Rio Grande to attempt to initiate trade with the Spanish. However, the commander of the Spanish fort imprisoned him. Never at a loss for a solution, St. Denis somehow managed to become engaged to the commander's step granddaughter. When sent to Mexico City for questioning, he purported to be in Spanish territory for the purpose of converting the Native Americans to Christianity. He agreed to denounce the French king, he declared allegiance to Spain, and was released to guide the Spanish back to Natchitoches to reestablish their missions. Their route, which became the Spanish Camino Real, became dotted with settlements, ending with the Mission of San Miguel de los Adaes, twelve miles west of Natchitoches.²³ In 1722 Sieur Diron d'Artaguet, an Inspector, reported on his findings in Natchitoches:

The road to Las Adaes is beautiful.... Sieur St. Denis and a few other men maintain that with the wild grapes found in the woods between Natchitoches and Las Adaes, one can make wine as good as in France, and that the grapes bear a year after they have been planted.²⁴

St. Denis' Fort St. Jean Baptiste became a prosperous trading post for the French, Spanish, and Native Americans in Louisiana. Again, St. Denis' natural instincts for survival and success on the frontier were borne out in his site selection for the settlement. Near the mouth of Bayou Amulet, the fort was just south of a one-hundred-mile-long logjam that blocked any further upstream navigation.²⁵

Trade became the common language of these varied peoples who managed to exist in relative peace, even though Spanish law forbade foreign merchandise. But the trade brought changes to both the Native American culture and to the local ecology. Native Americans exchanged deer hides, furs, bear oil, and horses for European goods such as knives, guns, metal tools, and manufactured cloth. And with animal skins becoming an important form of currency,

²³Richard Seale, "The Town of Natchitoches," in Philip Gould, *Natchitoches and Louisiana's Timeless Cane River* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 6-10.

²⁴Germaine Portre-Bobinski and Clara Mildred Smith, *Natchitoches: The Up-to-Date Oldest Town in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Demaron-Pierson, 1936), 48.

²⁵Seale, 10.

their populations began to be greatly reduced; with Bienville reporting that Louisiana exported fifty thousand deer hides each year.²⁶

With the example of St. Denis in his marriage to a Spaniard, the French and Spanish in the region began to intermarry. And with so many male settlers and soldiers and so few European women, interracial liaisons with Native Americans and slave women became commonplace, and the racial blending that has distinguished Cane River culture since then took root.

By 1733 flatboat traffic between Natchitoches and New Orleans was well established. A small but viable community began to develop around the fort. In 1735, the amount of flatboat traffic on the lower Red River encouraged Justine De Louche to establish a trading post and inn for weary Red River boatmen near present day Cloutierville.²⁷

The French and Spanish began to make forays into Texas to gather wild horses and cattle to start "rancheros" in Louisiana. These were the origins of the ranching business in the region, and livestock trading was added to the mix of commerce bringing people to Natchitoches.²⁸ With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Natchitoches experienced an influx of Americans from New England, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas.

When the Americans came to Natchitoches they found it neither French nor Spanish. Passing races had turned the tribal village of the Natchitoches Indians into an exotic old town, with crooked streets lined with quaint old buildings whose mixed architecture showed well a mysterious blending of taste and style.²⁹

One of those who came from Boston was Dr. John Sibley, an Indian affairs agent for the United States government. He was commissioned to report on the Red River country, its physical features and inhabitants, at the request of the War Department, and in 1805, traveled up the river from the mouth in an open skiff. Sibley reported as follows:

It was almost incredible the amount of fish and fowls these lakes supplied (Spanish Lake and Sibley's Lake, both near Natchitoches). It was not uncommon for one man to kill from 200 to 400 fowls, ducks, geese, brant, and swan. In summer the quantity of fish was in proportion.... Some of them weighed 30 or 40 lbs.³⁰

²⁶Ibid., 12-13.

²⁷Louis Raphael Nardini, *My Historic Natchitoches, Louisiana and Its Environment* (1963; repr., Hemphill, TX: Dogwood Press, 2004), 59.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Portre-Bobinski and Smith, 62.

³⁰Milton Dunn, "History of Natchitoches, Louisiana," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (New Orleans) 3 (January - October 1920): 36-37.

Though Sibley was impressed by the natural bounty of the region, he found the town itself not terribly refined, and described it as follows:

...a meanly built village, with the exception of a few (5 or 6) houses. The streets were 30 feet wide. The oak and pine forests at this time approached within 300 yards of the river. In the village were about 40 or 50 families, and twelve or fifteen merchants or traders, mostly French.³¹

By 1807 the Natchitoches population was 3,000 and Natchitoches Parish was established as one of the original Louisiana parishes.

In 1806, Thomas Freeman, leader of the Freeman and Custis Expedition, described the Cane River landscape below Natchitoches as one of small plantations occupied mainly by people of mixed blood, who lived in cottages on the riverbank.³² Although there had been large land grants made to settlers since the mid-18th century, few large plantations were developed during the colonial period. The earliest planters in the area had tried crops of indigo and tobacco, but it was not until the turn of the century with the success of cotton cultivation that fortunes began to be made. The pace of commerce was given a boost in 1815 when Captain Henry Miller Shreve brought the first steamboat above the rapids at Alexandria on the Red River, and by 1824 steamboats were running on a regular schedule to Natchitoches.³³ A roundtrip journey between New Orleans and Natchitoches took three weeks.

By 1816 there was enough traffic on the lower Cane River to warrant the founding of a small village to take advantage of those coming up and down the river between Natchitoches and points south. Cloutierville became a "rambling little French village of one street." The village was named for Alexis Cloutier who in 1817 donated a portion of his property to build a small frame church, St. John the Baptist, for the Catholic community. By 1822 Cloutier had determined to organize Cloutierville into a proper town and to have it named as the parish seat of a new parish, since Natchitoches was such a long journey away. At the time, it was necessary to travel by one of the riverboats or to go on horseback, stopping at different places along the way. Cloutier was not successful, and Cloutierville never became much larger than it was in the first half of the 19th century. It remained a tight-knit community with the church as its community

³¹ Ibid., 36.

³² See the Thomas Freeman 1806 quotation at the opening of this section.

³³ Nardini, 155.

center; in 1856 a Father Beaulieu from France was appointed as the parish's first resident priest, a position that he held for the next 40 years.³⁴

As the population living along the riverbanks increased, a number of public ferries were established at strategic points along the river. One of these was the Twenty-four Mile Ferry above Magnolia, so called because of its distance below Natchitoches, when one followed the serpentine course of the river. The Natchitoches public ferry regulations published in 1825 indicate how important it had become to be able to cross from one side of the river to the other:

The Ferryman is to keep the banks on each side of the river in good order, dug down to such a slope that carriages may safely and conveniently go up and down; ... to have sheds erected on both sides, with benches kept clean, that persons who may be waiting for the Flatboat may be covered from the sun or rain; he is to have blocks erected on each side for women to get on or off their horses....³⁵

Travel by steamboat on Cane River was slow because each plantation had its own landing, and this meant frequent stops for the delivery or pick-up of goods. A listing of Cane River steamboat landings from 1855 from Colfax, Louisiana up to Natchitoches includes, on the right bank, near Colfax, 5 landings, and on the left bank, 6 landings; near Cloutierville, on the right bank, 4 landings, and on the left bank, 2; near Derry, on the right bank, 7 landings, and on the left bank, 10; and near Natchitoches, on the right bank, 3 landings, and on the left bank, 3.³⁶

Olmsted, in his 1856 travelogue *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, gives a vivid account of the trials that one might face in traveling from New Orleans to Natchitoches by steamboat. He was so undone because his reserved stateroom had been given to another passenger and he had been forced to sleep on a cot in a crowded room with strangers, that he altered his itinerary:

My original purpose had been to go high up Red River at this time, but the long delay in the boat's leaving New Orleans, and her slow passage, obliged me to change my plans, and I went no further than Grand Ecore.³⁷

Olmsted's purpose in making his trip was to survey the institution of slavery and to report on its situation to newspaper readers back North. It was, of course, the existence of thousands of enslaved Africans and people of African descent who had made the rapid expansion of this

³⁴ Portre-Bobinski and Smith, 205.

³⁵ Ibid., 133, citing regulations published in the August 28 edition of the *Natchitoches Courier*.

³⁶ Nardini, 174.

³⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States 1853-1854, with Remarks on their Economy* (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), 620.

"cotton kingdom" and its incumbent wealth possible. While by no means unbiased in his perspective, Olmsted was an astute observer of the social and environmental scene, and his portrayals of the places and people that he encountered in the Natchitoches area are considered further in the following chapter on the historic context of cotton plantations along the Red River.

CHAPTER TWO

COTTON PLANTATIONS IN LOUISIANA

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

I should say something about the quality of the cotton, but if I spoke with the severity of a man who compared it impartially to the cotton of Saint-Domingue, Cayenne, and other places, I would probably be contradicted by the experience of European manufacturers who, without valuing it as much as those I have just mentioned, nevertheless know how to make the most of it, and have bid for it in the markets of England as much as fifty *sols tournois* a pound. I shall note also, to its credit, that it is quite silky and white, and the soil does not produce it with as short a staple as when it is exported so that it loses considerably in that regard by the faulty cleaning machines that damage the cotton in the seed by shaving it, rather than separating one from the other without that disadvantage.

James Pitot, *Observations on the Colony of Louisiana from 1796 to 1802*, 1799

The French colonization of Louisiana was motivated primarily by strategic considerations, but almost immediately attempts were made to develop commercial agriculture. Success was limited, however, by financial uncertainties and restrictive government policies. The main commercial crops were indigo and tobacco. Indigo was grown on large plantations rather than small farms because considerable capital was required to drain land and to build factories to process the crop. By 1754 there were 47 plantations in Louisiana producing indigo.³⁸ Tobacco was grown more widely since it could be grown by those operating small family farms without much capital. Some of the tobacco was of high quality, but production increased only slowly in part because of difficulties in shipping and marketing.³⁹

With the transfer of the colony to Spanish rule in 1763, Louisiana's indigo planters and tobacco farmers faced competition from producers in Spain's Caribbean colonies. However production of both crops expanded: indigo planters found it easier to acquire slave labor, and the Spanish government hoping to supply the French market began to purchase Louisiana tobacco. But in the 1790s there was a reversal in fortunes: indigo planters had to struggle against attacks

³⁸ Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington D.C.: The Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1933) 1:74.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

from disease and insects at a time of falling prices, and the Spanish government withdrew its support for the production of tobacco.⁴⁰

Both crops were grown on the floodplain of the Red River around Natchitoches, but tobacco was the more important crop. A 1776 list of items sent to New Orleans included 900 pounds of indigo and 30,000 packages of tobacco.⁴¹ The list also included large numbers of horses and large quantities of wildlife products, indicating the frontier character of the region at that time. Twenty years later the commercial agriculture of the region was hard hit by the ending of government support for tobacco production. According to one observer, tobacco growing virtually ceased.⁴² Fortunately for the European settlers, the rise of cotton as a commercial crop provided an opportunity to recover their prosperity.

In 1802, near the end of the colonial period, James Pitot, a Frenchman living in New Orleans who had acquired American citizenship, made a detailed assessment of the commercial and agricultural condition of the colony.⁴³ After explaining the parlous state of tobacco farmers and indigo planters throughout the colony, he hailed planters willing to experiment in the growing of cotton or sugar.

Cotton was then replanted in the colony, and the first efforts in that new cultivation were guided rather by necessity than hope of success, since tradition regarding earlier attempts could serve to discourage it. Nevertheless, agreeably surprised with the results, their labor – far from being lost as it had been for many years in the crops of indigo – was rewarded. Immediately followed by those who through fear, preoccupation, or discouragement of misfortune had kept in idleness, they saw an annual increase in the products of a soil that was thought worn-out, and gins and presses were established and improved for the exploitation of that commodity. They harvested about one thousand pounds of seed cotton per arpent [.85 acre] and cultivated at least three arpents with each laborer. Ease then finally took the place of want among a great many planters, and wealth soon banished financial embarrassment and privations among several others. Circumstances made the price of cotton increase and stay at the highest level; and in a country where a few years earlier agriculture did not provide enough for commerce to half fill the small number of ships that brought in the colony's supplies, one saw a growing number coming in ballast to take on cargo.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ibid., 72-74; James Pitot, *Observations on the Colony of Louisiana from 1796 to 1802*, trans. Henry C. Pitot (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 66-70; Kniffen and Hilliard, 136.

⁴¹ Nardini, 89; Ann Patton Malone, "The Magnolia Plantation Overview" (Atlanta, NPS Southeast Region, Cultural Resources, 1996), 11-13. The time period during which these items were shipped is not recorded.

⁴² Gray, 72.

⁴³ Pitot, xi-xvi. At the time this account was written the colony had been transferred back to France, and, although the arrangement had not been announced for security reasons, Pitot hoped to bring himself to the notice of French officials.

⁴⁴ Pitot, 72-73.

There had been attempts to develop both sugarcane and cotton plantations in the colonial period, but both were held back by technical problems in processing the raw materials. Cotton had been grown on a small scale but mainly to supply local needs. Several agricultural varieties of cotton had been developed from the wild species, but there were two main kinds available to farmers: a long-staple, smooth-seeded cotton known as sea-island, and a short-staple upland cotton. The fibers of the long-staple cotton were much easier to separate from their seeds. There were unsuccessful attempts to grow the long-staple cotton in Louisiana, and planters found they could only grow upland varieties such as a white Siam type and a yellow variety from Nanjing.⁴⁵ Pitot acknowledged the problems facing producers of short-staple cotton, but emphasized the high prices being obtained in Europe resulting from a rapid increase in demand primarily from new textile mills in England.⁴⁶

Even as Pitot wrote his remarks, the competitive disadvantage of short-stapled cotton was being overcome by the introduction of improved ginning machines modeled on Eli Whitney's famous invention. Other technological advances also facilitated a rapid expansion of cotton growing in the early years of the new century. In 1801, the invention of the screw press made it easier to bale ginned cotton for shipment.⁴⁷ The introduction of steamboats reduced the costs of transportation, and in 1816 the development of a highly maneuverable shallow-draft steamboat by Henry Miller Shreve made the navigation of the Mississippi, with its powerful currents, and the Red River, with its shallows, much easier.⁴⁸

The expansion of cotton plantations eventually led to the development of varieties of cotton suited to the region. The upland cotton that was grown nearly everywhere in the early years was difficult to pick and after 1811 became subject to a fungal disease called simply "the rot." It was replaced in the Mississippi Valley by a more disease resistant variety from Tennessee, but that variety had short and coarse fibers, so it was replaced in the 1820s by a variety of cotton brought from Mexico. An improved strain of this Mexican variety called "Petite

⁴⁵ Gray, 77, 673.

⁴⁶ See quotation at the start of this section.

⁴⁷ Charles Sackett Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), 18.

⁴⁸ Kniffen and Hilliard, 22-23; Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana, a Bicentennial History* (New York: Norton, 1976), 70.

Gulf" became widely used.⁴⁹ Several other varieties were then developed which shared its desirable qualities of disease resistance, relatively long fine lint, and ease of picking.

ECONOMY OF AN ANTEBELLUM COTTON PLANTATION

These large slaveholders were an elite class, whose role in the political, social, economic, and, in particular, agricultural life of the Deep South on the eve of the Civil War was far more important than their mere number would indicate. In Louisiana, for example, the large slaveholders amounted to less than one-fourth of one per cent of the population but held 49% of the slaves, owned 42% of the improved acreage, and produced 43% of the corn, 49% of the cotton, and 76% of the cane sugar. Their wealth, valued at about a quarter of a billion dollars, was more than 35% of the state total, even in a state that contained by far the richest city in the South.⁵⁰

In the course of the antebellum period, an upper class of large slaveholders, owners of 50 or more slaves, came to dominate the agriculture and economy of the South. Their wealth was derived from the successful operation of large plantations growing cotton, sugar or rice. These plantations were capitalistic enterprises, which in their commercialism, specialization, and regimentation of large labor forces resembled the manufacturing industries spawned by the Industrial Revolution. Many farmers aspired to become planters, but plantations differed from family farms in several ways.⁵¹ They were first and foremost commercial enterprises, organized to return profits on investments rather than provide subsistence for families. They were focused on the production of a staple crop rather than providing subsistence, and most contained industrial buildings in which that crop was processed for sale. Plantations were highly capitalized, often with borrowed money, and in order to realize economies of scale, planters were expansionistic, trying to acquire more lands and larger labor forces. Land was relatively cheap across the South, so the key to success was the acquisition of the means to work it. A major part of a planter's capital, therefore, was invested in the enslaved labor force.

⁴⁹ Sydnor, 184; Gray, 703.

⁵⁰ Joseph Karl Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of the Deep South, 1860* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1964) 1:1-2.

⁵¹ Sam B. Hilliard, "Plantations and the Molding of the Southern Landscape," in *The Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Michael P. Conzen (New York: Routledge, 1990), 104.

The Pursuit of Profits

In the early years of the 19th century, the costs of establishing a cotton plantation were relatively modest, particularly when compared to the costs of setting up a sugar plantation. In 1826, a German traveler, Karl Anton Postl, estimated one could set up a cotton plantation in the Red River Valley for around \$10,000. According to this account, the cost of 1,500 to 2,000 acres of fertile land was only \$3,000, and ten slaves could be obtained for \$5,000. Postl claimed a planter was assured of receiving an annual return of \$300 for each slave that he owned. With proper management and a bit of luck, he could recoup his initial investment in five years.⁵² As the antebellum period progressed, larger amounts of money were required to establish or expand a plantation as the costs of labor, land, and the necessary industrial equipment rose. Gray made the following estimate of the size of the investment represented by a typical large cotton plantation in about 1850.

For a large plantation devoted to upland cotton – say, in the Mississippi alluvium – 60 hands may be considered the typical size of the labor force. In that region, where the proportion of children and aged slaves was small, such a plantation contained about 120 slaves in all. At an average value of \$400 the capital invested in slaves amounted to \$48,000. For this number 1,000 acres of arable land and 600 of reserve woodland were required. Estimating the cleared land at \$35 an acre and the uncleared land at \$10 an acre, the entire investment in land amounted to \$41,000. Plows and harrows cost about \$600. About four wagons were required, worth approximately \$400. A common gin and gin house cost \$500. The entire investment for implements amounted to \$1,500. Thirty mules and horses, averaging \$100 each, 5 yoke of oxen at \$40 per yoke, with perhaps 50 head of cattle at \$10 each, 250 hogs at \$2 each, and 100 head of sheep or goats at \$2 required an investment of \$4,400 for livestock. The total capital account of such a plantation amounted to approximately \$96,000.⁵³

The profitability of such a plantation depended, of course, on the many factors affecting the growth of cotton each year, and the prices obtained when each crop was sold. When upland cotton plantations had begun to spread in the 1790s, prices for exported cotton had exceeded 25 cents per pound.⁵⁴ These high prices encouraged the switch to cotton from other crops and allowed a period of necessary experimentation with alternative varieties and cultivation techniques. Prices declined in the first decade of the 19th century, and fell below 11 cents in

⁵² Liliane Crété, *Daily Life in Louisiana 1815 – 1830*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 31. The stated land costs are low; other sources indicate the cost of land at between \$5 and \$10 per acre in the northern part of the region, see Gray, 898.

⁵³ Gray, 541-42.

⁵⁴ Data on cotton prices is taken from Sydnor, 183-84 and Gray, 681-83.

1811; principally due to trade uncertainties while Britain and France were embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars. During the War of 1812, no cotton could be shipped to Europe, but immediately after the war the price skyrocketed, reaching over 33 cents per pound in 1817. From that high point, prices declined to around 12 cents per pound in 1825. Thereafter the price fluctuated around that level, sometimes rising four or five cents above it and at other times dropping four or five cents below.

The potential for profits remained high until the financial panic of 1837. Thereafter, an agricultural depression set in and lasted through most of the 1840s, characterized by an overproduction of cotton that kept prices low. In 1844 the prices paid in New Orleans for middling cotton varied between 4.4 and 6.3 cents per pound.⁵⁵ Recovery came at the end of the decade, and the 1850s were a time of rising prosperity. During the last decade before the Civil War, there was renewed expansionism with speculation in both land and slaves. The outcome was a marked increase in the concentration of slave ownership into the hands of the largest owners, particularly in the areas most suited to large scale specialized production.⁵⁶

The Captive Labor Force

The enslaved work force represented the largest investment of capital on most large plantations; only on some plantations along the Mississippi River was the land more valuable than the slaves. The price of people used as slaves in Louisiana during the early decades of the nineteenth century varied greatly. Obviously the price of each person reflected a planter's assessment of his or her potential, involving such qualities as age, sex, strength, skills and disposition. But prices generally followed rises and falls in the price of cotton. One rough guide often quoted is that a young man valued as a field hand was worth in dollars the price of cotton in cents multiplied by 100, so when cotton was selling for eight cents per pound, a good field hand would be priced at \$800.⁵⁷ This ratio was true in the middle of the antebellum period, but slaves were generally cheaper in earlier years, and considerably more expensive later.⁵⁸ In the prosperous 1850s some planters were said to have developed "Negro fever" and speculation in slaves drove up prices to

⁵⁵ Sydnor, 183.

⁵⁶ Gray, 533.

⁵⁷ Judith Kelleher Schafer, "Life and Labor in Antebellum Louisiana," in *Louisiana: A History*, 4th ed., ed. Bennett H. Wall (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 175.

⁵⁸ Joe Gray Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: The Louisiana Historical Association, 1963), 38-39, 51-53.

record levels. "Just prior to the Civil War slaves of all ages in the Southwest probably averaged about \$600. Prime field hands sold for \$1,500, \$1,800, and \$2,000, and in 1860 reached an average of \$1,800." ⁵⁹

On most plantations the number of hands, that is people who could perform a full day's work in the fields, was equivalent to about half the total slave population.⁶⁰ Workers would be classed as full hands, three-quarter hands, half-hands, or quarter-hands each year based on their strength. This then determined the amount of work expected from each of them. Older people were given special tasks; the older men were often employed as gardeners, wagoners and stock tenders, and the older women as nurses, child-minders, assistant cooks, weavers and spinners. Children were given light duties such as driving stock and carrying water.⁶¹ Workers with special skills such as carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, millers and boatmen were often excused from working in the fields except during the busiest times, such as during cotton picking.

There were two ways of organizing work in the fields, the task and the gang systems.⁶² The gang system was used more often for the main operations such as cotton picking. The hands were divided into groups and closely supervised by drivers and overseers as they worked. In its most notorious form, the maximum amount of work was exacted by frequent use of a whip. Under less cruel regimes, a driver would set the pace for the work, and only laggards would be disciplined. The task system assigned a particular amount of work to be done by each hand in a day. Theoretically it reduced the need for constant supervision and gave the better workers the opportunity to finish the assigned task before the end of the day. Planters compared the merits of the two systems and discussed appropriate definitions of various tasks in their agricultural journals. Some planters disapproved of the task system as promoting idleness and hasty, poor quality work. On most plantations various combinations of the two systems seem to have been used.

While brutal treatment was a notorious concomitant of forced labor, there were economic motives for concern for the welfare of slaves since they represented such a large part of the capital investment made by a planter. Overseers were required to keep a close watch over the

⁵⁹ Gray, 666.

⁶⁰ Menn, 122.

⁶¹ Gray, 553; Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1989), 75.

⁶² Gray, 554-56; Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, ed. Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 123-27; William Kauffman Scarborough, *The Overseer, Plantation Management in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 80-82.

health of the workers and to make regular reports on births, deaths and sickness in the quarters.⁶³ Some large plantations had a doctor in regular attendance, and many had a building set aside as a hospital near the quarters.

A complex body of state laws on slaveholding governed the status and treatment of slaves. In Louisiana, these laws continued to be based on the Code Noir promulgated by the French in the colonial period.⁶⁴ Laws addressed a wide range of issues including hours of work – masters were required to pay slaves for work done on Sunday – and the right to a “peculium” – possession of goods subject to the master’s consent.⁶⁵ Many planters allowed their slaves to raise vegetables and livestock for sale, but limited contact between their slaves and outsiders by handling the marketing of these items themselves. Freedom of movement was forbidden, and laws restricted assemblies of slaves including attendance at religious meetings.

Specialization and Self-Sufficiency

According to the 1860 agricultural census returns, the most productive cotton plantations were in Louisiana, where the average production of a large cotton plantation was 413 bales.⁶⁶ The most productive regions in the state were a group of parishes along the Mississippi and a group along the Red River.⁶⁷ In the first region, large plantations produced, on average, 525 bales of cotton, while on the Red River a plantation produced, on average, 331 bales.⁶⁸ However, these figures must be used with caution as they are based on only one year’s production figures. According to the census enumerators it had been a good year along the Mississippi for growing cotton, but a poor year along the Red River. It was estimated that the crop in the Red River Parishes was down about 50%.⁶⁹ One may conclude that the two regions had a similar cotton growing potential, which was unequalled elsewhere in the South.

In these favored regions, specialization in cotton growing had clear advantages. It focused agricultural activities on the commercial crop for which the area was most suited, and it

⁶³ Scarborough, 77, 84.

⁶⁴ Light Townsend Cummins, “Louisiana as a French Colony,” in *Louisiana: A History*, 4th ed., ed. Bennett H. Wall (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 51-52; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 22, 59, 106.

⁶⁵ Gray, 512-514.

⁶⁶ Menn, 106. The census returns recorded crops produced in the 12 months previous to June 1860, so it was the 1859 cotton crop that was being recorded.

⁶⁷ The Mississippi River parishes were Concordia, Tensas, Madison and Carroll. The Red River parishes were Natchitoches, DeSoto, Caddo and Bossier.

⁶⁸ Menn, 106.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

facilitated an efficient use of the labor force, draft animals and farm equipment. Accordingly, plantations in these regions were specialized, but this did not mean they grew only cotton. Many planters were cautious about becoming too reliant on other regions for food to feed their workers and draft animals, so it was considered good practice for a plantation to grow at least corn sufficient to meet its own needs. In the prime cotton growing regions, about 10 acres of cotton were planted for each field hand, but, in addition, there would be about 6 acres of corn.⁷⁰ The other food crops that were commonly grown included sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, cowpeas and beans. In 1860, a large plantation in the Red River cotton region produced, on average, 4,066 bushels of corn, 560 bushels of sweet potatoes, 65 bushels of Irish potatoes, and 179 bushels of peas and beans.⁷¹ In addition plantations in this region produced a significant amount of oats, an average of 95 bushels, to supplement peas and beans as fodder crops.

Most large plantations kept some livestock in addition to their draft animals. These were expected to fend for themselves in the sections of the plantations that had not been cleared for cultivation, and their condition was notoriously poor.⁷² Hogs, semi-wild razorbacks, were the most numerous animals, and these provided most of the protein in a slave's diet. Large plantations in the Deep South had an average per unit of 142 hogs, but in Louisiana the average was only half that number.⁷³ A few cattle would be kept to supply dairy products and beef for the planter's family. The average number was 44 per large plantation in the Deep South.⁷⁴ In Louisiana, many of the cattle were long-horned descendants of stock introduced by the Spanish to Mexico, and though these "swamp cattle" were large and well adapted to being draft animals, they were very poor milkers.⁷⁵ Some planters also kept sheep, primarily for their wool. The average number per large plantation was 40, and there was surprisingly little variation from state to state.⁷⁶

The degree of self-sufficiency achieved by large plantations varied from place to place, but it is generally conceded that large cotton and sugar plantations in Louisiana produced a

⁷⁰ Edwin Adams Davis, *Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836-1846, as Reflected in the Diary of Bennett H. Barrow* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 31; Gray, 708.

⁷¹ Menn, 118, 120.

⁷² Gray, 836.

⁷³ Menn, 74. In Menn's statistical analysis the Deep South States were Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Gray, 846.

⁷⁶ Menn, 74.

smaller proportion of their food needs than plantations elsewhere.⁷⁷ This is explained by the economic advantages of focusing on their commercial crop, and by the ease with which food supplies could be imported from the Upper South by river. However there were significant variations between regions within the state, and plantations in the Red River cotton region were the most self-sufficient.⁷⁸ This may be attributed to the relative inaccessibility of this area compared to the regions alongside the Mississippi.

The Operation of a Large Cotton Plantation

Running a large cotton plantation was a complex undertaking involving many variables and uncertainties. Some insight into this can be obtained from the record keeping system devised by Thomas Affleck. He operated a cotton plantation and a plant nursery in Adams County, Mississippi, and in 1847 he introduced *The Cotton Plantation Record and Account Book* as an aid to efficient plantation management.⁷⁹ The books were organized under a series of headings that identified many of the items that an overseer and his employer had to consider when running a plantation. The major part of each book was devoted to a "Daily Record of Passing Events." On these pages an overseer was to record the yearly cycle of agricultural operations, taking particular note of factors affecting production.

The pages marked A, constitute the daily record of all that transpires upon the plantation, worthy of being recorded - - such as the kind of work being done, and the number of hands engaged in it; when plowing, planting, scraping, etc., began; when the first forms, blossoms, and open bolls appeared; the state of the weather and forwardness of the crops; the first appearance and continued progress of the caterpillar and other insects which injure the crops, with every fact of importance relative to them; the behavior, good or bad, of the negroes; and every other item which may be of value for future reference.⁸⁰

A series of inventory sheets followed this diary. Using these standard lists an overseer could keep track of things related to the agricultural operations, such as livestock and equipment, amounts of cotton picked and baled, tools and supplies distributed to the workers, together with the incidence of births, deaths and sickness in the slave population. The last part of each book

⁷⁷ Gray, 447; Menn, 135.

⁷⁸ Menn, 134. Self-sufficiency is judged by the amount of corn, vegetables and meat produced per person on each plantation.

⁷⁹ Thomas Affleck, *The Cotton Plantation Record and Account Book, No. 3. Suitable for a Force of 120 Hands, or Under*, 7th ed. (New Orleans: B. M. Morton, 1857). Extracts from one of the books used at Oakland have been reproduced as an appendix to the "Oakland Plantation CLR."

⁸⁰ Ibid., "Explanation of Records and Accounts."

was a series of tables leading to a final balance sheet of profit or loss. On these pages the planter rather than the overseer was to sum up his accounts for the year.

Affleck's book contained an essay on the duties of an overseer. He began by quoting George Washington's instructions to his overseers, requiring they be attentive to their duties. Affleck then summarized those duties emphasizing the best ways to care for the workers, and the draft animals and other livestock. He concluded as follows.

Bear in mind that *a fine crop* consists, first, in an increase in the number, and a marked improvement in the condition and value of the negroes; second, an abundance in provision of all sorts for man and beast, carefully saved and properly housed; third, both summer and winter clothing made at home; also, leather tanned, and shoes and harness made when practicable; fourth, an improvement in the productive qualities of the land, and in the general condition of the plantation; fifth, the team and stock generally, with the farming implements and the buildings, in fine order at the close of the year; and young hogs more than enough for next year's killing; *then* – as heavy a crop of cotton, sugar or rice, as could possibly be made under the circumstances, sent to market in good season and of prime quality. The time has passed when the Overseer was valued solely for the number of bales of cotton, hogsheads of sugar, or tierces of rice he had made, without reference to his other qualifications.⁸¹

Affleck's advice to take a long term rather than a short term perspective agreed with what the more enlightened planters of the time were saying, though most planters still paid close attention to the annual bottom line.⁸²

LANDSCAPES OF RED RIVER COTTON PLANTATIONS

The Red River bottoms are nearly the best cotton lands in the world; but the crops suffer upon them, in a wet season, and sometimes are totally destroyed by 'the rot,' or 'the worm.' The production on the old plantations, already falls far below what it was formerly - but deep plowing will at once restore their fertility; the soil being of unknown depth.⁸³

Frederick Law Olmsted in the accounts of his journeys across the South in the early 1850s provided memorable descriptions of its landscapes, including those of the Red River region. Olmsted was highly critical of the plantation system with its reliance on slave labor, and

⁸¹ Ibid., "The Duties of an Overseer."

⁸² Scarborough, 67-72.

⁸³ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 628.

doubted its economic efficiency. Nevertheless upon reaching the bottomlands of Louisiana and Texas, he realized that it was there that the plantation system reached, for good or ill, its greatest efficiency and most profitable form.

I have been on plantations on the Mississippi, the Red River, and the Brazos bottoms, wheron I was assured that ten bales of cotton to each average prime field-hand had been raised. The soil was a perfect garden mould, well drained and guarded by levees against the floods; it was admirably tilled; I have seen but few Northern farms so well tilled; the labourers were to a large degree, tall, slender, sinewy, young men, who worked from dawn to dusk, not with spirit, but with steadiness and constancy. They had good tools; their rations of bacon and corn were brought to them in the field, and eaten with efficient dispatch between the cotton plants. They had the best sort of gins and presses, so situated that from them cotton bales could be rolled in five minutes to steam-boats, bound direct to ports on the gulf. They were superintended by skilful [sic] and vigilant overseers. These plantations were all large, so large as to yet contain much fresh land, ready to be worked as soon as the cultivated fields gave out in fertility. If it was true that ten bales of cotton to the hand had been raised on them, then their net profit for the year had been, not less than two hundred and fifty dollars for each hand employed. Even at seven bales to the hand the profits of cotton planting are enormous.⁸⁴

The Layout of a Plantation

The average size of plantations owned by the large slaveholders in Louisiana was 2,204 acres, of which 743 were improved, that is cleared for cultivation.⁸⁵ Land grants made during the French colonial period, and continued during the Spanish period, had resulted in a distinctive pattern of settlement along the major rivers. Land had been apportioned in numbered sections; with size defined by the number of arpents of river frontage.⁸⁶ Eight arpents was a common size for a colonial land grant, and the standard depth was 40 arpents, which is 7,680 feet or approximately one and one-third miles. The resulting pattern of rectangular lots elongated at right angles to the rivers was complicated in the floodplain of the Red River by the presence of multiple channels with very serpentine courses. Many lots were abbreviated and some were pie-shaped, and many plantations had land on two sides of a river channel.

⁸⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 12-13.

⁸⁵ Menn, 69. The figure includes both cotton and sugar plantations.

⁸⁶ Kniffen and Hilliard, 122. There were several alternative versions of the French arpent, but in Louisiana an "arpent de Paris" was the norm; this was a square with sides measuring approximately 192 feet, giving an area equivalent to 0.846 of an acre.

The elongated form of the lots was intended to give settlers access both to river frontage and to varied types of land. Beside the rivers the natural levees provided raised areas protected during all but the most extreme flood conditions, and light silty soils which were easily cultivated. These then were the areas that were cleared first by the colonial settlers, indeed along the Cane River some areas had already been cleared for agriculture by the Native American peoples.⁸⁷ Away from the river the character of the soil varied with the pattern of drainage. In the swampy areas beside bayous the land was unsuited to cultivation, but the natural vegetation provided an important economic resource in the form of stands of cypress trees.

The cleared areas of a plantation were usually fenced, and, in some property inventories, cleared areas were listed as "areas under fence." Within the fence the cultivated land was flat and open and at a casual glance appeared to be one large field. On closer observation a pattern of approximately rectangular cuts bounded by turnrows and drainage ditches would be apparent. Drainage was very necessary to making the soil workable, and extensive networks of drains were constructed using very slight changes in elevation to lead surface water away into bayous. Floods were a common occurrence, with waters spreading from the bayous where there were no natural levees to confine them. Consequently many large planters erected artificial levees at the back of their cleared areas to protect their cropland from inundation.

Cotton usually occupied at least 60% of the cultivated ground, leaving the remainder for corn and other food crops. Cotton was an "all-year" crop and life on a plantation marched to the seasonal rhythm of events in the cotton fields.⁸⁸ Plowing began as early in the year as soil conditions permitted, and fields were cleaned, plowed, fertilized, and harrowed in preparation for planting. Planting usually occurred in March. When plows had opened drills in the ridged earth, gangs of workers, usually women, dropped in cottonseeds and then harrows drawn by mules were used to cover the seeds. Achieving a good stand often required repeated plantings because of late frosts or spring floods. Laborious cultivation began shortly after planting. Men used mule-drawn plows, scrapers, and sweeps to weed between the rows, then gangs of both men and women followed with hoes to thin the plants within the rows. The struggle to control competing grasses would eventually end when the cotton plants became tall enough to shade out the

⁸⁷ Fred B. Kniffen, Hiram F. Gregory, and George A. Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana: From 1542 to the Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 107-8.

⁸⁸ An account of a typical year on the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, based on the overseer's daily records is provided in the "Oakland Plantation CLR," 77-82.

competition, and there would be a brief respite from cultivation when the fields were "laid-by." Picking began in August once the cotton lint had ruptured its boll. Every hand capable of pulling a sack down the rows was sent into the fields and close watch was kept on how much each picked. At least three passes were made through the fields and picking often continued into December. The ginning and baling began in the fall, but usually continued well into the following year. Shipping had to await a rise of the water level in the rivers, so most cotton was not shipped until late winter or early spring, by which time the annual cycle of cultivation had begun again.

Behind the cultivated fields, woodlands occupied the wetter ground beside bayous. As Olmsted noted, this "unimproved" area was regarded as a reserve of land awaiting future clearance; and meanwhile it was a useful source of wood, particularly the valuable cypress timber. Their livestock left to roam freely and fend for themselves in these woods were rounded up annually for branding, and selected beasts would be brought back to pens for fattening before slaughter. Most plantations also had improved pastures and hayfields within the fenced area to feed the more valuable livestock including draft animals. Oxen, mules, and horses were kept as draft animals on most plantations, with oxen used for the heaviest work such as clearing woodland. Many planters came to prefer mules to horses, believing they were better adapted to the climate of the region, cheaper to keep, and longer-lived.⁸⁹ However only a handful of plantations produced their own mules, and every year large droves of unbroken two-year-old colts arrived from Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri.

The Big House and the Quarters

At the organizational center of each plantation was a complex of buildings that included a "Big House" and a "Quarters." While usually only a short distance separated the Big House and the Quarters, their occupants were at opposite poles of the social hierarchy and this was reflected in the architecture and outdoor spaces.

The architecture and grounds of the Big House were characterized by a geometrical order, which was a symbol of the importance attached by all large slaveholders to an orderly, hierarchical society. While this was true across the South, plantations established by settlers of

⁸⁹ Martin A. Garrett Jr., "The Mule in Southern Agriculture: A Requiem," *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 4 (December 1990): 925-27.

French descent were often different from those established by Anglo-Americans. The Louisiana cotton plantations of the Red River region are distinctly different in both their architectural language and domestic landscape appearance from those in the Florida parishes settled by planters of English descent. The French had different ideas about how domestic life should be lived, and these cultural distinctions resulted in differences in the floor plans of their houses, and in the appearances of their gardens and yards.

A distinguishing feature of French and Creole architectural plans was asymmetry, or the lack of an ordering central axis, and this lack of formality in plan extended to the layout of their ornamental grounds. Whereas many English house plans were organized by a central hallway, many French houses had no interior halls, and the galleries that surrounded much of the house served as anterooms to the interior spaces. These galleries often wrapped around three or all four facades of the Big House, providing outdoor living areas protected from direct sun or rain. Much of daily life was lived on these galleries.

There were clear relationships between the functions of the house's interior and the outdoor spaces that connected to the house. The public spaces of the house were on the front, and were typically reached by visitors arriving by carriage down a tree-lined avenue or allée, disembarking and walking through an ornamental garden or parterre, up a flight of outdoor stairs onto a gallery, and from there into the parlor. The kitchen and other service functions of the Big House were typically on the back of the house or in detached outbuildings behind the house, and opened onto the yard or working space of the site. Here small animals were caged or allowed to roam in the fenced area, food was processed and prepared for the kitchen, and clothes were laundered.

Located near the ornamental garden and the working yard that immediately surrounded the Big House were the kitchen garden and the fruit orchard. The kitchen garden was large enough to provide most of the food necessary for the planter's family and their guests. The orchard was nearby and included an assortment of fruit trees. These two specialized garden spaces were tended by gardeners, usually slaves, who at most plantations were under the supervision of the mistress of the Big House.

Olmsted visited a Red River plantation somewhere beside a bayou within five or seven miles of Natchitoches. The owner only had about 20 slaves and the place gave evidence of a

hardscrabble existence rather than gracious living; nevertheless, Olmsted's description provides some interesting details.

The house was a small square log cabin, with a broad open shed or piazza in front, and a chimney, made of sticks and mud, leaning against one end. A smaller detached cabin, twenty feet in the rear, was used for a kitchen. A cistern under a roof, and collecting water from three roofs, stood between. The water from the bayou was not fit to drink, nor is the water of the Red River, or of any springs in this region. The people depend entirely on cisterns for drinking water. It is very little white folks need however – milk, whisky, and, with the better class, Bordeaux wine, being the more common beverages.

About the house was a large yard, in which were two or three China trees, and two fine Cherokee roses; half a dozen hounds; several negro babies; turkeys and chickens, and a pet sow, teaching a fine litter of pigs how to root and wallow. Three hundred yards from the house was a gin-house and stable, and in the interval between were two rows of comfortable negro cabins. Between the house and the cabins was a large post, on which was a bell to call the negroes.⁹⁰

On the plantation of a large slaveholder an overseer might have occupied this type of dwelling. Olmsted's description of the residence of a sugar planter can be taken as more typical of the grander houses of large slaveholders in French Creole areas.

Fronting upon the river, and but six or eight rods from the public road, which everywhere runs along the shore inside the levee, was the mansion of the proprietor: an old Creole house, the lower story of brick and the second of wood, with a broad gallery, shaded by the extended roof, running all around it; the roof steep, and shedding water on four sides, with ornament of turned wood where lines met, and broken by several small dormer windows. The gallery was supported by round brick columns, and arches. The parlors, library and sleeping rooms of the white family were all on the second floor. Between the house and the street was a yard, planted formally with orange-trees and other evergreens. A little on one side of the house stood a large two-storey, square dove-cot, which is a universal appendage of a sugar-planter's house. In the rear of the house was another large yard, in which, irregularly placed, were houses for the family servants, a kitchen, stable, carriage-house, smoke house, etc. behind this rear yard there was a vegetable garden, of an acre or more, in the charge of a negro gardener; a line of fig-trees were planted along the fence, but all the ground inclosed was intended to be cropped with vegetables for the family, and the supply of "the people." I was pleased to notice, however, that the negro-gardener had, of his own accord, planted some violets and other flowering plants.⁹¹

The Quarters on a large plantation were also arranged with an apparent order, being usually laid out in lines and sometimes formed into a grid. Quarters were often located beside a plantation yard and close to a cotton gin, and resembled a small industrial village rather than a

⁹⁰ Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom*, 280.

⁹¹ Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 659.

rural settlement. The type and condition of the dwellings within Quarters varied considerably depending on the prosperity of the plantation and attitudes of the planter towards his workforce. Olmsted provided the following description of some he observed near Natchitoches.

Walking out, on Sunday, in the country, I came by chance upon the negro quarters of a large plantation, which were built right upon what appeared to be a public road. They were apparently intended for the accommodation of about one hundred slaves. The residents were mending clothes, washing, and cooking, and looked well-fed and contented. They were generally creoles, and spoke English, French, and Spanish, among themselves. The cabins were small, built mostly of hewn plank, set upright, and chinked with rags and mud, roofed with split clapboards, and provided with stick and mud chimney. There was but one room, and no loft, to each cabin; or, where there were two rooms, they were occupied by two families. Several of them, into which, without intrusion, I was able to see, were very destitute of furniture – nothing being perceptible but two very dirty beds, and a few rude stools, standing upon a bare earth floor. There was no window, of any kind – all light and ventilation being by the door or chimney. In one, a curtain or screen, of gunny-bagging, was hung across the doorway. In another, I saw a shelf of crockery. On another large plantation, I observed exceedingly comfortable, though cheap and rude, quarters for the negroes – each cabin being a good size, with brick chimney, and a broad shed or gallery before the door.⁹²

As slaves were required to produce some of their own rations, there might be small yards attached to cabins, otherwise additional land would be set aside as a communal vegetable plot. In March 1853, Olmsted spent several days on a group of four plantations located near the mouth of Cane River. The owner had nearly 1,000 slaves living in four settlements. During his stay, Olmsted was appalled to witness a sadistic flogging of a female slave; nevertheless, he found that the enslaved workforce was well provided for in terms of food and accommodation.

In the main, the negroes were well taken care of and abundantly supplied with the necessities of vigorous physical existence. ... Each family had a fowl house and hog-sty (constructed by the negroes themselves) and kept an unlimited number of fowls and swine, feeding the latter during the Summer on weeds and fattening them in the Autumn on corn stolen (this was mentioned by all the overseers as a matter of course) from their master's corn fields. ...

Each family had a garden, the vegetables in which, together with eggs, fowls and bacon, they frequently sold. Most of the families bought a barrel of flour every year. ... The negroes also obtain a good deal of game. They set traps for coons, rabbits and turkeys, and I once heard a negro complaining to his overseer, that he had detected one of the vagabond whites in stealing a turkey which had been caught in his pen. I several times

⁹² Ibid., 629-30.

partook of excellent game while on the plantation, that had been purchased of the negroes.⁹³

DEVELOPMENT OF SHARECROPPING AND TENANCY

The emancipation of the enslaved workers with the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War threatened to destroy the plantation system, but it survived in a reorganized form through the establishment of a new labor system. This system continued to provide the large amounts of labor necessary for the production of the staple crops in a way that ensured that labor would remain relatively cheap.

As soon as Union troops gained control of part of southern Louisiana, the army began to consider possible ways of setting up a new labor system in the region. This issue was of particular concern to the army since numerous former slaves had congregated into contraband camps on the edges of the Union encampments. Since the conditions in these camps were miserable, many army personnel saw the establishment of a new labor system as a way to end the suffering in the camps and to get the freedmen back to work.⁹⁴ General Nathaniel Banks, commanding officer in Union-occupied Louisiana, believed that providing support for a slightly altered plantation system would relieve the army of the burden and expense of the black refugees, would allow the ending of the wretched conditions in the contraband camps, and would restore some of the state's economic vitality.⁹⁵ Under Banks' orders, planters and freedmen were required to sign labor contracts which set forward specific working and compensation conditions.⁹⁶ New rights were also ensured in these contracts, which included prohibition of the sale of workers and of the separation of freedmen families, and the legalization of workers' marriages.⁹⁷

For the first time ever, landowners were required to pay wages to their former slaves or to lease their lands to individuals who would. Although they were allowed to resume the gang

⁹³ *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume II, Slavery and the South, 1852-1857*, ed. Charles E. Beveridge and Charles Capen McLaughlin (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 217-18.

⁹⁴ Peyton McCrary, *Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction: The Louisiana Experiment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 136-37; Daniel Novak, *The Wheel of Servitude: Black Forced Labor after Slavery* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1978), 13.

⁹⁵ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 54.

⁹⁶ During this period, American society placed great faith in the labor contract. "It was accepted doctrine that the capacity to make a contract was a corollary to freedom." Novak, 10.

⁹⁷ McCrary, 149.

system of labor, planters were prohibited from interfering in their laborers' family lives and from utilizing corporal punishment. The freedmen were compelled to sign contracts with their former owners, and these contracts required them to remain on a single plantation for a one-year period.⁹⁸ Within this wage system, the freedmen were to earn either 5% of the year's crop or a minimum wage of \$3 a month, plus shelter, food, and medical care.⁹⁹ In an attempt to assure that the laborers would remain on the plantations, the freedmen were required to apply for permission from the planters each time they wanted to leave the plantations.¹⁰⁰ The freedmen had to contract for the year by January 1, and any breach of contract resulted in criminal penalties. Failure to produce a contract upon demand was taken as proof of vagrancy, and contract violations were punishable by penal servitude.¹⁰¹

Despite concessions and improvements in the 1863 work contracts,¹⁰² the onerous restrictions associated with the contract wage system made it extremely unpopular with the freedmen. In protest, many performed only minimal work on the plantations. In addition, they were dissatisfied with the payment methods instituted in the contracts, since most planters delayed compensation of their workers until the end of the year to prevent laborers from leaving during the harvest season.¹⁰³ This way, planters could also punish perceived laziness and misconduct by withholding part of their workers' wages. More than anything else, the freedmen opposed the continuation of the gang and overseer method of labor and the restriction of movement, both of which reminded them too much of their years in slavery.

Planters were also less than happy with the new labor system, and many were convinced that the freedmen would or could not work voluntarily.¹⁰⁴ Some planters refused to sign government contracts, but they and those who failed to dispense wages in a timely fashion often

⁹⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁹⁹ Foner, 171; Ralph Shlomowitz, "The Squad System on Postbellum Cotton Plantations," in *Toward a New South?: Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities*, ed. Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 265. Initially, share wages were allocated to the workers as a group to be divided among the individual laborers, while monetary wages were paid individually.

¹⁰⁰ McCrary, 149; Foner, 55.

¹⁰¹ Novak, 5, 10.

¹⁰² McCrary, 156. Wages were doubled, prime field hands were granted each one acre of land for personal use, and children under the age of 12 were required to attend school.

¹⁰³ Foner, 171.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 56; Roger W. Shugg, "Survival of the Plantation System in Louisiana," in *Reconstruction*, ed. Staughton Lynd (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 110-11; J. Carlyle Sitterson, "A New Labor System, 1865-1880," in *Reconstructing Louisiana*, ed. Lawrence N. Powell (Lafayette: The University of Louisiana Press, 2001), 506-7. Some plantation owners joined in efforts to encourage the emigration of Chinese and German workers from other regions in the U.S. to replace the black workforce. These efforts were largely unsuccessful, because the Chinese and Germans were unwilling to work for such low wages.

found themselves confronted with workers' strikes and uncultivated fields.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, in the years immediately following the war, there was a search for workable alternatives that would be accepted by both freedmen and planters.

The Attitudes of Planters

Many owners of large plantations, if they had not been ruined by the war, were determined to keep their plantations intact. In the aftermath of the war, they successfully resisted radical proposals for a confiscation of plantations and their division among freed blacks and landless whites. Concerned planters banded together and sent a petition to Washington; this resulted in a statement from the Freedmen's Bureau, warning freedmen that the hoped for "40 acres and a mule" would not be forthcoming.¹⁰⁶ President Andrew Johnson then protected the plantations by offering his Amnesty Proclamation of May 1865, which restored all property rights to the former Confederates prepared to take an oath of loyalty.¹⁰⁷

The planters' determination was severely tested by economic conditions in the South at the close of the war. The harvests of 1866 and 1867 proved especially abysmal, and it was rumored that not a single Louisiana cotton planter could begin 1868 without giving a lien on his crop for supplies.¹⁰⁸ The year 1866 had begun poorly, since thousands of freedmen were reluctant to sign contracts at the beginning of the year. The competition among the planters for the limited labor force meant that workers were inclined to wait until the last possible moment in order to achieve the best possible contract.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Louisiana planters soon found that they were placed under a heavy tax burden by the Reconstruction government, which remained

¹⁰⁵ McCrary, 148.

¹⁰⁶ Shugg, 108.

¹⁰⁷ Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Climbing Up to Glory: A Short History of African Americans during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 114; Ransom and Sutch assert that Congress originally intended for the Freedmen's Bureau to fund itself through the confiscation of Confederate land and property. The land was to be given to the freedmen, and the property was to be sold to finance relief programs and the freedmen's schools. Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 82; Another possibility for land ownership among the freedmen was the distribution of millions of acres of public land under the 1866 Southern Homestead Act. Unfortunately, most freedmen did not have the capital to set up farms on this land or to even pay for their transportation to the public lands, which were often located in distant areas. Gilbert Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture 1865-1980* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1984), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Shugg, 110.

¹⁰⁹ Sitterson, 504; Luring workers away from their employers was common enough, that by 1865 laws were passed that forbade the enticing away or harboring of workers already under contract for the year. Ronald L.F. Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District, 1860-1890* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 98.

in place until the 1879 Constitutional Convention. To avoid expropriation, many planters pledged their standing crops for the capital needed to pay the taxes.¹¹⁰

The determination to hold onto their plantations may be attributed to the conservatism of the South's agrarian society and the dominant social position accorded large slaveholders in the antebellum period. But it was also based on a continuing belief in the economic advantages of the plantation system in a region geographically suited to the production of staple crops such as sugar, rice and cotton. Achieving economies of scale was still seen as essential. Most large cotton plantations, for example, had their own gins, an expensive feature that most small farmers could not afford. Public gins were uncommon, and large landowners effectively held a monopoly on the only means for a cotton farmer to prepare his crop for market.¹¹¹ Moreover, ownership of land was a prerequisite for obtaining the credit necessary to continue farming. So although estates frequently changed hands, they rarely shrank in size because each acre was collateral for the credit needed to run the plantation.¹¹² But in order to keep their plantations in operation, planters had to negotiate with the freedmen, in the hopes of forging a new system that would ensure a regular work force to farm their lands.¹¹³

The Aspirations of Freedmen

By 1866, freedmen were meeting with success in pressuring the planters to meet more of their demands. New contracts for that year gave freedmen the right to select their own employers, set the work month as 26 ten-hour days in the summer and nine-hour days in the winter, required extra compensation for any work additional to crop cultivation, and compelled a landowner to pay half of the wages owed each month, with the remainder due at the end of the year. Employees were also entitled to medical care, clothing, rations, housing, and schooling for their children.¹¹⁴ However, if a laborer failed to fulfill his contract, he forfeited all the wages due to him.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Shugg, 109.

¹¹¹ Grey, 377.

¹¹² Shugg, 112-13.

¹¹³ John Samuel Ezell, *The South since 1865*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 124. Until well into the twentieth century, cotton production remained unmechanized and therefore labor intensive in nature. This is why the planters needed such large numbers of laborers on their estates.

¹¹⁴ Michael Wayne, "Planter and Merchant," in *Reconstructing Louisiana*, ed. Lawrence N. Powell (Lafayette: University of Louisiana Press, 2001), 549.

¹¹⁵ Sitterson, 504.

Although still far from obtaining the land, education, and secure family life he desired, the freedman found that severe labor shortages worked in his favor, as planters were obliged to make concessions in order to procure a work force for the year.¹¹⁶ With the upper hand, the freedmen demanded that the gang system end, that white overseers be removed, and that some sort of leasing agreements be considered.¹¹⁷ Freedmen also objected to having to continue to live in old slave quarters. Although they continued to occupy these quarters in the years following the war, they eventually gained permission under the sharecropping system to build new houses on separate tracts of land scattered across the estate.¹¹⁸ The freedmen were also encouraged by the introduction of plantation schools located near the locus of their daily lives. Planter resistance to these freedmen's schools did not last long, as they soon learned that the hands worked harder when their children were in school. Although the plantation schools meant that a planter could supervise what was being taught, they had the advantage of easy access for the freedmen.¹¹⁹

Besides these tangible gains, freedmen also fought for increased independence in their daily lives. For example, they negotiated for the right to leave the plantation in the evening without a pass, to grow what they wanted in their own garden plots, and to raise pigs and chickens.¹²⁰ The freedmen also strove for the ability to adjust their work schedule around the needs of their families, a goal that was more likely to be achieved, they believed, under the sharecropping system than under wage labor.¹²¹

New Labor Systems: Squads, Sharecropping, and Tenancy

Wage labor was the first system to be instituted after the war. However, many freedmen disliked the working conditions in which they found themselves, and expressed their displeasure through frequent job changes and minimal work efforts, and a lack of concern about the ultimate success

¹¹⁶ It was common for freedmen in the early postwar years to voluntarily change jobs frequently. This may have been related to their desire to seek out better contracts or to their general joy at not being bound to one place, as they had been under slavery. See Ralph Shlomowitz, "'Bound' or 'Free'? Black Labor in Cotton and Sugar Cane Farming, 1865-1880," in vol. 2 *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*, ed. Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 667.

¹¹⁷ Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation" in *Reconstructing Louisiana*, ed. Lawrence N. Powell (Lafayette: University of Louisiana Press, 2001), 527.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 533.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 534.

¹²⁰ Davis, 94.

¹²¹ Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 526.

of the crop. In an effort to increase their workers' productivity, the planters agreed to discard the gang system and to replace it with the so-called "squad" system. By 1867, gang labor was diminishing, and squads of workers were becoming more common on cotton plantations.¹²²

The squad system paved the way for the shift from wage labor to sharecropping in the Cotton South. *De Bow's Review* from 1869 provided a description of this new system: "from two to eight hands only work together, in many instances a single family."¹²³ These squads had no planter-selected overseer and were usually made up of men who voluntarily worked together.¹²⁴ The average squad was composed of seven members, and it was quite common for the members to be either friends or relatives. The squads selected their own leaders, who provided guidance as peer leaders, unlike the reviled white overseer. Although the planter still made entrepreneurial decisions about such things as crop mix, he did not monitor the day-to-day operations of the squads. Believing in the "group incentive" aspect of the squad system, many planters felt that there was less need to supervise the squads, especially in light of the introduction of a share system of wage payment, which gave freedmen an interest in the crop.¹²⁵

At first, the share system, which had appeared as early as 1864, was simply a variation of the wage system in which laborers received part of their wages as a small share of the crop, usually one-tenth, which was payable after the harvest. This development occurred while the use of strictly supervised gang labor remained intact.¹²⁶ Several reasons lay behind the shift in payment practices. The actual routine of cotton cultivation, in which there are two periods requiring little work, provided part of the impetus for planters to transition from wages to shares. Then there was also the fact that most planters had little money with which to pay wages.¹²⁷ As was normal with the payment of wages, the shares were dispensed collectively to the gangs or squads, as it was the freedmen as a group that contracted with the planter for their shares and

¹²² Foner, 173.

¹²³ Quoted in Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 527; Foner, 173. According to Eric Foner, the squads could number up to twelve men.

¹²⁴ "Squads were self-selecting, semi-autonomous worker peer groups that were formed as subgroups for the plantation's labor force working assigned parcels of land for a share of the crop." Shlomowitz, "Bound or Free?," 679.

¹²⁵ Shlomowitz, "The Squad System," 266, 272-273. This article examines the squad system in the context of previous and subsequent labor systems.

¹²⁶ Davis, 89-90.

¹²⁷ Gray, 372-73; Michael Wayne claims that it was because of the failed crops of 1866 and 1867 and the resulting limited capital that planters were anxious to stop paying in wages: "In part, the gentry simply wanted a valid excuse for withholding disbursements until the crop had been marketed. But their principal objective was to limit their own financial risk, while, at the same time, giving the freedmen a vested interest in the efficient operation of the plantation." Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 524.

wages. The remainder of their earnings was provided in the form of rations, supplies, and housing.¹²⁸

It was the confluence of the squad system and the increasing frequency of share wages that gave rise to the new system of sharecropping, which was a more decentralized system than the labor systems that predated it.¹²⁹ Having won semi-independence under the squad system, the freedmen were eager to dispense with group labor altogether and to settle into separate family work groups. With little hope of resisting the insistence of their workers, the planters agreed to establish individual contracts with their workers and to allow them to farm separate plots of land.

Under the sharecropping arrangement, which became common around 1870, the planter and the freedman were each obliged to provide certain things. The usual sharecropping contract stipulated that the planter was to supply a cabin for the sharecropper and his family to live in, 30-50 acres of land to farm, tools, seed, teams of animals, and entrepreneurial supervision over such things as crop mixture.¹³⁰ The cropper, on the other hand, was responsible for providing labor in the fields, as well as food and clothing for his family.¹³¹ In some cases, the planter supplied rations to the sharecropper.¹³² Extra expenses, for such things as fertilizer or extra hands to help in the fields, were usually divided equally between the planter and the cropper.¹³³ At the end of the year, the cropper had to pay the costs for food and clothing that he had been compelled to buy throughout the year, while the planter had to repay the money he had borrowed to finance that year's crop.¹³⁴ The cropper usually retained one-third of the year's crop if the planter provided the seed, implements, and work animals, and one-half if the cropper provided these items.¹³⁵

Both planters and freedmen perceived various advantages to the system, though neither of them was completely pleased with the arrangement. The advantage for the freedmen was that they now had an interest in the crop and that they could pursue their work independently without

¹²⁸ Shlomowitz, "Bound or Free?," 678.

¹²⁹ Edward Royce, *The Origins of Southern Sharecropping* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 181; Ransom and Sutch, 91-92. According to Ransom and Sutch, sharecropping was more common on cotton farms than on rice and sugar farms.

¹³⁰ Royce, 181; Ransom and Sutch, 90.

¹³¹ Gray, 375.

¹³² Sitterson, 508.

¹³³ Gray, 375.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹³⁵ Foner, 173; Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 524.

direct supervision. Sharecropping rewarded superior knowledge and skills as a result of its basis on shares of output and offered the potential of a greater income than a fixed minimum wage.¹³⁶ As for the planters, the system provided a way to reduce the costs of labor supervision, share some of the risks of growing cotton, and circumvent the problem of a chronic shortage of cash and credit.¹³⁷ Many also thought that their workers were less likely to leave the plantation in this new labor arrangement.¹³⁸ However, preferring the old system of wages and close supervision, many planters only agreed to the sharecropping contracts because the freedmen refused to sign any other sort of contract.¹³⁹

In some areas, wage labor continued to persist; some freedmen actually preferred the wage system because they desired regular monthly payments of fixed wages that were not contingent on the ups-and-downs of the cotton market.¹⁴⁰ It has also been documented that freedmen often changed the terms of their contracts, switching from shares to wages and then back again, in an almost futile attempt to better their situations.¹⁴¹ In general though, most freedmen believed that they would earn more with the share system than they would under the minimum wage limit set by the federal government.¹⁴² They hoped for increased independence and imagined themselves as independent proprietors, working their own lands. Sharecropping resulted in more autonomy, smaller production units, and less supervision for the freedmen, but sharecropping did not alter the social hierarchy based on property and race, or free croppers from the role of landless agricultural laborers.¹⁴³

Another form of agricultural contract appeared to provide more opportunity for a move up the economic ladder. Like sharecropping, tenant farming involved the signing of an annual labor contract but a tenant farmer provided his own agricultural tools and team animals and kept

¹³⁶ Ransom and Sutch, 95.

¹³⁷ Gray, 374; Shlomowitz, "Bound or Free?," 673; Ransom and Sutch, 96; Foner, 174.

For a slightly different view, see Davis: "Most planters never believed that shares enabled them to diffuse the risks of freedmen's supposed unsupervised inefficiency, and they did not believe that blacks were capable of responding to shares as an incentive. Hence, they found sharecropping acceptable only if they could make the crucial decisions about what to plant, where to plant, and when to plant." Davis, 102.

¹³⁸ Ransom and Sutch, 96. Annual contracting and insecurity of tenure were methods employed by the landlords to secure diligent cultivation of the tenant holdings.

¹³⁹ Royce, 207.

¹⁴⁰ Shlomowitz, "Bound or Free?," 677. One observer noted in 1876: "Very few cotton farmers in Louisiana pay wages. The colored men prefer to take the land in shares... They usually work in squads." Quoted in Shlomowitz, "The Squad System," 269.

¹⁴¹ Davis, 90.

¹⁴² Ibid., 94; The cotton crop of 1869 was so good that most non-croppers decided to give up wage labor at this point in exchange for the share system, see Foner, 404.

¹⁴³ Davis, 216; Royce, 210, 213, 215.

more of the crop he raised.¹⁴⁴ Tenancy functioned as a kind of renting in which the tenant paid rent to the landlord with either a share of the crop or in cash. A sharecropper was often little different from a hired hand, whereas a tenant enjoyed more independence and control over the farming process.¹⁴⁵ Three forms of tenancy existed throughout most of the South. First, there was "standing rent tenancy" in which a fixed amount of the year's crop, such as a number of cotton bales, was paid to the landowner. Then, there was "share tenancy" in which a specified proportion of the crop was given to the owner.¹⁴⁶ And lastly, there was "cash rent" which entailed the payment of a certain cash amount on a monthly or annual basis.¹⁴⁷

All three of these tenant arrangements spread across the agricultural landscape during the late nineteenth century. Cash renting was considered by some to be the most desirable option, yet few tenants had the capital to pay cash before the cotton had been marketed, whereas most landowners required rent payments early in the year.¹⁴⁸ A share tenancy was probably the most equitable solution, since it reflected the fluctuations of the cotton market and did not place one party or the other under a greater financial burden.

Between 1869 and 1872, a large number of laborers were able to become share renters, but this trend ended abruptly with the depression of 1873, which sent many tenants back into the cropper category.¹⁴⁹ By the end of the Reconstruction era, approximately 20% of the black farmers were involved in renting, but for the majority of black laborers, sharecropping was the dominant labor framework.¹⁵⁰ Although freedmen did not necessarily obtain any clear advantages by moving from sharecropping to tenancy there was a marked shift from sharecropping to fixed renting in the 1880s and 1890s. At this time, cotton prices fell, and many planters realized that the shares of cotton brought in decreasing revenue each year and they thus

¹⁴⁴ Joseph D. Reid, "White Land, Black Labor, and Agricultural Stagnation," in *Market Institutions and Economic Progress in the New South 1865-1900*, ed. Gary M. Watson and James F. Shepherd (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 38; Sitterson, 508.

¹⁴⁵ Royce, 184-85; Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 527; Davis, 106. Davis, on the other hand, claims that landlords and their agents often made weekly inspections of both croppers and tenants.

¹⁴⁶ Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 528. Share rents were often one-half of the crop if the landowner provided operating expenses and feed for the stock, and one-fourth or one-third of the crop, if he only provided the land, see Grey, 376. Joe Gray indicates that it was common for the share renter to pay rent in one-fourth cotton and one-third corn.

¹⁴⁷ Royce, 185.

¹⁴⁸ Gray, 376. Cash renters often let land to sharecroppers.

¹⁴⁹ Gray, 376.

¹⁵⁰ Foner, 404; Royce, 186.

began to demand fixed rents payable in cotton.¹⁵¹ In some counties with large black populations where cotton was the main crop, tenancy rose up to 70-80% between 1880 and 1900.¹⁵² However, statistics must be viewed with caution, as many labor contracts did not clearly distinguish between sharecropping and tenancy, indicating a widespread lack of understanding of the differences.¹⁵³

The Problem of Chronic Indebtedness

While sharecropping and tenancy appeared to be reasonable compromises between the aspirations of planters and freedmen, the new labor systems soon became associated with chronic indebtedness and rural poverty. After the Civil War, there was a severe shortage of money and credit in the South. The only capital available at the end of the hostilities was from Northern and foreign sources. Land had so depreciated in value that it was not generally accepted as credit security, as was common in other regions of the country.¹⁵⁴ Planters desperately needed capital in order to cover the expenses for planting the upcoming year's crop, so instead of using land, the future crop was utilized as security. And lenders only wanted to provide credit to individuals they thought were the most likely to repay the loan – the large planters, not the small farmers.¹⁵⁵ In this way, the crop lien system emerged, requiring the individual receiving the credit to send his harvested produce for the year to his supplier.¹⁵⁶ The supplier had the right to market the crop as he desired, and only when the debt had been paid for out of the crop's earnings, did the lien become void.¹⁵⁷ The prospect of escaping from this debt depended on the success of the cotton crop and the price obtained for a bale of cotton, but the lien system encouraged an overproduction of cotton, which in turn depressed prices.

As planters became mired in debt, so did their sharecroppers and renters. This indebtedness was associated with an important new institution – the plantation store. Immediately after the war planters continued to provide supplies to their laborers; these goods

¹⁵¹ Davis, 111.

¹⁵² Fite, 5.

¹⁵³ Royce, 186.

¹⁵⁴ Foner, 394.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 400-401; Shugg, 113.

¹⁵⁶ Gray, 392-93; Wayne, "Planter and Merchant," 566. This did not differ substantially from the factorage system in place in New Orleans, but by the end of Reconstruction, factorage had faded in importance in the cotton industry and was replaced by the cotton buyer in the interior.

¹⁵⁷ Wayne, "Planter and Merchant," 561; Davis, 118-19.

came from a local commission merchant, who also provided a new outlet for the sale of cotton, effectively decreasing the importance of New Orleans as an export center.¹⁵⁸ But by the 1880s, planters were no longer required to provide provisions to their laborers, who instead had to shop at a local crossroads store or a plantation store.¹⁵⁹ It was to a planter's advantage to open a plantation store, since he could deal directly with the wholesalers, as opposed to purchasing goods through local merchants, and profits from the store sometimes rescued a planter from ruin during poor harvest years.¹⁶⁰ These stores performed an important function in that they provided credit as well as goods to the croppers and tenants. However high interest rates were charged when goods were bought on credit, and in some cases the price of the goods was also exorbitant. One study of the entire South revealed that the credit price averaged 55% over the common cash price.¹⁶¹ Another study found that merchandise bought on credit was often marked up by 25-100%.¹⁶² If the cropper or renter could not pay off his debt when the crop was harvested, he was forced into applying for more credit, and sometimes this was only granted on more onerous terms.¹⁶³

The general poverty of sharecroppers and renters was produced by a combination of factors, including cotton overproduction, a lack of crop diversity, the small size of croppers' and renters' holdings, and the low rate of production per agricultural worker, as well as the prevalence of chronic indebtedness.¹⁶⁴ Historians have argued about the contributing factors and the degree to which the new labor systems were to blame. Some have defended sharecropping and tenancy as rational and equitable responses in a free-market society to the postwar situation; others have seen them as inherently exploitive and placed them in the context of limited employment opportunities and coercive racism. Miller has summarized the positions of some of the major contributors to this debate in her study of the standard of living of laborers at Magnolia.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ Wayne, "Planter and Merchant," 549.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 554; Sitterson, 511; Gray, 373. The costs of these goods were taken out of the remainder of the payment that the planter withheld until the end of the year.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 550, 561; Grey, 394.

¹⁶¹ Gray, 402, 404.

¹⁶² Wayne, "Transformation of the Plantation," 525.

¹⁶³ Wayne, "Planter and Merchant," 564.

¹⁶⁴ Fite, 22.

¹⁶⁵ Miller, 6-11.

Whatever the merits and demerits of the new labor systems, they ensured the survival of large cotton plantations as viable enterprises well into the twentieth century. Although the organization of the labor force had changed, the commercialism and specialization that had characterized antebellum plantations continued unabated. Cotton production boomed in the postbellum South. By the mid-1870s, cotton production almost equaled that of the antebellum period, and by 1880, 50% of the tilled acres in the South were in cotton.¹⁶⁶ Between 1860 and 1900, there was a fourfold increase in the number of large plantations in Louisiana, and in 1900, over half the people in the state who were described in the census as farmers were landless sharecroppers or tenants.¹⁶⁷

MODERNIZATION OF COTTON PLANTATIONS

Between 1880 and 1910, cotton comprised more than half of the total agricultural output from plantation counties in the South.¹⁶⁸ But in the early decades of the twentieth century, cotton planters faced a series of problems. The first of these was the arrival of the boll weevil. Long a pest in Mexico, the boll weevil first arrived on American soil in 1892 when it appeared in the Texas Rio Grande Valley.¹⁶⁹ Although it had attracted enough attention by 1903 to warrant investigation by the United States Department of Agriculture, it was not until 1907 that the boll weevil spread across Louisiana.¹⁷⁰ One year later it crossed the Mississippi River and moved into the Southeast. One half of the South's entire cotton acreage was ravaged by the boll weevil, causing severe losses in farm income, and across the region, state and federal officials were urging farmers to diversify their crops to alleviate the impact of the pest.¹⁷¹

Control of the boll weevil raised production costs at a time when Southern planters were starting to lose their dominant position in the world's cotton markets. In 1911, 72% of the world's cotton came from the United States. Within a span of thirty years, American cotton

¹⁶⁶ Reid, 34.

¹⁶⁷ Shugg, 105-8.

¹⁶⁸ Jay R. Mandle, *Not Slave, Not Free: The African American Experience since the Civil War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 37.

¹⁶⁹ P. B. Haney, W. J. Lewis, and W. R. Lambert, "Cotton Production and the Boll Weevil in Georgia: History, Cost of Control, and Benefits of Eradication," Research Bulletin (The Georgia Agricultural Experiment Stations) no. 428 (November 1996): 6.

¹⁷⁰ www.rootsweb.com/~lamadiso/articles/agriculture.html

¹⁷¹ Haney, Lewis, and Lambert, 9.

represented only 38% of the cotton entering the world market, with China, India, and Brazil having made major inroads into export markets.¹⁷² Rising production costs in the United States meant that American planters found it increasingly difficult to compete with cheaper foreign cotton producers. At the same time, domestic demand was negatively affected by changes in women's fashions, dresses now requiring much less fabric than before, and by introduction of synthetic yarns such as rayon.

The year 1926 was a turning point for cotton planters across the South: that year a bumper crop of 17.3 million bales was produced on 43.5 million acres of land. Afterwards, cotton acreage decreased by approximately 1.4 million acres per year.¹⁷³ Some cotton farmers recognized the risk that over-production and over-reliance on cotton presented to them, and the low prices per pound resulting from the record crop led to calls for crop reductions to elevate cotton prices. In Louisiana, this idea was widely adopted and farmers decreased the acres planted for the 1927 crop by 18%.¹⁷⁴ But in many areas of the South, planters had to face the problem that there were few obvious alternatives to cotton. In areas like the Red River region, distance from urban markets, inadequate means of transportation, and a shortage of storage facilities for perishable commodities were major obstacles to the development of commercial fruit, vegetable and dairy farming enterprises.¹⁷⁵ Nor were Southern plantations in any position to compete in the production of corn and other cereals with farms in the Midwest that were already highly mechanized. Crop diversification had long been advocated, but it would take the interaction of multiple push-and-pull factors to free the region from the problems of overproduction resulting from over-reliance on cotton.

Progress Toward Diversification

Some planters had attempted to diversify after the invasion by the boll weevil, but most had focused on ways to combat the pest and on development of higher-yield cotton varieties with a

¹⁷² Fite, 175; Donald Holly, *The Second Great Emancipation: The Mechanical Cotton Picker, Black Migration, and How They Shaped the Modern South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2000), 56.

¹⁷³ John Leonard Fulmer, *Agricultural Progress in the Cotton Belt Since 1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 5, 41.

¹⁷⁴ Holly, 56-57. The price of a pound of cotton had reached 28.69 cents in 1923 when only 10.1 million bales reached the markets; in 1926 it dropped to 12.40 cents, and in 1927 it recovered to 20.20 cents.

¹⁷⁵ Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), 37.

fast seed-germination rate.¹⁷⁶ But higher yields contributed to the problem of overproduction and the resulting volatility in prices. When production dropped in 1927, the price of cotton recovered and production rose again in the following year. In 1929, a record 84% of all farms in the Delta states were growing cotton.¹⁷⁷ At the beginning of the 1930s with the onset of the Great Depression, the price of cotton sank to 9.46 cents per pound, about one-third of its price in 1923.¹⁷⁸ Many planters faced a financial crisis, and in August 1931, Governor Huey Long of Louisiana sent a telegram to the Governor of Texas, which read in part:

We can restore the prosperity of the South and materially the balance of the world within less than two weeks time if the cotton-producing states have governors and other officials who have the courage to act now and decisively. The only way this can be done is to prohibit by law at once the raising of a single bale of cotton in all cotton growing states during the year 1932. The farmers yet have their cotton and if action is immediately taken along this line they will get the benefit of the price that will result from this move. If such action be taken by all states immediately the farmers will get more money for this year's crop alone than they will get for this and the next two cotton crops they raise. A condition of near bankruptcy to a large part of our population and industries can be avoided if the officials of the southern states are willing to act now . . . With this year's crop we will have a surplus to carry over of 15,000,000 bales for next year.¹⁷⁹

Long never gained support for this idea in other states, but the Louisiana state legislature passed a bill banning the cultivation and processing of all cotton during 1932.

One of the priorities of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Administration was to address the plight of America's farmers, and in 1933 the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) was established. It quickly initiated programs that focused on the specific difficulties being faced by different types of farmers. The AAA cotton program based its actions on the premise that if fewer acres were planted in cotton, crop prices would rise. Since the 1933 crop had already been planted by the time the program got underway, a plow-up campaign was adopted. The AAA's goal was to cut cotton production by one quarter by the destruction of 10 million acres of cotton.¹⁸⁰ This was a voluntary program, but, as an incentive, the AAA offered cotton farmers two forms of financial remuneration. Farmers could either receive between seven and

¹⁷⁶ Charles Aiken, *The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 107.

¹⁷⁷ Fulmer, 41.

¹⁷⁸ Holly, 56.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Snyder, "Huey Long and the Cotton-Holiday Plan of 1931," *Louisiana History*, 18 (Spring 1975): 117-43; for full telegram see www.tsl.state.tx.us/governors/personality/sterling-long-1.html accessed May 30, 2005.

¹⁸⁰ Holly, 59; Biles, 39.

twenty dollars in rent for each acre taken out of production, or they could choose smaller cash payments with options on an amount of cotton equal to the production of the acreage that had been plowed up.¹⁸¹

Because payments were based on acreage, the large plantation owners had considerable incentive to withdraw lands from cultivation; but the scheme had less appeal to small farmers.¹⁸² Nevertheless, the AAA met its goal for 1933: approximately 10.5 million acres were taken out of cultivation, and \$180 million in benefit payments were distributed.¹⁸³ In Louisiana alone, 108,533 contracts were signed; 454,230 acres were rented, which amounted to 25.7% of the state's total cotton acreage.¹⁸⁴ Despite this success, the 1933 crop turned out to have one of the highest-yielding harvests on record. Nevertheless, cotton prices rose as anticipated, from 5.5 cents to 10 cents per pound.¹⁸⁵ The main achievement of the AAA program was to remove a substantial acreage from cotton production, an accomplishment that pushed many farmers to experiment with new crops on their otherwise empty fields.

The crop restrictions continued for the next couple of years, and by 1935, cotton prices had rebounded to their pre-depression levels. Grateful farmers voted for mandatory restrictions for the following year, but another arm of the federal government intervened and brought the program to a halt.¹⁸⁶ In 1936, the Supreme Court declared the AAA's actions and programs unconstitutional and in violation of individual state's rights. This led to the passage of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act two years later. This legislation encouraged a number of agricultural improvements, including a reduction in the acreage of certain crops and soil conservation measures. Farmers now received payments for rotating crops, withdrawing submarginal lands from cultivation, and planting new crops, including legumes, clover, and soybeans.¹⁸⁷ By 1940, soil conservation districts had been established in all of the southern states.

In Louisiana, many planters turned to beef cattle production as an alternative source of cash income. Between 1929 and 1940, the acreage of pastureland increased by 75%,

¹⁸¹ Aiken, 122; Holly, 59. The payment in the first option depended on the previous yield of the acreage taken out of production.

¹⁸² Biles, 55.

¹⁸³ Holly, 59.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁸⁵ Biles, 40; Holly, 60.

¹⁸⁶ Biles, 51.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 51-52.

considerably more than the increase in any other southern state.¹⁸⁸ Since the antebellum period, cattle had been reared on most plantations in an effort to attain self-sufficiency, but cattle rearing now became an important commercial enterprise. The long growing season with adequate rainfall made the state well suited to the development of productive grasslands, but it was necessary to develop breeds of cattle that were also suited to the climate. This came with the crossbreeding of established bloodlines with breeds introduced from India. Control of the fever tick was another important step towards reducing the risks in cattle breeding, and this was largely achieved by the late 1930s.¹⁸⁹

The entry of the United States into the Second World War provided further incentives for crop diversification. In part this was necessary to meet the wartime demand for food and feed crops, but, with the establishment of new war industries, there was an additional need for oil-producing crops such as peanuts and soybeans. In the Delta states, the main response was a sharp increase in the production of soybeans and cowpeas.¹⁹⁰

Between 1930 and 1944, the number of farms in the Delta states growing cotton decreased by one third and the acreage in cotton dropped by 48%; meanwhile, the acreage devoted to all crops other than cotton and corn had risen an average of 171%. The largest percentage increases were in the acreages devoted to lespedeza hay, soybeans, oats, and wheat, but there were also significant increases in other types of hay, Irish potatoes, vegetables and rice.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, in 1947, cotton was still Louisiana's biggest crop.¹⁹² Much of this cotton was produced on plantations by sharecroppers and tenants using the old labor-intensive methods; but already in the 1920s there had been signs that this labor force would one day disappear.

Migration and Mechanization

In 1920, tenants and croppers worked 81.3% of the cultivated acreage on cotton plantations, working mostly under some form of shares agreement.¹⁹³ During the 1920s, some left the land and sought employment in urban areas, particularly in the booming cities of the Midwest and

¹⁸⁸ Fulmer, 31. The average increase across all southern states was 28%.

¹⁸⁹ Donald L. Winters, "Agriculture in the Post-World War II South," in *The Rural South Since World War II*, ed. R. Douglas Hurt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 18; Richard M. Highsmith, "Natchitoches Parish: A Microcosm of Trends and Processes in Southern Land Use," *Louisiana Studies* 3, no. 1 (1964): 29.

¹⁹⁰ Fite, 165; Fulmer, 28. The production of soybeans and cowpeas more than tripled between 1929 and 1944.

¹⁹¹ Fulmer, 27-30.

¹⁹² Fite, 45.

¹⁹³ Mandle, 39. Sharecroppers and share renters made up 68.5% of the labor force.

Northeast, but the onset of the Depression slowed this out-migration to a trickle. In Louisiana and the Red River region there was actually a small increase in the number of croppers and tenants between 1930 and 1935.¹⁹⁴

Although those who stayed on the land hoped to avoid the dire straits of the jobless, many found their situation becoming ever more insecure. Government programs to reduce the acreage in cotton, and the introduction of other, less labor-intensive farming enterprises led to the eviction of some tenants and the demotion of others to the role of day laborers. Many went on relief rolls and only found occasional work doing chopping and picking.¹⁹⁵ To some extent, the AAA contributed to this insecurity by providing larger benefits for acreage that was not farmed by tenants or sharecroppers. Also, landowners were required to share benefits with tenants, but not with wage laborers.¹⁹⁶ Both of these factors contributed to the decline in the number of tenants in the South.

In spite of the AAA's avowed concern for the poor farmer, changing the land tenure system and providing security of tenure was not one of the cotton program's goals. Although the director of the AAA, Henry Wallace, regretted the increasing displacement of tenants, he was convinced that only by reducing the size of the farming population could American cotton remain competitive in the world's markets.¹⁹⁷ However the plight of tenants and croppers did not go unmarked.

The depression was the decade of the Southern tenant farmer. Never before or since have tenant farmers received the attention that they were given during the 1930s. ... So fashionable were the Southern tenant farmers by 1938 that James Agee confided to his journal that "the cheap use of the word" had made him "unable to hear, say, or think 'sharecropper' without a certain amount of nausea."¹⁹⁸

In response to this widespread concern, the 1938 Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act attempted to address the situation of tenants: under this legislation, landowners' benefits were decreased and checks were sent directly to tenants.¹⁹⁹

In 1930, about 715,000 tenants and croppers worked on southern plantations and farms; by 1940 the number had dropped to 505,000.²⁰⁰ In the next few years, employment opportunities

¹⁹⁴ Holly, 62; Highsmith, 28.

¹⁹⁵ Holly, 65.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 68-69.

¹⁹⁷ Biles, 47.

¹⁹⁸ Aiken, 120.

¹⁹⁹ Holly, 68; Biles, 52.

in war industries accelerated the migration from plantations and farms. While people of all races were involved, African Americans left the land in especially large numbers to take advantage of new opportunities for employment: during the 1940s, over one million black people emigrated from the plantation states, three times as many as had left during the previous decade.²⁰¹

Immediately after the war, this out-migration slowed and some people returned to seek work again on the land. However, this was only a hiatus, and soon the process resumed. Louisiana was one of the states in which the number of African Americans working the land rapidly declined. In 1950, 25% of the black population was engaged in farming, but, by 1960, the figure was only 8.7%.²⁰²

The departure of croppers and tenants was both a response and a stimulus to modernization of cotton plantations. Cotton planters had been slow to adopt modern agricultural machinery partly because of the availability of cheap labor, but also because of the inadequacies of early machines. As long as it was necessary to pay for hand labor for any part of the agricultural operations, planters saw little advantage in making a large investment in machines.²⁰³

The process of mechanization began in the mid-1920s with the development of improved tractors. Until that time, tractors were suitable for ground breaking and plowing, but not for the cultivation of row crops, particularly crops like cotton requiring intensive and repeated cultivation. This began to change when International Harvester developed the first all-purpose tractor in 1924. This tractor had better maneuverability and could make sharp turns at the end of rows.²⁰⁴ In 1930, there were only 0.43 tractors per 1,000 acres harvested in Louisiana, but by 1940 this number had increased to 2.09 tractors per 1,000 acres, and Louisiana had more tractors than any other southern state.²⁰⁵ The South still lagged behind the rest of the country; in 1945, there were 4.6 tractors per 1,000 acres in the Cotton Belt, while the national average was 7.6 tractors per 1,000 acres.²⁰⁶ In the 1950s, the region began to catch up, in part because less expensive models became available, but also because of the reduction in the numbers of farm

²⁰⁰ Fite, 155-156; Mandle, 89. In that ten-year period, the number of black sharecroppers dropped by 23.9%.

²⁰¹ Holly, 84, 149; Fite, 156.

²⁰² Holly, 150.

²⁰³ Aiken, 100-109; Fite, 150; Holly, 74, 124.

²⁰⁴ Aiken, 101-2.

²⁰⁵ Holly, 73.

²⁰⁶ Fulmer, 17.

laborers, and changes in methods of cultivation.²⁰⁷ During the 1950s the development of agricultural herbicides and insecticides by the petrochemical industry greatly reduced the need for intensive cultivation of cotton during the growing season, and further reinforced the advantages of replacing men and women with machines.²⁰⁸

Picking was the last part of cotton's agricultural cycle to be mechanized, although the first spindle harvester had been patented in 1850.²⁰⁹ Early mechanical harvesters collected a large amount of trash as they picked the cotton bolls, and the poor quality of the lint reduced its market price. Another disadvantage of these machines was that they could not pick all of the bolls due to height variation in the cotton plants, which meant that landowners still had to send in farm laborers to finish the harvest.²¹⁰ However, by the 1950s a significant number of planters were beginning to utilize cotton-picking machines, and gins were developed that could clean the trash out of the cotton picked by mechanical harvesters. In addition, plant geneticists developed cotton plants that were more uniform in height so that the harvesters could pick a larger percentage of the bolls.²¹¹ Nevertheless, there remained some drawbacks to the employment of machines: they could be immobilized in wet weather, and the cotton picked was still inferior in terms of fiber quality and cleanliness. Some textile companies still wanted handpicked cotton, and, as a result, some landowners delayed the full mechanization of their enterprise because they could obtain better prices for their handpicked cotton.²¹² It was not until the end of the 1960s, that virtually 100% of the South's cotton was machine-picked.²¹³

Conclusion

Modernization of cotton production reinforced the economic advantages enjoyed by large plantations. The acreage reduction and payment programs were continued after World War II, and these continued to benefit large landowners, some of whom increased their land holdings.²¹⁴ Not only did the new machines need larger fields within which to maneuver, but also the expense tied to the acquisition of the equipment meant that in order to run at optimum efficiency farmers

²⁰⁷ Mandle, 91.

²⁰⁸ Winters, 22; Aiken, 109.

²⁰⁹ Aiken, 102; Mandle, 91.

²¹⁰ Winters 11-12; Aiken, 105.

²¹¹ Winters, 12; Fite, 186.

²¹² Holly, 155, 158; Fite, 181; Aiken, 109.

²¹³ Holly, 139.

²¹⁴ Fite, 153.

needed to cultivate larger acreages. For example, it was necessary to harvest at least 100 bales of cotton in order to justify the cost of a mechanical harvester. This scale of agriculture was too expensive for those with small family farms, which meant that many gave up cotton production altogether.²¹⁵ The new large-scale farming operations that emerged from the modernization process have been called "neoplantations," due to some resemblances to antebellum plantations.²¹⁶ The removal of tenant houses, which had been scattered across the landscape, and the concentration of workers near plantation headquarters, recalled the historic settlement pattern. In addition, the rationalization of field patterns to meet the requirements of large machines in many cases recalled the highly ordered antebellum layouts that had been fragmented by the introduction of sharecropping.

Although "neoplantations" might recall earlier plantation landscapes they are, of course, very different as institutions. Like antebellum plantations they are highly capitalized and have a strong commercial focus, but they do not focus necessarily on the production of one staple crop, and machines have replaced a captive workforce. The introduction of federal minimum wage legislation in 1967 was the final impetus for planters to fully modernize their operations and reduce as far as possible their dependence on manual labor, and as the cost of labor has steadily increased, so the size of the workforce remaining on the plantations has been progressively reduced. It is estimated that it required about 155 hours of labor to produce a bale of cotton by the old methods, and it now requires about 10 hours per bale.²¹⁷ Compared to both antebellum and postbellum plantation landscapes, the modern plantation landscape is an empty one; for good or ill, most of the people have gone and with them much that characterized the peculiar role of the plantation in the agricultural history of this nation.

²¹⁵ Peter Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco and Rice Cultures since 1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 75; Fite, 150, 186; Winters, 12.

²¹⁶ Aiken, 110-11.

²¹⁷ Winters, 11; Aiken, 97.

CHAPTER THREE

MAGNOLIA – NARRATIVE HISTORY 1753-1860

We found in the field thirty plows, moving together, turning the earth from the cotton plants, and from thirty to forty hoers, the latter mainly women, with a black driver walking about among them with a whip, which he often cracked at them, sometimes allowing the lash to fall lightly upon their shoulders. He was constantly urging them on with his voice. All worked very steadily....

Frederick Law Olmsted, *Our Slave States*, 1860

Sources

In order to understand a cultural landscape, it must be seen in as many dimensions as possible, and from as many human perspectives as are available. Each landscape has its own set of documents. Magnolia is particularly well documented from the perspective of the physical and spatial landscape, with the 1858 plat as the key drawing. This watercolor illustration by the surveyor G. S. Walmsley shows in two and three dimensions the high degree of organization that distinguished Magnolia from many of its Cane River neighbors.

Lands included in Magnolia have been owned and cultivated by the same family since the original French land grant of 1753. Due to this continuity, the record of the landscape is accessible through legal documents of succession and through oral tradition. The history of the plantation has been documented comprehensively in an overview by Dr. Ann Malone Rose, and in subsequent NPS contracts for HABS, ethnographic studies, archaeology, and Historic Structure Reports. While this has provided almost an "embarrassment of riches" for the research team to use in writing this landscape report, there is a void in the documentation as it relates to the day-to-day relationship of the planter and his family to the landscape in the 18th and first half of the 19th century. This kind of information is often provided through a planter's journals and correspondence. Much of this documentation was destroyed when Union troops burned the Magnolia Big House in 1864. Some family papers have been located in the Prud'homme Family Papers at the University of North Carolina.²¹⁸ Perhaps other family letters will come to light in the future that might allow for a more personal view of the early settlement of the landscape to

²¹⁸ Matthew Hertzog's mother was Marianne Desiree Prud'homme of nearby Oakland Plantation. This family connection provides the link between Magnolia's history and the Prud'homme Family Papers that are now housed in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, (hereafter SHC, UNC, Chapel Hill).

be included in the landscape's interpretive program. The perspectives most under-represented in the archival record are those of the enslaved workers, the majority of the plantation population. Also missing is the voice of the several plantation mistresses, who most certainly played a central role in the operation of the day-to-day events of the plantation.

The timeline outlines significant dates and data for the evolution of the plantation landscape at Magnolia within the context of events in the community, region, and nation. It serves as the factual "skeleton" upon which the narrative text has been built.

Timeline

- 1753 Jean Baptiste LeComte (date and place of birth, unknown) applies for and receives a French land grant for a tract of land on both sides of the Red River.
- 1774 Jean Baptiste marries Marguerite LeRoy.
- 1760 Ambrose is born December 24.
- 1763 Transfer of Louisiana to Spain.
- 1765 The LeComtes produce 2,000 pounds of tobacco in twists and thirty-five barrels of corn at the time of enumeration. They also own four horses, eight pigs, eight "horned cattle," and one firearm. On a Spanish census from the same year, Jean Baptiste reports his landholdings for the first time: 8 arpents of river frontage of the "usual depth." He also lists six head of cattle, two horses, six head of cattle, and no slaves.
- 1766 In the French Census, Jean Baptiste's household includes his wife Marguerite, one boy (Ambrose) and two girls (Louise Marguerite and Marie Françoise), one adult female slave and two female slave children.
- 1840 On a tax list and census of slaveholders taken in February, Jean Baptiste reports "three negresses or mulatresses and two Negro or mulatto children under twelve." In September, he lists three Negro males and two mulatto females.
- 1780 Ambrose serves in Natchitoches as a military cavalryman during the Revolutionary War.
- 1783 Ambrose marries H  l  ne Cloutier.
- 1784 Jean Baptiste dies at his residence on May 28 and is buried on his land grant in an area that eventually became known as Shallow Lake Cemetery.
- 1786 Jean Baptiste II is born to Ambrose and H  l  ne.
- 1787 In the census, Marguerite is listed as the head of the LeComte household. Her household includes Ambrose and his wife H  l  ne Cloutier, their one-year-old son Jean Baptiste II, her widowed daughter Fran  oise, and her four-year-old son Joseph Dupre III. At this time, the widow LeComte owned 14 slaves. She also had 60 head of cattle and 4 horses. Ambrose is listed with 64 arpents of land, 4 slaves, 15 head of cattle, and 20 horses.
- 1787 Ambrose acquires a Spanish land grant for an additional league of land.
- 1787 Marguerite applies for a new survey and reconfirmation of her husband's French and Spanish land claims of 2,031.6 acres, including 30 arpents front and 40 arpents depth, on both sides of the Cane River.

- 1793 Eli Whitney applies for a patent for a new cotton gin. Rapid dissemination of pirated copies of his design leads to rapid adoption by planters and a great expansion of area devoted to cotton production throughout the South.
- 1795 Marguerite owns 18 slaves, and Ambrose owns 14.
- 1795 Ambrose receives a second Spanish land grant for a league of land.
- 1800 Transfer of Louisiana from Spanish to French control.
- 1801 Invention of the screw press makes it easier to bale ginned cotton.
- 1803 Louisiana Purchase.
- 1803 Foreign slave trade is forbidden in Louisiana, but widespread smuggling along Gulf Coast continues practice. English-speaking slaves now imported from other states in the American South.
- 1806 Jean Baptiste II marries Mary Anne Cephalide Lambre.
- 1807 Ambrose II is born to Jean Baptiste II and Mary.
- 1808 US Congress prohibits foreign slave trade in all States.
- 1810 Population census: eight people in the Ambrose LeComte household. LeComte owns 54 slaves.
- 1811 Marguerite dies.
- 1811 The LeComtes' land grant is reconfirmed and considered valid by the United States.
- 1812 War between Britain and US disrupts cotton trade.
- 1815 Cotton prices double at end of War of 1812.
- 1816 Price of cotton reaches 33.9 cents per pound, its highest point in the period before the Civil War.
- 1816 Henry Miller Shreve develops shallow-draft steamboat.
- 1819 In the years following the Panic of 1819, Ambrose consistently purchases tracts of land from his neighbors and kinsmen, building up his family's riverfront landholdings.
- 1820 Population census: seven people in the Ambrose LeComte household. 64 enslaved people are engaged in agriculture, and two are engaged in manufacturing.
- 1824 Hélène conveys her half of the plantation to her grandson, Ambrose II.
- 1825 Jean Baptiste II and Hélène Cloutier die.
- 1826 During the '20s regularly scheduled steamboat traffic starts to operate on the Red/Cane River.
- 1827 Ambrose II marries Marie Julia Buard.
- 1830 Ursula Atala is born to Ambrose II and Julia.
- 1830 Louisiana restricts importation of slaves from other states after the Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia. Restrictions are repealed in 1834.
- 1832 Main flow of the Red River begins to leave the channel of the Cane River and follow that of the Rigolet de Bon Dieu.
- 1833 Shreve begins work to clear the Great Raft on the Red River above Natchitoches.
- 1834 Ambrose I dies.
- 1835 More land opened up for American settlement in the region by the removal of the Caddo Indians. Ambrose LeComte II is acquiring additional lands to enlarge his plantation near Cloutierville, and will eventually divide it into two plantations, Shallow Lake and Magnolia.

- 1837 Average export price of cotton is 14.2 cents per pound. National financial panic has a depressing effect on commerce in general, and initiates an agricultural depression that lasts for most of the 1840s.
- 1838 Average export price of cotton is 8.6 cents per pound.
- 1845 Population census: the population of Natchitoches Parish has doubled since 1830 and stands at 14,350. Five in Ambrose LeComte household, including 4 free females, 2 female slaves (total slaves listed as 5). One person is engaged in commerce.
- 1844 The average export price of cotton drops to 5.9 cents, its lowest point in the antebellum period.
- 1920 LeComte lists among his 18 taxable properties, a 3,444-acre plantation on both sides of the Red River. The average export price of cotton has risen to 7.8 cents per pound. Julia Buard LeComte dies; LeComte property near Cloutierville includes the original 2,260 acres, plus 1,147 acres on the left bank and 135 acres on the right bank of the Red River. The inventory records 155 slaves, valued at \$71,435. Inventory also mentions five brick and mortar slave cabins under construction.
- 1846 Throughout the state a drought and a plague of armyworms has decimated the cotton crop.
- 1846 Ambrose II marries Lise Victorie Désirée Sompayrac. The family moves into a townhouse in Natchitoches.
- 1856 The average export price is 7.6 cents per pound. Flooding in the Natchitoches region results in a bad harvest year.
- 1857 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the Mexican War, and the U.S. acquires new territories west of Louisiana.
- 1858 Record high water during floods on the Red/Cane River.
- 1859 Price of cotton has risen to 12.1 cents.
Population census: eight in Ambrose LeComte household. Value of real estate is listed as \$125,000. Ambrose, his wife, and their children are living at the townhouse in Natchitoches. The only family living at Magnolia is Ambrose's sister-in-law Suzette Buard and her household. Ambrose owns about 180 slaves, and Suzette owns 49 slaves.
- 1850s LeComte's horse the "Flying Dutchman" wins stakes at New Orleans' Metairie racetrack.
- 1852 Matthew Hertzog marries Atala LeComte. Ambrose II gives her a 40% share in Magnolia at the time of their marriage.
- 1855 The average export price of cotton is 9.5 cents per pound.
- 1756 Town of Natchitoches incorporated.
- 1757 Magnolia's gin house burns with about 80 bales of cotton.
- 1758 Ambrose J. Hertzog is born to Matthew and Atala.
- 1858 Walmsley surveys Magnolia Plantation – includes 2,570 acres. Gin repairs are made at a cost of \$400 at Magnolia.
- 1759 Slave census: Ambrose II owns 235 slaves. Second agricultural census: Ambrose reports 1,133 400-pound bales of cotton. Average export price of cotton is 11.1 cents per pound. Ambrose II is the largest slaveholder and largest producer of cotton in Natchitoches Parish. In the census, he is credited with 2,240 improved

acres and 5,395 acres of woodlands and unimproved lands. The combined value of his plantations is \$251,000. Population census: three in Ambrose LeComte household. Real estate is listed at \$190,915, and personal estate is listed at \$251,850. Matthew Hertzog is listed twice in the census. There are either 5 or 6 in his household, and his real estate is valued at \$22,400 or \$30,000, while his personal estate is valued at \$52,500 or \$25,000. Matthew owns 42 slaves.

DEVELOPMENT OF MAGNOLIA PLANTATION IN THE RIVIÈRE AUX CANNES

The LeComte Family and their Early Settlement in Louisiana 1753 - 1834

What distinguishes the Natchitoches area, settled by the French in 1714, is that it is the oldest permanent European settlement in the Louisiana Purchase territory. The French began a system of land grants in the Louisiana colony in 1716, precipitating the development of an extensive and productive agricultural landscape along the region's fertile river valleys. One of the distinguishing features of Magnolia Plantation is that some of the land within its boundaries has been owned by the same family since French land grants to the LeComte family in 1753.

The plantation's history began with the immigration from France of Jean Baptiste LeComte I, who, by at least 1753, was residing at the Natchitoches Post where he had completed his military duty.²¹⁹ He was granted lands on both sides of the Red River (later to become the Cane River); this was the beginning of what would become Shallow Lake and Magnolia Plantations. A land grant required that the land be cleared within a specified period of time, and these grants included river frontage and long narrow pie-shaped lots stretching back from the river's edge, in LeComte's case, on both sides of the river.

In 1756 LeComte married Marguerite Leroy who had been living at the Natchitoches Post since the 1720s; they had three children born on the plantation — Ambrose, Louise Marguerite, and Marie Francoise. With the French loss in the French and Indian War, Spain gained control of all French lands west of the Mississippi in 1763, and LeComte's claim had to be recognized by the Spanish government, which it was in 1787. The LeComtes also pastured cattle at Anacoco Prairie, now the Sabine Wildlife Refuge in the Toledo Bend area in Sabine

²¹⁹ Historic American Buildings Survey "Addendum to Magnolia Plantation, HABS No. LA-1193" (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2002), 16.

Parish.²²⁰ From early census data we know that Jean Baptiste had significant farming enterprises underway by 1765, recording the production of 2,000 pounds of tobacco in twists, 35 barrels of corn, ownership of four horses, eight pigs, and eight "horned cattle." He reported owning no slaves at the time.²²¹ But by the following year, in the census, his household included an adult female slave and two female slave children.²²² Spanish rule had brought with it the resumption of the slave trade, and this might explain the change in LeComte's household. Over time, the slave population in the LeComte household grew as did the acreage owned.

In 1783 LeComte's only son Ambrose married Helene Cloutier; Jean Baptiste died the following year. The newlyweds named their firstborn after Jean Baptiste in 1786, and by 1787, the census listed his widow Marguerite as head of household, with Ambrose and Helene and their son living there, along with Marguerite's daughter Francoise and her young son. Marguerite was recorded as owning 2,031.6 acres of land, 14 slaves, 60 head of cattle, and 4 horses. Ambrose had 64 arpents of land, 4 slaves, 15 head of cattle, and 20 horses.²²³ The primary crop grown on the plantation at this time was tobacco, until the invention of the cotton gin toward the end of the century made cotton production economically viable.

In 1806 Jean Baptiste II married Mary Anne Cephalide Lambre, and they had a son, Ambrose II, the following year. Marguerite died in 1811, closing the chapter of the first generation on the land.

The War of 1812 was disruptive to cotton trade and the Panic of 1819 further strained economic conditions for cotton planters. But Ambrose took advantage of the economic downturn, and followed the aggressive example of his parents, purchasing lands from cash-poor neighbors in 1820, 1824, and 1825, and building up his family's holdings along the riverfront. He also increased his slaveholdings as he made the transition from tobacco farming to large-scale cotton production with the incumbent need to clear more land; by 1820 he owned 62 male slaves and 34 females. By 1830 the LeComte's slave force numbered 136.²²⁴ In 1824 Ambrose's wife Helene conveyed her half of the plantation to her grandson Ambrose II. The following year she was dead, as was her son Jean Baptiste II.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Malone, 16.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 21.

²²⁴ Miller, 24.

In 1827 Ambrose II married Marie Julia Buard, a union that would eventually lead to the Hertzog family joining the LeComtes. Ambrose II and Julia had a daughter Ursula Atala in 1830. When Ambrose II's grandfather died in 1834, he inherited the family plantation near Cloutierville at the young age of 24.

Establishment of Magnolia Plantation 1835 - 1860

Ambrose II continued the expansion of his property near Cloutierville with the purchase of 960 arpents from the neighboring LaCour family in 1835. This expansion largely consisted of acquiring more land on the left bank of the river where the soils were particularly suitable for the growing of cotton. Despite the fact that the Red River had begun to leave the channel of the Cane River in about 1832, and that Captain Shreve²²⁵ had begun to clear the Great Raft above Natchitoches, further carrying the lucrative Red River traffic away from Natchitoches, Cane River plantations continued to grow and prosper. Cotton cultivation and slavery had increased in the region although yellow fever and cholera epidemics had taken their human tolls.

The precise date when the property was divided into two plantations is not known. Magnolia must have become a separate operation by the time the Big House was constructed, but definitive documentation that gives the date of its construction has not been located. Invoices from 1839 record repair of a dwelling house, the repaving of a stable, and the making of doorframes.²²⁶ It is unclear whether these are repairs to structures acquired through the purchase of the LaCour property or routine repairs to structures on the original LeComte tract. Another 1839 account lists in May, "24 Boxes furniture," and "4 Bed Cornices," as well as various barrels of lime, kegs of nails, lead pipe, tools, and household goods.²²⁷ Although it certainly seems that there was a household being set up somewhere, it is not clear where.

In 1845, Ambrose II noted amongst 18 taxable properties, "my plantation such as it stands now on both sides of Red River containing in all about 3,444 (acres)."²²⁸ In the same year his wife Julia died and her estate went into probate. This detailed inventory gives us an important benchmark of their holdings at the time. In the inventory, the plantation near

²²⁵ Shreve had already revolutionized traffic on the Red River by developing the shallow-draft steamboat in 1816.

²²⁶ A. Lecomte to B. Jessup, Natchitoches, 12 June 1839. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 909, UNC, Chapel Hill.

²²⁷ A. Lecomte to Barker (?), 25 July 1839. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 909, UNC Chapel Hill.

²²⁸ "List of Taxable Properties, 1845," document in the collection of Betty Hertzog. In addition to these 18 properties he listed 7 town lots.

Cloutierville is still regarded as one unit. They owned a large number of other properties in addition to this, including another plantation shared with Louis Alexander Buard, and a number of lots and buildings in Natchitoches. The succession inventory also included reference to land "in the pine woods," and on Spanish Lake.²²⁹ It was common for Cane River planters to not only own properties in town, but to also have residences or camps on the higher land of what would become the Kisatchie Forest, as well as on one of the area lakes. These places were used by planters' families as retreats during the hottest times of the summer. When flooding was severe, families would flee, often with their most valuable livestock, to the pine forests near Natchitoches. The forest was also a refuge in times of cholera and yellow fever epidemics. Betty Hertzog says that Ambrose LeComte owned a sawmill in Kisatchie, although the location is not known. According to Betty, the family's camp in the forest was called the "Hacienda," and although the building no longer stands, the ancient live oaks that surrounded it can be spotted in the pinewoods.²³⁰

The inventory of livestock included in the succession document illustrates the scale of the family's livestock operation at the Cloutierville plantation:

Brood mares, mules, horses, cattle &c...		
70 head of plantation mules, horses & mares @ \$30		\$2100
11 colts	\$80	
100 head hogs, more or less	\$100	
3 blooded cows & calves	\$90	6 blooded Bulls \$160
1 Common cow & calf	\$5...	
Personal property of A. Lecomte		
150 head sheep	\$300	
58 head cattle	\$174	
16 yoke oxen	\$240 ²³¹	

The inventory also describes the land owned by the LeComtes that was the family *Vacherie* or ranch (approximately thirty miles west of Cloutierville) and inventories its livestock:

A tract of land on the Yanacoucou Prairie, containing 677 acres...the claim of the same prairie, unconfirmed, for some four square leagues - \$3000

Individual property of A. LeComte

600 head of horned cattle...at \$3 \$1800 -
20 head of horses, mares, & colts, more or less....²³²

²²⁹ Succession of Julia Buard LeComte, 1845, as quoted in "Magnolia Plantation, HABS," 17.

²³⁰ Interview with Betty Hertzog, 11 May 2004.

²³¹ Succession of Julia Buard LeComte, 11 August 1845, Succession Book 20, 264-330, Natchitoches Clerk of Court, Parish Courthouse, Natchitoches, Louisiana.

The total estate of Julia Buard and Ambrose Hertzog II was appraised at over \$285,877.²³³ The inventory also records that the brick slave cabins at Magnolia were under construction at the time.²³⁴ The decision to build the cabins of brick rather than of the more typical frame construction would prove to be a major factor in the survival of this portion of Magnolia's antebellum landscape and its subsequent acquisition by the National Park Service. While masonry quarters were not rare in the South, the less expensive frame alternative was far more common. This is also the case with the brick used to build the Big House; many raised Creole mansions of the same period were built of bousillage rather than brick. The archival record does not record whether all of the brick was made on the plantation, but if it was, the clay would have either been dug from the riverbanks, or from the backlands where the heavier soils were located. The amount of clay required for that amount of brick would have produced a significant pit somewhere. Family members report that brick-making facilities were located in a field southeast of the plantation buildings, but this has not been confirmed by archaeological investigation.²³⁵

The year after Julia's death, Ambrose II married Lise-Victorie Desiree Sompayrac and moved his family to a Natchitoches town house, leaving the management of the lands near Cloutierville in the hands of overseers. Suzette Hertzog Buard (Julia's sister-in-law) and her children remained in residence at the Cloutierville property.

It is clear that by the 1850s the property had been divided into two plantations with Magnolia on the left bank and Shallow Lake on the right. Although we know very little of the daily operations at Magnolia in this period, Dr. Ann Rose's 1998 discovery of a group of letters in the attic of Oakland's Big House and their subsequent publication in Keel's 1999 archaeological study of Magnolia gives us some important clues. During the 1850s Magnolia was being managed by a series of overseers, one of whom was named W. B. Eddins.²³⁶ The seven letters are from Eddins to Ambrose LeComte II, living in Natchitoches. Much of Eddins' commentary concerns the health of specific slaves, the status of the cotton crop, weather,

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Keel, 19.

²³⁴ Ibid., 24.

²³⁵ "Magnolia Plantation, HABS," 8, which cites personal communication with Betty Hertzog, 13 June 2002, and with Ambrose Hertzog, Jr., 16 June 2002.

²³⁶ W. B. Eddins was Magnolia overseer from January 1851 until his sudden death in September 1853, according to Keel, 84, based on Malone, 58.

shipment of food and supplies back and forth, and the shipment of cotton to market. But there are interesting revelations. For example in a letter dated February 1, 1851, Eddins says that he has attended a sale:

...Bought the piece of land there for you, adjoining yours above for \$1200.00 dollars. I informed Mr. Taber that I Bought the Land for you—so I presume you may arrange it now with the Sheriff without my further assistance....²³⁷

Whether Eddins has acted as LeComte's agent to prevent the tedium of travel or whether he is standing in for him in order to keep the price lower is not clear from the letter.

Another important note is that Eddins refers to the plantation as "Magnolia Grove" rather than "Magnolia" in all but one letter, and in that letter, he doesn't name the plantation at all. So it is unclear when the "Grove" is dropped from the name of the plantation.

In a letter from March 1851, Eddins makes reference to "your new house," which suggests that the Big House at Magnolia may have been under construction at the time. This is in conflict with oral tradition that dates the house from the 1830s.²³⁸ Further details in another letter about putting the flooring down in the entry closet, the dining room pantry, and one of the bedrooms further attests to a house under construction.²³⁹

Eddins' letter of May 9, 1851 closes by asking LeComte to "Give my respects to Mrs. Lecomte and the [tell?] her that the Garden is doing well —." Except for the "Garden" labels on either side of the Big House on the Walmsley survey, this is the only documentary reference there is for a garden, and for the fact that, as is typical in plantations, the garden is the domain of the plantation mistress. Although this could be a reference to an ornamental garden, it is more than likely reference to a kitchen garden, which would have been of more concern than anything ornamental to a planter's wife living away from her plantation. Early May in south Louisiana is an important time for the success of a kitchen garden — a time of unpredictable weather and rainfall, and the time when vegetables need to have been well established before the onslaught of the tropical summer heat. Vegetables and fruit would have been grown at Magnolia as a means of feeding the family and the slave population. Again, because of the paucity of antebellum

²³⁷ W. B. Eddins to Mr. Lecomte, 1 February 1851, as cited in Keel, 84.

²³⁸ Keel, 84-85. A receipt dated 19 September 1850, acknowledges payment of 1,500 piastres for building "sa maison de l'habitation," document in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²³⁹ Eddins to "Very dear sir," 2 May 1851, in Keel, 87.

receipts, we only have one reference to the subject,²⁴⁰ but because of the remoteness of Magnolia's location, it would have been important for the LeComtes and Hertzogs to produce the basic foods necessary for subsistence on the plantation. These would have been supplemented with specialty staples like rice, sugar, flour, molasses, and coffee that were shipped upriver from New Orleans, or could be purchased in Natchitoches.²⁴¹

Another interesting reference from the period suggests that as changes were being made to the house, or as a new house was, possibly, being constructed, so, too, were additions to the landscape being made. A receipt for shipping lists freight charges of \$15 for 15 magnolia trees sent to A. LeComte on March 27, 1850.²⁴² Whether these are the trees shown as the allee leading up the Big House on Walmsley's 1858 survey or not is impossible to know. An additional reference that supports the later construction for the house is an 1852 payment by LeComte to L. J. Miles of \$196 for "building cisterns."²⁴³

In 1852, Ambrose II and Julia's daughter Atala married Matthew Hertzog, the son of Jean Francois Hertzog and Marianne Desiree Prud'homme, neighbors of the LeComtes.²⁴⁴ Jean Francois and his brother Richard William Hertzog had immigrated to northwest Louisiana from Bordeaux after their military service in France. Upon Matthew's marriage to Atala in 1852, Ambrose gave his daughter a 40% share in Magnolia as a wedding gift. The next year Matthew acquired a large tract of land just north of Magnolia.²⁴⁵ Matthew's brother Henry Hertzog owned Ferry Plantation, which stood between the Magnolia and Matthew's plantation.

Ambrose continued to stay actively engaged in the financial affairs of his plantations, but he had developed a passion for breeding racehorses. In the 1850s his horse "The Flying Dutchman" won big at the Metairie racetrack in New Orleans. He kept some of the horses at a stable in Natchitoches; his racehorses were trained by a Mr. Wells whose operation was near present day Lecompte, above Alexandria. Numerous New Orleans newspaper clippings from the

²⁴⁰ A ledger of A. LeComte's purchases for 1852 includes the entry on February 9 of the purchase of "2 Doz. Garden Seed \$12." Document in Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁴¹ A. LeComte in account with Parker (?), 1839. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 909, UNC, Chapel Hill.

²⁴² A. Lecomte to Heck, 3 April 1850, shipping bill, document in Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁴³ Received of "A. LeComte August 1852 Building Cisterns L. J. Miles \$196," Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁴⁴ This connection by marriage is the reason that some of the plantation letters have been located at Oakland and are now in the Prud'homme Papers at the University of North Carolina.

²⁴⁵ "An Abstract of Title to Sections 101 and 102, Township 7 N Range 6 West," in the collection of Betty Hertzog. This plantation was also surveyed by Walmsley in 1858, see the following section on Landscape Characteristics.

1850s demonstrate how important news of the details of these races were to the readership in remote places like Natchitoches; these articles also record the fate of LeComtes' various race horses - for the most part, his horses won.²⁴⁶

In addition to Matthew's involvement in managing the plantation, there was an overseer or agent actively communicating with LeComte at least until 1860. In May 1854 G. H. Smith wrote to LeComte about the weather and the cotton crop, and then mentioned that the outside walls of the kitchen were nearly done.²⁴⁷ One wonders whether this was a new kitchen to replace an earlier one. If the Big House was just being completed in 1851 then perhaps this was a kitchen behind this house.

By the following year Smith had been replaced by A. Wheeler, or they were both working in supervisory roles at Magnolia. In 1855 A. Wheeler wrote to LeComte, "Cotton good Corn Tolerable and wanting rain verry much I expect to be in Natchitoches tomorrow."²⁴⁸ By 1860, the letters to LeComte are from a G. E. Spillman who reports on plowing at both Magnolia and Shallow Lake. It is noteworthy that this overseer is the first to refer to the plantation simply as Magnolia, dropping the "Grove" from the earlier name.²⁴⁹

A small brown memorandum book in the collection of Betty Hertzog records the fluctuations in the "Cotton crops made on Ambse Lecomte Plantation from the yr. 1846 to the present year (1858-59)." A single figure is given for the years from 1846 to 1850. 1846-47 was noted as a bad year with 302 bales, followed by 1847-48 where production was doubled at 648 bales. The next year was noted as "good" with a total of 585 bales. An "overflow year," presumably the disastrous flood in 1849, cut the crop to only 103 bales in 1849-50. The next year despite "rain and partial overflow," the total was 384 bales.

Thereafter separate totals are given for Magnolia, Shallow Lake, and Vienna Plantations, with Magnolia always producing the largest crop, by far, followed by Shallow Lake, and then Vienna. In 1851-52, although again there was a partial overflow and "caterpillar," Magnolia

²⁴⁶ Envelope containing newspaper clippings about horse races, 1850s to 1860; envelope containing newspaper clippings about pedigrees of horses including Flying Dutchman, both in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁴⁷ G. H. Smith to Mr. A. Lecomte, 16 May 1854. Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁴⁸ A. Wheeler to Mr. Lecomte, 10 May 1855, Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁴⁹ G. E. Spillman to Mr. A. Lecomte, 27 January 1860, Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog. Overseer for the year 1859 was Samuel Geter who was paid \$350 by A. LeComte for the year ending 31 December 1859. There is also a receipt for Geter as overseer for the year ending 31 December 1860, Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog. It is not clear what the duties of the two men were, but they seem to have been employed during the same time period.

produced 383 bales, Shallow Lake produced 126, and Vienna, 51 bales. 1852-53 was noted as "most excellent year, caterpillar came late," and Magnolia produced 479 out of a total of 854 bales. This was followed by a poor year of "rain...sickly caterpillar...total - 366." The next year, despite "caterpillar," Magnolia alone produced almost as many bales, 347, and in the year 1855-56, with "late caterpillars," Magnolia produced 527 bales out of a total of 793 bales. In September 1856, a gin house fire at Magnolia destroyed about 80 bales of cotton and cut production there to 299 bales. The following year was evidently a poor year with a total production from all plantations of only 461 bales. The notation for the last year listed, 1858-59, mentions "abundant rains up to July after which great drought...cotton small, caterpillars beginning August...," and yet the total was 743 bales. Magnolia produced 380 bales averaging 500 pounds.²⁵⁰

The partnership of A. LeComte with his daughter and Matthew Hertzog proved beneficial for Magnolia. By the onset of the Civil War "LeComte was producing more cotton and owned more slaves (235) than anyone in the parish."²⁵¹ The slave population was housed in 70 slave cabins, although all of these were not at Magnolia.²⁵² The 1858 survey is graphic evidence of the prosperity and sophistication of the Magnolia complex, and the plat indicates a level of efficiency and spatial organization on par with the largest plantations of the Mississippi River Road.

The relationship of the French plantations along Cane River to those of the Mississippi River Road near New Orleans is worth exploring because there was bound to have been cross-fertilization relative to planning concepts and the overall organization of the agricultural complex, as well as in the design of the Big House, its supportive outbuildings, and its landscape features. Not only did they share a French heritage, but also many of the settlers of Cane River came to the region through the port of New Orleans and became familiar first with the Mississippi River plantations. It was common for Cane River planters and their families to make seasonal trips to the Crescent City on business and for shopping. Invoices from 1860 show that Ambrose LeComte and his wife, daughter, and servant stayed at the St. Louis Hotel for three

²⁵⁰ LeComte Memorandum Book 1853-1859, "Crops made on Ambse LeComte Plantation from the yr. 1846 to the present year," in the collection of Betty Hertzog (not paginated).

²⁵¹ Keel, 19; "Magnolia Plantation HABS," 18.

²⁵² Keel, 24. Keel states that seventy slave cabins appear on the 1859 census for Ambrose LeComte; the Walmsley plat indicates twenty-four brick cabins were located at Magnolia, each of which accommodated two families.

weeklong periods between April 2nd and May 7th.²⁵³ They probably made these trips annually; perhaps they visited relatives or friends at nearby plantations as well. But in any case, during the period that they would have been building and developing the house and grounds at Magnolia, they would have had the opportunity to see many examples of impressive plantation houses and gardens along the lower Mississippi.

Although there are few graphic documents that illustrate these plantations during the antebellum period, the 1859 drawings of over 20 plantations in St. Charles Parish (near New Orleans) painted by the Jesuit priest Father Joseph Paret provide a basis for limited comparison. His depictions of The Hermitage, the home of Mme. M. Delhommer, the home of Mme. H. Trepagnier, and the home of the J. B. Labranche Brothers all show raised Creole cottages flanked by gardens on both sides, similar to the arrangement at Magnolia. Although these are all sugar plantations, the layout of the domestic landscape surrounding the Big House is comparable. Several show central allées formed by lines of trees leading to the house. It is worth noting that in depicting trees in these watercolors, Paret distinguishes between trees that have been intentionally planted as part of a grove, orchard, or designed scheme, and those individual trees that appear to have existed prior to construction of the plantation and are very large and irregularly shaped.²⁵⁴

It was common practice during the period to prune trees on at least an annual basis in order to keep them in a formal and regular shape and uniform size. Our contemporary notion of planting trees for shade, and allowing them to spread their canopies uncontrollably was not the practice. Whether this was simply the way things were done in France, or a response to the fact that huge amounts of human energy had recently been expended to clear the landscape of virgin timber in order to be able to plant a cash crop, both the written record and graphic documents like Paret's paintings attest to the French taste for the "cropped" tree.

²⁵³ Invoices from St. Louis Hotel, New Orleans, for A. Lecomte, 2 April 1860; 22 April 1860; 3 May 1860; Prud'homme Family Papers, copies in collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁵⁴ Marcel Boyer, *Plantations by the River* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Geoscience Publications, 2001), passim.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS 1858

Introduction

The survey of the plantation by G. S. Walmsley made in 1858 for Ambrose LeComte II provides a remarkably detailed picture of the antebellum landscape.²⁵⁵ The following description of the landscape is based on an analysis of this survey. The 1996 archaeological investigation of the portion of the plantation now in NPS ownership confirmed the general accuracy of Walmsley's survey within that area but also indicated some limitations and possible omissions. One important limitation arises from the way buildings were drawn: because they were drawn in elevation, each symbol indicates the general location, but not the accurate footprint of a building. Other historical documents have been used to supplement the 1858 survey; these documents include other maps, succession records, family account books and correspondence. Interpretations of the historical evidence by other historians including Dr. Ann Malone Rose and the HABS team, the analysis of the archaeological evidence by Dr. Bennie Keel and Dr. Christina Miller, interviews with Betty Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog, and an examination of the existing landscape have provided valuable insights.

The layout of the landscape in 1858 is illustrated in the 1858 Period Plans. The distinctive characteristics of this landscape can be discussed under the following eleven headings:

Property Boundaries

Spatial Organization

Cane River and the Bayous

Roads, Lanes and Turnrows

Cultivated Land

The Pasture Field and Clover Lot

Woodlands and Swamps

The Grounds around the Big House

The Plantation Yards

The Quarters

Rhythms of Life in the Landscape

²⁵⁵ G. S. Walmsley, "A Survey of A. LeComte's Magnolia Plantation South of Natchitoches La., scale 10 chains & 1/8th of a mile to an inch, February 1858," in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

These headings are similar to those used in the Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report to describe the landscape of the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation on Isle Brevelle in 1860.²⁵⁶ A comparison of the two landscapes indicates many similarities and some important differences. These are discussed in the following text. However it should be remembered that the historical records of the two plantations are very different in scope. There is an extraordinary volume of written records in the Prud'homme family papers but a dearth of maps, therefore much is known about the operation of the plantation in the antebellum period, but many questions remain about its layout. At Magnolia, in contrast, many of the LeComte-Hertzog family records from the antebellum period have been lost, so relatively little is known about the day-to-day operation of the plantation, but the Walmsley survey provides a clear picture of its layout. In this respect the historical records are complementary, but one must exercise caution when making comparisons between a landscape described in words and one described on a plan.

Property Boundaries

The boundaries of Magnolia Plantation in 1858 encompassed 3036.88 arpents, or just over 2,570 acres, on the left bank — descending — of Cane River. The plantation had nearly five miles of river frontage and it stretched back from the river nearly three miles. In plan the property was roughly triangular in shape with the base of the triangle formed by the meandering course of Cane River and the apex located close to Little River. The shape of the property was the outcome of a long process of land acquisition by the LeComtes, beginning with the 1753 French land grant to Jean Baptiste LeComte. The eastern side of the plantation incorporated part of that grant while the western side was made up of tracts purchased in the 1820s and 1830s by Ambrose LeComte I.²⁵⁷

The eastern and northwestern boundaries followed arpent lines surveyed in the colonial period. Most arpent lines were straight lines drawn perpendicular to the river, but because of the serpentine form of the river, many lines met away from the river and formed pie shaped tracts. The inland boundaries of Magnolia followed straight lines with angular deflections where one arpent line met another. The lines generally ignored natural features away from the river; for example, the northwestern boundary of the plantation cut across a lake and bayou.

²⁵⁶ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 112.

²⁵⁷ Malone, 35-37.

On his survey, Walmsley noted the names of some of the adjacent landowners. Upstream, to the northwest, Magnolia was bordered by properties owned by the Hertzog brothers, Henry and Matthew. Both had married daughters of Ambrose LeComte II: Henry had married the eldest daughter, Laura, and Matthew had married the second daughter, Atala. So the adjacent land was in the hands of members of the extended LeComte – Hertzog family. Henry Hertzog's plantation occupied both sides of the river, while Matthew owned land upstream and inland from Henry's plantation. Walmsley also surveyed both these properties in 1858.²⁵⁸

Downstream, the area between Magnolia and Cloutierville was labeled as belonging to G. Fontenot and others. It is not known if there was any connection between these people and the LeComte – Hertzogs, but there was apparently an amicable working relationship. A pencil note on Walmsley's survey indicates that part of the pasture at Magnolia was being used by Fontenot as a cotton patch. Fontenot lived on the edge of Cloutierville on land originally claimed by Cloutier.²⁵⁹

There was a small inholding on the western side of Magnolia downstream from Henry Hertzog's place. Walmsley recorded the land as belonging to "the Free Negress Mariot." Marie Adelaide Mariotte was a Creole granddaughter of Marie Therese Coin-Coin and the common-law wife of a nephew of Ambrose LeComte.²⁶⁰ Her holding was comprised of 12 arpents, which Walmsley surveyed but specifically excluded from his calculation of the size of Magnolia. It is possible the land was being worked as part of adjacent cuts even though it was in separate ownership, because in a marginal note the acreage within the holding is divided and added to that of the adjacent cuts. Malone speculates that LeComte sold the land to Mariotte and her children after they had been deprived of a promised share in his nephew's estate.²⁶¹

The survey did not include any information about the land across the river, but much of the land to the south was part of Shallow Lake Plantation. The core of Shallow Lake was the right bank portion of the 1753 land grant, but some additional lands had been added. Although

²⁵⁸ G. S. Walmsley, "Survey of lands owned by Henry Hertzog, scale 10 chains or 1/8 mile to an inch, 19th & 20th February, 1858;" G. S. Walmsley, "Survey of improved portion of Matthew Hertzog's Plantation, scale 10 chains or 1/8 mile to an inch, 16th & 18th January, 1858," in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁵⁹ Mershon, *Natchitoches and Alexandria Survey, West of Red River* (no date c.1864), copy in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, map collection 1471, original in National Archives Cartographic Records, RG 77b, file Z-33-138.

²⁶⁰ Malone, 79.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* LeComte was executor of the estate and became involved in a lawsuit over it; in 1878, after Mariotte's death, Matthew and Atala Hertzog purchased the land – said to comprise 15 arpents – and reincorporated it into Magnolia.

the LeComtes occupied the right bank first, by the 1850s Magnolia had become the larger and more important property; while Magnolia comprised 2,570 acres, Shallow Lake had around 1,850.²⁶² There were larger areas suitable for growing cotton on the left bank and so Magnolia had the lion's share of the cultivated land while Shallow Lake had more land in pasture. The operations of the two plantations were closely connected and letters from overseers at Magnolia often included information on the sister plantation.

When the boundaries of Magnolia Plantation are compared to those of the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation a number of differences are immediately apparent.²⁶³ Magnolia was the larger property by about 600 acres and it had a simpler and more coherent shape, which must have helped simplify its agricultural operations. The Prud'homme Plantation was bisected by the river and its elongated form meant much time was spent moving workers and equipment from one part of the plantation to another. The organization and supervision of agricultural operations at Magnolia would have been more straightforward; nevertheless the presence of Shallow Lake across the river must have meant some movement of people back and forth. There were also important similarities between the two plantations. Both plantations were bordered by other plantations held by people related by blood or marriage. And although most of the adjacent land was organized into large plantations there were smallholdings owned by free African-Americans within or next to both Magnolia and Emanuel Prud'homme's plantation. Finally, both plantations were operated as part of a chain of properties; the LeComte holdings were substantially larger, but the types of land held were similar. Both family holdings included some other Cane River land — some of which was probably held as speculative property, one or more vacheries, and some timber land in the pine woods, as well as residential properties in the town of Natchitoches. Thus, the specialized agricultural production of each plantation should be understood in the context of a more diverse pattern of land use. This was important for the financial stability of each enterprise as demonstrated by the way both had managed to weather the agricultural depression of the 1840s.

²⁶² Settlement "A Lecomte to Atala Lecomte," 27 January 1852, Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 164, UNC, Chapel Hill. This transfer of property from Ambrose LeComte to his daughter Atala at the time of her marriage includes a statement of the "Lands of A. Lecomte," according to this Magnolia and Shallow Lake plantations totaled 4,420 acres, of which 1,200 were in cultivation, 2,000 were of secondary quality and 1,220 of third quality. Information on the early settlement at Shallow Lake is in A Mildred McCoy, "Shallow Lake House has Many Memories," *The Natchitoches Times*, 22 May 1975.

²⁶³ See the 1860 Period Plan for the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation in Oakland Plantation CLR.

Spatial Organization

A strong sense of order was imposed on the landscape at Magnolia by the straight lines of the field pattern with its cuts, lanes and turnrows. Despite the serpentine course of Cane River, the 1858 survey showed that much of the cleared land was organized into approximately rectangular spaces.

A few of the straight lines within the field pattern were arpent lines marking the edges of properties incorporated within Magnolia's boundaries. On the east side of the plantation, the line which ran approximately due north from the river separating cuts number four and five from cut number seven marked the western limit of the 1753 land grant to Jean Baptiste LeComte. But most of the straight lines within the layout did not coincide with arpent lines. For example, the central lane originated at the riverfront close to the start of an arpent line but it did not follow the same orientation.²⁶⁴ On the western side of the plantation, the straight line that led from the river to Hertzog Lake originated close to another arpent line but also followed a different orientation. This suggests that much of the field pattern was laid out after 1835, when the various pieces of land were brought together into a unified property and the old arpent lines ceased to function as boundaries.

The rectilinearity of the field pattern had some practical value in terms of the organization of agricultural operations, but geometric order also had aesthetic and symbolic values in antebellum Louisiana. As noted in the Oakland Plantation CLR, it was considered a mark of a well-ordered plantation that the layout be planned with a precise rectilinear geometry. The regimentation reflected the hierarchical organization of plantation society and expressed a planter's concern to maintain discipline amongst his captive workers and efficiency in his financial enterprise.²⁶⁵ These values were manifest at Magnolia in the architecture of the Big House and the layout of its yard and gardens. They were also very much in evidence in the organization of the Quarters and to a lesser extent in the working yards nearby. It is interesting to note, however, that the axis of the Big House with its allée did not extend far into the landscape. It did not extend into the fields behind the house, nor is it paralleled by the lane. Walmsley's survey did not record any details of the landscape across the river, but it seems

²⁶⁴ The arpent line is shown on an 1818 survey by Irwin, see Malone, fig. 6 ; the arpent line was oriented N 30 degrees E, the Lane was oriented N 55 degrees E.

²⁶⁵ Fred B. Kniffen, "The Physiognomy of Rural Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 4, no. 4 (1964): 296; John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: the Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 2-12.

unlikely that the presence of the Big House at Magnolia played any part in its layout. In contrast, at the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, where the Big House was built earlier and the plantation occupied both sides of the river, we think the axis of the Main House continued across the river and was marked by a lane leading to Bayou Ataho. The house at Magnolia was somewhat grander than the house at Oakland, but it was constructed later and seems to have been added to a landscape, the framework of which had already been laid out.²⁶⁶

Cane River and the Bayous

In the antebellum period, the river played a major role in the lives of all who lived beside it. It was an important artery for the movement of people and goods into and out of the region, and in particular it was the main route for the shipment of cotton to market in New Orleans. But the rise and fall of water in the river was unpredictable and a constant source of concern. Low water disrupted steamboat traffic, while high water brought the threat of floods. In the Oakland CLR it was noted that the state of the river was a subject of almost daily comment in the overseers' records of events on the plantation.²⁶⁷ It was also mentioned frequently in Lestan Prud'homme's diary, though that young man was more interested in the social life of Natchitoches than in the operation of his family's plantation.²⁶⁸ There is a more meager record of daily life at Magnolia, but some of the documents that have survived contain similar references and confirm the importance of the river. Letters from various overseers to Ambrose LeComte II refer to shipping cotton and other freight and comment on the rise or fall of the river. For example: G. E. Spillman wrote for instructions in January 1860: "Let me heare from you about shiping cotton thare will be a Boate up in Ten Days if the Rive Rises on."²⁶⁹

In February 1851, another overseer, W. B. Eddins, had written to LeComte about several shipments of goods:

I received the articles – left at Boxtton's Landing for me – by Hecla a few days ago by sending for them. As the Hecla came down the River this last trip – I received from her

²⁶⁶ The evidence for a construction date at Magnolia in the early 1850s is discussed in "Magnolia Plantation HABS," 7.

²⁶⁷ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 114-117.

²⁶⁸ "Lestan Prud'homme Journal, 1850-1852," copy in Cammie G. Henry Research Collection, NSU, original at the Howard Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans.

²⁶⁹ G. E. Spillman to A. LeComte, 27 January 1860. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 902, UNC Chapel Hill.

the articles for the plantation – all – as per Bill of Lading Except one Box of Merchandise which she did not put out[.]²⁷⁰

The Hecla was a steamboat and in the spring of 1851 it made several stops at Magnolia. However Eddins' letter indicates it sometimes left freight for Magnolia at other landings. We do not know the location of Boxtton's Landing; it might have been further downstream or it might have been on the Rigolet de Bondieu, which was the main channel of the Red River by the 1850s. When water levels in Cane River were low, steamboats would use the Rigolet de Bondieu to reach Natchitoches. LeComte owned several pieces of land beside the Rigolet and there might have been a landing on one or more of these properties. Another overseer, A. Wheeler, wrote in May 1855:

You spoke of shipping freight at Durans Landing let me say to you not to do so for it is impossible to haul cotton there on the account of little rivers being so bad to cross have it shipped to – or at – Boxtton landing for the latter is a good road and just as near you can Telegraph to you Merchant before he ships.²⁷¹

Flatboats were used to ferry goods and people between neighboring plantations and for short distances up and down the river, but sometimes even these could not be used because of low water levels. In early January 1862, W. S. Campbell, who seems to have been in charge of the plantation but addressed LeComte more as a friend of the family than as an employee, wrote about using a flatboat to fetch some rations:

I think the river too low at present to get either Henry's or your flat down, so I think we had better wait for rain, as it does not take much to raise the river 8 or 10 inches, and in the mean time we might send the wagons for a few bbls. if you wish, but we might wait a week for rain as we have hogs heads and other parts of the hogs we killed that it will not do to try to keep too long.²⁷²

Walmsley's survey did not record the location of a landing at Magnolia. It was probably fairly close to the place where cotton bales were stored ready for shipping. That would place it downstream from the Big House, somewhere next to the main complex of plantation buildings.

²⁷⁰ W. B. Eddins to A. LeComte, 1 February 1851, transcribed in Keel, 84.

²⁷¹ A. Wheeler to A. LeComte, 10 May 1855. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 901, UNC, Chapel Hill.

²⁷² W. S. Campbell to A. LeComte, 11 January 1862. Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog; Campbell might have been a lawyer, a payment to a lawyer of that name was recorded in the 1845 succession inventory.

There it would be on the outside of a bend in the river, so the current would swing against the bank making it easier to dock a boat.

Walmsley's survey shows two artificial levees crossing the plantation, one close to the Big House and the other at the edge of the woodlands. These were built to protect buildings and fields from floodwaters coming from bayous. In March 1851, Eddins reported on some spring flooding:

Our Levee holds the water back well – The River has fallen here in front – about 7 inches – and back of the Levee about 12 in – a good deal of our corn Land was over flowed though I think if the River continues to fall – our Land will be all dry in the course of 6 or 8 days more –.²⁷³

There were natural levees along the riverfront, which protected the property from floodwaters in Cane River. The natural levees were rarely overtopped, although that had happened in some places in 1849.²⁷⁴ But in most years any floodwaters came from bayous that laced the floodplain between the main channels of the river system. In 1851, Eddins noted, "...The plantation on the other side was over flowed from the back part...."²⁷⁵ Walmsley's survey of Magnolia did not show the bayous in the back part of the plantation, but they were charted on later maps. Branches of the Bayou Charette, which drained to Little River, wound through the eastern and northern parts of the plantation. The levee Eddins referred to would have been built to stem the rise of waters coming from Little River via these bayous at the back of the plantation.

Eddins' letter suggests there was only one levee in existence in 1851. If so, it was probably the front levee because the letter leads one to believe there was considerable cultivated ground flooded behind it. The "set back" levee at the edge of the woods was probably built between 1851 and 1858 during the prosperous years when higher cotton prices justified such expenditures and more land was probably being cleared from the woodland area.

On the east side of the Magnolia Plantation the two levees met at the boundary of the property and followed it towards the river. The termination point was on raised ground provided by the natural levee of the Cane River. On the west side of the plantation the two levees ended near the lake that was to become known as Hertzog Lake. In 1858, half of this lake was situated

²⁷³ W. B. Eddins to A. LeComte, 21 March 1851, transcribed in Keel, 85.

²⁷⁴ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 115.

²⁷⁵ Eddins to LeComte, 21 March 1851.

on LeComte's land and half on Henry Hertzog's plantation. The front levee terminated south of the lake, running into raised ground provided by the natural levee. The set back levee terminated on the eastern shore of the lake and isolated the lake from the headwaters of the Bayou Charette. On Henry Hertzog's plantation several bayous entered the lake and a very complex drainage pattern had evolved, some of which was no doubt manmade. As two of these bayous — one of which was named Bayou Michel — were also connected to the main channel of Cane River, it is not clear what prevented floodwaters from the river flowing into the lake via these bayous. If this had happened the floodwaters would have gained access to the land between the front and set back levees. In order to prevent this, there were probably some flood barriers in these bayous, but these were not shown on Walmsley's drawing. We know that dams were built at Emanuel Prud'homme's plantation to prevent floodwaters from backing up major drainage channels connected to Bayou Brevelle.²⁷⁶ It is possible that there were similar devices to control the rise of water in the bayous on the western side of the lake; however, Walmsley's surveys of Magnolia and Henry Hertzog's plantation do not enlighten us about this. The river road crossed these bayous where they entered the main river, so combined bridge and dam structures might have been constructed at those crossings, but that is just a guess.

Roads, Lanes And Turnrows

A pattern of circulation routes typical of plantations in the region can be clearly seen on Walmsley's drawing. The river road ran along the riverbank and leading from this into the interior of the plantation was a central lane, and, on either side of this, a network of turnrows.

Although rivers were the most important arteries for the movement of people and goods into and out of the region, roads were much used by local traffic. The main roads followed the natural levees alongside the rivers and were linked by minor roads, which threaded the backcountry, fording bayous at suitable points. The road in front of Magnolia would have carried traffic between Cloutierville and Natchitoches, a distance of nearly 30 miles given the serpentine course of Cane River. In many places there were shortcuts across necks of land at major bends in the river. This was the case on Henry Hertzog's Plantation where the road cut across the neck of land opposite the junction of Cane River with Old River. Cut-offs greatly reduced the time taken to move between plantations, and although they cut across private land

²⁷⁶ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 115.

there were no restrictions on their use. At Magnolia there were no cut-offs in the river road, but it is possible that some turnrows were used to shortcut the river bends, particularly the sharp curve below the Big House.

Walmsley's survey of Matthew Hertzog's land showed a ferry across the river upstream from Magnolia. This was an important crossing known as the Twenty-four Mile Ferry reflecting its distance downstream from Natchitoches, and because of its location Matthew's plantation was sometimes referred to as Ferry Plantation.²⁷⁷ A short distance above this crossing, travelers could reduce the distance into town by leaving the river road and taking a more direct route to the west of the river. However this route was referred to as a "summer road," indicating it was only usable at certain times of the year.²⁷⁸

No crossings are indicated below the Twenty-four Mile Ferry, so we do not know where or how the river was crossed at Magnolia. As noted above, a flat boat was used to ferry supplies up and down the river, and no doubt it would have been used to connect Magnolia with its sister plantation across the river, but we do not know where the preferred crossing points were located. One possibility would have been at the end of the turnrow that led south from the main building complex between cut number 7 and cuts number 10, 11 and 12. At the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, the river was crossed by a bridge and ford, as well as by boat.²⁷⁹ The bridge was erected each summer when steamboat traffic ceased, and the ford was similarly only used at low water. We do not know if there was either a bridge or a ford at Magnolia; being further downstream water levels may not have dropped as low as at the Prud'homme plantation.

The central lane at Magnolia was a straight route that connected the main building complex at the center of the plantation with cuts, pasture and woods in the interior. The lane was wide; Walmsley indicates it was at least the same width as the allée leading to the Big House. Today there is a line of bois d'arc trees, *Maclura pomifera*, along the western side of the lane, and their size and condition suggests some might have been planted in the antebellum period, perhaps to provide a hedge.²⁸⁰ Lanes were usually fenced and gated, but gates are not indicated on Walmsley's drawing. Connected to the lane, turnrows ran around the edges of cuts and

²⁷⁷ "Partition of Land Between Ambrose J. Hertzog and Fanny H. Chopin," 18 January 1903, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog, original at Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court, Natchitoches Courthouse, Instrument 29021, Conveyance Record 110-A, 485.

²⁷⁸ Mershon, *Natchitoches and Alexandria Survey*.

²⁷⁹ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 80-81, 117.

²⁸⁰ A hedge of bois d'arc was planted at Oakland around the fruit and vegetable garden in the antebellum period, "Oakland Plantation CLR," 129-130.

provided paths for the movement of field workers and draft animals as they went about their tasks. Walmsley indicated some turnrows with double lines and these should be interpreted as an indication of their width and importance.

Walmsley added a number of dashed lines, which seem to have indicated paths that ran across the middle of cuts. Immediately northwest of the Big House, in cut number 13, he drew a double line of dashes, labeled "Road to Dwelling." The other lines have only one line of dashes. One of these passes ran through the smallholding owned by Marie Adelaide Mariotte and a marginal note reads: "The turning row continued to the river through Mariot's tract [finishes] at the live oak." The others are not labeled. With the exception of the route through the smallholding, it is not obvious how any of these paths fitted into an overall circulation system. The "Road to the Dwelling" in cut number 13 linked the Big House to the front levee, meeting it at a junction with a major turnrow. If one followed that turnrow north, one would arrive at Hertzog Lake, so the path might have provided a convenient way to get from the house to the lake. The other paths crossed cuts number 6, 14, 15 and 24. None of these led to any obvious destinations. It may be that the lines indicated temporary turnrows created by a division of crops in these cuts, rather than permanent paths. This interpretation is supported by the addition in pencil of a dotted line at the east end of the pasture field to indicate the area being used by Fontenot as a cotton patch.

The survey did not indicate a lane at either the eastern or northwestern side of Magnolia Plantation. As Walmsley did indicate a lane between Henry Hertzog's Plantation and Matthew Hertzog's Place, and another lane in the middle of Matthew's property, it seems probable that if there had been a lane between Magnolia and Henry Hertzog's land it would have been shown. On the eastern side of the plantation, we know that there was a lane in later years. It still exists and leads to Little River. It is possible this lane existed in the antebellum period and was the route to Duran's Landing referred to by Wheeler in the letter quoted above.

Cultivated Land

In 1858, 1,310 acres were cleared, just over half of the total area of the plantation, and 1,007 acres were being cultivated. Cleared land on plantations was enclosed by fences; on the drawing of Matthew Hertzog's property Walmsley used the term "Total under fence" when giving the area of cleared land. At Magnolia, Walmsley referred to front fences in his notes at the bottom

of the drawing, but did not indicate fence locations elsewhere. Nevertheless, in addition to fences along the river road, there would have been fences at the edge of the woodland and where open fields met property boundaries. Fences were necessary to exclude livestock that roamed freely in unenclosed woods and swamps. On the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, the lane was fenced also because it was used to drive livestock between woods, pastures and the plantation yard. It seems likely that the lane at Magnolia was fenced for the same reason. There would have been no need to fence individual cuts, except the field that was used as a pasture. Consequently the landscape of the cultivated land would have been very open, giving the appearance of two very large fields, one above the central lane and one below.

The records of the overseer at the Prud'homme plantation indicated that two types of fences were in use in this period. A post and rail fence was built at the front of the property, but log fences were used elsewhere, probably because they were easier to move.²⁸¹ At Magnolia, there might have been a log fence beside the woodland because fencelines would be shifted if new land were cleared.

Walmsley recorded the size of each cut. The sizes vary widely; cut number 1 was the largest, comprising 82 acres, while cut number 8 comprises only just over 15. The 'Potatoo Field' was even smaller, but it had a special use which will be discussed below. Clearly, the size of cuts had little or no operational significance and was probably determined during the process of clearance and drainage.

The cuts were identified by number rather than by name. In one of his letters to LeComte, Campbell wrote: "Cuts Nos 4, 5, 6 and nearly all of No 7 are broken. The wet weather has made me loose some time with the ploughs."²⁸² The use of numbers gives an impression of industrial efficiency rather than attachment to the land, but it is likely some cuts were given names by the people who worked the land. We know this was the case on the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation. And, in one of his letters from Magnolia, Eddins referred to "the levy cut," and in another to "the little field adjoining Mr. Hertzog's place."²⁸³ In the second letter he also recorded "planting cotton On front b[e]low." The terms "front" and "back" were used along Cane River to indicate position relative to the riverfront. These terms together with "above" and

²⁸¹ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 121-22.

²⁸² W. S. Campbell to A. LeComte, February [year obscured]. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 904, UNC, Chapel Hill.

²⁸³ W. B. Eddins to A. LeComte, 14 December 1851, and 21 March 1851, transcribed in Keel, 88 and 85.

"below" referring to position relative to the Big House would have been used for general orientation when referring to the location of individual cuts.²⁸⁴ Bends in the river would also have provided a means of orientation. In November 1854, Wheeler wrote to his employer about cotton picking, which was proceeding rather slowly:

I am picking but sloly in trying to pick fair cotton I get along sloly I have the point which is very thick with cotton to pick and am cot [up] one day picking behind then I will have [to do] over nearly all again but it will be a lite licking it will take me 2 weeks longer to finish picking ²⁸⁵

The point to which he refers may have been the land within the sharp curve below the Big House, which contained cuts 8, 9, and 10.

A major part of the cultivated land at Magnolia was devoted to the growing of cotton. In 1858, after a late drought and predations by caterpillars, the plantation produced 380 bales of cotton, with an average weight of 500 pounds per bale. It was a disappointing year; six years earlier in a "most excellent year" 479 bales had been produced at Magnolia.²⁸⁶ In both years the production at Magnolia was greater than the combined production of the other LeComte plantations.

Magnolia had extensive areas of soil suited to growing cotton; nevertheless it is likely that about a third of the cultivated land was devoted to the production of corn. It was generally regarded as prudent for a plantation to grow sufficient corn to meet its own needs, and this generally meant about six acres of corn for every ten acres of cotton.²⁸⁷ Cotton was usually grown on lighter soils near the river and corn on stiffer soils further back. Eddins' letter about flooding in March 1851 referred to corn land being overflowed, which confirms that it was being grown on low-lying back land. However, in the same letter, he notes that he will be planting corn "in the little field adjoining Mr. Hertzog's place." That little field was probably cut number 24, which was located by the river on the natural levee; if so, some corn was being grown on front land. We know there was some crop rotation at the Prud'homme plantation, and the same was probably true at Magnolia.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 41.

²⁸⁵ A. Wheeler to A. LeComte, 26 November 1854. Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

²⁸⁶ LeComte Memorandum Book, 1853-1859, in the collection of Betty Hertzog, (not paginated).

²⁸⁷ Gray, 708; Davis, 31.

²⁸⁸ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 79.

Walmsley's survey showed the locations of eight weather houses. These shelters were used primarily for the temporary storage of cotton picked from the fields. The distribution of these weather houses throughout the cultivated area suggests that cotton was grown in most of the cuts at some time.

The agricultural census of 1860 recorded a very large production of cotton and corn on the LeComte properties but did not record any other field crops.²⁸⁹ It seems highly likely however that other subsistence crops were being grown. Sweet potatoes would have been the main crop in the potato field marked by Walmsley. Sweet potatoes were an important part of enslaved workers' rations on all plantations in this region, and this field was located next to the slave quarters. Other crops commonly grown on cotton plantations in the region included cowpeas and beans. At the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, these fodder crops were interplanted with corn and grown along fencelines. A small amount of sugar cane might also have been grown. Cane River plantations were too far north for commercial production, but cane sugar was grown to supply molasses for home consumption on many plantations. In a letter written in May 1851, Eddins mentions sugar cane that was located close to the rear gallery of the Big House.²⁹⁰ This would put it in one of the gardens of the Big House where it might have been grown to supply the LeComte/Hertzog family's needs. It might have been grown on a larger scale elsewhere to supply the workers' rations; however, we know that in some years barrels of molasses were delivered by steamboat.²⁹¹

The 1858 survey provided no information on the drainage of the cultivated land. The construction of drainage ditches would have been an important part of the initial clearance of the ground, and regular maintenance of ditches was an important task on plantations. There are many references to such operations in the owner and overseers' records at the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation.²⁹² Unfortunately similar records have not survived at Magnolia, but we can be sure that similar activities were going on. There is one reference to drainage in a letter from Eddins:

²⁸⁹ *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Agricultural Productions, Louisiana Natchitoches Parish* (microfilm, Washington D.C.: NARA, 1967).

²⁹⁰ W. B. Eddins to A. LeComte, 2 May 1851, transcribed in Keel, 87.

²⁹¹ Shipping Record, Steamboat Cote Joyeuse, 7 April 1845, Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 912, UNC, Chapel Hill.

²⁹² "Oakland Plantation CLR," 123-24.

Baptist tells me that he will not have lime enough for your ditching – he says he will want about 80 lbs More – so you would do well to have it brought before the water gets to low in the River.²⁹³

Baptiste was working on the construction of the Big House at that time, so it seems likely that the ditches were associated with that project.

Questions about flooding around the lake have already been raised. The survey showed cultivated land in several cuts running right up to the edge of the lake; however, as already noted, the lake was more of a swamp than an area of open water and it had no precise edge. As the size of the swamp fluctuated in wet and dry years, so the area in cultivation around it must have varied.

Livestock, the Pasture Field, and Clover Lot

At Magnolia about 177 acres of enclosed land were set aside as pasture and another 20 acres as a hayfield. These areas were probably devoted primarily to the feeding of the more valuable livestock including draft animals. We know that enclosed pastures at the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation were occupied mainly by mares with foals, milch cows and sheep, with draft animals kept there some of the year to recover from their hard work in the fields, and it is reasonable to assume the same pattern of use at Magnolia.²⁹⁴ Unlike many cotton planters, LeComte had some valuable pedigree livestock including cattle and pigs as well as his famous racehorses; however, we do not know exactly where they were kept. The figures in the 1860 agricultural census do not separate the livestock at the various LeComte properties in Natchitoches Parish, which included a vacherie as well as three plantations. In total, in 1860, LeComte owned 32 horses, 90 mules, 28 working oxen, 50 milch cows, 125 sheep, 100 swine, and 282 other cattle.²⁹⁵

There was a much larger acreage of enclosed pasture at Shallow Lake than at Magnolia; Campbell referred to finishing a pasture fence at Shallow Lake and noted: "I think there will be about 1,200 acres in the pasture."²⁹⁶ Therefore we hypothesize that there would have been more livestock on the right bank of the river. There would nevertheless have been a variety of livestock at Magnolia. In 1845, according to the Succession of Julia Buard LeComte, there had been brood mares, other horses and colts, mules, blooded bulls, cows and calves, plus about 100

²⁹³ Eddins to LeComte, 9 May 1851, transcribed in Keel, 88.

²⁹⁴ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 71 and 125.

²⁹⁵ *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Agricultural Productions, Louisiana, Natchitoches Parish.*

²⁹⁶ Campbell to LeComte, n.d. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 904, UNC, Chapel Hill.

head of hogs at Magnolia; all of these except the hogs had probably spent at least some of the year in the pasture²⁹⁷

The pasture at Magnolia was in one large enclosure, which was accessible from the central lane and protected by levees. Within the field was a stand of trees covering about 20 acres. These trees no doubt provided shade for the livestock, but they had probably been left when the land was cleared because the ground was damp and stiff. The trees stood near the head of a small bayou, and although a levee had been constructed between the pasture and the bayou, the ground might have remained marshy. At the eastern end of the pasture, Walmsley added a note that a small area was being used as a cotton patch. This suggests that at least some of the field was suitable for cultivation. It might be that the field had first been cleared in hopes of increasing the acreage of cotton, hence the construction of the levee. Its conversion to pasture might have come about after it was realized that most of the ground was in fact less suited for cultivation than the rest of the cleared area.

The clover lot would have been used to provide hay for the draft animals and horses in their stables. The lot was located next to the lane and fairly close to both sets of stables. We do not have any information on what sorts of fodder grasses might have been grown in addition to the clover. At the Prud'homme plantation, several grasses were grown for hay, including rescue grass (*Bromus unioloides*) and Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*).²⁹⁸

Woodlands And Swamps

Walmsley did not survey the woodland but relied on "official and approved surveys" to construct the boundaries of the area. His map provides no information on the woodland other than its extent: he calculated that at 1,260 acres it covered nearly half the property. That figure did not include the lake, which he included in his inventory of unproductive areas of land, but it seems certain that the lake, then as now, was a cypress swamp rather than an area of open water.

The most valuable product of the bottomland forests of the Red River region was the timber of the swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). As there were extensive swampy areas in the northern part of the woods at Magnolia, there must have been extensive stands of cypress on the property at one time; however, it seems likely that most of the original stands on the

²⁹⁷ Succession of Julia Buard LeComte, 11 August 1845, 272.

²⁹⁸ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 125-126.

plantation had been worked over by 1858, and the most valuable timber extracted. In the Prud'homme records of Emanuel Prud'homme's plantation, there were several references to their 'cypriere' in the 1840s, but by the late 1850s there are no more references and Phanor Prud'homme had established a sawmill in pinewoods in the Kisatchie Hills.²⁹⁹

LeComte also owned land in the pinewoods, but he still had a sawmill in operation at Magnolia. Continuing clearance of the woods at Magnolia might have provided a continuing source of raw material for that sawmill. Clearance was probably ongoing in the 1850s when the price of cotton had recovered from the depression of the 1840s. Walmsley's survey showed a cut behind the set back levee next to the lake. The cut was not numbered, and its position suggests it was cleared from the woods after the set back levee was constructed. But woodland clearance would not by itself justify the continued operation of the plantation sawmill. If the cypress stands had been logged out, timber was probably being brought to the plantation from the pinewoods.

The woodland would have provided browse and rough grazing for some of LeComte's free ranging cattle and hogs. Eddins mentioned receiving some cattle in December 1851. "Elwah came in with 17 heads of beaves – part of which I have picked up."³⁰⁰ However, it is not clear where the cattle came from: they might have been driven in from the woods, or been brought from Shallow Lake, or from LeComte's vacherie. At the Prud'homme plantation, cattle were sometimes brought from elsewhere and then turned out into the plantation woodlands until they were needed, although the grazing was poor and cattle were often in poor condition.³⁰¹ Free ranging livestock in the woods would have been branded to indicate ownership. At the Prud'homme plantation enslaved workers owned some of the hogs and cattle in the woods.

Another important use of woods and swamps was recreation. Many Cane River planters enjoyed hunting and fishing. Ambrose lived at his town house for some of the 1850s, but he visited his plantation and we know that he and Matthew Hertzog went hunting. In 1859, his niece Coralie wrote to Fanny Bossier from Magnolia:

We took a ride to Cloutierville in a carriage yesterday evening...I enjoyed it very much. Uncle Matthew and Uncle LeComte have returned from their hunt.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 126.

³⁰⁰ Eddins to LeComte, 14 December 1851, transcribed in Keel, 88.

³⁰¹ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 126.

³⁰² Coralie to Fanny [Bossier], 15 October 1859. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 1, UNC, Chapel Hill.

Duck hunting on the lake and along the bayous was a popular sport; in April 1855, LeComte was buying decoys and duck calls from a dealer in New Orleans.³⁰³

The Grounds around the Big House

The architecture of the Big House at Magnolia manifested the wealth and status of the LeComtes.

The two-story brick house at Magnolia, with its central hall plan and exterior surrounded by Tuscan columns must have been the finest outside of the River Road when it was built. The brick masonry of the edifice lent a cosmopolitan air to the rural landscape, was enhanced by the presence of the equally durable, brick slave quarters, and contrasted sharply with the bousillage buildings all around it.³⁰⁴

It seems certain that the grounds around the house were also designed to impress. Unfortunately, Walmsley's survey gives little information beyond the pattern of land uses around the house.

In front of the house, the drawing indicates an allée formed by double lines of trees. Five pairs of trees formed the inner lines and six or seven pairs of what appear to be smaller trees formed the outer lines. The giant live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) standing today in the Front Yard are no doubt survivors from the antebellum period, and probably formed part of the inner lines of the allée. There is no survivor from the outer lines in front of the house, but there are giant live oaks at the sides of the house, which were probably planted on continuations of the outside lines indicated by Walmsley.

The name of the plantation suggests the original presence of magnolias (*Magnolia grandiflora*) in a prominent location, but it is not known where this was. As noted above, there is a freight bill from 1850 that refers to the shipping of 15 magnolia trees, but where these were to be planted we do not know. Only one of the magnolia trees standing near the house today is of any considerable age; the rest were planted in the mid-20th century.

At the end of the allée in front of the house, Walmsley's drawing indicated a fenced front garden. He drew the Big House in elevation, and, while it might not have been a completely accurate representation, neither was it a generic house. It showed a two-story brick structure with a gallery, in front of which was an arched entrance bordered on both sides by a fence. This

³⁰³ Receipt, T. F. Guion, Corner of St Charles and Canal Streets, 20 April 1855. Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

³⁰⁴ "Magnolia Plantation HABS," 8.

probably enclosed a parterre or flower garden, the ancestor of the flower garden in front of the house today. Walmsley's drawing suggests a rectangular space, but this may be misleading. The sides of the present garden are splayed at an angle and it would have been difficult to indicate this in elevation.

On either side of the allée, there were large spaces; together these formed the front yard. There is no information on the use of the downstream side of the front yard. On the upstream side of the yard Walmsley indicated stables. The old stables survived until 1917, so we know that the location shown in the 1858 survey was approximately correct.³⁰⁵ The building contained space for a carriage, quarters for a carriage driver, and stalls for carriage horses. Walmsley did not indicate a route to the stables, but there must have been a track leading to it from the end of the allée beside the house. There were probably several tracks on this side of the yard. The road across the cut on the northwest side of the house has already been mentioned. This road entered the front yard at its northern corner from where there must have been a way to the house.

The front yard would have been fenced on all sides, and there were probably trees along the fencelines at the side of the yard. Some of the live oaks along the upstream and downstream sides of the yard today probably were planted in the antebellum period. We do not know if there were any other plantings in these spaces. At Oakland, Phanor Prud'homme planted a variety of things in his front yard including grapes, but we do not know if any of the residents of Magnolia shared his horticultural interests.³⁰⁶

Walmsley labeled the spaces at the sides of the Big House as gardens, showing them extending the full width of the front yard. There are much smaller gardens at the sides of the house today. Because Walmsley's drawing of the house exaggerated its width, the spaces occupied by the present-day side gardens are hidden on his drawing. We do not know therefore whether they existed in 1858 as part of the large side gardens or were separate spaces. As live oaks were planted in these spaces close to the house they were probably unsuited to the growing of fruits and vegetables, so the gardens further away from the house could have been used for that purpose. We do not know very much about what was grown in any of these gardens. The only specific reference we have discovered thus far to plants in the gardens in this period is the

³⁰⁵ Malone, 54.

³⁰⁶ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 127-128.

mention of sugar cane by Eddins. His account places the cane next to the gallery of the house in the garden on its northwestern side.³⁰⁷

In Walmsley's drawing, the elevation of the house obscures the space immediately behind it. The backyard was probably used for work associated with the running of the Big House and most likely had a utilitarian character not unlike the backyard in the present day. The area would probably have been either paved with brickbats or had a swept dirt surface. Walmsley indicates a small building on either side of the backyard, and we can assume these were dependencies of the Big House. Because of the exaggerated size of the elevation of the Big House, the drawing probably did not accurately indicate the size or locations of these dependencies. There is a family tradition that a kitchen stood behind the house, in a spot to the right of the existing back garden, and there are the remains of cisterns in that location.³⁰⁸

Two other buildings were shown close to the Big House on Walmsley's drawing. One stood at the back of the garden on the downstream side of the house, and it is labeled as a "garden house." It may have been used as a tool or storage shed. The other building stood outside the southeast corner of the same garden, in the orchard. This is approximately the position of the old cook's house that still survives, and it may therefore be that building, and have been used at that time by a domestic servant.

The orchard probably contained a variety of fruit and nut trees. It covered ten acres of good land between the house and the front levee. There is one historical reference to a pecan tree, which was probably located in the orchard. In a letter written in October 1859, Coralie recorded: "Yesterday evening we took a walk with him to the Pecannes tree, we gathered good many."³⁰⁹ Other possibilities include peaches and mulberries. We know both were being grown here before LeComte acquired the land because they are mentioned in earlier surveys of the property.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Eddins to LeComte, 2 May 1851, transcribed in Keel, 87.

³⁰⁸ Betty Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005; "Magnolia Plantation HABS," 36. In a letter from Magnolia Grove dated 16 May 1854, a C. K. Smith wrote "Batiste has the outside walls on the kitchen nearly done, but he will be stopt on account of lime, I thought you knew that he had not finished or I would have let you know ere now." Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 901, UNC, Chapel Hill.

³⁰⁹ Coralie to Fanny Bossier, 12 October 1859. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 1, UNC, Chapel Hill.

³¹⁰ An 1818 survey of the LaCour property used peach, mulberry and pecan trees as markers, see Malone, fig.6.

The Plantation Yards

The various buildings associated with the operation of the plantation as an agricultural and industrial enterprise were clustered in two yards at the geographical center of the plantation. It is not known what names were given to the two yards in the antebellum period, but for convenience in this report one is referred to as the Agency Yard and the other as the Gin Yard. The character of the antebellum buildings that still exist in these areas is described in a series of Historic Structure Reports, and Malone and Keel have discussed what is known about vanished structures.³¹¹ The focus in this Cultural Landscape Report is on the arrangement of the buildings and the character of the spaces around the buildings. The grouping of the buildings shown in the 1858 survey was evidence of careful organization and concern for operational efficiency. We hypothesize that the late development of Magnolia and the wealth of the LeComte family allowed Ambrose to develop a layout that could serve as a model for the planning of such an enterprise.

The Agency Yard was located next to the central lane. The buildings in this yard were probably placed there because of its central location and because they would be under the eye of the overseer. The agency would have been occupied by the agent, which we believe would have been the person acting for LeComte when he was absent. The drawing on Walmsley's plan indicated a raised structure, substantial enough to provide accommodation as well as an office, but we do not know its exact use or uses. In this central location an agent or overseer would have been well placed to keep watch on all comings and goings in the yards and Quarters. The Quarters were located behind the Agency Yard and access would have been through that yard. Standing next to the agency the plantation bell would have been used to summon the enslaved workers each workday morning.³¹²

The other buildings close to the agency were related to the production and storage of rations and the welfare of the enslaved workers. A mill stood behind the agency. This was probably a gristmill, as there must have been a mill for grinding corn on the plantation, but it might have been a syrup mill. There is a reference in a document from 1845 to a "vertical grain

³¹¹ "Cane River Creole NHP, Magnolia Plantation, Overseer's House, Historic Structure Report" (Atlanta: NPS Southeast Region, Cultural Resources, 2004); "Cane River Creole NHP, Magnolia Plantation, Blacksmith's Shop, Pigeonnier and Carriage Shed, Historic Structure Report" (Atlanta: NPS Southeast Region, Cultural Resources, 2004); *Cane River Creole NHP, Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report* (Atlanta: NPS Southeast Region, Cultural Resources, 2004); Malone, 46-54; Keel, 23-28, 77-81.

³¹² Keel noted another building next to the bell, but the preliminary draft of Walmsley's survey showed only one symbol; the final drawing may be misleading in the way it represented the bell tower.

mill" costing \$1,300.00; but we do not know if that was the mill at Magnolia.³¹³ A smokehouse stood beside the mill, so there might also have been some pens for holding animals such as hogs in this yard while they were fattened before slaughter. Meat from the smoke house would have gone to the Big House as well as to the Quarters, unless one of the small buildings located in the gardens of the Big House stored meat. Squabs from the pigeon house, which stood between the mill and the smokehouse, would certainly have been destined for the table at the Big House. Why the pigeon house was located here instead of closer to the Big House is therefore a question; perhaps the answer is related to the feeding or care of the pigeons. In some layouts pigeoniers became formal elements in a garden layout, their location more related to design than utility; here, utility seems to have been more important. At the Prud'homme plantation two pigeoniers stood close to the Big House, but there the plantation yards were much closer to the house as well.³¹⁴

A slave hospital was located in the northern corner of the Agency Yard. It was close, but not too close to the Quarters and conveniently located for an overseer to make regular inspections. Overseers were required to keep a close watch on the progress of sick workers; most of their surviving letters to LeComte contain reports on the health of his slaves.³¹⁵ On the other side of the agency and probably much closer to the entrance to the Quarters Yard, a small building was labeled as a nursery. Children too young to be sent to the fields would be cared for there, while their mothers were at work.

Finally there were two important buildings beside the junction of the central lane with the river road. A sawmill stood inside the Agency Yard, while a smith's shop was located on the other side of the lane beside the front yard of the Big House. The sawmill was well located to receive deliveries of timber coming down the lane from the plantation's woodland or by river or road from elsewhere. We know this sawmill was erected in 1854.³¹⁶ We do not know if there was one on this side of the river before that date, but it seems likely given the amount of construction that had taken place before 1854.³¹⁷ The smith's shop might have been much older;

³¹³ Receipt, J. R. Mille per Crossany, 9 April 1845, Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog; Malone, 50.

³¹⁴ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 134.

³¹⁵ For example all seven of Eddins letters transcribed in Keel contain reports of the sick.

³¹⁶ C. K. Smith to A. LeComte, 16 May 1854. Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 901, UNC Chapel Hill.

³¹⁷ A freight bill from August 1852, records the shipping of "machinery for sawmill," but it is not clear whether it was destined for Magnolia; Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 919, UNC, Chapel Hill.

Malone speculates it might have been acquired with the land it stood on.³¹⁸ This might explain why it stood by itself outside the plantation yards. However, it would probably have been moved or replaced if it had not occupied a conveniently central location. A blacksmith would have done a wide variety of jobs related both to the agricultural and industrial activities of the plantation and the operation of the Big House. A central location was therefore important. Walmsley's drawing showed a yard beside the shop filled with rows of lines. That symbol might have represented piles of wood being stored in the yard. Charcoal would have been needed to operate the forge, and there was probably a charcoal kiln in the yard. The wood for the kiln was probably obtained from the plantation's own woodland, so it would have been brought down the lane and stored in the yard.

The Gin Yard was located downstream from the Agency Yard, and a fence separated them. A gate in the center of the fence linked the two yards. The gin itself was located at the far end of the yard, well away from the Big House. A smudge of ink has obscured the elevation of the gin in Walmsley's drawing; but one can make out a tall structure with a shed addition. It is not known whether the gin was steam driven at this time, but if it was, the shed may have housed the steam engine.³¹⁹ The gin house at Magnolia had burned with about 80 bales of cotton in September 1856, so the building shown by Walmsley was a new structure.³²⁰ The location of the gin at the far end of the yard may be explained in part by the fire hazard, but also by the noises emitted by its industrial processes.³²¹ Planters complained of the squeals emitted by wooden screw presses of the type that still exists at Magnolia, and the chatter of the gin must have been equally tiresome, so a location at some distance from their residence would be preferred.

The ginning area was close to the river so that bales could be stored close to the landing from which they would be shipped, but as noted above we do not know the exact location of the landing. A building beside the river was labeled "Cotton Baled." As the press was probably located in the gin building, this other building was probably a magazine where bales could be stored before shipment. LeComte decided when it was most advantageous to send his cotton to

³¹⁸ Malone, 45.

³¹⁹ *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 15-16; LeComte spent considerable sums on his gins in the 1850s but we have found no clear reference to a steam engine at Magnolia.

³²⁰ LeComte Memorandum Book, 1853-1859.

³²¹ John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 10.

market. Letters from the overseers contain requests for instructions on this matter.³²² As well as being located close to the river, the gin was conveniently accessible from the cotton fields. Two major turnrows led to the gin from the cuts on the eastern side of the plantation. Cotton picked in the cuts above the central lane would have been sent via the lane or river road. Once the cotton arrived in the Gin Yard, some, or all of it would have been spread on scaffolds to dry. Walmsley did not mark a scaffold yard, but it would have been close to the gin, perhaps in the space between the gin and the area for storing bales.

A large stable building stood near a gate giving access to turnrow paths across cultivated ground on the downstream side of the plantation. This stable would have housed the mules used to cultivate the cotton and cornfields, while the oxen would have been kept outside. According to Malone, the stables were also used to house some of LeComte's racehorses, so the building would have been substantial and well maintained if it contained such valuable bloodstock.³²³ Close to the stables Walmsley showed two corncribs. Corn was an important feed for the animals. There were probably several outdoor pens beside the stable, but Walmsley did not mark those. There might also have been space assigned for the storage of plows and other farming equipment, which in this region were often stored outside.

Both yards were fenced. Walmsley's drawing marks several gates. There was one beside the gin leading to the fields, one between the two yards, and one opposite the agency leading out to river road. There was probably another gate leading to the river road in the northeastern corner of the gin yard, but the gate symbol is partly obscured by writing. These were probably the major gates, but there must have been others, including one to the Quarters. In later years at Magnolia, stiles were used to cross fences in areas where there was livestock and it seems likely that stiles were present in the antebellum period; so this may help explain the lack of gates on Walmsley's drawing.

The ground surface of plantation yards was packed earth, sometimes reinforced with rubble or brickbats, and it was important to keep it as well drained as possible. At the Prud'homme plantation the overseer's records indicate that the maintenance of drainage ditches around the plantation yard was an important task, and we can assume that the same was true at

³²² See for example, Wheeler to LeComte, 19 May 1855, Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 918, UNC, Chapel Hill; Spillman to LeComte, 27 January 1860, Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 902, UNC Chapel Hill.

³²³ Malone, 48.

Magnolia. The yards were probably drained to a ditch on their eastern side, and that ditch would have been connected to a drainage system in the fields. There is a drainage furrow to the west of the extant slave dwellings at Magnolia today, which may mark the eastern boundary of the antebellum plantation yards.

Collection into cisterns of rainwater from the roofs of most of the buildings in the yards would have played a role in keeping the ground dry. And water from the cisterns would have been useful for watering livestock and operating the steam gin. On Walmsley's drawing there is a small circle between the sawmill and the hospital; this might be his symbol for a bottle cistern. However there would have been cisterns near other major buildings, and these are not recorded, so the meaning of the circle is not known.

The Quarters

Walmsley's survey showed 24 cabins, arranged in a grid with military precision. Like the Big House, the buildings were colored red to indicate they were made of brick, and on the roofs of those drawn in elevation, Walmsley marked two chimneys. Eight of these buildings remain today, and the archaeological survey detected the remains of the others, so we know Walmsley's plan was generally accurate. However, the drawing is misleading in certain ways. The buildings did not have two chimneys, but rather had two rooms within each cabin and a central chimney. The drawing also exaggerated the size of each unit and gave a misleading impression of narrow streets. In fact the spaces between the buildings were wide enough to allow the creation of small garden plots. We know that there were small gardens in front of each cabin later in the history of the site, but we do not know if there were gardens in the Quarters in the antebellum period. It was common practice in Louisiana for slaves to produce some of their own food, so there were often small fenced yards beside or behind cabins.

Whether or not there were gardens in the Quarters, it seems highly likely that its inhabitants used the potato field to grow some of their food. It was of course in the economic interests of planters to encourage enslaved workers to grow as much of their own food as possible, to minimize the amount of rations that had to be purchased. At the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, slaves were assigned time to work in their garden plots and allowed to

grow their own corn in one of the cuts. Phanor Prud'homme sold their surplus corn, and there is evidence that LeComte did the same for his slaves.³²⁴

The Quarters were probably fenced. Walmsley's drawing indicated that the fence would have stood close to the cabins on three sides, but there was some open space on the western side between the quarters and the plantation yards. It seems likely that this space was used for any social gatherings, as well as more garden plots. At the Prud'homme plantation social gatherings took place at Christmas and New Year and at various other times to celebrate special events or mark points in the agricultural cycle.³²⁵ On these occasions there was dancing and drinking, and Phanor Prud'homme allowed his enslaved workers to socialize with slaves from other plantations. It seems probable that a similar pattern was followed at Magnolia. The space on the west side of the Quarters would have been overlooked by the agency and would therefore have been ideal for the supervision of such events.

Rhythms of Life in the Landscape

The lives of the inhabitants of an antebellum cotton plantation were dominated by the annual cycle of agricultural activities. The lives of the enslaved workers, who constituted the great majority of the inhabitants, were dominated by work activities. The daily and seasonal rhythms of work on a Red River cotton plantation have been well documented at the Emanuel Prud'homme Plantation, and these have been discussed in the Oakland Plantation Cultural Landscape Report.³²⁶ Unfortunately, there is a paucity of records recounting daily activities on Magnolia in this period, but the few documents that have survived make it clear that there were similar rhythms of work on LeComte's plantation.

On most plantations, Sunday was a time for the inhabitants of the Quarters to work in their own gardens or in a communal garden plot. These areas, then, would have been busy on Sundays and any other times when workers were not required to be in the fields. True leisure time was granted only on a few occasions, but at these special times, when dancing and drinking were allowed under the watchful eye of the overseer, the Quarters would have taken on a festive character in sharp contrast to its work day appearance.

³²⁴ Malone, 59.

³²⁵ "Oakland Plantation CLR," 78, 80, 82.

³²⁶ Ibid., 77- 82.

The lives of the inhabitants of the Big House on a Cane River cotton plantation were very different. Members of the owner's family were involved in some domestic duties, but they spent a considerable amount of time paying and receiving social calls from relatives and neighboring planters, and in visits to town for both business and pleasure. Some idea of the social rounds that occupied the families of wealthy planters in French Creole society can be gathered from Lestan Prud'homme's journal.³²⁷

In 1858, LeComte was living in his town house in Natchitoches, while his daughter and son-in-law occupied the Big House at Magnolia. We may assume therefore that members of both households spent a considerable amount of time traveling between the two residences, a journey by horse or carriage that would have taken the best part of a day. We know that LeComte spent some of his time following the fortunes of his racehorses, and visiting distant cities such as New Orleans and St Louis. But his days were not entirely devoted to social events and recreational pursuits. It is clear from his overseer's letters to him and his entries in his Memorandum Book that he kept a close watch on his business affairs. He would therefore have been very aware of the seasonal if not the daily rhythm of work on his plantations including Magnolia. The marked fluctuations in the size of his cotton crops from year-to-year indicate how uncertain an enterprise cotton growing was. Planters were never free from anxieties about the many factors that could affect their investments including the vagaries of the weather, the possibilities of floods or droughts, the depredations of caterpillars, outbreaks of disease amongst enslaved workers, and breakdowns of machinery at their gins. The life of even a wealthy absentee owner like LeComte must therefore have been dominated by the agricultural cycle, and thereby tied to the natural rhythms of the Cane River environment.

³²⁷ Lestan Prud'homme Journal, 1850 – 1852.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAGNOLIA – NARRATIVE HISTORY

1861 – 1941

When the war began, there stood on Cote Joyeuse an imposing mansion of red brick, shaped like the Pantheon. A grove of majestic live-oaks surrounded it. Thirty years later, only the thick walls were standing, with the dull red brick showing here and there through a matted growth of clinging vines. The huge round pillars were intact; so to some extent was the stone flagging of hall and portico. There had been no home so stately along the whole stretch of Cote Joyeuse.

Kate Chopin, "Ma'ame Pelagie," *Bayou Folk*, 1894

Sources

The period after the Civil War saw a dramatic transformation of Southern society and with it significant changes in the agricultural landscape at Magnolia. Much has been written about the South and reconstruction, some of it accurate, much of it emotionally charged, none of it specific enough to elucidate the day-to-day experience that life during these years would have brought to the residents of Magnolia, black and white. This chapter examines the changed landscape based upon the documentation that survives, and what is known about the larger region during the period.

Some of the most precise documentation for the years of the Civil War is from the Red River Campaign of 1864, but the documentation only addresses the superficial aspect of the overall story of Magnolia's landscape evolution — the fact that the house and much of the surrounding domestic landscape was burned and destroyed by Union troops. What would be more relevant in considering the future of Magnolia as an agricultural enterprise would be to understand the psychological and economic impact that having the conflict come literally into the sacred precinct of one's own home would have upon the LeComte and Hertzog families. Not only did the torching of the Magnolia Big House destroy the house and its furnishings, but presumably all of the family documentation that had been carefully saved through the generations by family members.

While documentation in the form of diaries, letters, and receipts are, therefore, scarce for the antebellum period, they are virtually non-existent for the post-bellum period when economic

hardship, increased mobility, and dramatic shifts in technologies typified daily existence. The rituals of daily letter-writing, documenting family events for posterity, and the security of living in the same place that facilitated keeping documents, took a "back-seat" to the challenges of adapting to the new reality of reconstruction.

Documents for the period that do survive are legal records, including succession records; the scrapbooks compiled by Cammie Henry housed in the Melrose Collection at the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches; the photographs and films of Magnolia taken by Dr. Ambrose Hertzog II; and ledger and other account books, some of which are at the Big House while others from the plantation store are now in the collection of the Cane River Creole N. H. P.³²⁸

These primary documents have been augmented by the existing studies on Magnolia particularly "The Magnolia Plantation Overview," by Ann Malone Rose; "Slavery and its Aftermath: The Archeological and Historical Record at Magnolia Plantation," by Christina E. Miller; and the Historic American Building Survey's "Addendum to Magnolia Plantation."

Timeline

- 1876 Louisiana secedes from the Union – War between the Union and the Confederate States.
- 1877 Capture of New Orleans by Union Navy disrupts cotton trade.
- 1878 Union Army's Red River Campaign causes extensive damage.
- 1864 In April, the Magnolia main house is burned by Federal troops. Matthew and Atala move into the old slave hospital.
- 1879 Over 12,000 bales of cotton are reported as stored in Natchitoches. In late March, cotton is burned along the Cane River to prevent the Federal troops from acquiring them. At the end of the war, the old agricultural routine is reestablished on the plantation despite fears of lawlessness, as the Confederacy is defeated. Freedman's Bureau is created by act of Congress in March. Experiments begin to find an alternative labor system acceptable to both planters and freedmen.
- 1879 Seventy slave dwellings are listed as being on Ambrose II's landholdings. 4,500 bushels of corn and 213 bales of cotton are reported for Ambrose II. 3,000 bushels of corn and 163 bales of cotton are listed for Matthew's estate, which also includes 25 bushels of sweet potatoes and 30 pounds of wool.
- Late 1860s Scarcity of cash and credit in the South after the Civil War results in crop lien laws. Direct result of this new economic system is growth of plantation stores or "crossroads merchandising," to supply former slaves with tools, food, and clothing. Magnolia opens general store in either late 60s or early 70s.

³²⁸ As noted in the Introduction neither of these collections of account books has yet been inventoried and we have examined only a selection of them.

- 1870 Census: Ambrose II reports 1,650 improved acres, 1,320 unimproved acres, and 6,065 acres of woodland. His farmland is appraised at \$64,000. His livestock is valued at \$3,500 and includes 12 oxen, 100 sheep, 4 horses, 36 mules, 4 milch cows, and 130 head of other cattle. Matthew reports 100 acres of improved land and 1,400 acres of unimproved acres with a \$12,000 cash value on the farm. Farm machinery is appraised at \$200, and one-third of the crop is designated as wages for the tenants. Livestock is valued at \$3,190 and includes 12 oxen, 50 sheep, 90 pigs, 25 horses, 28 mules, 20 milch cows, and 50 head of other cattle. Population census: four are in Matthew Hertzog household. His real estate is valued at \$12,000, and his personal property is valued at \$8,390. Together Matthew and Ambrose report 376 bales of ginned cotton.
- 1892 Thirty crop liens are recorded between sharecroppers and Matthew Hertzog. These are the only Magnolia sharecropping agreements or crop liens to be recorded at the Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court office.
- 1906 Political Reconstruction ends in Louisiana. Cotton sells for 10 cents per pound. Cotton prices remain steady around this price during the 1880s.
- 1927 Author Kate Chopin (1850-1904) moves to Cloutierville and in 1893 describes the ruins of the house at Magnolia in fictional "Ma'ame Pelagie."
- 1879 Estimated farm production from the 1880 census amounts to \$4,000: 125 cotton bales from 125 acres and 750 bushels of Indian corn from 150 acres. These statistics are probably for Matthew's plantation, rather than the LeComte's Magnolia.
- 1880 Census: Matthew owns 558 improved acres and 1,724 unimproved woodland acres, valued at \$20,000. His livestock is valued at \$100 and includes 14 oxen, 110 sheep, 30 milch cows, 30 calves, 100 horses, and 20 mules and asses.
- 1883-1885 Munger develops the process of "system ginning" linking all ginning operations and moving cotton from one to the next by a pneumatic system.
- 1883 Ambrose II dies. Ambrose II's inventory: two plantations namely Shallow Lake (appraised at \$12,000) with 1,960 acres and Magnolia (appraised at \$15,000) with 2,580 acres. Magnolia Store contained \$3,546.63 worth of boots, shoes, clothing dry goods, groceries, hardware, crockery, drugs, and stationary. 285 people owed \$12,912.13 to the store. Other property holdings include the property at the corner of Church and Front streets (worth \$12,500), the fifty-acre racetrack lot, various other town lots, and unimproved timberland in Townships 5, 9, and 10.
- 1887 Ambrose II's property is put up for sale. Matthew and Atala buy most of Magnolia's farm equipment, livestock, and household goods. 1,960 acres of Shallow Lake purchased by Eliza LeComte Prud'homme, the wife of A.J. Alphonse Prud'homme of Oakland.
- 1891 Matthew buys the plantation next to Magnolia, once owned by his brother Henry, and integrates it with Magnolia and his own plantation into one operation. Sometime during this decade he also installs a new system gin, a further indication of renewed prosperity.
- 1937 Ambrose Hertzog (1857-1921) marries Sarah (Sally) Hunter (1873-1960) of Alexandria.
- 1893ff. After the Panic of 1893, cotton prices drop to five to seven cents per pound.

- 1896 Matthew and Atala move into the rebuilt main house. Matthew is said to have used massive brick pillars, walls, and foundations left from original house. He may have used bricks from deconstructed slave quarters.
- 1897 Atala dies. Ambrose's wife Sarah, "Miss Sally" Hunter Hertzog begins to assume the role of family matriarch. Matthew II is born to Ambrose and Sarah.
- 1898 The main house is completed.
- 1900 Census: Matthew lives with his son, daughter-in-law, and their four children at Magnolia.
- 1903 Matthew dies. After his death, the plantations are divided among his heirs. Ambrose J. Hertzog inherits the Big House at Magnolia and the land above it, while his sister Fanny Hertzog Chopin receives the downstream portion, which includes the gin and quarters, as well as land on the other side of the river. She subsequently sells the plantation yards to Ambrose J. to keep them with the Big House. Ambrose gives up Alexandria law practice to return to Magnolia.
- 1973 Hyman Cohen builds store in Cloutierville; purchased in 1920 by J. C. Carnahan, whose family operates it until 1990. Fire destroys the structure in 2005.
- 1974 Ambrose J. Hertzog II is born to Ambrose J. and Sarah. The boll weevil arrives in Louisiana and causes widespread losses.
- 1975 The first dam on the Cane River ends river traffic.
- 1976 Catholic chapel built into wing of main house for Hertzog family's use.
- 1917 The carriage house and stables in the front yard of the Big House at Magnolia are razed during World War I.
- 1919 Cotton prices peak in the post-World War I years. They reach 43 cents per pound and level off at 35 cents per pound.
- 1920s The cotton boom collapses, and cotton farmers experience years of unstable prices. Many sharecroppers and tenant farmers leave the land in search of better opportunities in urban areas. New products, such as radios, movies, and automobiles, become common, even in rural areas.
- 1921 Ambrose J. dies. Inventory: 2,192 acres with buildings valued at \$135,000. Crops: 280 cotton bales (10 cents per pound in 1921), 1,000 bushels of corn (60 cents per bushel), 8 tons of cottonseed (\$18 per ton), and 115 tons of hay (\$20 per ton). Livestock, valued at \$8,400 and includes 57 mules, 2 jacks, 2 jennets, 19 horses, mares, and colts, 149 head of cattle, and 15 hogs.
- 1873 Matthew II is appointed manager of his father's estate and lives at Magnolia with his family. He manages the plantation for fifty years.
- 1921 The only people in debt to Magnolia Store are sharecroppers.
- 1874 Former Magnolia quarters resident recalls school being held at the Quarters because there were no black public schools until the 1930s.
- 1924 Matthew Hertzog II marries Eleanor Lydia Compton.
- 1991 The Great Flood sweeps the Mississippi Delta and Red River areas, including Cane River.
- 1929 Betty Hertzog is born to Matthew II and Eleanor Hertzog.
- 1930 Kisatchie becomes a National Forest, bringing an end to large-scale logging, and all-but eliminating mill towns like Derry and Montrose.
- 1930s The Great Depression. During this period, emigration from the land slows because of lack of alternative employment. The Magnolia main house is electrified.

Magnolia has a baseball diamond located between the main house and the blacksmith shop. The horse track is located between Magnolia and the Cohen plantation.

- 1931 Cotton prices drop to 5 cents per pound.
- 1933 As part of the New Deal agricultural policies, cotton farmers are required to plow under one-quarter of their crop or risk penalties. Some cotton farmers begin to diversify their farming enterprises.
- 1973 Magnolia is in full compliance with the New Deal agricultural policies, practicing crop rotation, a federal crop control plan, and planting winter peas as a cover crop on harvested cotton acreage. Matthew requires tenants and day laborers to grow gardens to supply their own vegetables. The cotton crop spreads over 600 acres along the Cane River highway. Matthew II is breeding mules for export and reviving the breeding of racehorses on the plantation. Article in the *Progress Magazine* quotes Matthew, reflecting on the toll that the depression is taking on the plantation: "We're not making the money the old folks used to make, but we're making a little and we're still here."
- 1939 Dr. Ambrose Hertzog II photographs and films scenes from daily life at Magnolia. A tornado passes through Magnolia and damages some of the plantation buildings, including the engine house near the gin barn, the "Cottage Buard," and the eight remaining slave cabins.
- 1941 Land purchased to build public school for black children in Derry, called St. Andrews, attended by children from Magnolia quarters until 1954 when school closed and children transferred to black public school near Melrose, St. Matthews.
- 1941 December 7, Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor bringing US into World War II. Dr. Ambrose Hertzog II films Christmas Eve celebration at Magnolia Store held for workers and their families.

WAR AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PLANTATION

Civil War and Magnolia 1861 – 1865

Although much has been recorded of the Union army's Red River campaign of 1864,³²⁹ we know few specifics of the direct impact of the earlier years of the war at Magnolia. The documentation for 1860 suggests that all was well with plantation operations, so much so that Ambrose was considering adding another story to his cotton gin,³³⁰ and was looking for someone to work as foreman of his livestock operation in the Anacoco Prairie in Sabine Parish.³³¹

³²⁹ Ludwell Johnson's seminal *Red River Campaign: Politics & Cotton in the Civil War* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993) brings together first-hand accounts, field maps, and careful analysis of the military campaign and how the troops negotiated the landscape of the Red River countryside.

³³⁰ G. E. Spillman to A. Lecomte, Magnolia Plantation, 10 February 1860. Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in collection of Betty Hertzog.

³³¹ Mark McAlpin, Anacoco, Sabine Parish, Louisiana, to A. LeComte, February 16, 1860, Prud'homme Family Papers, copy in collection of Betty Hertzog.

But by 1862, the Federal naval blockade of New Orleans had put an abrupt halt to cotton production as the planters of Cane River had known it. The state capital was moved to Alexandria, and then to Shreveport, as Federal troops advanced north. Many Natchitoches men had joined the Confederate forces, but in 1864 the civilians of Natchitoches, including the residents of Magnolia and other plantations along the lower Cane River, came face-to-face with Federal troops. Cotton had become an important target in the Red River campaign. Confederate troops came in advance of the Union forces, seizing and burning cotton stored on the plantations in order to keep it out of the hands of the Union troops. Union soldiers were reported to be selling the cotton they were able to seize to speculators in Alexandria for a profit.³³² Natchitoches narrowly escaped destruction from the advance of the Union troops, but the lower Cane River was directly in the path of their retreat, as Confederates pushed them back. Historian Johnson describes the march of the Federal troops from Natchitoches south toward Monette's Ferry:

... the Army of the Gulf left behind it a smoldering wasteland. So far as the available evidence indicates, there was almost complete and total destruction of all property within reach of this column. Governor Lubbock of Texas was...an eyewitness: "The demoralized enemy in their retreat left no houses or fences, stock or supplies, behind them. Everything of any possible value was taken or destroyed." According to Henry Watkins Allen, Governor of Confederate Louisiana, "From Mansfield to the Mississippi River the track of the spoiler was one scene of desolation . . . You can travel for miles, in many portions of Louisiana, through a once thickly-settled country, and not see a man, nor a woman, nor a child, nor a four-footed beast. The farmhouses have been burned. The plantations deserted . . . A painful melancholy, a death-like silence, broods over the land, and desolation reigns supreme."³³³

Johnson recounts the memoir of a soldier of the 81st Illinois describing the march of April 22:

"On the whole of this march from Natchitoches, nearly every building was burned." Johnson says that another soldier described how "every kind of domestic animal – cows, calves, hogs, horses, mules – lay dead along the road. Barns, smokehouses, corn cribs, chicken houses, and cotton gins were destroyed as well as dwellings. Not even the cabins of the Negroes escaped the torch."³³⁴

In April, 1864, skirmishes took place at Mansfield, Pleasant Hill, Cloutierville, Monette's Ferry, and on the grounds of Magnolia Plantation itself, where Union forces took over the Big House and camped in the yard on April 22-23. A two-day encounter took place behind the slave

³³² "Magnolia Plantation HABS," 19.

³³³ Ludwell Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 223.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

quarters but before the Federal forces retreated they burned the Big House and the structure labeled as the "Agency" on the 1858 plat.³³⁵

The accounts by eye-witnesses are important in recognizing how absolute the alteration of the landscape must have been, and what a blow the vandalism would have been to the morale of planters who had worked for decades with large forces of enslaved workers to build the plantation landscape that was so quickly and, in their minds, senselessly destroyed. If one only considers the loss of fencing and livestock, and what would be necessary in terms of human labor and capital to replace them, then the enormity of the loss becomes more real. And that does not begin to address the loss of agricultural buildings, equipment, seed, business records, and other supplies.

The LeComte and Hertzog Families

The loss of physical property and the emancipation of the labor force that had produced the wealth were devastating, but the most serious loss to the families of the South was the loss of the young men who were to be the future of the region. The LeComte and Hertzog families were not excluded from these personal losses. Ambrose's wife's son, Placide Bossier, who had lived in their household since their marriage in 1846, was killed in Mississippi in 1861; Matthew Hertzog's brother Emile Tousaint Hertzog died in 1862; and another of Matthew's brothers, Henry, joined the Orleans Guards.³³⁶

With the destruction of the main house at Magnolia, Matthew and Atala Hertzog moved into the old slave hospital. This structure was the family home for the next thirty-plus years, and we can assume that the Hertzogs attempted to modify its interior and its grounds so that it felt more like a homestead than part of the working and industrial yard of a cotton plantation.

It would not be until the late 1890s that there would be another Big House built at Magnolia. The issues that faced the families associated with Magnolia in the interim years were far more serious than in what kind of house they would live, and when they might be able to rebuild. Their way of life - social, political, economic, physical - had been overthrown, and it would take years before stability could be regained and a way of continuing to farm profitably at Magnolia could be devised.

³³⁵ Miller, 43.

³³⁶ Miller, 42.

The 1883 death of Ambrose LeComte meant that Magnolia would henceforth become known as the Hertzog Plantation. Although Ambrose had been heavily involved with raising his racehorses, he had continued to stay involved with Magnolia's financial operations, but after his death, Matthew and Atala assumed full control of the plantation. They purchased household goods and equipment from Ambrose's estate, and worked for several years to rebuild the Big House. Unfortunately, Atala was able to live in the "new" house for less than a year; she died suddenly in 1897. Perhaps the stress of rebuilding and moving had compromised her health.

Matthew died in 1903 resulting in the division of the plantation between his two children, Ambrose and Frances (Fanny). His son Ambrose gave up his law practice in Alexandria to move back to the Big House at Magnolia and dedicate the rest of his life to the management of his share of the plantation. This kind of personal decision to answer family responsibilities as heir is a theme that occurs often in the passage from one generation to the next of southern plantations. Rarely, however, is that chain of family occupancy and management as continuous as it has been at Magnolia.

The role of family matriarch was also important in the history of Magnolia as well as for most southern plantations, for it was the "plantation mistress" who made decisions about the family's social life and domestic setting. When Ambrose moved to Magnolia, the role of family matriarch was gradually assumed by Sarah "Miss Sally" Hunter Hertzog (1873-1960), Ambrose's wife. Sally and Ambrose had five children, and although Ambrose died in 1921, Sally lived in the Big House for five decades. Sally was responsible for guiding the domestic household through years of tumultuous transformation, both social and economic. In many ways, much of the Magnolia Big House that exists today bears the stamp of decisions made by Miss Sally. Although Miss Sally became an invalid after the birth of her fifth child, she continued to direct the social and religious activities of the plantation. She was responsible for the addition to the Big House of the bathrooms, the breakfast room (1910s), and the chapel, which was created from a room in the ell of the house when her failing health prevented her from attending mass in town.³³⁷

Once the Big House had been reconstructed, the extended family had a home place to return to for family reunions, vacations, and holidays. They were joined by a network of friends, and Magnolia once again took on the character that it had had during the antebellum period when

³³⁷ "Magnolia Plantation HABS," 25.

frequent visiting and house parties would have been commonplace. Photographs and reminiscences of family members record weekends and summers spent at Magnolia playing baseball, riding horses, watching farm operations, and hunting and fishing — all with the landscape as the setting for these memorable activities.³³⁸

At the death of Ambrose Hertzog, Matthew II was appointed manager of his father's estate. Matthew had left his studies at Louisiana State University to serve in the Armed Forces in World War I, despite a congenital hearing condition. In 1921 he assumed management of the plantation. Matthew was to live at Magnolia for fifty years and would negotiate the impacts of a national stock market crash and depression, a world war, a revolution in technology, and the beginnings of the civil rights movement. It would be Matthew who would face some of the bleakest of times in the agricultural operation, but who would persist through reliance on the kind of conservative "best practices" that had carried the plantation through the first century of production. And it would be Matthew who would bring Magnolia into the modern world, accepting the inevitability of a greatly reduced labor force and a new and highly mechanized way of planting and harvesting cotton.

Transformation and Operation of the Plantation after the War

Although many freed slaves left the plantations, more stayed on their former places, in need of work and a place to live. Magnolia, like other Cane River plantations, converted to a system of sharecropping and day labor. In the Magnolia account books, all the workers were referred to generally as "hands;" most were half-hands, but a few were noted as being fourth-hands. The fourth-hands provided their own mules and farm equipment and retained three quarters of their crop, while the half-hands depended on the Hertzogs for their mules and equipment, and only retained one half of their crop. Fourth-hands were also referred to as renters. Both renters and half-hands lived with their families in cabins along Cane River, while day laborers remained in the Quarters. Despite emancipation, racial castes remained, and renters tended to be Creoles of mixed race, while most half-hands and day laborers were African Americans.³³⁹ People moved between the economic categories as opportunities arose and their fortunes fluctuated, and in this report, for the sake of simplicity, both fourth-hands' and half-hands' cabins along the river are

³³⁸ Ibid, 26.

³³⁹ Ibid., 21.

referred to as tenants' places. And while the fourth-hands enjoyed the greatest degree of economic independence from the Big House, half-hands and day laborers were also encouraged to own livestock, and raised vegetables in their own gardens to feed themselves.

Ambrose LeComte, and Matthew and Atala Hertzog continued their joint ownership and management of Magnolia, although the 1870 Census enumerates their holdings separately. The census numbers give an explicit picture of the families' economic decline as a result of the war. Together Matthew and Ambrose reported 376 bales of ginned cotton; Ambrose's farmland was appraised at \$64,000, and Matthew's at \$12,000. In 1860 Ambrose had reported the value of Magnolia's land at \$251,000.³⁴⁰

An important addition to the Magnolia landscape, both physically and socially, was the construction of the Magnolia General Store sometime in the late 1860s or in 1870. In order for the new labor system of renting, sharecropping and day labor to work efficiently and to maximum benefit for the planter, it was necessary that the workers be able to "purchase" the items that would have been provided for them under slavery, such as food, clothing, medicine, and household goods. These purchases were made either with cash or more often on credit against the purchaser's share of the crop. Other area residents shopped at the store as well, often on credit. In many ways, the store became a crossroads of the community, and the social center of the plantation, serving as a commissary, a bank, a meeting place, and a place to exchange news. The store was also the location of Matthew Hertzog's office, where he did his bookkeeping and kept track of the various aspects of Magnolia's business.

The ledgers and account books that Matthew Hertzog meticulously kept provide a wide variety of details about his business affairs at Magnolia. In March 1886, he bought 3,960 feet of fencing,³⁴¹ so he might have been improving the land that was in pasture. There are numerous entries for the purchase of garden seeds by both Matthew and other members of the Hertzog family.³⁴² These are evidence that the Hertzogs were growing their own vegetables. Each month Matthew's entries begin with a listing of the monthly wages that he pays to a small group of people: "Bruno \$20, A. Hertzog \$35, Isaac Jackson \$20, N. Prud'homme \$12, Nathan Jackson

³⁴⁰ Miller, 44.

³⁴¹ Magnolia Plantation, Ledger Book H, 1885, 246, in collection of Betty Hertzog.

³⁴² Ibid., 464-5, includes several purchases by Henry Hertzog of onions and garden seeds; Magnolia Plantation Ledger Book L [or J ?], 1887, in collection of Betty Hertzog; and Magnolia Journal 1895-1896, in collection of Betty Hertzog, record numerous purchases of "garden seeds," "onion sets," "turnip seed," and "potatoes," by Matthew and Henry Hertzog.

\$2.”³⁴³ Other entries that note wages specify what activity the wages are being paid for, such as “for making hay,” or “Labor in field,” or “hands at Press.” The notations in the ledger also reveal the intricacies of the banking functions that the storekeeper/planter often performed, and the complexity of the relationship between planter and sharecropper: “Jan 19--By yr share of Seed from yr hands 46 Sk; By advances by you made on Cot. Seed; To 199 Sks Seed by you Kept.”³⁴⁴ The ledgers also indicate what materials are being used on the plantation and how and when technologies change: June 8, 1887 – 1 Reel Barb Wire; June 9 – Harness for Cart and Mowg Machine.”³⁴⁵

The death of Ambrose LeComte II in 1883 brought an end to the LeComte line at Magnolia and the end of an era in Magnolia’s history. Ambrose had turned over the day-to-day operations of the plantation in the 1850s in order to pursue his love of horse breeding and racing, but at the time that he took this step he was the wealthiest individual in the parish.³⁴⁶ The inventory taken at his death provides not only a detailed accounting of his properties, including all of the furnishings of his home in Natchitoches, but an inventory of the merchandise in the Magnolia Store which was valued at \$3,546.63.³⁴⁷ The inventory lists the farming equipment in use at Magnolia; the types of equipment listed indicate that by this time, Magnolia’s general farm equipment was being modernized. Agricultural operations, however, were still dependent upon mule power and human efforts.³⁴⁸

Matthew and Atala Hertzog acquired Ambrose’s portion of Magnolia, as they had been partners in its operation for nearly thirty years. In 1887 when Ambrose’s property was put up for sale, Matthew and Atala bought most of Magnolia’s farm equipment, livestock, and household goods. The Hertzogs had struggled tirelessly to rebuild the plantation after the Civil War, and by the 1890s the plantation had recovered much of its prosperity. In 1891, Matthew purchased the land that in the antebellum period had been owned by his brother Henry Hertzog.³⁴⁹ This was a strategic acquisition since it linked his own land with Magnolia land and henceforth all three

³⁴³ Magnolia Plantation Ledger Book H, 345, 1 June 1886.

³⁴⁴ Magnolia Plantation Ledger Book I, 1888, 139, in collection of Betty Hertzog.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 154.

³⁴⁶ Malone, 80.

³⁴⁷ Succession of Ambrose LeComte II, 11 March 1883, Succession Record 38, no. 1940, 486-492, Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court, Parish Courthouse, Natchitoches, Louisiana .

³⁴⁸ Malone, 86.

³⁴⁹ “An Abstract of Title to Sections 27, 32, 103 and 104, Township 7 N Range 6 West,” document in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

properties could be operated as one plantation. Sometime in the next few years, Matthew modernized the gin at Magnolia, installing a new system gin in the old gin barn.³⁵⁰

Matthew and Atala were determined to rebuild the Big House, presumably using the remains of the house that had been burned. Entries in the Magnolia ledgers record the purchase of building materials beginning in 1885, but it has not been possible to determine where the materials were used. For example, selected entries from 1885 include:

June 29 – Bldg. 4 cisterns - \$35
July 14 – 3600 shingles; 30 laths
Aug. 10 – work on chimneys
Sept 25 – 184 f. Lumber, 3400 shingles
Sept 28 – 2400 shingles
Oct 2 – 3200 shingles.³⁵¹

In May 1889 Matthew noted the purchase of a washstand, 18 chairs, and 2 beds, mattresses and springs.³⁵² Perhaps these purchases were in preparation for moving into the Big House, which he and Atala finally were able to do in 1896. Tragically, Atala died less than a year later, on October 31, 1897, of an “affliction of the lungs.”³⁵³ The 1900 Census recorded that Matthew lived at Magnolia with his son, daughter-in-law, and their four children. By 1903 Matthew was dead at the age of 75, leaving as heirs their son Ambrose J. Hertzog (1857-1921) and Frances “Fanny” Hertzog Chopin (1865-1953).³⁵⁴

LIFE ON THE PLANTATION IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

After Matthew's death, his landholdings were divided between his heirs, and Magnolia was divided as well. Although Fanny had inherited the area containing the cotton gin and the quarters, she agreed to sell it to her brother in order to keep the work area of the plantation intact. Ambrose had married Sarah (Sally) Hunter (1873-1960) in 1892, and gave up a law practice in Alexandria to manage Magnolia; the couple had five children. The eldest son Matthew II would return to Magnolia after serving in World War I to help his parents run the plantation.

³⁵⁰ *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 32.

³⁵¹ Magnolia Plantation Ledger Book H, 1885, 94, in collection of Betty Hertzog.

³⁵² Magnolia Ledger L [or J?], 517, in collection of Betty Hertzog.

³⁵³ Malone, 80.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 81.

The early 20th century saw the invasion of the boll weevil wreaking havoc on the cotton crops and forcing agricultural diversification. The early decades of the century also saw the beginning of the out-migration of Louisiana rural African-American workers moving to Houston, and to northern and Midwestern urban and industrial centers in search of higher pay and opportunity. Nearby railroads and lumber mills also attracted workers looking for a weekly paycheck.³⁵⁵

The years of World War I brought change to the nation, and shifts in the industrial economy had direct effects on the cotton market. Although cotton production and cotton prices were high from 1914-1919, so were production costs. More significant, perhaps, was the competition produced by war demands, with foreign production increasing, and with synthetic textiles being developed as a result of war-related research.³⁵⁶

By 1920 the boom in cotton production and sales had collapsed, and a national agricultural depression had begun, foreshadowing the broader economic crash that would follow nearly a decade later. Over-production, the boll weevil, foreign competition, synthetics, and other factors resulted in a decline in demand and prices.³⁵⁷

Meanwhile radical changes were taking place in the way Americans lived, with the development of new consumer products such as radios, movies, and most importantly automobiles. For rural, isolated areas like the lower Cane River, the coming of the car had a dramatic impact upon people's experience of the landscape and its fourth dimension of time. No longer were people confined to the small area where they labored and lived. The larger landscape began to be more available to them on a more frequent basis, and this broadened their outlooks. Even though there were very few automobiles at Magnolia for a number of years, the possibility of a "ride" was there, and that way of experiencing the landscape changed people's perceptions of it forever. One of the responses to this "progress" was the demolition of the old carriage house at Magnolia.

Another transportation-related event that would have significant impact not only on Magnolia's future, but more so on the future economy of Natchitoches, was the damming of both ends of Cane River in 1915.³⁵⁸ The new "Cane River Lake" meant that Natchitoches was no

³⁵⁵ Malone, 88.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 89.

³⁵⁸ Seale, 14.

longer able to have even seasonal river trade, and the Cane River became strictly a recreational waterway, an ideal spot for house sites and camps, but without the economic advantage of access to market. And it would not be long before shipping would be dominated by the new highways and its vehicles rather than by water or rail.

Ambrose Hertzog died in 1921; the inventory listed 2,192 acres with buildings valued at \$135,000; crops of 280 cotton bales, 1,000 bushels of corn, 8 tons of cotton seed, and 115 tons of hay; livestock valued at \$8,400 including 57 mules, 2 jacks, 2 jennets, 19 horses, mares, and colts, 149 head of cattle, and 15 hogs.³⁵⁹ Matthew Hertzog II assumed management of Magnolia, and in 1924 he married Eleanor Lydia Compton, or "Miss Dee." His experiences during the war would have exposed him to the kinds of technological change that were sweeping the country and abroad, and he may have been ready to embrace the opportunities that mechanization was beginning to provide. Many renters and croppers in the South had left farming to seek their fortunes further North, hoping to find situations with more open doors and less racial discrimination. New agricultural machines like tractors were able to take up the slack in the work force.

The years of the national depression were marked by federal programs that sought to improve the plight of American farmers hard-hit by the economic downturn. In 1933 Roosevelt's New Deal agricultural policies dictated that cotton farmers plow under one-quarter of their crop or risk penalties. These federal controls led Matthew to look at ways to diversify that might augment the plantation's bottom line.

The information that survives suggests that Matthew was resourceful on all fronts in exploring options for advancing Magnolia's production and entry into the modern world. During the 1930s the main house was electrified. Also in the 1930s, Matthew began to breed mules for export, and to revive the breeding of racehorses on the plantation, looking at options for diversification and areas in which the plantation had historically been successful. By 1937 Magnolia was in full compliance with the New Deal agricultural policies, with 600 acres along the Cane River highway planted in cotton. An article in the March 25, 1938 edition of *Progress* is most revealing of Hertzog's ambitions for managing Magnolia. "For 125 years," Hertzog is quoted as saying, "this land has been in cotton. Today it produces a bale to the acre, a better crop

³⁵⁹ Succession of Ambrose J. Hertzog, filed 1 February 1921, Succession Record A, no. 3094, Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court, Parish Courthouse, Natchitoches, Louisiana.

than in the old days when they had caterpillars but no boll weevil. Our crops have always been cotton, corn, hay, mules and cattle." The article goes on to say that in 1937, 600 acres were in cotton, cultivated by tractor and mule power. "Enough corn and hay were produced to feed more than 100 head of fine Hereford cattle and half a hundred mules." Hertzog explains that Magnolia's continued productivity is the result of "crop rotation, soil conservation and a continued clearing of new grounds."³⁶⁰ The overall tone of the article is that Matthew took great pride in the fact that he had built upon the traditions of his family at Magnolia, and that the tradition was one of wise resource use and self-sufficiency.

Two years after the publication of this article Magnolia experienced a destructive tornado that destroyed some of the plantation buildings, including the engine house near the gin barn, a cottage in the plantation yards known as the Cottage Buard, and some of the slave cabins.

What cannot be gleaned from any written documents is the kind of daily life that was fostered by the Hertzogs during this time period. Only the photographs and movies made by Dr. Ambrose Hertzog II in the late 30s reveal vignettes of what that life was like. Although these photos are, for the most part, posed, they at least capture scenes in the landscape, and suggest the kinds of activities that the residents of Magnolia, black and white, participated in. It is important to remember, of course, that by virtue of the fact that they were taken by a family member, they possess a certain degree of intimacy in terms of the social relationships among the various personalities living at Magnolia. At the same time, they are subjective portraits, interpretations of a place and the people who live there, seen through the lens of someone who had a strong attachment to the place and yet did not live there permanently.

³⁶⁰ "Crop Rotation System of Cultivation Maintained at Magnolia," *The Progress*, 25 March 1938, copy in Melrose Collection Scrapbook 50, 82-83.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS 1921

Introduction

In February 1921, following the death of Ambrose Hertzog, his property was inventoried and the plantation was surveyed.³⁶¹ The survey by Gainnie Hyams does not provide as much useful detail as Walmsley's earlier survey, but, supplemented by other sources of information, it enables us to construct a picture of the plantation landscape in the early 20th century. Another important source is a soil survey carried out in 1921. This provides useful information on settlement patterns and roads, as well as soil types.³⁶² The appearance of areas around the Big House and the Quarters at about this time has been captured in photographs; some of these are in Hertzog family collections and some in the Melrose Collection at the Cammie G. Henry Research Center in the Watson Library at Northwestern State University.

There is an ongoing Magnolia Oral History project being conducted by Dr. Ann Malone Rose that should provide additional insights, but at this time the project is incomplete and we have not read the interview transcripts. However, we have found some useful information in an interview Rose conducted with Will Hunter, Henley Hunter and Betty Hertzog as part of the Oakland Oral History project.³⁶³ In addition, we have had the opportunity to ask Betty Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog III questions about the landscape at various stages in its development during the 20th century.³⁶⁴

Property Boundaries

On his survey map, Hyams recorded the various sections that made up the plantation inherited from Ambrose Hertzog by his heirs as a community property. That property was somewhat smaller than Ambrose LeComte's Magnolia, 2,192 acres rather than 2,570 acres, and there had been a significant change in boundaries. The division of Magnolia in 1903 between Ambrose Hertzog and his sister Frances (Fanny) Hertzog Chopin had meant a major shift in boundaries

³⁶¹Succession of Ambrose J. Hertzog, "Inventory and Appraisement," Gainnie Hyams, *Map of Survey, J. A. Hertzog Plantation, Natchitoches Parish LA. February 12th 1921*, in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

³⁶²J. A. Kerr et al, "Soil Survey of Natchitoches Parish, LA," in *Field Operations of the Bureau of Soils 1921* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1926).

³⁶³Interview with Will and Henley Hunter and Betty Hertzog, Alexandria, Louisiana, by Ann Malone, 28 July 1996, transcript provided by Dr. A. M. Rose.

³⁶⁴In these informal interviews, which were conducted by the authors on 9 and 10 February and 13-14 April 2005, questions were asked about the landscapes seen in the historic surveys and aerial photographs.

away from those shown in the 1858 survey, so that the Big House was now situated in a corner rather than in the center of the property. What had been the central lane on the LeComte plantation had become the southeastern boundary of the Ambrose Hertzog plantation, except beside the river where Ambrose had bought about 65 acres from his sister to obtain possession of the plantation yards. The boundary on the upstream side of the Ambrose Hertzog plantation followed the boundary of what had been Matthew Hertzog's Ferry Plantation in 1858. Some of what had been Henry Hertzog's plantation was also included, but 55 acres on the point opposite the mouth of Old River were willed separately to Mathew Hertzog II and did not form part of the community property.³⁶⁵

The name Magnolia seems to have remained associated with Ambrose's share of his parents' property, which included the Big House, rather than with Fanny's share. Fanny and her husband Lammy Chopin lived across the river in Derry, and her portion of Magnolia was probably managed in association with his plantation on the right bank. By 1921, Chopin had died and Fanny had remarried, becoming Mrs. Guillot, but her share of Magnolia continued to be referred to as the Chopin property.

To the north, the Hertzog Plantation was bordered by property of P. R. Birdwell and J. C. Carnahan.

Spatial Organization

The 1903 division of Magnolia Plantation meant that the Big House and plantation yards stood in the southern corner of the Hertzog property. The location of the plantation's headquarters so far from the geographic center no doubt produced some operational problems, such as time wasted reaching outlying areas, but centrality did not matter much because of the decentralization of plantation operations. Following the introduction of sharecropping, the majority of the plantation's workers were no longer living in the Quarters, but instead occupied tenant cabins located in the cultivated fields. Each tenant place had become a small-scale center of farming operations enjoying some independence, much valued however limited, from the Big House. This major change in the social and economic organization of the plantation was reflected in the

³⁶⁵ Succession of Ambrose J. Hertzog, "Last Will and Testament"; this gift was balanced by a gift of \$5,000.00 to Ambrose J. Hertzog II for his education.

landscape, with a dispersal of settlement along river road and a marked reduction in the size of the Quarters.

This pattern had been repeated on all large plantations along Cane River and tenant cabins now lined both sides of the river for much of its course between Natchitoches and Cloutierville. As a result the river no doubt became a more prominent feature in many people's daily lives, but, ironically, much of its historic functional relationship to the operation of the plantations had been lost by 1921.

Cane River and the Bayous

The construction of a dam immediately above the mouth of Old River had converted Cane River into a lake above that point. The river/lake provided a broad and placid expanse of water without significant seasonal fluctuations in level. In 1921, a small steamboat still went up and down the lake, but it served as a tourist attraction rather than as an economic form of transportation.³⁶⁶

The Hertzogs were among those who began to enjoy the river/lake as a recreational resource. The earth for the dam had been taken from the end of the point on the left bank of the river that had once been part of Henry Hertzog's Plantation. At the request of the Hertzog family, the tip of the point had been left as an island in the lake, and the family now went there to go fishing and swimming.³⁶⁷

Below the dam the river continued to function as a natural river with seasonal variations in water level. Although the presence of the lake moderated these variations somewhat, the inflow of water from Old River served to continue them and a heavy rain in the Kisatchie Hills would lead to a rapid rise in water level at Magnolia. And the construction of the dam did little to prevent flooding since floodwaters coming from the main channel of the Red River backed up Cane River and the bayous. The severe floods of 1927 were to affect this region along with many other parts of the Lower Mississippi Valley. The levees at Magnolia continued to be needed therefore to protect the cultivated land.

³⁶⁶ Kerr, "Soil Survey," 1398.

³⁶⁷ Betty Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog, interviews with authors, 9 and 10 February 2005.

Railroads, Roads and Lanes

Railroads had replaced steamboats as the major conveyors of people and goods in this region in the late 19th century, and the main line of the Texas and Pacific Railroad had been built close to Magnolia on the western side of the river. At Derry, beside Shallow Lake, and at Montrose, on the banks of Old River, lumber railroads brought timber from the pinewoods of the Kisatchie Hills to large sawmills. These had become important sources of employment in the region and small company towns had been established. Will Hunter remembered the lumber company town at Derry in the early 1920s when it had a large commissary, a hotel, a place to show movies and a doctor.³⁶⁸ But by the 1920s the days of the sawmills were numbered as the greater part of the pinewoods had already been cut over.³⁶⁹

All the roads in the area were dirt roads and although their importance was increasing with the advent of automobiles, their condition depended on the weather. The authors of the Soil Survey gave the following, probably rather kind, assessment:

The main country roads of the parish are good most of the year. Roads on the sandy front lands of the river bottoms are very good through winter and spring, but are somewhat heavy through the summer. Stretches in the stiff lands of the bottom are good in summer, but are at times impassable in winter.³⁷⁰

River roads ran on both sides of the river, but the one on the Magnolia side seems to have been the more important and was known as the Jefferson Highway.³⁷¹ There were bridges at Derry and Cloutierville and the dam provided another road crossing; but above the dam the 24-mile ferry remained in operation as a way of traversing Cane River Lake.³⁷²

The only lanes that are indicated by the Soil Survey are at the northern end of the Hertzog Plantation and at the eastern end of the Chopin property. The lane along the Hertzog's northern boundary ran back to a point behind Hertzog Lake and stopped, but the lane near Cloutierville provided a route to Little River. Hyams' survey records the lane that had served as the central spine of the LeComte plantation. For much of its length it now lay at the boundary between the

³⁶⁸ Will and Henley Hunter and Betty Hertzog, interview by Ann Malone, 28 July 1996, transcript, 21 and 32.

³⁶⁹ Kerr, "Soil Survey," 1398.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ "Arthur Babb Scrapbook, 1926," 207, Arthur Babb Collection, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, NSU.

³⁷² Kerr, "Soil Survey," map.

Hertzog and Chopin plantations; nevertheless, it seems to have retained its usefulness. Hyams shows it now extended from the Jefferson Highway almost to the back of the plantation.³⁷³

Neither the soil survey nor Hyams recorded any field patterns, but we know that major turnrows were still well used as shortcuts through cultivated areas. Will Hunter remembered a shortcut from the Big House at Magnolia to Cloutierville across the cotton fields on Chopin land, and Betty Hertzog remembers her father talking about going to school that way.³⁷⁴ It is not clear whether that shortcut followed exactly the major turnrow indicated in Walmsley's survey in 1858, but it must, at the least, have closely paralleled it.

Cultivated Land

In 1921, the Hertzog Plantation included 1,352 acres of cleared land; this was slightly more than the amount of cleared land on LeComte's plantation in 1858. The boundary of the cleared area roughly coincided with the boundary between fine sandy loam soils and clay soils. The 1921 soil survey classified the soils on the plantation into three series: the Miller, Yahola and Buxin series.

The Miller soils are purplish-red soils with heavy purplish-red subsoils. They are rich in lime and the mineral plant foods. The lime content gives favorable structure even to the clay type. The Yahola soils are similar to the Miller in all respects except that the lower subsoil is of light texture, with somewhat lower capacity for holding soil moisture, but not unduly subject to drought. The very fine sandy loams and silt loams of these series occupy high front situations and are very productive cotton soils. The clay types occupy lower back lands, but large areas are so seldom overflowed that they form valuable farm lands.³⁷⁵

Even the Buxin clay in the lowest and dampest situations was considered inherently productive although not rich in lime; but clearly the light sandy loams on the front were the easiest to work and most suitable for cotton, hence the early clearance.

Although the social and economic organization of the plantation was very different in 1921 compared to 1858, the pattern of agricultural production was essentially the same. Cotton remained the important cash-crop, with corn and hay being secondary crops. In this respect, Magnolia was typical of many large plantations in the parish, and like the others was struggling to deal with the impact of the boll weevil.

³⁷³ Walmsley's survey did not indicate how far the lane extended into the woods in 1858.

³⁷⁴ Hunter and Hertzog interview by Malone, transcript, 38.

³⁷⁵ Kerr, 1441.

At present (1921) cotton is the main crop in the river bottom. With the coming of the boll weevil cotton growing became precarious, but the growers have been able to adjust themselves to the new conditions to some extent, and by growing early varieties and practicing better cultural methods generally they produce the crop at a profit, though with reduced yields. Poisoning the weevil has not yet been generally introduced.³⁷⁶

The average yield in the parish, which had been more than a half bale of cotton per acre in 1879, 1889, and 1899, had declined to one third of a bale in 1909 and was one-fifth of a bale in 1919. At Magnolia, "Paris green," an arsenic compound, had long been used to control caterpillars, so it seems probable that insecticides were employed against the boll weevil.³⁷⁷ The use of poisons would have raised the yield somewhat, but even if yields were higher, it is reasonable to assume that, nevertheless, they had been sharply reduced. In 1920, the Hertzogs had produced 280 bales of cotton, but we do not know how much land had been planted to make that crop. The advent of the boll weevil had accentuated the advantages of the lighter soils for growing cotton, as rank growth on damper soils provided conditions favorable to the weevil, and sharecroppers along the river front had produced most of the crop. In the 1921 succession it was estimated that they were due nearly 60% of the gross return of \$14,000.00.³⁷⁸

The second most important crop on the plantation was hay, grown to feed the plantation's livestock. In 1920 the plantation had produced 115 tons, and these were valued at \$2,300.00. This crop was grown by the Hertzogs using day labor, so the profits did not have to be shared with renters and croppers. The corn crop was much less valuable: the plantation had produced nearly 1,000 bushels of corn in 1920, but this was valued at only \$600.00.³⁷⁹ The average yield of corn per acre in Natchitoches Parish was low, being somewhere between 10 and 16 bushels per acre, but the yields at Magnolia were probably significantly higher, probably between 40 and 60 bushels an acre. The Hertzogs had long practiced rotating row crops with grasses and legumes to conserve soil fertility, and regularly applied manure from the livestock to needy areas.³⁸⁰

The 1921 soil survey describes several other commercial crops that were being grown in the bottomlands of the parish, including sweet potatoes and alfalfa.³⁸¹ However, there was no

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 1400.

³⁷⁷ Miller, 67.

³⁷⁸ The cotton was valued at 10 cents per pound; Succession of Ambrose J. Hertzog, Inventory Schedule D.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Miles DeLacerda, "Farming Today vs. Farming of the '90s," *Natchitoches Times*, 1941, copy in "1939-1949 Scrapbook" in collection of Ambrose Hertzog III.

³⁸¹ Kerr, "Soil Survey," 1401.

mention of any other crops at Magnolia in the succession inventory, so if there were other crops in 1920, they were not considered of commercial value.

Livestock, Pastures, and Hayfields

We do not know which areas of the plantation were in permanent pasture in 1921, though it seems likely that some of the cleared land behind the set back levee would have been in that category. The pasture field on the LeComte Plantation was now part of the Chopin property, so the Hertzogs would have had to put down other areas to grass. As noted above, the plantation produced a considerable amount of hay, and some of this would have come from areas permanently in grass as well as from areas where grasses were rotated with other crops.

Bermuda grass was the main component of productive grasslands along Cane River.

Bermuda grass appears to form the most productive pasture and hay grass on both uplands and bottoms. Although it is a permanent grass and forms a good sod, in this region it does not smother out various clovers and grasses, which commonly form a considerable part of the total growth. On the limy upland and bottom soils it is commonly mixed with much white clover, some lespedeza, and bur clover, and in places carpet grass. The sod is heavier in the older pastures. White clover comes up in February or March; Bermuda grass makes its growth from about March 1 till frost; lespedeza is more noticeable in the fall. Bermuda grass produces well on all types of soil, but is commonly grown along the bayou banks and on the heavier soils back from the front land. Bermuda grass survives prolonged overflow, and a good crop of clean hay may be cut 3 or 4 weeks after the water recedes. The grass commonly grows about 15 inches high. Three cuttings are obtained, the first early in May, with a total yield of about three-fourths ton to 2 tons per acre on both sandy and clay soils.³⁸²

The 1921 succession provided an inventory of the livestock on Ambrose Hertzog's Plantation and estimated their total value at \$8,400.00.³⁸³ Mules were the main draft animals: there were 57 on the plantation of which 28 were work mules, valued at \$100.00 each and the rest were young animals not yet broken-in for work. The Hertzogs bred their own mules and provided a team to sharecroppers on half shares as part of their tenancy agreements. By far the most valuable animal on the plantation was a jack donkey used in the breeding program; it was valued at \$500. Donkeys were kept in a pasture at the northwestern end of Hertzog Lake, which was known as "Jack Pasture."³⁸⁴ There were no oxen, but there were 19 horses including mares

³⁸² Kerr, 1402-1403.

³⁸³ Succession of Ambrose J. Hertzog, Inventory Schedule E.

³⁸⁴ Ambrose Hertzog III, interview by authors, 10 February 2005.

and colts; some of these were draft animals, but others would have been kept for riding. None was considered particularly valuable.

There was a variety of other livestock on the plantation. A herd of 80 cows constituted the second most valuable group of animals. It seems doubtful if all of these were part of the dairy herd because there was no large urban market nearby for dairy products. There were 65 young beef cattle, plus 4 bulls, and a similar number of sheep. Lastly there were 15 hogs, no doubt kept primarily for domestic consumption on the plantation. We do not know where all these animals were kept at this time, but some of them were still allowed to wander in the woodlands and swamps at the back of the plantation.³⁸⁵

Woodlands and Swamps

The Hyams survey recorded 775 acres of woodland on the Hertzog Plantation, plus 65 acres of wooded swamp in Hertzog Lake. The area of woodland was considerably less than the area on LeComte's Plantation. The main reason was the division of LeComte's property, but in addition there had been some clearance behind the set back levee.

Woodlands were no longer of much economic value and were regarded primarily as land held in reserve for future clearance. There were few stands of cypress left, although in 1927 some cypress was cut from the lake swamp, and there was no longer a sawmill in operation at Magnolia.³⁸⁶ The woods continued to provide some rough grazing, and tenants collected fuel for winter fires, but otherwise the main use of the woodlands was for hunting and fishing.

The Grounds around the Big House

Hyams' survey provided no information about the character of the grounds around the Big House, but some photographs from the 1920s give an idea of their appearance and this can be supplemented by the impressions of a visitor in 1926.

By the 1920s the live oaks planted in the front yard were at least 70 years old and their wide spreading branches formed a stately entrance way. Arthur Babb accompanied Cammie Henry on a visit to Magnolia on May 1, 1926 and recorded the following impressions:

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ "Note on sale of cypress, 1927," document in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

The house sets well back from the front with giant oaks lapping their branches over the driveway. Near the house and within the inclosure are both oaks and magnolias of mammoth size.

To either side of the main drive are spacious lawns, which is also outlined with gigantic oaks and magnolias . . . The east lawn is used for a base-ball park, and you would expect it wonderfully abused, but it is not; how it withstands the ruff usage I can't say. To the rear of the house just clearing the porch is another one of those magnificent old oaks. There is something awe inspiring about those giant old tress, that produces a feeling that I have not language to express . . .³⁸⁷

Babb took several photographs of the front yard in which one can see the large oaks in the allee and a few magnolias close to the house. The trunks of the trees have been whitewashed, at that time a common practice intended to give a well-maintained appearance and protect against insect damage.³⁸⁸ At the river road entrance, the gates stood open beside a sunken cattle grid; the tall gateposts, which appear to have been built of brick, had also been whitewashed. On either side of the entrance, a hog-wire fence was supported on wooden posts and surmounted by a wooden top-rail.

The east and west "lawns" had the character of pastures rather than mown lawns and a horse can be seen grazing on the east lawn. Nearby there was a utility pole probably carrying telephone wires to the house. Babb's photograph of the west lawn was taken from a spot close to the site of the antebellum carriage house, which had been demolished in 1918, apparently because it was no longer needed and blocked views between the house and the road.³⁸⁹

The Big House, which had been rebuilt on the ruins of the LeComte house, can be seen in family photographs taken in the early 1920s.³⁹⁰ At the front, the flower garden appears well-maintained, with various shrubs and herbaceous plants enclosed within a fence. The fence had a heavy top-rail and base board, and there was probably wire stretched between these. There was a small gate, made of palings and painted white, beneath a pergola at the entrance to the garden. On either side of the garden, framing the house, stood large magnolias, but the center of the garden was open and sunny. The spacious gallery of the house was shaded with awnings that could be rolled up between the columns. In the photograph, members of the family were standing

³⁸⁷ Babb Scrapbook, 207-208.

³⁸⁸ Betty Hertzog interview, 12 April 2005.

³⁸⁹ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005. The carriage house can be seen in an early photograph, see Malone, fig. 19.

³⁹⁰ These photographs are in the collection of Betty Hertzog, they are reproduced in Malone, figs. 34 and 35.

beside the front door and behind them the wall of the house appears to have been stuccoed and the surface has been scored to imitate masonry.

At the back of the house, a paling fence enclosed the space beside the ell extension. In the photograph, the fence obscures what lies behind it, but the space appears to have been an open yard. According to Betty Hertzog, there was once a small bottle garden beside the steps leading up to the back gallery, but that part of the space cannot be seen in the photograph.³⁹¹ A prominent feature of the yard was a large cistern, one of eight surrounding the house, this one had a pump and provided drinking water.³⁹² At the opposite side of the house, there was an water tank elevated on brick piers that supplied water to the kitchen in the ell.³⁹³ Also on the western side of the house, there was a carbide house that supplied gas to illuminate the house in the days before electricity was available.³⁹⁴

Babb took some photographs at the back of the house in 1926. One shows a children's playhouse in the shade of one of the live oaks, and beyond it, a fence of vertical boards enclosing the back yard at its southeastern side.³⁹⁵ Another provides a view of part of the orchard, in which large pecan trees stand in rows forming a lane or allée. When Babb visited Magnolia, a woman he refers to as "Margaret" occupied the cook's house in the corner of the orchard.

Margaret's house was almost covered as well as surrounded by big Live-Oaks, all these oaks that I have been trying to describe are Live-Oaks; and this plantation should have been called "Live-Oak" or "Oak-Dale" instead of Magnolia. The split yard pickets give it the appearance of a typical Southern negro cabin.³⁹⁶

The fence that attracted Babb's eye had a less regimented appearance than those around the Big House; here the palings were of different heights and spaced unevenly.

The Plantation Yards

Many of the agricultural and industrial operations that had been centered here in 1858 were still carried out in 1921, however there had been significant changes in the contents of the yards.

³⁹¹ Betty Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005.

³⁹² The pump can be seen in a 1925 photograph from the Melrose Collection, Scrapbook 71, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, NSU, reproduced in Malone, fig. 32. Betty Hertzog remembers the location of the eight cisterns; Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006.

³⁹³ The base of the piers can still be seen at the northwestern corner of the house.

³⁹⁴ The carbide house was located beside the junction between the main house and its ell; the foundations are still there; Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006.

³⁹⁵ Babb Scrapbook, 210.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 211-212.

Unfortunately, Hyams' survey provided no details of the layout of the yards and we have located no photographs, so this discussion is restricted to a summary of changes in the collection of buildings.

The most important addition to the yards was the plantation store, constructed in the late 1860s or early 1870s. It had been built not far from the site of the antebellum agency, but closer to the river road, and it took over as the organizational center of the plantation. Christina Miller sums up its importance as follows:

The Magnolia store was a multipurpose establishment and played a key role in the plantation's operation and in the daily lives of its wage earners and sharecroppers. It was first a general store where area residents, day laborers, and sharecroppers purchased groceries and other supplies. It was here that the Hertzogs kept their ginning receipts and insurance policies, wrote checks to wholesalers, and recorded how much cotton was picked by whom and how many days each day laborer worked. The general store was the place where workers were paid each Saturday and where sharecroppers settled their accounts after their crops were sold.

...

In addition, the Magnolia store was also a center of social activity in the isolated and rural community. It was a central location where neighbors, friends and relatives congregated on Saturday paydays to visit, exchange views, or play a game of dice on the well cover or under the trees lining the road. It was a place to catch a ride to town or to a family member's house down the river.³⁹⁷

Around the store, a few of the antebellum buildings had survived albeit in modified forms. The smith's shop was probably the least altered as it was still in use as a blacksmith's shop.³⁹⁸ The plantation hospital had been converted into a residence by Matthew and Atala Hertzog after the destruction of the Big House and was now occupied by the plantation overseer.³⁹⁹ Nearby a couple of smaller structures also survived: the plantation bell still hung in its tower, but the pigeonier had been moved to a place beside the front yard of the Big House.⁴⁰⁰

At the opposite end of the plantation yards a gin barn was still in operation but it was probably a much-modified successor to the antebellum gin barn. Questions remain about the history of the gin in the years before and after the Civil War, about how much of the original gin

³⁹⁷ Miller, 50-51, 55.

³⁹⁸ "Magnolia Plantation, Blacksmith's Shop, Pigeonnier and Carriage Shed, Historic Structure Report," 26.

³⁹⁹ The names of some of the overseers are given in the "Magnolia Plantation, Overseer's House, Historic Structure Report," 29.

⁴⁰⁰ The tower may have been rebuilt but the bell was the original bell. The evidence in favor of believing the existing pigeonier is the original one moved to a new site is discussed in "Magnolia Plantation, Blacksmith's Shop, Pigeonnier and Carriage Shed, Historic Structure Report," 27-28.

house had survived the fire reported in 1856 and the destruction wreaked by Union troops during the war, and when a steam engine might have been added.⁴⁰¹ But we know that in the 1890s a new system gin had been installed with a hydraulic press, and at the same time, a new seed house had been built beside the river close to the spot used to store cotton bales in the antebellum period.⁴⁰²

The original stables that had stood not far from the gin had been destroyed by fire sometime around the turn of the century and a new stables had been constructed further from the gin. In 1921, between the stables and the seed house there was a house, which was recorded by the Soil Survey. Family members remember this as being a raised cottage of whitewashed cypress, brick and bousillage. That would indicate it was an old structure, but Walmsley did not record it in 1858. Its history is therefore a subject of some speculation; what we do know is that it was occupied by various relatives of the Hertzogs in the early 20th century and was referred to as the Cottage Buard.⁴⁰³

The Quarters

In 1921 only eight cabins remained in the Quarters, and at one of these only half of the original structure remained. Most, if not all, of the rest had been demolished in the 1890s almost certainly to provide bricks for the rebuilding of the Big House, a frugal step at a time when most of the cabins were probably unoccupied.⁴⁰⁴ In 1921, according to the Soil Survey, in the second row only one cabin was occupied, and when Babb visited in 1926 he noted the same thing.

Leaving this place (the cook's house) walking east, we came in view of two rows of brick huts, four in each row. There was only one hut of the second row occupied, that the last one on the south end. This is the one we wer (sic) headed for, it was Martha's house, Aunt Martha sat on the Porch in a clean checkered dress with a bandaner tied on her head, She had broad hips that moved up and down as she walked, one leg was lame and she used a cane, but was good natured for all that.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰¹ *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 26-33; Keel, 78.

⁴⁰² The use of cotton seed as a cooking oil had begun in the 1880s and this had increased its value, *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 31.

⁴⁰³ Malone, 46; Keel, 80-81.

⁴⁰⁴ Malone, 49; Keel, 78-80.

⁴⁰⁵ Babb Scrapbook, 241.

The occupants of the Quarters were employed by the Hertzogs and worked in the Big House and its grounds or in the fields. They were wage earners rather than sharecroppers, and were referred to as "day labor."⁴⁰⁶

The character of the outdoor spaces in the Quarter in the 1920s was recorded in photographs in the Melrose collection. One set featured "Aunt Agnes," a former slave who died in 1922. The old woman was standing in front of her cabin, which had a large porch with plank floor and sturdy log posts. At the edge of the porch were two wooden barrels for catching water. In front was a fenced yard and on one side of this a shade tree. It is not possible to see whether any plants were growing in the yard, but the area beside the porch appears to have been swept.⁴⁰⁷ A set of photographs taken in 1923, showed other cabins.⁴⁰⁸ Most had fenced yards and in one there are tall growing plants, possibly sunflowers. The fences have the same irregular appearance as the one at the cook's house. Between the cabins, there was a scattering of shade trees, while between the rows, some of the area was in rough grass, but elsewhere corn was growing. In 1926, Babb took a photograph of Aunt Martha's house in the second row and the empty cabin next door. Aunt Martha's place had a fenced yard and shade tree, but the space in front of the other cabin appears to have been plowed.⁴⁰⁹

Tenant Places

The 1921 Soil Survey recorded 31 tenant houses on the plantation.⁴¹⁰ All but one of these were located on the river road, the exception was a short distance back from the river on the lane at the northern boundary of the plantation.

Each tenant family worked about 40 acres of land, but we do not know which cuts were assigned to individual tenants.⁴¹¹ As already noted, the land was worked with mules, and in ways that had not changed greatly since 1858, so it seems likely that the pattern of cuts established in

⁴⁰⁶ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 February 2005.

⁴⁰⁷ Melrose Collection, Scrapbook 70, 119, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, NSU; copies of the photographs are in Malone, figs. 26 and 27.

⁴⁰⁸ Melrose Collection, Scrapbook 71, 119, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, NSU; copies of the photographs are in Malone, figs. 28, 29 and 30.

⁴⁰⁹ Babb Scrapbook, 212.

⁴¹⁰ Kerr, "Soil Survey," map; the figure does not include the cabins in the Quarters, the overseer's house, or the cottage in the gin yard.

⁴¹¹ Malone, 98.

the antebellum period would not have been changed very much, except that large cuts would have been subdivided.

Each house would have had a yard, and most yards probably contained a few outbuildings, some livestock and a vegetable garden. Unfortunately we have located no photographic record similar to the one of the Quarters. Dr. Ann Rose's Magnolia Oral History project should provide a more detailed picture of some of the tenant places when it is completed.

Rhythms of Life in the Landscape

A much fuller record exists of daily life in the late 1930s and early 1940s, this is discussed at the end of the section on Landscape Characteristics in 1941.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS 1941

Introduction

The earliest aerial photographs of the plantation retained in the National Archives were taken in 1941 by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.⁴¹² These photographs provide a picture of the landscape on the eve of America's entry into the Second World War. Like the Civil War, the Second World War was to be a watershed in the history of the plantation system across the South. After 1945, the sharecropping system rapidly disintegrated and by the 1960s it had been replaced by modern agribusiness. Therefore these aerial photographs record the landscape of Magnolia at a critical period in its history.

Fortunately, the aerial view can be supplemented by evidence from other sources. Account books from Magnolia Store provide some details of agricultural production in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Matthew Hertzog II, who had become the manager of the Hertzog Plantation in 1921, gave a newspaper interview in 1938, in which he described the way the land was being worked.⁴¹³ At about the same time, his younger brother, Ambrose Hertzog II, began to record scenes of daily life on the plantation on film as well as in still photographs.⁴¹⁴ To these

⁴¹² National Archives and Records Administration, Cartographic Section, RG 145, Can 1240, Frame CQJ 9A~60, 19 January 1941, Can 1243, Frames CQJ 11A~23 and CQJ 11A~25, 5 April 1941, Scale: 1/20,000.

⁴¹³ "Crop Rotation System of Cultivation Maintained at Magnolia for 125 years," *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

⁴¹⁴ These photographs and films are in the collection of Ambrose Hertzog III; an edited version of some of the films entitled "Plantation Life, 1938-1950s," compiled by the Sue Eakin Institute for Studies of Plantation Life is in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

important historical documents can be added the recollections of people who remember this period. Some of the former tenants and employees on the plantation have been interviewed for an ethnographic study, and their recollections provide valuable insights.⁴¹⁵ Hertzog family members were also interviewed for that study, and we interviewed Betty Hertzog for this Cultural Landscape Report, who answered many of our questions about the landscape recorded in the 1941 aerial photograph.

Property Boundaries

The boundaries of the Hertzog Plantation did not change significantly during the 1920s and '30s; we know this because a mortgage agreement made in 1936 cited Hyams' survey as defining the boundaries.⁴¹⁶ By this time all the boundaries, including those around the remaining wooded areas, were fenced with post and wire fences.⁴¹⁷

To the southeast the land was still part of Fanny Hertzog Chopin Guillot's property. To the north the land was now owned by the Cohen family, which called its property "Lakeview Plantation." The Cohens and the Hertzogs cooperated as good neighbors in a number of ways; for example, both plantations issued store tokens in lieu of legal tender to their employees and tenants, and these were honored at the stores on both plantations with a monthly exchange and settlement.⁴¹⁸ And, after they ceased to operate their own gin in 1939, the Hertzogs usually took their cotton to the Lakeview gin for processing. Neighborliness had long been an important part of life on Cane River but this was particularly the case during the lean years of the 1920s and '30s, and Crespi in her ethnographic study has emphasized the importance of the many social and economic connections developed across property boundaries.⁴¹⁹

Spatial Organization

A large part of the woodlands at the back of the Hertzog Plantation was cleared between 1921 and 1941, creating a large open space behind Hertzog Lake; but there was a marked difference in

⁴¹⁵ Muriel Crespi, "A Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation: Planning for Cane River Creole National Historical Park," Draft revised 29 January 2002 (Washington, D.C.: NPS Archeology and Ethnography Program, National Program Center); Betty Hertzog, interview by authors, 9 and 10 February, and 13 April 2005.

⁴¹⁶ Mortgage Agreement for sum of \$59,000, 4 May 1936, copy in a file of land records in collection of Betty Hertzog.

⁴¹⁷ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

⁴¹⁸ Miller, 67.

⁴¹⁹ Crespi, 31.

the character of the cleared land behind the lake from the land in front. Whereas the riverfront was almost entirely cropland worked by tenants, the newly cleared area was almost entirely in grass and was worked with day labor. So the tradition of a strong difference in the use of front and back land on the floodplain was continued but the nature of that difference had changed significantly.

In the cultivated land the pattern of cuts can be seen clearly in the 1941 aerial photograph. The pattern is based on the geometry developed in the antebellum period, but the old cuts have been subdivided. This subdivision had probably taken place in the 19th century following the introduction of sharecropping. It seems likely that some other adjustments to the antebellum pattern had also been made at that time in order to improve drainage; these are discussed in the next section. The overall effect of the subdivision and adjustments was a field pattern that appeared less rigidly geometric than the one laid out for Ambrose LeComte.

Cane River and the Bayous

The Corps of Engineers had begun to line the main channel of the Red River with levees after the floods of 1927, but the risk of floods along Cane River had not passed. In 1945 there were to be major floods in which a large part of Magnolia was inundated. The waters reached the Quarters so that its inhabitants had to be evacuated, and cattle from bottomlands were taken to the pinewoods.⁴²⁰ So the river remained an important and at times threatening factor in the management of the plantation.

Much of the time, however, it was a benign presence. The films and photographs taken by Ambrose Hertzog II include scenes of Hertzog family members enjoying picnics at the island beside the dam on Cane River Lake. A cabin had been built there and it became a fish camp reached by a flatboat or a boat with a small outboard motor.

The tenant families and day laborers also used the river for fishing and occasionally for swimming, but they were more likely to use the river below the dam close to their homes. The banks of the river below the dam were more open than they are today, and this must have been associated with the higher amount of use. A large number of small paths leading down to the water can be seen in the aerial photographs. When water levels were low, it was possible to ride a horse across the river in several places, and sometimes a temporary bridge was erected below

⁴²⁰ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

the junction with Old River. Matthew Hertzog II had bought a tract of land across the river, known as the Mary Johnson Place, and the bridge provided a convenient shortcut to this property.⁴²¹

Maintenance of a network of drainage channels was an important part of plantation management in the bottomlands. Comparing farming practices at the end of the 19th century with those in the early 1940s, Miles DeLacerda emphasized the continuing importance of good drainage: "With all the improved tools, etc., we can not make a crop in the mud, we must have proper drainage to keep the water off and keep the ball rolling."⁴²² It seems likely that a number of improvements had been made to the drainage network when DeLacerda's father was one of the overseers on Matthew and Atala Hertzog's plantation in the 1890s. In several places, for example southwest of Hertzog Lake and on the point opposite Derry, it is apparent from the aerial photographs that the pattern of antebellum cuts had been reorganized around a set of drainage channels. Matthew Hertzog I had the resources to make such improvements, and it seems doubtful that they would have been carried out after the division of the plantation and the arrival of the boll weevil.

Another set of drainage improvements were underway in 1941, this time at the back of the plantation in association with the clearance of the woodland. A wide ditch known as "the canal" was being dug to connect a small bayou that drained into the north side of Hertzog Lake with a branch of the Bayou Charette, thereby draining most of the area behind the lake towards Little River. The canal runs onto Fanny Chopin Guillot's land, so its construction must have required her agreement and cooperation. We have not found any documents relating to this work, but it is very likely it was undertaken with support from one or more of the New Deal agricultural programs.⁴²³

Roads, Lanes and Turnrows

Some major changes had been made to the road network beside Cane River between 1921 and 1941. As the roads were modernized and straightened to accommodate the speed of the automobile, several stretches of the old river road were bypassed. About half a mile upstream from the Big House at Magnolia, the highway left the riverbank and cut in a straight line across

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² DeLacerda, *Natchitoches Times*, 1941.

⁴²³ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

the cultivated land towards the point by the dam. A similar straightening occurred beyond that point as it headed onto the Cohen property. Some sections of the old river road continued in use by Magnolia tenants, but others were simply abandoned.

Downstream from the Big House, the river road continued to serve as the main highway as far as the bridge at Derry, but beyond this a new road on the right hand bank linked Derry to Cloutierville. On the left bank the old river road continued to be used by sharecroppers and renters on the Chopin property who lived along it, and by those on the Hertzog property who found it offered a shorter way to Cloutierville than the new road. Of course, many people did not have an automobile, so distance was still an important consideration.

The old central lane running from the plantation yards back into the woods can be seen on the aerial photographs. As in the antebellum period, the lane was a direct link between the back and front of the plantation and it was fenced so that cattle could be driven down it. Towards the back of the plantation, it appears to be a wide grassy drove road at the edge of the pastures. In front of the set back levée it is lined with bois d'arc, *Maclura pomifera*, on its upstream side, and Betty Hertzog believes these may have been planted in the days of Ambrose LeComte.⁴²⁴ In a triangular pasture between the levées, the cattle tracks spread out as they head towards the plantation yards, and pass around a crawfish pond near the front levée. After that, one track continues beside the bois d'arc hedge, while another runs on the eastern side of the field behind the overseer's house, and judging from the aerial photograph, it seems likely that the latter route was now used as least as much as the original line as a way of reaching the plantation yards.

Another lane was also heavily used. The one on the upstream side of the front yard of the Big House offered a more direct route to the cultivated ground; however, people and livestock using it had to use the main road in front of the Big House to reach the plantation yards.

As in the antebellum period, turnrows remained a vital part of the circulation network and many show up clearly on the aerial photographs. Some provided shortcuts through the cultivated areas of the plantation to the lake and pastures beyond, and others linked tenants' places on the riverfront to the cotton fields.

⁴²⁴ Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006.

Cultivated Land

In his 1938 interview in *The Progress*, Matthew Hertzog expresses pride in his family's success in holding the plantation together through difficult times.

"We're not making the money the old folks used to make," said Mr. Hertzog, "but we're making a little and we're still here. We ra[i]se the same crops, in a quicker, better manner and the land is as rich now as it was then."

"For 125 years," he continued, "this land has been in cotton. Today it produces a bale to the acre, a better crop than in the old days when they had caterpillars but no boll weevil. Our crops have always been cotton, corn, hay, mules and cattle."⁴²⁵

In 1937, according to this article, the cotton crop spread over 600 acres of land along the riverfront, and a few years later, in 1943, he recorded a total crop of 612 bales of cotton.⁴²⁶ Matthew Hertzog explained the continuing emphasis on the traditional staple despite pressure to diversify as follows:

"Cotton is our logical crop," explained Mr. Hertzog. "The land and climate are not suitable for sugarcane or rice. Tobacco does not grow here in large quantities. There is no market near at hand for perishable truck crops. In view of markets and shipping facilities this will probably always be cotton country."⁴²⁷

Much of the cotton was produced on the sharecroppers' and renters' farms, and there was a continuing reliance on mules and human muscle power.⁴²⁸ Account books from Magnolia Store include records of numbers of pickers at work each week at tenants' places, since croppers and renters were charged for any extra labor required during busy times, such as hoeing and picking. Ambrose Hertzog filmed some of the old practices still in use, including plowing and planting with mules, chopping with hoes and, of course, the backbreaking task of picking.

Some mechanization was underway by the early 1940s. In 1942, a new tractor was purchased for the plantation; it cost \$800, and was partly paid for by trading in an old tractor worth \$300.⁴²⁹ Magnolia was probably in the vanguard in this respect amongst Cane River plantations, but what really distinguished Magnolia from many other operations, according to Matthew Hertzog, was the close attention paid to the maintenance of soil fertility.

⁴²⁵ *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

⁴²⁶ Crop Book 1943, Magnolia Store Room B, Counter 2, Section 2, in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ More information about tenants' production of cotton may be obtained when a thorough analysis of the Magnolia Store records is carried out.

⁴²⁹ Loose leaf of paper entitled "Purchased for Plantation 1942," in Crop Book 1943.

Over a period of many years Magnolia's 2,500 acres have all done alternate service in crops and pasturage. In the old days it was always the custom to plow under that portion of the crop left after the harvest. Last year Mr. Hertzog, a firm believer in the federal crop control plan, planted 500 acres of winter peas as a cover crop on his cotton land.⁴³⁰

The federal crop control plan meant that although cotton was still "the money crop," other parts of the farming enterprise offered better opportunities for increasing economic returns. In particular the livestock on the plantation were of increasing importance. About half of the total acreage cleared was in pasture or hayfields by 1941, and if one adds to this the fields in corn, about two-thirds of the productive land was devoted to the care and raising of livestock.

Livestock, Pastures, and Hayfields

In the 1941 aerial photographs several stages in the process of clearing additional pastures can be seen. The land nearest to the set back levee and the lake has been thoroughly cleared and put down to grass, as either permanent pasture or hayfield. Behind this, in the area within the curve of the new canal, the land has been cleared of most but not all of its trees, and has probably been left as rough grazing. And beyond the canal, the remaining woods already have cleared patches, probably as a result of the long history of use by free ranging livestock.

All the pastures and hayfields were fenced. Some of the pastures near the set back levee and lake appear pock marked. According to Betty Hertzog, some shade trees had been left standing when the area was cleared, but a tornado swept through this area in 1939 and uprooted many of these trees.⁴³¹

Matthew Hertzog mentioned in the article in *The Progress*, that there were more than 100 head of Hereford cattle in these pastures in 1938. Advances in the control of the fever tick in the late 1930s made the raising of cattle a more attractive proposition than it had been previously, and there was a general shift to cattle-raising in the parish and particularly on large plantations at this time.⁴³² The number of cattle at Magnolia had increased by the early 1940s; an inventory of cattle in July 1943 gave a total of 292, with about 250 of these being cows and heifers.⁴³³ Another inventory, taken a couple of years later, indicated the locations of the livestock. Most

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

⁴³² Richard M. Highsmith, "Natchitoches Parish: A Microcosm of Trends and Processes in Southern Land Use," *Louisiana Studies* 3, no. 1 (1964).

⁴³³ Crop Book 1943.

were in the main pasture, but a dozen were in "Little Pasture," and a few were being held in various yards. The list noted three cattle were in the "woods." This might have been the uncleared area at the back of the plantation, but it was more likely to have been the pinewoods of the Kisatchie Hills. As noted above, some cattle were sent to the pinewoods in 1945 when large scale flooding occurred, and there is a reference in the crop book for that year to the expenses incurred.⁴³⁴

One advantage of investing in livestock production was that it did not require a lot of labor. On the Hertzog's Plantation the management of the hayfields was being mechanized in the 1930s and early 1940s, so the "cowboys" on the plantation began to operate with machines while the sharecroppers continued to work with mules. Photographs taken by Ambrose Hertzog in 1939, show hay being cut by a "Farm All" tractor, men feeding hay into a stationary baling machine, and a load of hay being hauled by a "Model A" Ford truck.⁴³⁵ According to Betty Hertzog it took a team of 14 men to operate the baling machine. In 1942, a combine was purchased for \$700, presumably for cutting and baling hay. It is interesting to note, however, that a mule-drawn mowing machine was purchased at the same time, and it cost only \$158. A couple of years later, the crop book records a production of 9,474 bales of hay.⁴³⁶

Mule breeding continued to be an important part of the livestock operations on the plantation in this period. Matthew Hertzog took considerable pride in the quality of his mules, boasting: "I believe this is the only plantation in the state, ever to ship a carload of mules to Texas. We got letters for years afterward asking about them."⁴³⁷ The main mule lot was in the plantation yards, but there were two other mule lots beside tenants' places near the mouth of Old River. Mules used by tenants upstream were kept at these other lots, so tenants and mules had less distance to travel between lot and cut.⁴³⁸

Other livestock on the plantation included a small herd of dairy cows, some hogs, sheep and poultry. The Hertzogs kept these for their own use and many of the tenants also kept a few animals. There was no mention in *The Progress* of any sheep, but some sheep can be seen grazing in the front yard of the Big House in one of Ambrose Hertzog's films. A small number

⁴³⁴ Crop Book 1945, Magnolia Store Room B, Counter 2, Section 2, in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

⁴³⁵ Some of these photographs are reproduced in Malone, figures 68, 69 and 70.

⁴³⁶ "Purchased for Plantation 1942," in Crop Book 1943; Crop Book 1944, Magnolia Store Room B, Counter 2, Section 2, in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

⁴³⁷ Matthew Hertzog II, quoted in *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

⁴³⁸ Betty Hertzog, interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

were kept to graze the front pastures and provide meat for the table at the Big House. Sheep and hogs were not a commercial venture in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but a few animals were occasionally sold.⁴³⁹

According *The Progress*, Matthew Hertzog had recently purchased a thoroughbred mare and planned to resume the breeding of racehorses following the example of his grandfather and great-grandfather. Horses were an important part of life at Magnolia, and horses can be seen in many of the scenes filmed by Ambrose Hertzog at this time.

Woodlands and Swamps

In 1941 the area of the woodlands was about half of what it had been in 1921. The woods and swamps were now regarded primarily as a reserve of land awaiting clearance. Matthew Hertzog made no reference in *The Progress* to the woods, but noted the practice throughout the history of the plantation of "a continued clearing of new ground."⁴⁴⁰

The woodland was useful as a source of fuel for the fireplaces and stoves of the Big House and the tenants' places, but the only records of any commercial cutting of timber relate to the removal of cypress from Hertzog Lake. As noted above, some cypress was sold in 1927, and there was to be another sale in the late 1940s or early 1950s. It is possible, of course, that some of the trees felled when the woods were cleared for pasture were sold for timber, but we have no record of this.⁴⁴¹

The woodlands and swamps continued to provide some browse and rough grazing for livestock, but their main value in this period seems to have been as habitat for wildlife, including ducks and squirrels, that was hunted.⁴⁴²

The Grounds around the Big House

In 1941, only four, or possibly five, of the live oaks planted in the antebellum period were still standing in the allée. A couple of younger oaks filled gaps near the entrance from the road, but the allée near the house was now formed by magnolias. It is very unlikely that these were the

⁴³⁹ Crespi, 38; the Crop Book for 1945 notes the sale of 10 hogs and 2 sheep.

⁴⁴⁰ *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

⁴⁴¹ The Magnolia Store records that have not yet been examined may shed light on this.

⁴⁴² Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005; Ambrose Hertzog's films included scenes of hunting with dogs.

original trees planted in this location, but they had reached a good size, so Matthew and Atala Hertzog probably planted them at the time they rebuilt the Big House.

On either side of the allée the grassed areas in the front yard provided pastures for horses and cows. At times, goats and sheep also used these spaces. The goats seem to have been particular favorites of the Hertzog children, who can be seen playing with them in Ambrose Hertzog's films. These films also record the continued use of the right-hand side of the yard as a baseball field.

On the aerial photographs, several paths can be seen crossing the front yard. The most used of these connected a gate at the northern corner of the yard with the allée near the entrance gate; it probably served as a short cut between the fields and the plantation yards. The front yard was fenced with a post and rail fence, and it was lined on each side by live oaks. These lines of live oaks were more complete than the allée, presumably as a result of their more protected locations.

One important feature of the front yard was described in *The Progress*:

The Flying Dutchman is buried between two great oak trees on the lawn, near the grassy mounds that mark the former site of the Hertzog training stables. Nearby was a private racetrack.⁴⁴³

According to Betty Hertzog, the LeComte horses were trained at General T. J. Wells's stables near Lecomte, south of Alexandria, so it is not clear whether any prizewinning racehorses were trained at Magnolia. Nevertheless, the front yard near the carriage house had been selected as an appropriate resting place for the most famous of all the LeComte and Hertzog racehorses.

Six large live oaks shading the house, three on each side, can be clearly seen on the 1941 aerial photographs, and unfortunately they hide most of the garden spaces in front of and beside the house. Only the left hand side of the front flower garden can be seen: it appears to have had the same pattern of paths that can be found there today. To the southeast of the house, outside the shade of the oaks, there was a large rectangular space in cultivation. This may have been a vegetable garden, though family members remember the vegetable garden as being behind the house in its present position. Walter "Buddy" Randolph was the yardman who looked after the flower and vegetable gardens in this period.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

⁴⁴⁴ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

The backyard was a work place and was used for a variety of tasks from chopping wood to killing hogs, as well as for keeping chickens, guinea hens and other animals. Ambrose Hertzog recorded some of these activities. Post and wire fences enclosed the yard and there was a scatter of outbuildings in and around the yard. The largest building was a dairy barn, which was located just outside the entrance to the yard, and due north of the house ell. Betty Hertzog remembers the family keeping five or six cows at this time.⁴⁴⁵ Further away, close to a track leading to the hayfields stood another shed, but we do not know what it was used for at this time. The buildings inside the yard were smaller and cannot be seen on the aerial photographs, but can be seen in some of Ambrose Hertzog's films and photographs. Close to the entrance to the yard stood a privy, and next to this there was a wire-covered coop for pigeons. On the other side of the entrance was a chicken coop, and at the other end of the yard was a second, larger chicken shed.⁴⁴⁶

The places for livestock spilled over into the orchard beyond the backyard. Hogs were kept in an area near the location of the antebellum orchard house, which by this time had disappeared; there was a chicken run in the middle of the orchard on the north side of the main stand of pecans; and sheep were allowed to graze beneath the trees.⁴⁴⁷ The main stand of pecan trees can be seen in the aerial photographs. Some of these were named cultivars, but most were seedlings that had been allowed to grow. Some of the pecan harvest was sold.⁴⁴⁸ In addition to the pecans, Betty Hertzog remembers fig and peach trees in the orchard, but these were most likely only for family use. There was a line of figs close to the backyard and a stand of peach trees close to the rectangular garden space on the southeast side of the house.⁴⁴⁹

The Plantation Yards

In January 1939, a tornado had touched down in the plantation yards causing much damage but fortunately no loss of life there and in the Quarters. The Cottage Buard near the seed house was demolished and the gin barn with its engine house was badly damaged. The mangled structures can be seen in family photographs. This disaster brought to an end ginning operations at Magnolia; Matthew Hertzog decided against restoring his gin as there were better-equipped

⁴⁴⁵ Betty Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005.

⁴⁴⁶ Some of these buildings can be seen in one of Ambrose Hertzog's photographs reproduced in Malone, fig. 52.

⁴⁴⁷ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005; Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁴⁴⁸ The accounts in the Crop Book for 1944 mention pecans amongst the products of the plantation that were sold.

⁴⁴⁹ Betty Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005.

modern gins available nearby. Thereafter, much of the plantation's cotton was taken to the adjacent Lakeview Plantation for ginning.⁴⁵⁰ The engine house was demolished, but the main gin barn was repaired and adapted for use as a hay barn.⁴⁵¹ In the 1941 aerial photographs there is a dark stain on the ground in the location of the cottage, and the area around the gin is in cultivation, an indication that its industrial use had ceased.

The other buildings in the yards - the blacksmith's shop, the store, the overseer's house, and the stable, plus their outbuildings - are visible in the aerial photographs and the layout of the spaces between them can be clearly seen. The yards were subdivided into a series of enclosures, and while activities in these spaces varied over time, photographs and family recollections allow us to list some of the main ones.

Betty Hertzog remembers the space behind the blacksmith's shop as being a potato field at about this time, but in the aerial photograph it appears to be covered in grass. A lane ran from the highway to the cook's house in the orchard, keeping in the shade of the live oaks standing along the fenceline between the blacksmith's field and the front yard of the Big House.⁴⁵² On the downstream side of the blacksmith's field there is a fence, but there is no sign of the central lane in this location, and we conclude that by this date the lane did not continue directly across the yards to join the river road; instead, it might have connected to the lane that ran on the northwestern side of the blacksmith's field. Originally, the central lane must have passed close behind the overseer's house, but by 1941 the yard behind that house had been extended into this space and sheds had been built next to, or within the old line of the lane.⁴⁵³

The main entrance to the yards was now located beside the store, and the enclosure next to the store was used as a mule lot.⁴⁵⁴ This mule lot was bounded by a five-rail wooden fence, and some stretches of this fence were painted white. Not surprisingly giving the large number of mules, the ground had only a sparse cover of grass. Cattle were collected into this space when they were ready to be taken to auction, and hogs can also be seen in one of the photographs. Between the store and the stables there were other enclosures that were fenced with posts and rails and these were also used for corralling mules, horses and other livestock. There was a large

⁴⁵⁰ Gin Books from 1947 contain receipts issued by Lakeview Gin for loads of seed cotton sent by the Hertzogs and their sharecroppers and renters.

⁴⁵¹ *Cane River Creole NHP, Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 22-23.

⁴⁵² Betty Hertzog interview, March 29 2006.

⁴⁵³ According to Ambrose Hertzog the carriage shed that stands close to the line of the lane was built in the 1920s or 1930s; the date of construction of the other shed is not known.

⁴⁵⁴ A photograph of this lot by Ambrose Hertzog II is reproduced in Malone, fig. 36.

hayrack and a chute for loading cattle near the store. The main path from the Quarters to the store went through the stable yard and an adjacent mule lot, and stiles were built to allow people to cross the fences. Ambrose Hertzog remembers three stiles, one in the fence beside the highway, one near the stables, and one beside the Quarters. The one in the fence beside the river road can be seen in one of the family photographs.⁴⁵⁵ The river road fence was painted white to present a well-kept appearance to passers-by. Between the stables and the gin, the yard had been converted to a cultivated field by 1941. In some years, cotton or corn were grown here, at other times it served as a pasture or hayfield.⁴⁵⁶

During the 1930s, the overseer's house behind the store lot had been occupied by Henry Gallien, who was succeeded as overseer, probably in the 1940s, by his son Lester Gallien.⁴⁵⁷ The house had its own set of outdoor spaces. On the southwest side, the front yard had a picket fence and was shaded by live oaks, and there were also a few ornamental plantings such as irises and aspidistras on the southeastern side.⁴⁵⁸ There were a few plum and pear trees, but most of the yard was a utilitarian space like the backyard of the Big House. On the northwest side of the yard, the overseer had a cotton field with a vegetable patch in a corner near his house.⁴⁵⁹

The busiest and most photographed space on the plantation was the area beside the road in front of the store. Ambrose Hertzog's photographs and films provide an excellent record of the various ways in which workers and tenants used the porch, the covered cistern nearby, and the road as places to gather, visit, relax, and on certain celebratory occasions to listen to music and dance together.⁴⁶⁰

The Quarters

According to *The Progress*, seven families lived in the Quarters in 1938.⁴⁶¹ The 1939 tornado removed several of the roofs but the buildings were repaired and reoccupied by 1941. A list of the types of work done by residents of the Quarters is provided in Crespi's ethnographic study; it

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

⁴⁵⁷ "Magnolia Plantation, Overseer's House, Historic Structure Report," 14; Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁴⁵⁸ The picket fence can be seen in a photograph reproduced in the "Overseer's House, Historic Structure Report," 12.

⁴⁵⁹ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

⁴⁶⁰ Photographs by Ambrose Hertzog II of this space are reproduced in Malone, figs. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, and 62.

⁴⁶¹ *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

included jobs around the Big House as well as work in the plantation yards and fields.⁴⁶² Some of the residents and their children were recorded in Hertzog family photographs, and Betty Hertzog remembers most of the people in these photographs.⁴⁶³

In the aerial photographs a network of footpaths and a scatter of outbuildings and shade trees are visible, and in Ambrose Hertzog's photographs some other details can be seen. As in the 1920s, most of the cabins had fenced yards, but by 1941 many of the fences were made of posts and wire rather than palings. Some of the ground in the yards was kept bare and swept, and some trees had whitewashed trunks. Matthew Hertzog provided whitewash for the residents to paint the exterior of the cabins at Christmas in order to control insect pests, so presumably some also elected to whitewash adjacent trees.⁴⁶⁴ In several photographs, washing can be seen hanging on lines in the yards, and they obviously had a utilitarian character, but some residents also planted flowers. According to *The Progress*, Matthew Hertzog required both his tenants and day laborers to raise a crop of vegetables to supply their own tables, but the size and condition of the vegetable gardens must have varied with the interest and aptitudes of each family.⁴⁶⁵ Unfortunately, we have not seen any photographs that provide a clear picture of these vegetable gardens.

Some residents kept chickens and hogs, plus a few geese and ducks in their yards. Hogs were valuable so their pens were kept close to the cabins.⁴⁶⁶ Poultry were allowed the run of the yard for most of the year but might be brought indoors in cold weather.

Any large livestock, such as cows and goats, owned by residents were tethered in the triangular pasture to the east of the Quarters.⁴⁶⁷ That pasture was also used for some of the plantation's cattle, and it contained a dipping vat for the treatment of cattle ticks. Across the front levee immediately north of this pasture, there was a crawfish pond that attracted children and adults from the Quarters as well as the Big House.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶² Crespi, 37-38.

⁴⁶³ Photographs are reproduced in Malone, figs. 54, 55, 56, 57, 5, and 64.

⁴⁶⁴ Crespi, 47; a whitewashed tree can be seen in Ambrose Hertzog's photograph of the Vercher family home in the Quarters in 1940, see Malone, fig. 64.

⁴⁶⁵ Crespi, 47-48; a list of plants typically grown in gardens in the Cane River area is given, this was based on the interviews conducted for this study.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁶⁷ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

⁴⁶⁸ Crespi, 49; a photograph taken around 1948 by Ambrose Hertzog II of his daughter Irma Jane fishing in the pond with Stanley Gallion, son of the overseer, is reproduced in Malone, fig. 43.

Tenants' Places

Thirty tenants' places can be identified on the 1941 aerial photographs, nearly all of them located along the river road. That is about the same number as was recorded by the soil survey in 1921. Crop books in the collection of records from the plantation store provide the names of about 40 sharecroppers in 1936 and 1943.⁴⁶⁹ The differences between the number of dwellings shown and the number of croppers listed may be accounted for by the fact that some of the croppers named also performed day labor and lived in the Quarters, but a few tenant places may have housed more than one cropper. According to the crop book for 1943, out of a total of 37 tenants, 25 were half-hands, and 6 were fourth-hands; the status of the remaining 6 tenants was not recorded.⁴⁷⁰

Betty Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog III remember the names of many of the tenants who lived along the river road in the late 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁷¹ There were considerable changes in the composition of the labor force between 1936 and 1943, perhaps as the result of the onset of the war, but most of those named below can be found in the lists given in the crop books for those years.⁴⁷² Andrew "Pierce" Rachal lived in the first house one came to if one were heading upstream from the front yard of the Big House. He worked with the Hertzog's horses, so it was important that he live close to the Big House and the plantation yards.⁴⁷³ Earlier this house had been occupied by William "Brindle" Gallien, who had been employed as the yardman at the Big House.

The second house was home to Cliff Lamell and his wife Rosetta. For many years he worked as the blacksmith on the plantation and was also the collector at the store. He was an important figure in the black community and served as a deacon at the local African Methodist Episcopal Church.⁴⁷⁴

Walter Blackman lived in the third house along the road with his mother Victoria. He was a foreman on the plantation, so it would have been logical for him to occupy one of the places close to the Big House.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁶⁹ The Cash/Crop Book for 1936 gives the names of 41 croppers, and the 1943 Crop Book lists 37; both books are in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

⁴⁷⁰ Crop Book 1943.

⁴⁷¹ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005; Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁴⁷² Of the 41 names given in 1937 only 20 were listed again in 1943. A few of the others may have been listed again, but the use of nicknames and variations in spelling makes identification uncertain.

⁴⁷³ A photograph of Pierce Rachal with Matthew Hertzog's racehorse "Babe" is reproduced in Malone, fig. 67.

⁴⁷⁴ Crespi, 37.

⁴⁷⁵ A photograph of Walter Blackman at the foot of the steps of the Big House is reproduced in Malone, fig. 75.

John Rachal lived in the next house [number four on the 1941 period plan]; as already noted he worked as the gardener at the Big House.⁴⁷⁶

The next house [number five on the period plan] stood at the inside of the bend in the new road where it left the riverbank. It was occupied at one time by Tony Moran, and later, by William "Willy" Middleton. On the opposite side of the road from this place there was a log cabin, but it was probably unoccupied in 1941.

There is some uncertainty about who lived along the section of the river road that was cut off by the new road. Either the first or second place along this stretch [number seven or eight on the period plan] was occupied by the sister of Meg Rachal; and Joseph "Blue" Rachal lived at the last place before the bend in the river [number 11 on the period plan]. In 1941, St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, an important focus in the life of the black community, was located on the riverbank half way between the bend in the main road and Joseph Rachal's house. Later, it was moved to the plot of ground occupied by the empty log cabin at the bend.⁴⁷⁷

Around the bend in the river, the old river road had been abandoned and a new track wound its way on the field side of the tenants' places. Close to the place where Bayou Michel met the riverbank, one of the mule lots used by the tenants was located. This was supervised by Fred Roque who occupied the house [number 14 on the period plan] standing close to it. Albert Lemy lived on the other side of the bayou, Alvin LaCour at the next place, and Matthew 'Shine' Johnson at the one after that [numbers 15, 16 and 17 on the period plan].⁴⁷⁸ Some memories of life on the plantation told by Matthew Johnson's wife, Lizzie, can be found in Crespi's ethnographic study. Ms. Lizzie had grown up in the Quarters and she and her husband had lived there for over 20 years, working as both day labor and sharecroppers, before moving to this tenant's place. The impetus for the move was the 1939 tornado, which damaged their home in the Quarters.⁴⁷⁹

The next group of houses was located near the junction of the road to the dam with the main road. Thomas Randolph lived in a house by the river [number 18 on the period plan], Atwood Moran in a two-storey house across the road [number 19], and Thomas Rachal along the

⁴⁷⁶ A photograph of John Rachal holding Matthew Hertzog III one of the children of Ambrose Hertzog II is reproduced in Malone, fig. 74.

⁴⁷⁷ A photograph of this church after it was moved is reproduced in Malone, fig. 21.

⁴⁷⁸ Photographs of Johnson and Lemy relaxing in front of the store with other people are reproduced in Malone, figs. 62 and 63.

⁴⁷⁹ Crespi, 50-51.

road to the dam [number 20]. Atwood Moran was a renter with a three-quarters share agreement. Betty Hertzog remembers he had 12 children and was always anxious to work as much land as possible to support this large family.

Betty Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog III do not recall all the names of the tenants who lived along the main road where it cut across the point and headed towards Lakeview Plantation. Wilson "Squirrel" Metoyer probably lived in the first house, another might have been the home of John Coutee, and a third was probably occupied by a Randolph. Joseph Balthazar lived beside the lake above the dam [number 24 on the period plan]; later he moved from this place and it became a fishing camp. "Bully" Epperson occupied the place across the road, and Macon LaCour lived beside the second mule lot used by tenants [at number 26 on the period plan]. The last two places beside the river near the boundary of the plantation were occupied by Nathaniel Coutee and "Man" Malone [numbers 27 and 28].

In addition to these places beside the river road, there were a couple of tenant houses near Hertzog Lake. In 1941, one of these was inhabited by "Cot" Williams, the father of Jack Williams who lived in the Quarters.⁴⁸⁰ The other might have been unoccupied at this time. Ambrose Hertzog remembers hearing a story about a tenant who moved from a place behind the lake to the Quarters just before the 1939 tornado struck.

A similar distribution of tenant places could be found on the Chopin property. All but a couple of places were situated beside the river. The exceptions in this case were located close to Magnolia's yards, and were probably put there before the division of the plantation in 1903.

As noted above, Matthew Herzog required his tenants and his employees to raise a crop of vegetables and keep some livestock, "as a matter of both tradition and economics."⁴⁸¹ We do not know if all tenants conformed to his wishes, but certainly many would have had vegetable gardens and kept livestock in their yards. Unfortunately we have not seen any photographs of tenant yards. Ambrose Hertzog III remembers there were wide variations in the appearance of the yards in the early 1950s. Some were well maintained with productive vegetable gardens and bright displays of flowers; he remembers Victoria LeCour's yard as a particularly fine example, while others were in various states of disorder and neglect.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ Photographs of Cot Williams and his son are reproduced in Malone, figs. 61 and 62.

⁴⁸¹ *The Progress*, 25 March 1938.

⁴⁸² Ambrose Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005.

Rhythms of Life in the Landscape

Ambrose Hertzog II recorded many aspects of life on the plantation, including both work and play. The work activities he filmed included planting, cultivating and picking cotton, branding mules, deworming cattle, cutting and baling hay, milking cows and butchering hogs. The leisure time activities he recorded included plantation workers hanging out and shooting craps in front of the store, Hertzog family members picnicking at their fish-camp, men hunting with dogs, children riding horses, workers playing baseball in the front yard of the Big House, and horse racing at the neighboring Lakeview Plantation. Both Malone and Crespi have discussed the social significance of these and other activities, and the degree to which they reflected the hierarchical organization of plantations and the segregated nature of Louisiana society at this time.⁴⁸³ In terms of their landscape significance, it is important to recognize that each had its time and place. The places and settings were recorded on the films, but times and frequencies generally went unrecorded, yet these are equally important to an understanding of the cultural landscape.

Sharecroppers' and day laborers' work activities were obviously governed by the agricultural calendar and with minor variations due to weather would have been repeated at the same time and in the same places year after year. And to a large extent their recreational activities would have shared this predictability. Recreation for plantation workers and their families occupied whatever time was left over from work, and since they had no electricity in their homes and limited access to automobiles, most people found recreational opportunities outdoors in the immediate environs of the plantation. Leisure activities, therefore, were synchronized with the natural rhythms of the place just like the agricultural calendar. In short most of these people lived close to the land in both their work hours and their leisure moments.

Members of the Hertzog family could select from a much wider range of work and recreational opportunities. But those who elected to stay at Magnolia seem to have valued its traditions and were content to continue a way of life that had changed little since the rebuilding of the Big House. Indeed, Ambrose Hertzog's films may be interpreted as evidence of the nostalgia experienced by someone who left to pursue a medical career in cities for the rural tempo of life at Magnolia.

⁴⁸³ Malone, 102; Crespi, 52-53.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAGNOLIA – NARRATIVE HISTORY

1942 – 1997

The South he came home to was different from the South he had left . . . The happiness and serenity of the South disconcerted him. He had felt good in the North because everyone else felt so bad . . . It was possible for him to be at home in the North because the North was homeless. There are many things worse than being homeless in a homeless place — in fact, this is one condition of being at home, if you are yourself homeless . . . The South was at home. Therefore his homelessness was much worse in the South because he had expected to find himself at home there.

Walker Percy, *The Last Gentleman*, 1966

Sources

While the most important sources for the majority of this study have been archival manuscripts, perhaps the best source of information for the period after World War II is oral history, the accounts of those who experienced the Magnolia landscape first-hand, and who were instrumental in the processes of its later development. By far, the most important informant for this report, and in particular for this most recent period in Magnolia's history, has been Betty Hertzog, who has dedicated most of her adult life to the care of Magnolia Plantation. Her cousin Ambrose Hertzog III has also been extremely informative, because he spent a great deal of time at Magnolia during his childhood, and because of his abiding commitment to and familiarity with the plantation today.

Photography is another significant source for this time period, but since the plantation has not been systematically recorded since Dr. Hertzog's series, there is not a very complete record for the landscape changes of the years since then. It is probable that various family members have photographed family outings and gatherings at Magnolia over that time period, but these photographic records exist within the collections of several families, and in the various forms of still photographs, film, video, and now digital images.

Timeline

- 1943 The federal government removes the last of the New Deal agricultural price controls and supports.

- c.1946 Electricity is installed at the eight cabins in the Quarters as part of the rural electrification program.
- 1950s Agricultural mechanization accompanies rural exodus, which in turn causes reconfiguration of local farms and settlements. Most of the sharecropper families leave Magnolia. Those that remain are day laborers, working for wages. Cattle raising and breeding are expanded at Magnolia.
- 1950s Matthew Hertzog purchases a freezer for Magnolia Plantation Store making it possible to sell ice cream and frozen food for the first time.
- 1960 Sarah Hertzog dies; estate inventory includes 2,167 acres of land with an estimated value of \$216,699.
- 1869 Civil Rights Act; only after court-ordered school integration in 1968 did Parish schools gradually integrate.
- 1960s Piped water supply makes use of cisterns to collect drinking water unnecessary.
- 1970s Last person to live in the former slave cabins moves out.
- 1869 Matthew Hertzog II dies. The Magnolia store closes.
- 1869 Ambrose J. Hertzog II returns to Magnolia and builds a residence next to the main house.
- 1869 Hertzogs transfer ownership of gin barn, blacksmith shop, plantation store, overseer's house, and surviving slave houses to Museum Contents, with a concurrent lease on the grounds.
- 1869 Gin barn and other Magnolia buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1986 Historic American Building Survey (HABS) records the gin barn.
- 1869 Ambrose J. Hertzog II dies.
- 1994 Federal legislation establishes the Cane River Creole National Historical Park and authorizes the acquisition of portions of Oakland and Magnolia Plantations.
- 1997 Acquisition of Magnolia property by the National Park Service complete.

MODERNIZATION OF THE PLANTATION

The Hertzog Family

Although the end of World War II signaled a new era for much of American society, the Hertzog family continued to live and farm at Magnolia in much the same way as they had before the war. Matthew Hertzog and his wife Lydia Compton lived in the Big House with their daughter Elizabeth Jane (Betty), and with Ambrose's widow Sally; they were joined by Matthew's sister Sarah (Mrs. Norman Gunn), who moved back to Magnolia with her children Norman and Mary. Eventually, after his retirement, Dr. Ambrose Hertzog II and his family also returned to Magnolia, and in 1976 built a new family home next to the Big House. This is the house where

Ambrose Hertzog III now resides. Matthew and Lydia's daughter Betty left Magnolia to attend college, but has essentially lived at Magnolia since then.

It is the inventory associated with the death of Sally Hunter Hertzog that paints a picture of how the modern world had transformed the agricultural component of Magnolia; the domestic world of the Big House and its garden and yards still maintains a very direct and visceral connection to the way of life that has been lived there for many generations in a relatively unchanged form save a few electrical fixtures and modern conveniences.

Matthew Hertzog II died in 1973 and his daughter Betty abandoned her plans to work in Houston and decided to stay at Magnolia. It has been her dogged work and passion for this family landscape that has ensured that the connection to the previous generations' labor in the landscape can still be felt at Magnolia.

Life on the Plantation after the Second World War

World War II changed the South more deeply than any event since the Civil War. Whether serving in the military or entering the industrial workplace for the first time, many Southerners encountered challenges to long-held assumptions concerning race, religion, work, and regional identity.⁴⁸⁴

And for those who remained at home on the plantation, the changes being experienced by so many and by the culture as a whole sent ripples of change into their more simple lives as well, though many of these changes were quite subtle.

The landscape changed with remarkable speed, as interstate highways, suburbs, and fast-food franchises sprouted up in the fields. Television introduced Southerners to styles of life earlier generations had only glimpsed during brief visits to cities of the North.⁴⁸⁵

Whereas the residents of Magnolia had remained fairly isolated up until mid-century, they began to travel more frequently, bringing home modern ideas and introducing these ideas into the fabric of daily life at Magnolia. And for those who didn't travel, the modern world forced itself into their lives.

Although sharecropping families had begun to leave with the start of World War II, day laborers remained and several continued to live in the cabins well into the 1960s.⁴⁸⁶ The Cottage

⁴⁸⁴ Edwin L. Ayers and Bradley C. Mittendorf, eds., *The Oxford Book of the American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 435.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Malone, 108.

Buaird could not be salvaged after the 1939 tornado, so severe was the damage, but the former slave cabins had been repaired, and in 1946 electricity was installed in the eight remaining cabins as part of the rural electrification program. These cabins were occupied by people who were working for the Hertzogs either as gardeners, housekeepers, or as day laborers. Although the Quarters area must have still had some sense of a neighborhood, the size of its population would have been much diminished, and its appearance would have been altered by cars in the yards, and electric appliances like refrigerators and washing machines on the porches—lives and homes tottering between two very different eras.

The End of Sharecropping

The onset of better tractors and the migration of more and more rural blacks to the industrial centers after World War II encouraged Matthew Hertzog to invest in a more mechanized form of raising cotton. It was not until the mid-1960s that a very effective mechanized cotton picker was purchased, and even with this piece of equipment, some of the early cotton was still picked by hand, before going over the fields with the mechanical picker.⁴⁸⁷ This move toward agribusiness meant that the way that tenant farmers had operated was really no longer viable. While there was still a need for day laborers to perform tasks around the farm and to operate the equipment, the notion of individual families farming their own small portions of land for cotton was a thing of the past. As the tenants moved out, the tenant houses were torn down in order to allow for more efficient operation of larger equipment in the fields. Where mule lots and barns had been, tractor sheds now stood. And the landscape began to take on a different, less textured character because of the loss of these personalized residences along the road. The landscape began to be simplified, and the presence of people and draft animals in the fields was less common.

As field patterns were changed to suit the dimensions of the new machines, so were the locations of some of the other landscape elements of the working area of the plantation. This was a common occurrence throughout the history of all plantations - that structures would be moved periodically as patterns of use changed. Since most of the buildings and ancillary features of the landscape were either raised off the ground or built on piers of some sort, moving them was not a major feat of engineering, just a matter of man- or animal-power. In the 1950s Matthew Hertzog attempted to reap the advantages of diversification, and increased the emphasis on one of the

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

earliest of occupations in the Red River region, that of cattle breeding and raising. Cattle proved to be profitable and are still being raised at Magnolia today.

In the 1950s, Matthew Hertzog purchased a freezer for Magnolia Plantation Store, which allowed him to sell ice cream and frozen food to customers for the first time. The store continued to function as the "living room" of the community, where neighbors and workers gathered to pass the time after work, to hear the news, and now to eat ice cream!

The death of Sally Hertzog brought to a close an era in the history of Magnolia Plantation, and her succession record documents the shape, size, condition, and contents of the place at that time, as well as other minor land holdings that were owned by the widow. Magnolia was comprised of 2,167 acres and her one-third interest had an appraised value of \$74,233.00.⁴⁸⁸ Most telling of the tale of mechanization is the inventory of the "movables," the farm tools and equipment, including a John Deere 620 tractor valued at \$2,572.50, and the total equipment valued at \$15,532.46.⁴⁸⁹ Also significant is the listing of the livestock on the place and their appraised values. Sally owned an "undivided one-half interest in the following cattle:"

606 Head of cows, appraised value	60,600.00
496 Calves, appraised value	24,800.00
15 Older Cows	1,558.64
161 Large Calves	<u>11,496.08</u>

Total appraised value----- 98,454.72

Undivided one-half interest of decedent appraised at--- 49,170.36⁴⁹⁰

Matthew continued to steward the landscape of Magnolia through the turbulent decade of the 1960s, continuing the production of cotton and cattle that had been so important in producing the wealth that established the LeComtes and later the Hertzogs as among the most successful planters of the state. With Matthew's death in 1973, the plantation store was closed, and Betty Hertzog decided to stay at Magnolia to continue the tradition of stewardship that was her birthright and responsibility.

In 1976 the Hertzog Family, recognizing the significance of the plantation's working core, and worried about the deteriorating condition of the disused buildings, transferred ownership of the gin barn, the blacksmith shop, the plantation store, the overseer's house and the

⁴⁸⁸ Succession of Sarah J. Hertzog, 26 May 1960, Succession Record W, no. 6851, Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court, Natchitoches Courthouse.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

surviving slave houses to Museum Contents Inc., with a concurrent lease on the grounds.⁴⁹¹ Museum Contents is a Natchitoches non-profit intended as a pass-through organization to rescue at-risk historic artifacts or structures. In 1978, the seed house was demolished, but in 1979 the gin barn and other Magnolia buildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Plans to turn the working core of the plantation into a museum did not materialize due to a lack of funding, but in 1986 the documentation of the gin barn by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) brought additional attention to the significance of the agricultural complex. With the creation of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park in 1994, Museum Contents transferred its holdings to the park and the donation of the land was completed in 1997.

Some years after the death of Matthew Hertzog, Betty Hertzog and her cousin Ambrose Hertzog decided to give up farming. The land was then leased to other farmers. They continued to grow cotton and soybeans, and raise cattle on the land, so the pattern of land use did not change, but the Hertzog family was no longer directly involved in farming operations. However, Betty Hertzog continued to live in the Big House, and to raise horses, and in these and other ways, she maintained the family traditions begun by her great-great grandfather Ambrose LeComte.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS CIRCA 1960

Introduction

By the close of the 1950s, the sharecropping system that had characterized the plantation since the Civil War was coming to an end, and it was being replaced by a modern enterprise economizing in the use of labor through the employment of machines and agricultural chemicals. The succession inventory of the estate of Sally Hertzog, the widow of Ambrose J. Hertzog I, in 1960 gives some idea of the economic structure of the plantation at this time.⁴⁹² The momentous social and economic changes were reflected in the landscape, and an aerial photograph taken in December 1958 provides a picture of Magnolia 100 years after Walmsley's survey.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 34.

⁴⁹² Succession of Sarah J. Hertzog, Petition and Inventory rec'd. 6 October 1960.

⁴⁹³ USDA - CFSA, Aerial Photograph CQJ 1W, 12/16/ 58, Scale: one inch = 400 feet (Aerial Photography Field Office, Salt Lake City Utah).

Unfortunately, the on-the-ground photographic and film record retained from this time by the Hertzog family that we have seen is not as rich as that from earlier times, but the recollections of family members and former tenants and employees have helped us interpret the 1958 aerial photograph.

Account books from Magnolia Store provide some information on crop and livestock production that can be compared to figures from earlier years. The changes that had occurred at Magnolia were part of region-wide trends, and a geographical study of land use in Natchitoches Parish, carried out in 1959 and 1960 by Richard Highsmith, allows us to place the changes within this wider context.⁴⁹⁴

Boundaries

According to the succession inventory compiled in October 1960, Magnolia comprised 2,107 acres above the old central lane of the original plantation. This property was held in common by the heirs of Ambrose Hertzog I. In addition, there were the 60 acres containing the plantation yards purchased by Ambrose in 1903 from his sister Fanny. Family members' shares in the ownership of this tract were arranged differently, but it was functionally an integral part of Magnolia.⁴⁹⁵ Sally Hertzog's estate included other pieces of land across the river but these were not considered part of Magnolia proper.

On the aerial photograph, the line of the boundary between the Hertzog and the Chopin properties is clearly visible because of differences in land use. Nearly all the woodland has been cleared from the Hertzog Plantation, while it still occupies approximately the same area as in 1858 on the Chopin property. The boundary between Magnolia and Lakeview Plantations is not marked by a similar contrast in land use. The Cohens had cleared much of their woodland before 1941.

Spatial Organization

The entire Hertzog Plantation with the exception of Lake Hertzog now was cleared of woods, and sweeping views could be obtained across the property. However, the distinction between

⁴⁹⁴ Highsmith, 9-45.

⁴⁹⁵ The difference in acreage between the 1960 inventory and the 1921 survey can be accounted for by the fact that 25 acres had been taken for the improvements to Highway 119, see Succession of Sarah J. Hertzog, 6 October 1960.

"front" and "back" remained important as the former remained in cultivation while the latter had been cleared for pasture.

Across the cultivated ground, the field pattern was becoming simpler as there were fewer subdivisions producing small cuts than there had been in 1941. This simplification along the front meant the landscape had a clearer geometric organization, and this was echoed at the back by the straight lines of drainage ditches. So the modern landscape had a strong man-made geometry not unlike the character of the antebellum landscape though the agricultural systems that produced the geometries were very different.

Cane River and the Bayous

The most important change in the hydrological patterns on the plantation was the extension of the drainage system for the new pastures begun in the 1930s. A new branch was added to the canal, which ran directly east to join a tributary of the Bayou Charette. On both sides of the canal, new drainage networks can be clearly seen on the aerial photograph: one drains the area where clearance was underway in 1941, and another grid drains newly cleared land at the northeastern corner of the plantation.

Another change that is evident on the aerial photograph is the growth of woody vegetation along the banks of Cane River. In some areas a dense stand of trees and shrubs had developed between the river and the road. This is particularly noticeable near the Big House, but the process of vegetation succession is evidently underway all along the river. This must indicate changing conditions and a reduced level of human-caused disturbance was probably an important factor.

Roads, Lanes, and Turnrows

In 1957, Highway 119 in front of the Big House was blacktopped. The improvement of the highway served to further differentiate the improved sections of river road from those that had been bypassed and were falling into disuse.

The old central lane on the plantation continued to provide a route from the plantation yards to pastures at the back of the plantation, and it seems to have changed little since 1941; however, the lane on the upstream side of the front yard of the Big House might now have been of greater importance, since it provided the main route for machines going to and from the cotton

fields. The network of turnrows that had once been linked to these lanes was now changing, and, as cuts were combined into larger fields, old turnrows were plowed up. This is particularly noticeable along the front, where some of the tenant places were no longer linked to turnrows.

Cultivated Land

Nearly all the sharecroppers and renters had gone by the end of the 1950s. An account book for 1959 names only six croppers growing cotton, and only two of them grew more than ten acres.⁴⁹⁶

Nearly all the cotton acreage was now held directly by Matthew Hertzog and his family and farmed by employees, and most of the old methods of planting and cultivating cotton had been superseded by modern techniques. The simplification of the field pattern and elimination of turnrows had been carried out to facilitate the efficient use of machinery in place of mules. According to Sally Hertzog's succession inventory, there were only four mules left on the plantation in 1960.⁴⁹⁷ Workers now did most of the planting and cultivating using equipment drawn by tractors. In the 1960 inventory, there were 12 tractors, 9 disc harrows, and 12 cultivators. Most of the tractors had been purchased between 1944 and 1951, but a new John Deere 620 tractor had been bought in 1959. This was the most expensive machine on the plantation and was valued at \$2,570. 50.⁴⁹⁸

In 1959, cotton was grown on only about 400 acres of the plantation, but the record of cotton ginned indicates a production of 651 bales; this suggests a marked improvement in yields.⁴⁹⁹ Highsmith found that planters in Natchitoches Parish were using various techniques alongside mechanization to improve cotton yields and at the same time reduce production costs.

It is now common to apply 60 to 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre before the planting date. To reduce chopping cost some farmers have changed from solid row drilling to either check or hill planting; a few are using solid row drilling and check plowing. Cleaning the grass from the rows is still a major item of cost; traditionally a hand hoe operation, a number of farmers are now using geese for this purpose (at the rate of 1.5 per acre) and a few are experimenting with flame cultivators. Chemicals are also being used increasingly for grass and weed control. Systematic and complete control of insects is now deemed

⁴⁹⁶ Hobs Metoyer, who was probably a renter, grew cotton on about 17 acres and retained two thirds of his production. James Moran, grew cotton on 15 acres, but he was on half shares. The others, who were also on half shares, each grew between 5 and 9 acres of cotton. Cotton Account and Settlement Book 1959, Magnolia Store records in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

⁴⁹⁷ Succession of Sarah J. Hertzog, 1960, Inventory, Movables - Livestock.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., Inventory, Movables - Farm Tools and Accessories.

⁴⁹⁹ Cotton Account and Settlement Book 1959. It is possible that not all the cotton ginned had been produced in that year, nevertheless a substantial increase in yields had probably been achieved.

absolutely essential. The variety of pests has increased with the years and they now include, in addition to boll weevils, boll worms, aphids, spider mites, leaf worms, and flea hoppers. Control programs begin when about twenty-five per cent of the young squares or forms have been punctured by boll weevils and continue until the youngest bolls to be harvested are about three weeks old. During this period insecticides are applied on a five-day rotation.⁵⁰⁰

By the end of the 1950s the adoption of modern agricultural technology had gone a long way on the larger plantations along Cane River but it was still incomplete.

Hand harvest is still the common method in the parish, largely because of the availability of labor plus the danger of wet weather's limiting machine operations in the field. In a normal year thirty per cent of the crop may be machine harvested⁵⁰¹

At Magnolia there was a Farm-All tractor cotton picker, but most of the picking was done by hand. Hoeing was also done by hand, and to supplement the plantation workforce, day laborers were brought in from elsewhere on the river and from Natchitoches.⁵⁰² Weekly accounts for the years 1958, 1959, and 1960 list between 20 and 30 names of people who were employed on a regular basis, but in the late spring and early fall, the plantation employed another 40 or so people to work in the fields.⁵⁰³ Some of these extra hands were referred to as "outside hands," and account books give the names of several agents who recruited these people. This practice continued into the 1960s. In the mid 1960s a new cotton picker was purchased, but even after this some early picking was still done by hand.⁵⁰⁴

After harvest, stalks were machine shredded and plowed under to decay; this practice was now necessary to control insects. A cover crop of winter peas or vetch was then used until spring plowing.⁵⁰⁵

Corn remained the only other crop grown on any scale. It was generally planted on stiffer soils near the lake, but there was some rotation with cotton on the front. However, with increasing use of fertilizers there was now less need for rotation. We have no information on yields at Magnolia at this time, but Highsmith noted that yields in the parish were generally low

⁵⁰⁰ Highsmith, 31.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Crespi, 37. Photographs from the Hertzog family collection of cotton picking at this time are reproduced in Malone, figs. 77 and 78.

⁵⁰³ Magnolia Plantation Settlement Book, 1958 – 1960, Magnolia Store records in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

⁵⁰⁴ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005; Malone, 108.

⁵⁰⁵ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005.

compared to those obtained in the Midwestern Corn Belt. Yields were however improving with the use of fertilizers and the introduction of hybrid seeds.⁵⁰⁶

Diversification into other crops was held back by several factors which placed the planters at a competitive disadvantage compared to agribusinesses elsewhere, including distance from urban markets and processing centers. But cattle provided an attractive alternative to cotton, and Highsmith suggested that diversification into livestock production explained why in 1959 a substantial share of the federal government cotton allotment was not used in the parish.

The fact that many allotments were not used is indicative of changing preference of the farmers based on increasing experience with cattle and upon the assessment of relative costs and profits. Recently cotton production costs (assuming at least one bale per acre) have been at least \$100 per acre - \$10 for preparing seed bed, \$30 for hoeing, \$20 for insecticides and fertilizer, and \$40 for harvest and marketing. The better pastures in the parish will carry one cow per acre through the pasture season and allow the cutting of about one ton of hay for the winter feed - with labor costs of less than \$10 per cow.⁵⁰⁷

Livestock, Pastures, and Hayfields

The cattle raising enterprise at Magnolia had grown very considerably since 1941. In 1960 there were 1,258 head of cattle on the plantation with a total appraised value of \$98,454.72.⁵⁰⁸ The total count included 606 cows and 496 calves, plus another 141 large calves. Highsmith described the cattle industry in the parish as follows:

The cattle industry of the parish is dominated by beef breeds and based largely on cow-calf enterprises. About fifty per cent of the calves are sold for slaughter with a good finish at weights of 400 to 600 pounds. Most of the rest are sold as feeders to cattlemen in Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arizona, and California. Brood cows usually contain some of the Brahma strain to improve hardiness. When these cows are bred to a good Hereford bull, the resulting calves have Hereford characteristics as far as body conformation and meat are concerned. A calf crop of seventy-five to eighty per cent is common on the bottom pastures. There are two steer fattening operations in the parish, seven farmers engaged in registered Hereford production, and one is a registered Brahma breeder.⁵⁰⁹

At Magnolia, some of the cattle were registered Herefords, but the succession inventory did not differentiate the blooded cattle from the rest. The 141 large calves mentioned in the 1960

⁵⁰⁶ Highsmith, 34.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31. In 1959 the parish was allotted 24,090 acres of cotton for 914 farms, but cotton was grown on only 371 farms and covered only 15,086 acres.

⁵⁰⁸ Succession of Sarah J. Hertzog, 1960, Inventory, Movables - Livestock. The cattle count in a settlement book for June 1960 was slightly different, it listed 766 cows, 616 calves, and 29 bulls, giving a total of 1411 head of cattle.

⁵⁰⁹ Highsmith, 36.

succession inventory were probably steers being fattened, while the other calves would have represented a calf crop of just over 80%. According to Crespi, auctioneers came from Alexandria about twice yearly to take calves back for auction.⁵¹⁰

The pastures beyond the canal cleared in the 1950s were referred to as the "Bulldozer Pastures." Other pastures had also acquired names by this time.⁵¹¹ The large pasture between Hertzog Lake and the canal was known as "Big Pasture," and a pasture on the other side of the lake became known as "Heifer Pasture." Pastures at the southeast end of the lake were referred to as the "Big Water Trough" and "Little Water Trough" pastures. Water was supplied to the cattle at this time from wells, and Betty Hertzog remembers there were problems with iron deposits from this water clogging pipes.

In an account book for the years 1958 – 1960, there is a list of five people who paid the Hertzog's rent for the use of their pastures. None of these people had more than three head of cattle and they were probably employees.⁵¹² According to Crespi, Matthew Hertzog had some difficulty finding hands with the right skills to be cowboys, and presumably some had had to be trained on the job.⁵¹³ The job involved management of the pastures as well as the cattle, and it was important to pay attention to grazing pressures to ensure the continuing vigor of the grasses. The new pastures like the old ones were composed largely of Bermuda grass, with some white clover, the latter being largely self-seeded.⁵¹⁴ Highsmith mentioned success with the recent introduction of Coastal Bermuda grass, but it is not known if this was used in the pastures at Magnolia.

The main hayfields were situated beside the old central lane on either side of the set back levée. They had a similar composition to the pastures and usually yielded two or three cuts per year, depending on price and needs. In 1959, a total of 11,266 bales of hay were obtained on the first cut in May – June, and another 9,844 bales on the second cut in August – September. The management of the hayfields had relied mainly on machinery since the 1930s, and in the 1960 succession the hay baler was appraised at \$1,534.93 making it the second most valuable machine on the plantation.

⁵¹⁰ Crespi, 38.

⁵¹¹ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005; Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁵¹² In 1959 and 1960, Matthew Johnson, Nunnie Rachal, Raymond Pantalion, Thomas Randolph and Joseph LaCour paid pasture rents. These names are not the same as those listed as growing cotton, nor are they the names of the people who were living in the Quarters at this time. Magnolia Plantation Settlement Book 1958-1960.

⁵¹³ Crespi, 38.

⁵¹⁴ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

There was no mention of sheep or hogs in the 1960 succession inventory. There were certainly still hogs being raised to supply the table at the Big House, and there may have been a few still owned by the residents of the Quarters. But neither hogs nor sheep were being raised as a commercial enterprise. Highsmith pointed out that owing to greater labor requirements neither were as attractive as cattle as a commercial investment.⁵¹⁵ Dairy cows were also being kept only to meet domestic needs. The 1960 succession inventory lists 15 older cows, and this figure probably included the approximately half a dozen dairy cows that Betty Hertzog remembers were kept by her father.

Woodlands and Swamps

A scatter of shade trees had been left standing in the pastures when they were cleared, but Hertzog Lake now contained the only large stand of trees on the plantation. The contrast with the neighboring Chopin property has already been noted.

The Grounds around the Big House

These grounds were altered very little between 1941 and 1958. At the time the aerial photograph was taken, the magnolias at the end of the entrance allée were missing, but they were replaced before 1960.⁵¹⁶ The front yard was still grazed by horses and cows and used occasionally for baseball games. Photographs from the early 1960s show a fenced ring for horse riding to the right of the allée, but there is no sign of it on the 1958 aerial photograph, so it must have been added later.⁵¹⁷

By the 1950s, John Rachal had replaced Buddy Randolph as the yardman, and the only vegetable garden was the one behind the house.⁵¹⁸ The space to the southeast of the house that was cultivated in 1941 appears to be under grass in 1958.

The orchard can be seen very clearly in the aerial photograph: it contained about 60 trees, mostly pecans, with a few figs and peaches. It was divided into several parts by fences. The eastern part was still used for raising hogs, and one can see a corn crib standing beside a pond, somewhere near the site of the orchard house shown in Walmsley's survey 100 years earlier. In

⁵¹⁵ Highsmith, 36-37.

⁵¹⁶ Betty Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005.

⁵¹⁷ Photographs of the ring from the Hertzog family collections are reproduced in Malone, figs. 81, 82, 83, and 85.

⁵¹⁸ Betty Hertzog interview, 13 April 2005; a photograph of John Rachal is reproduced in Malone, fig. 74.

the southeastern corner of the orchard the antebellum cook's house still stood. At this time it was the home of Rosa Rachal and her mother, both of who worked as cooks at the Big House.⁵¹⁹

At the other side of the orchard, the space behind the dairy probably served as a loafing yard for the cows. Beyond this, there was a significant addition to the stock of buildings. A new tractor shed had been built northwest of the dairy barn. Tractors parked in this location could be kept close to the cotton fields and hayfields, much closer than if they were stored in the plantation yards.

The Plantation Yards

Although the tractors were not stored in the plantation yards, other equipment can be seen on the aerial photograph in the old mule lot beside the store, and at the back of that space a new shed had been erected to house the cotton-picking machine. The area was clearly much used, and the ground appears to be bare of vegetation.

The store was still in operation, but it cannot have been the busy place it was 20 years earlier. Matthew Hertzog still kept an office there, but with the departure of most of the sharecroppers the organization of the plantation had been greatly simplified. The store still offered a variety of goods to the remaining employees, but it had a smaller inventory. The 1960 succession appraised the merchandise in the store at \$941.45, whereas it had been valued at \$1,506.98 in 1921, when obviously a dollar would have bought considerably more.⁵²⁰

We do not know if the blacksmith's shop was still in operation in 1958; it would seem that the plantation now had more need for the services of a garage mechanic than a smith. The field beside the shop appears on the aerial photograph to be in grass, and, as in 1941, it was separated from the old mule lot beside the store by a fence. The overseer's house was still occupied, but Lester Gallion who had followed his father as overseer, left the position in the late

⁵¹⁹ Photographs of Rosa Rachal and her mother Martha Littleton are reproduced in Malone, figs. 60 and 76. In the Magnolia Plantation Settlement Book 1958 - 1960, six people are named under the heading 'House Labor' in August 1958, viz. John Rachal, Rosa Rachal, Victoria LaCour, Ella Baltazar, Teresa LaCour, and Buddy Rand[olph].

⁵²⁰ Succession of Sarah J. Hertzog, 1960, Inventory, Movables - Store Inventory; Succession of Ambrose J. Hertzog, 1921, Inventory, Schedule G, Merchandise and Fixtures in Plantation Store. The estimated value of the fixtures has been subtracted from the figure given in the text.

1950s.⁵²¹ The field behind the overseer's house was still in cultivation, and there was still a vegetable garden at the end nearest the house.

The pattern of fenced enclosures between the store and the stables had been modified slightly with new fences near the store where the cattle were corralled. Cattle were now virtually the only animals gathered into the yards. The four mules remaining on the plantation were probably kept in the stables, but there must have been a lot of empty stalls.

To the south, the seed barn had been moved a few yards from its original location and now stood close to the site of the Cottage Buard. As in 1941, the area between the stables and the gin was being cultivated, but there are no longer paths between the Quarters and the gin.

The Quarters

At least six of the cabins in the Quarters were being lived in at the end of the 1950s. Jack Williams, who worked with the cattle and horses, lived in the house in the front row nearest the gin barn.⁵²² Walter "Buddy" Randolph, the retired gardener, lived next door. Above the gap in this row, Johnson Dugas had his place, and Wilson "Squirrel" Metoyer, who had been a tenant, lived in the northernmost cabin. Doris Randolph lived in the house in the second row behind Wilson Metoyer, and Abe Randolph lived in one of the middle cabins.⁵²³

Living conditions in the houses had improved when electricity was introduced in the 1940s, but the outside spaces had probably changed little. The cabins still had small yards in which vegetables were grown and small livestock kept. The pattern of fences enclosing these yards can be seen on the 1958 aerial photograph. Also clearly visible are the footpaths. One that ran from the cabins to the store was there in 1941, but a lane that provides a short cut from the southern group of cabins to the highway by the river seems to be new. A photograph taken about this time provides a picture of the Quarters seen from Highway 119: most of the cabins are shaded with trees; gardens can be seen though no details can be made out, and there is an automobile parked beside one of the homes.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005. Names of the people who occupied the house after Lester Gallien are given in the "Overseer's House Historic Structure Report," 14-15.

⁵²² Williams was later to move to the cook's house, where he became its last resident before it fell into disuse. Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006.

⁵²³ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁵²⁴ This photograph from the Hertzog family collections is reproduced in Malone, fig. 80. A Day Book for 1960 contains a record of car payments being made by Jack Williams to Matthew Hertzog; Day Book 1960 - 1962, Magnolia Store records in the collection of Cane River Creole NHP.

Tenants' Places

Most of the tenants' houses were still standing in 1958. A few people were still living in these places, although some of the occupants may have become employees rather than sharecroppers or renters. As noted above, only six people were listed in accounts as still growing cotton on a shares basis at this time.⁵²⁵ But most of the tenants' places were unoccupied by the late 1950s.⁵²⁶ In the aerial photograph some appear to have abandoned yards and are no longer linked to turnrows. These signs of abandonment are concentrated among the places furthest from the main road.

Rhythms of Life in the Landscape

The modernization of the plantation system was symbolized at Magnolia by the presence of an exploratory oil well behind Hertzog Lake in 1958. Workers now moved across the landscape on tractors pulling machines, not on foot behind mules. The process of modernization was not yet complete; the fields would fill with people hoeing cotton in the spring, and with pickers in the fall, but there must have been a spreading feeling of emptiness for much of the rest of the year.

Now, human life was once again concentrated at the Big House and the Quarters, while along river road there were abandoned homes. In and around the Big House, much of the old way of life continued to be followed: children and young adults rode horses in the front yard, servants tended the flower and vegetable gardens and looked after livestock in the backyard, "Mr. Matt" went to his office in the store, and the entire Hertzog family went for picnics to their island on Cane River Lake. In the Quarters there was also some continuity: people sitting on porches, working in their yards, and talking with their neighbors. But major changes were occurring in the lives of the workers on the plantation, which have been discussed by Crespi.⁵²⁷ People now had access through the ownership of televisions and automobiles to the modern world beyond Cane River. While this meant that lives were less circumscribed, they were also

⁵²⁵ In 1959, Joseph Balthazar, Dorothy Mae West, James Moran, Hobs Metoyer, Joseph Rachal, and John Vercher were listed as cotton growers; Cotton Account and Settlement Book, 1959. Atrice Anthony and his family may have been amongst the sharecroppers or renters in the early 1960; they were photographed picking cotton in 1963; Malone, fig. 77.

⁵²⁶ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 and 10 February 2005; Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁵²⁷ Crespi, 59-60; the difference between the modern world and the old way of life is a theme in the chapters on "Plantation Economy," "The Magnolia Community," "Recreation and Holidays," and "Religion." They are summed up under the heading "Mechanization, Rural Exodus and the Church."

becoming less closely connected, not only to their neighbors but also with their environment. So the importance of the natural rhythms of the place was diminishing as the plantation entered the modern world.

CHAPTER SIX

MAGNOLIA TODAY

Introduction

On January 22, 1996, Museum Contents Inc. transferred about 19 acres containing the plantation yards and the Quarters at Magnolia to the NPS. This organization had acquired the area from the Hertzog Family in the 1970s in order to provide for the preservation of the historic buildings most of which were no longer being used. The remaining 2,148 acres of Magnolia Plantation remain in the ownership of the Hertzog Family. This description of existing conditions discusses the larger landscape first, and then considers in more detail the portion within the ownership of the NPS.

An aerial photograph taken on January 28, 1998 provides an overview of the entire landscape, and this has been used to produce a plan of the entire plantation, which can be compared to earlier period plans.⁵²⁸ This aerial photograph was discussed with Betty Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog III, and the former kindly arranged for us to tour the plantation in the company of James Scarborough, whose family now leases and farms some of the land.

A Cultural Landscape Inventory was carried out in 1996 and this has provided a useful base map of both the grounds around the Big House and the area within the NPS boundary.⁵²⁹ The HABS team made a more detailed survey of the gardens and backyard of the house in 2002, and with this in hand we have walked around these areas with Betty Hertzog.⁵³⁰ Our aim has been to collect sufficient information about the grounds of the Big House so that we can discuss the character and importance of the area, but we have not attempted a detailed survey to refine or add to the mapping that has already been done.

Finally we have used the site map showing the location of extant structures prepared by the archaeological team under the direction of Dr. Bennie Keel to provide a base for our Existing

⁵²⁸ USDA – CFSA, Aerial Photograph NAPP 10802-3, 01/28/98, Scale: one inch = 800 feet (Aerial Photography Field Office, Salt Lake City Utah).

⁵²⁹ "Cane River Creole NHP, Magnolia Plantation, Cultural Landscape Inventory, Context Map, Drawing 404/80 006," December 1996 (Atlanta: NPS Southeast Region, Cultural Resources).

⁵³⁰ "Magnolia Plantation, HABS," Site Plan, Summer 2002. The walk around the gardens was conducted 13 April 2005.

Conditions Plan of the NPS Magnolia Unit.⁵³¹ In May 2004 we surveyed the vegetation within the NPS boundary and in April 2005 and March 2006, we took photographs of the important features within that area.

LANDSCAPE OF THE HERTZOG PLANTATION

Today, the northwestern boundary of the plantation follows the arpent line that defined the boundary of Matthew Hertzog's Ferry Plantation in 1858. The southeastern boundary follows the old central lane of Ambrose LeComte's Magnolia, until it meets the wedge of land containing the plantation yards and the Quarters, which was purchased by Ambrose Hertzog from his sister Fanny in 1903. These historic boundaries are visible in the landscape as they are fenced and lines of trees follow these fences for much of their length.

While these boundaries follow important historic lines, there is a general absence of other historic lines still visible within these boundaries. This is very noticeable if one compares Magnolia's landscape to the one across the river. Many of the colonial arpent lines are still visible on the right hand bank of the river, whereas only short stretches of a couple of arpent lines exist as landscape features on the left hand bank. On Magnolia Plantation, evidence of most of the arpent lines was removed at the time LeComte acquired the land and gave it a highly rational layout. Then in the mid-twentieth century, evidence of much of the historic field pattern was removed when the tenancy period ended and the plantation was modernized. Finally, in the mid 1970s, the front levée behind the Big House was removed.⁵³² This means that, apart from the natural setting and the collection of historic buildings at the old core of the plantation, the set back levée and the central lane are the main relics of the layout recorded by Walmsley in 1858.

Since the reorganization of plantation operations that followed the death of Matthew Hertzog II in 1973, the land has been farmed under agricultural lease agreements. The son and grandson of James Scarborough now farm Ambrose Hertzog's share of the plantation, while the rest of the Hertzog family lease their share to the Bayou Camitte organization. James Scarborough, lives on the northern side of the plantation near one of the bayous, and the Scarborougs keep their machinery in a compound on the Cane River Lake side of Highway 119.

⁵³¹ "National Park boundary and core area of Magnolia Plantation showing extant structures," Keel, Figure 2, 16.

⁵³² Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

So, the organizational center of some agricultural operations has been moved from the historic core to the northern side of the property, while the center of operations for the remainder has been moved off-site by Bayou Camitte.

It has been more than 50 years since major flooding occurred in this region and Cane River has lost much of the influence it once had over life on the plantation. As already noted, one of the artificial levees that ran across the plantation has been removed; when this was done the earth was used to raise the level of a lane leading to a cattle pen near Hertzog Lake. But, although flooding is no longer considered a major problem, riverbank erosion remains a concern. Above the dam, erosion is attributed to the wake of motorized boats, and the Cane River Waterway Commission is attempting to regulate the speed of boats. Below the dam, erosion damaged the southbound lane of LA 119 at the curve in front of the Big House, and the Louisiana Department of Transportation has installed gabions to stabilize the bank.⁵³³ These are hidden from the road by stands of trees and shrubs along the bank, which render the river virtually invisible.

While the economic role of Cane River as a natural transportation route has finished, its importance as a recreational resource, particularly the importance of the stretch above the dam, has grown. Lakefront property has become highly desirable, and some of the land beside the lake has been subdivided by members of the Hertzog family. Betty Hertzog has built a house beside the lake, and although this is not her primary residence at this time, the situation could change.⁵³⁴ With the construction of houses beside the lake, the family has no need of the old fish camp beside the dam, and trailers in that area are now rented to fishermen.⁵³⁵

Nearly all the former tenants' houses have been demolished, only a couple of them remain and these are in a ruinous state. As the houses were removed, the roads leading to them have been abandoned and little now remains of the old river road where it has not been incorporated into Highway 119. Even this highway has become almost a backwater, as most local traffic uses Highway 1 between Cloutierville and Natchitoches, and all regional traffic uses Interstate 49.

While the land is now leased and members of the Hertzog family play no direct role in its day-to-day management, there is a lot of continuity in management decisions from the days of

⁵³³ *Cane River Creole N. H. P. Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, 202.

⁵³⁴ Betty Hertzog interview, 9 February 2005.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

Matthew Hertzog II. The pattern of land use continues to reflect the historic difference between front and back land, and the front land is cultivated while the back land is in hay or pasture. Cotton and corn are still the major crops, but soybeans have increased in importance since the 1970s.⁵³⁶ A decision on how much acreage to devote to a particular crop depends primarily on an assessment of the markets and varies from year to year.⁵³⁷ In 2004, corn was the most important crop, but in 2005 cotton occupied that position. Agricultural operations are highly mechanized, and the landscape is made up of a few large fields separated by lanes, drains and bayous.

As in 1958, the major hayfields are to be found on the southeastern side of Hertzog Lake beside the set back *levée*. Since 1958, lines of trees have grown up along the fence lines that separate these fields from the permanent pastures behind the lake. These pastures are still grazed by large numbers of cattle, but now hundreds of beef cattle are rotated in and out of the plantation every few months.⁵³⁸ Hayracks and water troughs are strategically placed at various points in the pastures; the troughs are now filled with water piped from the municipal supply instead of wells. The main cattle pen is located close to the southern end of Hertzog Lake, and the turnrow leading to it from Highway 119 has become the equivalent of a central lane on the plantation.

The course of the old central lane is still marked by the line of *bois d'arc* trees, but it has fallen into disuse now the old plantation yards are no longer a functioning part of the plantation. The pastures beside the lane behind the plantation yards are now used primarily as grazing for Betty Hertzog's horses.

There is still a scatter of shade trees in the bulldozer pastures at the back of the plantation, but the only substantial stand of trees left on the plantation is at Hertzog Lake. This remains one of the least altered parts of the plantation despite the fact that cypress timber has been removed from it on several occasions. It still provides wildlife habitat and it is still used for duck hunting in season.

The grounds around the Big House have also retained much of their historic character. The only major change came in 1976, when Ambrose Hertzog II, having retired from his medical practice, returned to live at Magnolia and built a residence next door to the Big House. It is now occupied by his son, Ambrose III.

⁵³⁶ Ambrose Hertzog interview, 10 February 2005.

⁵³⁷ James Scarborough interview, 13 April 2005.

⁵³⁸ James Scarborough interview, 13 April 2005.

The magnolias in front to the Big House that were replaced at the end of the 1950s have now matured and the allée has regained the appearance it had in the first half of the twentieth century. Elsewhere, one or two trees have been lost, notably a live oak on the right hand side of the front garden, and a few trees have been added around the edges of the front yard, but otherwise little seems to have changed in the past 48 years.

The plantings in front of the house and on the left side are a combination of evergreen shrubs, perennials and bulbs, and both the front and the side are similar in character. There are relic brick borders and remnants of paths throughout these parts of the garden, but it is impossible to discern their layout because the vegetation is overgrown.⁵³⁹ The plantings in the garden include plants associated with traditional Louisiana gardens such as sweet olive, (*Osmanthus fragrans*), banana shrub, (*Michelia figo*), mock orange, (*Philadelphus coronaries*), camellia, (*Camellia japonica*), abelia, (*Abelia x grandiflora*), and Japanese Rose, (*Kerria japonica* 'Pleniflora.'). The plantings on the right side are much simpler and consist primarily of ground cover and aspidistra because of the tremendous amount of shade provided by the canopy of the enormous live oaks. Without archaeological exploration it is not possible to determine to what degree the front and side gardens have been layered atop an earlier antebellum parterre.

There is a curious garden structure in the right side of the garden, toward the side fence, that appears to be some kind of a hot house or possibly a propagation structure. It is overgrown and we were not able to examine it closely, but it did not appear to be from the antebellum period.

The yard immediately behind the house is enclosed by a cypress *pieux* fence that encloses the rectangle formed by the ell of the house. The interior of this space is covered in lawn except for a spot near the center where an area that seems to be paved in brick rubble shows through the grass lawn. There are aspidistras below the gallery, and antique roses growing along the fence, including a large and vigorous specimen of climbing sweetheart rose.

Beyond this yard are the work yards, containing a chicken coop that is very much still in use and producing. To the left of the coop is a holding yard for potted plants that are ready to be transplanted to Betty's lake house, as well as beds with numerous plantings of Louisiana iris and

⁵³⁹ According to Betty Hertzog, on the west side of the house there are the remains of at least two brick paths; one continuing the line of the gallery at the front of the house and the other continuing the line of the gallery behind the main part of the house. The roots of one of the live oaks seem to have disrupted the line of the latter, suggesting it was laid out when the oak was fairly young. Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006.

Iris pseudacorus. In this yard is a fiberglass greenhouse where tender plants, such as ferns, are kept over the winter. Behind the coops, stand broken lines of pecan trees in the orchard, and in a sunny patch is the space where the family vegetable garden used to be.

These areas immediately surrounding the Big House are still very much "in use" and although somewhat overgrown retain the character of gardens and yards that would be associated with rural Louisiana homesteads of the late 19th and first half of the 20th century.

LANDSCAPE OF THE NPS MAGNOLIA UNIT

The boundaries of the property transferred to the NPS were drawn around the extant historic buildings in the plantation yards and Quarters; however only a few of the boundary lines coincide with the antebellum boundaries of the yards and Quarters. On the western side of the property, the boundary follows the edge of the road; this was the historic boundary, though it might have shifted a few feet further away from the river since the antebellum period. At the southern end of the property, the boundary follows the line used in 1903 to define the area purchased by Ambrose Hertzog from his sister Fanny when the plantation was divided. This line was almost certainly the original limit of the gin yard. On the eastern side of the NPS property, the 1903 line also provides the current boundary, but on this side it cuts through the area the Quarters occupied in the antebellum period. Keel has observed scattered bricks and artifacts in the field to the east, and these almost certainly represent remains of the cabins demolished in the late-19th century.⁵⁴⁰ On the northern side of the Quarters, the boundary line parallels an old fenceline that enclosed the pasture east of the cabins, but it is located a few yards closer to the cabins. The boundary then turns to run close beside the overseer's house, heading past the cook's house towards the front yard of the Big House. This northeastern stretch of boundary cuts through several historic areas, most notably the central lane of the antebellum plantation.

Finally, the boundary beside the front yard of the Big House parallels the historic line between that space and the yard of the blacksmith's shop, but the new boundary is a few feet to the east of the old, so that the live oaks that once stood inside the boundary of the front yard of the Big House, are now on NPS property.

⁵⁴⁰ Keel, 60, 82.

Fences of various types, lines of trees, and hedgerows made up of volunteer trees, shrubs, and vines now mark the property boundaries. The fence types include post and board, and post and wire structures. Some of the fences were constructed recently, but others, such as the barbed wire fences along the eastern sides of the property, are older. There are several new tubular steel gates in the fence beside the road, and the NPS has constructed a new entrance to the unit just down the road from the store. This entrance leads to a new parking lot that has been built within the area of the old stable yard, as defined for the NPS by Ambrose Hertzog.

The live oaks along the northwestern boundary of the Unit are the only fence line trees that were obviously planted, all others along the fences are probably volunteers. The largest of these are hackberries and pecans, but beside these black locusts, ironwoods, mulberries, bois d'arcs, boxelders, and chinaberry trees are common. In places, a tangle of vines including honeysuckle, smilax, poison ivy, wild grape, Virginia creeper and trumpet vines interlace underbrush. As might be expected, the live oaks beside the smith's shop are the oldest trees, but there are a few large trees along the eastern boundary. Aerial photographs indicate that some trees were allowed to grow along this fence line in the vicinity of the Quarters and a tenant's place on the Chopin property. The other hedgerow trees are much younger even though some of the fence lines are older; in particular the hedgerow along the main road is a recent development, as this fence line was kept clean, except for a few shade trees near the store, when the plantation yards were in active use.⁵⁴¹

Within the NPS boundaries, there are only a few relics of the historic layout and land use, other than the historic buildings themselves. Between the blacksmith's shop and the store, there is little visible evidence to indicate where the old central lane crossed the plantation yards and joined the river road. Beside a corncrib near the highway, there is a short stretch of fence that is almost certainly the remains of the fenceline that remained after the old lane had gone, but an exact determination of the location of the original entrance to the lane from river road would require some subsurface investigations. The corncrib, according to Betty Hertzog, was moved to this location by her father, probably in the early 1960s.⁵⁴² There is no sign of the lane in the middle of the yard, which is now covered with grass. Behind the overseer's house, the lane probably occupied the space between the pecan trees and carriage shed that still stand there;

⁵⁴¹ See the 1941 and 1958 aerial photographs.

⁵⁴² Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006. The crib can be seen in a photograph taken in 1965 that is reproduced in "Historic Structure Report, Blacksmith's Shop, Pigeonnier and Carriage Shed," 115.

however, another shed, which stands beside the NPS Unit boundary, appears to block the line of the lane, and we conclude therefore, that it was constructed after the section of lane crossing the yards was closed.⁵⁴³

Near the blacksmith's shop, there is a gate and this led to a lane that ran towards the cook's house, staying beneath the canopy of live oaks at the edge of the front yard.⁵⁴⁴ The remains of the fence that separated this lane from the rest of the blacksmith's yard can still be seen near the smith's shop.

Below the store there are remnants of some of the fences that enclosed lots where cattle were held for inspection, treatment or sale. Most of these short stretches of fence are constructed of wooden posts and three or four rails. In this area and behind the store there would have been little opportunity for grass to grow, but today there are only limited areas without grass cover, and these are generally the result of recent disturbance by the NPS and its contractors.

Behind the shed that housed the cotton picker, the yard around the overseer's house also retains some old fence lines. The main feature of the yard is the line formed by large live oaks on the southwestern side of the house. These are obviously old trees that were planted to provide shade, perhaps in the antebellum period when the house served as a hospital, but more likely after the Civil War when the Hertzogs made this building their temporary home. Around the overseer's house there are clumps of aspidistras; these suggest there might have been more ornamental plantings in its yard. Much of the rest of the vegetation around the house is made up of volunteer species that have colonized old fence lines. These hedgerows have a similar composition to the boundary hedgerows, and like most of those are not very old.

Unfortunately, there are few remnants of any yards and gardens in the Quarters. We observed a few clumps of *Crinum* lilies, narcissi and bluebells in front of three cabins at the south end of the Quarters. And although there might be a few other garden survivors that were not visible during our visits, it is clear there is very little evidence above ground to indicate what the Quarters looked like when they were occupied. There are no traces of any fences, and only a few shade trees. Of the remaining trees, only a sycamore and three pecans appear large enough to be more than 50 years old.

⁵⁴³ According to Ambrose Hertzog, the carriage shed was built in the 1920s or '30s; it was probably used as a garage, and includes a dog pen, "Historic Structure Report, Blacksmith's Shop, Pigeonnier and Carriage Shed," 5.

⁵⁴⁴ Betty Hertzog interview, 29 March 2006.

In his final report, Keel recommended the removal of volunteer trees, including hackberries and mulberries, in the vicinity of the cabins, because their branches and roots posed threats to the historic structures.⁵⁴⁵ This might account for the absence of the sort of volunteer growth found elsewhere on the property. Only one clump of mulberries and black locusts still exists and this occupies what appears to be a trash pile near the location of one of the demolished cabins in the eastern corner of the property.

The archeology report also included a recommendation that measures be taken to improve drainage as lack of proper drainage could adversely affect the foundation of the cabins. There is a drainage ditch some distance west of the Quarters, but ponding still occurs during wet weather.⁵⁴⁶ There is a second drainage ditch in front of the overseer's yard. This is an old ditch, which can be clearly seen on the 1958 aerial photograph draining towards the bayou at the crawfish pond. It might have been part of a larger network that once drained the plantation yards. However part of the drainage problem around the buildings must be attributed to the fact that cisterns are no longer used to collect water from the roofs. Piped water became available in the 1960s and most of the cisterns have now gone, and those that remain have been filled or closed because they were considered a potential hazard to visitors.

It has been about 40 years since anyone lived in any of the cabins in the Quarters or in the overseer's house, and 30 years since the store was closed and the plantation yards fell into disuse. The NPS property contains an extraordinary collection of historic buildings, but unfortunately much of their landscape setting has changed greatly in the past 30 or 40 years. As a result, it would now be very difficult for any visitor to understand how any of the outdoor spaces were used, why the complex was laid out the way it was, or how it was connected to the larger plantation landscape.

⁵⁴⁵ Keel, 82.

⁵⁴⁶ This ditch was there in the 1970s, but it cannot be seen in the 1958 aerial photograph. It does not follow the location of any historic fencelines across the plantation yards.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND INTEGRITY

Historical Continuity And Change

Magnolia Plantation has borne witness to some of the most dramatic shifts in the South's political, social, economic, and agricultural history, but its landscape reflects a story characterized by remarkable continuity as well as radical change. That continuity is due, for the most part, to the continuous ownership of the plantation by the LeComte-Hertzog family from the time of the French land grant in 1753 up until the present day. This continuity in ownership has been accompanied by continuities in cultivation and occupation. A large part of the land beside the river has remained in cultivation, with cotton as the main crop, since the early years of the plantation system along the Cane River. The cultivation of cotton by traditional methods required a large workforce, and until recently this was composed of African American and Cane River Creole workers. It was the departure of these workers in the 1950s that signaled the end of the plantation system.

The dialogue in the landscape between continuity and change can be seen in the period plans attached to this report. There remain many questions about the early history of Magnolia, for example, we do not know the precise date at which it became a separate entity, so we must use Walmsley's 1858 survey as the datum against which we can measure the amount of change. Within a few years, the Civil War had left the Big House in ruins, and emancipation had disrupted the social and economic organization of the plantation. At the center of the plantation the character of the Quarters and plantation yards changed as workers left to live along river road, closer to the areas they were allocated as sharecroppers, and the Hertzogs took up residence in the former slave hospital. Day laborers continued to live in some of the cabins in the Quarters, but about two thirds of the cabins must have become empty, and these would eventually be demolished to supply bricks for the rebuilding of the Big House. But despite these major changes at the center of the plantation after the war, patterns of land use across the entire plantation were not radically different towards the end of the nineteenth century from the ones recorded in 1858. Cotton remained the staple crop, and the land continued to be worked by an intensive application of human and animal muscle power. And the plantation yards still continued to function as the

organizational hub of the plantation, only now Magnolia Store stood at the center of things rather than the agency or Big House.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, another round of major changes were precipitated with the division of the plantation following the deaths of Atala and Matthew Hertzog. The result can be seen in the 1921 period plan, where the boundaries of Magnolia Plantation have shifted northwards, leaving the Big House and plantation yards in a corner, rather than at the center, of the property. By this time the geographical situation of the plantation had changed with the damming of Cane River and the growth of Derry on the right bank as a railroad stop and sawmill town, and cotton production had been made more difficult by the arrival of the boll weevil. Nevertheless, seventeen years later, Matthew Hertzog II could still talk in *The Progress* about the remarkable degree of continuity there had been in the landscape over a 125-year period, with cotton, corn, hay, mules and cattle remaining the major crops. And the scenes at Magnolia captured by his brother Ambrose on film in the late 1930s and early 1940s were probably very similar to ones witnessed by his grandparents in the late nineteenth century.

The Depression slowed the process of modernization and diversification throughout the region; but important changes were underway at Magnolia by 1941, indicated by changes in the roads beside the river, and clearance and drainage of the woodlands at the back of the plantation. And the 1940s and 1950s were to be years of radical changes, both in farming operations and, even more importantly, in the community that worked the land. The conversion of the plantation into a modern agribusiness operated with machines by a few skilled wage earners, and the associated exodus of sharecroppers from the land, signaled the end of the traditional way of life by the end of the 1950s. At first glance, the landscape seen in the plan based on 1958 aerial photographs gives little indication of these events, except that the process of woodland clearance and drainage has been completed; but the landscape was largely empty, and most of the tenant places were standing derelict.

The ending of the old way of life became final at Magnolia when a new generation of Hertzogs took over after the death of Matthew Hertzog II in 1973. The plantation store was closed, the farmland was leased rather than managed directly by the owners, and the plantation yards were transferred to the protection of Museum Properties, and eventually to the NPS. The resulting changes to the landscape can be seen in the plan based on 1998 aerial photographs, with its simplified field pattern, absence of tenant places, and establishment of new centers of activity

away from the old plantation yards. And yet one can still see some landscape continuities not only from earlier decades in the twentieth century, but also from the antebellum period. Patterns of land use are still based on the potentialities and limitations of the natural environment, and reflect the subtle but enduring natural differences between land located near the river and backland beside the bayous. The natural levée still offers the best sites for settlement and the light sandy soils near the riverfront are best for cotton, while the stiffer soils at the back, even when drained, are better suited for hayfields and pastures.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The quality of significance refers to “the meaning or value ascribed to a cultural landscape based on the National Register criteria for evaluation,” and “normally stems from a combination of association and integrity.”⁵⁴⁷ The four National Register criteria are the following:

WWWWWWWWWWWW. association with events that contribute to the broad patterns

XXXXXXXXXXXX. association with the lives of significant persons from the past;

YYYYYYYYYYYY. embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; possession of high artistic value; representation of a “distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;”

D. possession or likely possession of information important to pre-history or history.

The landscape of Magnolia Plantation has a national level of significance under National Register Criteria A, C, and D.

Criterion A: Association with the history of cotton plantations from the colonial period onward.

Magnolia Plantation is associated with events central to the broad patterns of the history of the American South, specifically the history of cotton plantations from the colonial period onward. Its landscape witnessed key moments of the 19th and 20th century, including the tremendous growth of production in cotton production during the “golden years” of the antebellum period,

⁵⁴⁷ *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters (Washington, D.C., National Park Service, Cultural Resources, 1996), 5.

with the concomitant world of slavery and its landscape of bondage and labor; it served as a literal battlefield for Civil War skirmishes; it was transformed after the Civil War into a system of tenancy and day laborers, with former slaves and their descendants continuing to live at Magnolia as a part of a loose community that had as its social center the Magnolia Store; the production of cotton at Magnolia was sustained through a national economic depression, a revolution in agricultural technology, and the loss of young laborers to the armed forces. After two world wars, Magnolia witnessed the impact of the struggle for Civil Rights as it played out in the national landscape, and its own peculiar expression in Creole Cane River, where race is not just a matter of black or white, but much more complex. As a cultural landscape, Magnolia has been shaped by all of these major events in American history, and has retained a strong semblance of its original organization and appearance.

Magnolia's extraordinary collection of historic buildings, outbuildings, landscape features, and ephemeral elements represent the various phases in its long history, spanning from colonial origins to the present. Because Louisiana was the nation's most productive cotton-growing region by the onset of the Civil War, and because the Red River region shared with the Mississippi River parishes the lead in that cotton production, and since Magnolia's LeComtes were the largest slaveholders and producers of cotton in the parish, Magnolia represents the apogee of Creole cotton culture and its subsequent adaptation to the physical and economic devastation of the Civil War. As a landscape, Magnolia chronicles the story of cotton cultivation as a major force in shaping a landscape, a culture, an economy, and a society. The Magnolia landscape also demonstrates the processes of cultural adaptation to changes in labor force, technology, and natural factors such as drainage patterns.

In the Magnolia landscape are remnants of many aspects of cotton plantation culture, from the housing complexes and relict gardens of the planter society to that of the enslaved workers, later to be transformed into housing for day laborers; to the yards where the labor of processing the crop took place with its incumbent technology, including the nationally significant mule-driven c. 1830s cotton press; to enclosed pastures where draft animals and race horses grazed; to the fields where from the earliest days of the plantation's establishment up to the present, cotton has been grown; to wooded swamplands where cattle, wild hogs and other game lived. Connecting all of these landscape spaces is a network of field roads, lanes, turnrows, footpaths, and cowpaths.

The vegetation at Magnolia also speaks to the long history of this cultural landscape and to the types of trees that have been valued across generations, particularly live oaks, Southern magnolias, and pecans. Several of the hardwood trees date to the first LeComte Big House. Other trees mark the lines of fences long since decayed by the region's high humidity and heat.

The survival of the Big House complex, the Quarters village, the Plantation Store in the old agency yard, the Overseer's House/Slave Hospital, and the Gin Barn, together with the surviving relationship to the Red River and the views to cotton fields in all directions give Magnolia a historical completeness rare amongst southern cotton plantations.

Criterion C: Illustration of the distinctive characteristics of the landscape of a cotton plantation.

While Magnolia is an outstanding example of a southern cotton plantation, it is more specifically representative of a French Creole cotton plantation of the Red River region, with architectural and landscape practices that find their sources in France. Characteristic of these Creole patterns is a remarkable environmental "fit" to the conditions of the indigenous landscape, with buildings constructed from materials found nearby, in shapes that respond directly to the extremes of the semi-tropical climate, and land survey methods that seem to have grown organically from the sinuosity of the local riverine systems. Whereas many of the Louisiana cotton plantations located along the Mississippi River were either built by Anglos, or had Big Houses where earlier Creole houses were replaced by grand Greek Revival mansions as the style swept the Eastern Seaboard and made its way south, the architecture of the Cane River maintained its early French roots and is an anomaly in an otherwise Anglo North Louisiana.⁵⁴⁸

Particularly distinctive to Magnolia are the eight surviving brick slave houses, one of the few quarters villages built of brick rather than of the more typical cypress frame construction. This is evidence of Ambrose LeComte's extraordinary wealth.

The patterns of the landscape are very distinctly French in origin, based upon the pie-shaped lots measured in arpents, resulting in trapezoidal and irregularly shaped fields and other subdivisions within the original tract.

⁵⁴⁸ Jonathan Fricker, "Tales from an ancient river town: historic Natchitoches and environs," *Preservation in Print*, May 2004, 9.

What distinguish Magnolia from most of its counterparts are its completeness, as well as its organic "layering" and adaptation to changing conditions over time. And what is important about this layering is that it remains fairly legible in the landscape. Comparisons to Oakland are useful, as it is the companion NPS Cane River property and, like Magnolia, remarkable because of the single-family ownership throughout its history. The distinctions in the two properties' significance are what make them such an important pairing for purposes of preservation and interpretation. At Oakland, one sees the original Big House and its garden, the plantation store, a doctor's house and yard, an overseer's house and slave cabins, parts of the agricultural operations, and many outbuildings scattered throughout a larger NPS holding—important associated artifacts, but the patterns are somewhat difficult to read as a related complex. Years of use and disuse, partial removal and replacement have left a landscape that is a challenge to interpret.⁵⁴⁹ Its main value lies in its Big House and adjacent garden and yard, the sheer number of significant structures that survive, and most importantly in the richness of the historical record of the Prud'homme Family, supplemented by an extensive oral history project that documents the more recent history of the plantation from a broader chorus of voices.

Other Cane River plantations have Big Houses that are older and perhaps more architecturally distinctive than Magnolia, but few have the collection of associated agricultural structures and landscape patterns, and none have the rare collection of masonry slave quarters. Only one other Louisiana plantation site has surviving masonry slave houses, and only three structures survive there. Magnolia's Quarters are one of only about nine groups of slave quarters that survive with any substantial amount of original material in the American South.⁵⁵⁰ The survival of the cabins and the fact that they were inhabited until fairly recently, allows for the interpretation of the story of the change in settlement patterns that was ushered in with tenancy, when tenant farmers moved to places along the river road, and new social patterns developed with Magnolia Store as a focal point. Unfortunately, the tenant houses at Magnolia no longer survive, but an oral history project is gathering information about the families who occupied them, and the Crespi ethnographic study and the photographs and films of Ambrose Hertzog II already provide important resources. So the potential to demonstrate and interpret the life experience of the work force of the plantation from slavery into modern times exists at Magnolia

⁵⁴⁹ See Firth and Turner, "Oakland Plantation CLR," 150.

⁵⁵⁰ Phone conversation with Donna Fricker, Louisiana State Office of Historic Preservation, 31 January 2006.

in a way that is rare at most southern plantation sites because of a lack of surviving landscape fabric and documentation.

In sum, the landscape of Magnolia Plantation represents an outstanding extant example of a large, highly efficient antebellum cotton plantation, together with the accrued adaptations precipitated by emancipation, tenancy, and the technological revolution of agribusiness of the second half of the 20th century.

Criterion D: Potential to yield important historical information.

Based upon SEAC's 1999 archaeological investigation of Magnolia, under the lead of Dr. Bennie Keel, it is evident that the site holds the potential to yield a great deal more important historical information, including the correlation of the Walmsley 1858 plat with the locations of structures that do not survive, the location of the Cottage Buard, and information about the functions of unidentified structures. Most importantly, further archaeological investigation should reveal information about the everyday lives of the slaves and the earliest period of tenancy, including "material culture, foodways, health practices, and perhaps religion and magic."⁵⁵¹ It also may be possible to discover the location of the slave quarters that preceded the brick slave village.

Further archaeological investigation of the site should also yield more information on the small-scale elements of the landscape, such as pathways, fencelines, planting bed borders, privy locations, and trash pits, revealing a clearer picture of the day-to-day movements of the various populations throughout the landscape of work and home.

INTEGRITY

Major changes have occurred in the landscape of the Hertzog Plantation over the past forty or fifty years. These changes have been discussed in earlier chapters, and so only a brief summary is provided here.

A fundamental reorganization of the plantation took place after the death of Matthew Hertzog II in 1973. Now, most of the agricultural land is leased, and the organizational center of farming operations has moved upriver away from the Big House, leaving it and the plantation

⁵⁵¹ Keel, 81.

yards in a quiet corner of the property. Although there is a considerable amount of continuity in agricultural land use patterns, the field pattern has been simplified, and some important historic elements, such as the front levée, have been removed. But, the most significant change has been the departure of most of the plantation's workforce. Already in 1960 many of the tenant places along the river were unoccupied, and, today, nearly all the derelict buildings have gone; indeed, much of the evidence that they ever existed has vanished, at least from above the surface of the ground.

The setting of the Big House was changed when Dr. Ambrose Hertzog built his house next door, but the continued occupation of the Big House by Betty Hertzog has meant much of its historic character has been retained. In contrast the plantation yards and the Quarters have been transformed now that they have ceased to be operational elements of the plantation and have become incorporated as a unit within the Cane River Creole National Historic Park. The appearance of the yards and Quarters has changed as restoration work has been carried out on some of the empty buildings, and a grass sward has grown over most of the ground hiding any evidence of previous uses. A new parking area for visitors with a large entrance sign now advertises the new identity of the yards as a unit within the National Historical Park.

It is not surprising that the landscape has been transformed in the past thirty years; the changes reflect the demise of the plantation system with its replacement by a modern agricultural business, and the praiseworthy effort to preserve many of the derelict plantation buildings by transferring ownership to the NPS. It is perhaps more surprising that a considerable number of traces survive from the landscapes of earlier periods, including some from the colonial and antebellum periods. The principal traces are summarized below under the headings used in previous chapters to identify the landscape characteristics of the plantation at various stages in its development.

Boundaries

The present-day boundaries of the Hertzog Plantation result from the 1903 division of the Magnolia Plantation between the heirs of Atala LeComte Hertzog and Matthew Hertzog, but many of the boundary lines have a much longer history. The northwestern boundary line is a colonial arpent line, which in 1858 marked the northern limit of Matthew Hertzog's Ferry Plantation. The use of the river as a boundary line is also a reminder of the arpent system, and the colonial practice of measuring the size of a property by the length of its river frontage

measured in arpents. The river frontage of the present-day Hertzog plantation incorporates the frontage of Matthew's Ferry Plantation and his brother Henry's plantation, as well as about half of the frontage of Ambrose LeComte's Magnolia.

The southeastern boundary of today's Hertzog Plantation follows the line of the central lane of LeComte's plantation. The land beyond this, which passed to Fanny Hertzog Chopin in 1903, is no longer part of the Hertzog's Magnolia, but the original eastern boundary of LeComte's Magnolia near Cloutierville is still clearly visible in the landscape: it is followed for part of its length by a lane, and then by Route 491. This old eastern boundary is another arpent line, and it is associated with the 1753 land grant to Jean Baptiste LeComte.

The only new line created by the division of the plantation in 1903 is the line on the eastern side of the plantation yards and Quarters; this was drawn to define the area purchased by Ambrose Hertzog from his sister, so that the yards and Quarters would remain with his share of the property. This line now forms part of the boundary of the NPS property acquired in 1997.

There is one other twentieth-century line in the boundaries of the present-day Hertzog Plantation. This is the line across the point by the dam on the river, which was drawn in 1921 to separate the individual inheritance of Matthew Hertzog II from the rest of the plantation, which was to be held communally by all members of the family.

Spatial Organization

Although the complex of buildings containing the Big House, the plantation yards and the Quarters no longer functions as the organizational center of agricultural operations on the plantation, the preservation of the historic buildings provides clear evidence of where the center of the plantation was located throughout the historic period. The complex as a whole retains much of its antebellum layout, although some of the antebellum buildings are gone and have been replaced by later structures. These later buildings are important reminders of the struggle after the Civil War to recover the prosperity of the antebellum years. The plantation store, in particular, is an important reminder of the way the plantation was reorganized during the sharecropping era, and is all the more valuable in this respect because of the removal of the tenants' places along river road.

Cane River and the Bayous

The river assumed its present character in the early years of the twentieth century with the impoundment of Cane River Lake. Below the dam, the river retains some of its natural

characteristics of earlier times, with water levels fluctuating between the high banks formed by the natural levées; however, it is difficult to visualize its antebellum character, when it was busy with steamboats. The nagging anxiety about water levels that characterized Cane River society throughout the nineteenth century has gone, but the remnants of the artificial levées are reminders of the risks entailed in working land in a major floodplain.

Roads, Lanes and Turnrows

The evolution of the present-day network of roads can be clearly seen in the period plans. A comparison of these plans indicates where traces from the era of slow journeys on foot and horseback, or by horse-drawn carriage and wagon, survive in our era of high-speed interstate highways. A short stretch of the winding line of the old river road has been incorporated in Route 119, where it curves around the river bend in front of the Big House and plantation yards. Unfortunately, few traces exist elsewhere because of the straightening of the highway, and the abandonment of the tenants' places along disused sections of the road. Away from the river, a large part of the central lane that linked the front to the back of the plantation survives, though it is no longer of much use. And the survival of the other lane on the old eastern boundary of the LeCompte plantation has already been mentioned above. Regrettably little remains of the network of turnrows that once led from these lanes to cultivated fields. There might be a few traces left in the form of field boundaries between the central lane and Hertzog Lake, but these are no longer used as paths.

Today, Cane River can be crossed below Magnolia at Derry, which became the main crossing point along this stretch of the river with the growth of Derry as a railroad and sawmill town, and at the dam upstream. As far as we know, nothing remains to mark the site of antebellum crossing points, and indeed the only one about which we have any information is the 24 Mile Ferry.

Cultivated Land

Most of Matthew Hertzog II's comments reported in *The Progress* in 1938, about the continuity of agricultural production at Magnolia, still apply today. Cotton, corn, hay, and cattle are still the important crops. Mules have gone, and soybeans have been added to the list; nevertheless there has been a remarkable degree of continuity in land use since the antebellum period. Of course, the methods of planting, cultivation and harvesting have changed, even since Matthew Hertzog's day, with further improvements in agricultural machinery and in the

application of agricultural chemicals. And, there has been a marked simplification of the field pattern in the past fifty years, but the cycle of agricultural operations remains essentially the same.

Livestock, Pastures, and Hayfields

When Matthew Hertzog made his observations in *The Progress*, the process of clearing the woodlands at the back of the plantation to create more pastures and hayfields was underway. This was completed after the Second World War, and the present-day landscape of hayfields and pastures dates from the 1950s. Since that time, the organization of the beef cattle business has changed somewhat, but the appearance of the landscape behind Hertzog Lake has remained much the same. The most noticeable development has been the growth of trees along some of the fencelines.

There are great differences between today's livestock enterprise and the management and use of livestock on the plantation before modernization began, and, unfortunately, there are few reminders of the vital roles played by draft animals in the past. Happily, as long as Betty Hertzog continues to breed and keep some horses near the Big House, there will be reminders of the importance attached to horses and horseracing by many generations of her family, and indeed by all sectors of Cane River society in the historic period.

Woodlands and Swamps

Woodlands and swamps covered about half of Ambrose LeComte's plantation, but already by 1858, the lake was isolated from the rest of the woodlands by the clearance of land behind it. It appears likely that the lake always had the character of a wooded swamp, and this has not changed despite the extraction of cypress timber at various times. Hertzog Lake is, therefore, one of the least changed parts of the plantation landscape, but to appreciate the character of the great tract of woodlands that once lay behind it, visitors would now have to look outside the boundaries of the Hertzog Plantation.

The Grounds of the Big House

Many of the features seen today in the grounds around the Big House can be seen in the films taken in the 1930s and 1940s by Ambrose Hertzog. In front of the house, the allée and lawns are much the same, though a few of the old trees have been lost, and goats and sheep no longer graze on the lawns. The flower garden in front of the house and the gardens at each side are overgrown in places, but almost certainly retain the same layouts and many of the same

plants. The backyards remain places of work with scattered livestock pens and sheds, and although they are no longer as busy as they were, it is easy to visualize them filled with activities associated with running the Big House. And behind the yards, the pecan orchard has retained much of its historic character.

According to family members, the layout and character of all these areas have changed little in living memory, and the grounds probably assumed their present form when Matthew and Atala Hertzog rebuilt and reoccupied the Big House. How many of the features were present in the antebellum years is more difficult to say because of the lack of detailed information about the grounds at that time. But we do know from Walmsley's survey that the general layouts of the front yard and orchard were the same, and we can be confident that the large live oaks in the allée and beside the house were planted before the Civil War. It seems likely that the grounds, like the house itself, are a creation of the 1890s, but were closely modeled on and incorporated features from the antebellum home.

The Plantation Yards

Many of the buildings that were recorded in Walmsley's 1858 survey have been lost, but the three main survivors were amongst the more important. The blacksmith's shop, the slave hospital that became the overseer's house, and the gin barn contain within their internal structures evidences of long histories of use, and various adaptations to new uses and occupants. Unfortunately, only the overseer's house retains much of its external setting, and most of this dates from the twentieth century. It is also regrettable that the boundary of the property conveyed to the NPS slices through that setting and separates the house from the area used by its occupants for their cotton patch and garden.

Fortunately the plantation store, which is the most important connection to the era of sharecropping and tenancy, does retain some of its historic setting. The area in front of the store has not changed greatly since it was recorded in films and photographs by Ambrose Hertzog in the late 1930s and 40s. Unfortunately, behind the store much has changed, and little remains of the fences and pens used to corral livestock when this area was the operational center of the plantation.

The Quarters and Tenants' Places

The survival of eight cabins in the Quarters is one of the most remarkable features of Magnolia, but, of course, that is only one third of the number of cabins shown on Walmsley's

survey. It is, therefore, rather difficult to appreciate the extent of the original complex and the size of the labor force it was built to accommodate. And although the proximity to the plantation yards is obvious, there is nothing on the ground today to indicate how the complex was connected to, or separated from the yards and adjacent fields.

When current oral history projects are completed, we should have a detailed picture of the daily lives of some of the employees who lived in the Quarters in the twentieth century. We already know some people had fenced yards, garden plots and livestock pens beside their cabins, but we know few specifics about the layout and composition of any of the yards, and unfortunately the only evidence visible on the ground is a few persistent flowering bulbs.

Almost nothing is left of the tenants' houses along river road. There might be a few persistent flowering plants left in some of the old yards, but most of these areas have been reincorporated into cultivated fields, so such survivals are probably rare.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance should be defined as extending from the date of the land grant (1753) to the end of the plantation system around 1960. The final General Management Plan for the National Historical Park recommended the selection of a date around 1960 as the close of the historic period, after public response to a draft version of the General Management Plan questioned the wisdom of choosing an earlier date.⁵⁵² Our research findings confirm the soundness of the final selection.

Here as elsewhere, the historic plantation system came to a close with the end of the sharecropping system and the reorganization of the farming enterprise into a modern highly mechanized operation. The changes that brought this about began in the 1920s and continued during the five decades during which Matthew Hertzog II managed the plantation. They were not completed until after his death in 1973. It is not helpful to try to identify any single year as a turning point, but the process accelerated during the 1950s and by the close of that decade the end of the plantation system was in sight, since by then most of the sharecroppers and renters had left and nearly all the tenant places were unoccupied. And the presence of good documentation

⁵⁵² The June 2000 draft had recommended an end date of 1948. *Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, January 2001, 5, 9 and 10.

from the end of the 1950s, including the succession inventory of Sally Hertzog's estate and the 1958 aerial photograph, makes it possible to describe the landscape at this point in its development with some precision.

Since 1960 the landscape has undergone considerable further change, but within the small area that now forms the Magnolia Plantation Unit of the National Historical Park, much of this change is reversible. The treatment of this area, and the role it might play in the interpretation of the larger landscape are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RECOMMENDATIONS

Seeing is believing, as the saying goes, but the reverse is also true: knowing is seeing.

Arthur Koestler

The genuine voice of the past is exactly what must be safeguarded by preservation.

Paul Philippot

Introduction

The 18.25 acres within the boundaries of the Magnolia Plantation Unit of Cane River Creole National Historical Park contain a fine collection of buildings associated with the long history of agricultural and industrial operations on the plantation and the accommodation of its workforce. Unfortunately, the empty spaces between the buildings have lost much of their historic appearance and it would be difficult for visitors to appreciate the character they had when they were in active use. The first challenge, therefore, is to develop treatment recommendations that recognize and address this problem.

While it is possible to address some of the changes that have occurred in the landscape since 1960, it is not possible, nor is it even desirable, to reverse them all. Missing buildings, such as the stables and seed house will not be reconstructed, and even though some farm animals may be reintroduced for special events when aspects of life on the plantation are demonstrated, for most of the time visitors will find the yards and Quarters empty. Treatment recommendations must therefore be coordinated with ideas about the interpretation of the site in accordance with the quiet "discovery experience" recommended in the General Management Plan.⁵⁵³

Ideas about interpretation must look beyond the boundaries of the NPS Unit. The eighteen acres within the Unit are a very small part of the historic plantation, which in 1858 encompassed over 2,570 acres, and grew even larger before its division in 1903. The significance of the plantation yards and the Quarters can only be understood within the geographical and historical context of the landscape of the entire plantation. A major challenge, therefore, is to

⁵⁵³ *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, January 2001, 10.

find ways to convey the larger landscape picture to park visitors. These issues are addressed in the following sections on treatment and interpretation.

TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary aim of the recommended treatments is to restore the spatial organization of the plantation yards and Quarters at the close of the historic period around 1960, and to indicate some of their historic character as working and residential areas. Restoration of the spatial organization is considered essential to allow visitors to orient themselves in the historic landscape, but full recovery of the historic character is constrained by questions of feasibility and maintenance. The restoration of the spatial organization and recovery of some of the historic character can be achieved by a combination of treatments, with restoration recommended as the primary treatment and preservation and rehabilitation as secondary treatments; this parallels the combination of treatments already being applied to the historic buildings.

The treatment of the cultural landscape is subject to the same federal laws as govern the treatment of the historic buildings. These include Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and since Magnolia Plantation has been designated a National Historic Landmark, Section 110 of that Act also applies.⁵⁵⁴ The application to the stewardship of cultural landscapes of National Park Service management policies is set out in the *Cultural Resource Management Guideline*. The following treatment recommendations are framed in accordance with the standards set out in this policy document.⁵⁵⁵ Additional guidance is provided in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. The introduction to the *Guidelines* includes a list of factors that should be considered when choosing an appropriate treatment. In addition to items relating to a proper understanding of the historic landscape, these factors include – archaeological resources, natural systems, interpretation, and accessibility considerations.⁵⁵⁶ Each of these deserves a special mention at Magnolia. The importance of the archaeological

⁵⁵⁴ See *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 70, and "Magnolia Plantation, Overseer's House, Historic Structure Report," 88.

⁵⁵⁵ USDI, National Park Service, *NPS – 28 Cultural Resource Management Guideline* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, Cultural Resources, 1998), 87-112.

⁵⁵⁶ *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, 6-13.

record in the Quarters at Magnolia is a major consideration in framing the treatment recommendations for the landscape. Actions that might disturb that record are noted so that appropriate consultations can occur. The protection of natural resources has also been considered, and has influenced the recommendations for the treatment of the biotic resources. In the introduction to this chapter, the need to coordinate treatment and interpretation recommendations has already been mentioned. And, finally, a goal of providing the highest level of access with the lowest level of impact on the integrity of the landscape has influenced the recommendations for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic paths, lanes, and fences.⁵⁵⁷

General Recommendations

General recommendations for the treatment of the landscape are provided before recommendations are given for each area. The Magnolia Plantation Unit is divided into six areas based upon the historic spatial organization, and the recommended actions in each area are indicated on the Recommended Treatment Plan.

Recommendations for Restoring the Spatial Organization

The spatial organization of the plantation yards and Quarters at the end of the historic period should be restored by reestablishing historic fencelines, and indicating the location of historic paths into and across these areas.

The locations of historic fencelines in the yards can be seen in historic photographs, and remains of historic sections of fences in and around the yards and beside the overseer's house can still be found. More information is needed, however, before fencelines around cabins in the Quarters can be reestablished. This may be provided in the oral history collected by Dr. Ann Rose, and additional information may be forthcoming as a result of further archaeological investigations in this area.

A variety of types of fences could have been found in these areas in the 1950s, and this variety should be reestablished because it was indicative of the variety of activities and land uses. Wooden post and board fences were used around areas where mules and horses were kept, and formed the pens in which cattle were corralled. Some of these wooden fences, particularly those

⁵⁵⁷ Compliance with Americans With Disabilities Act is discussed in *Magnolia Plantation, Gin Barn, Historic Structure Report*, 71.

at the front of the plantation, were whitewashed to present a well-kept appearance to passersby on the highway. Elsewhere, post and wire fences were used to enclose pastures for cattle and to mark property boundaries away from the road. Since this type was cheaper to erect and maintain, it had begun to replace some of the post and board fences as the numbers of mules and horses in the yards declined. It was also used around the Quarters, but within this area some tenants maintained picket fences to protect their gardens from small animals like rabbits. Unfortunately, we do not yet know the exact location of all of these garden fences.

An accurate replication of the historic fence structures is only recommended where there are existing sections of fence still standing from the historic period that only need repair. Elsewhere, we do not know some of the details of the historic construction – dimensions of posts, width of boards, types of nails, spacing of strands of wire, etc. – and these details are not considered historically significant. It is however important to represent the type of fence so its historical function can be understood.

Where fencelines are required in locations where there was no fence in the historic period, such as along new boundary lines, a different type of fence should be erected, one that was not used on the plantation in the historic period. This will avoid any confusion with the fencelines that define the historic spatial organization. The park has already erected metal post and wire fences in several areas. This is an acceptable type, and it has minimal visual impact.

The locations of lanes and paths into and across the plantation yards and the Quarters are also fairly well documented. The 1958 aerial photograph is particularly useful. Lanes and tracks used by farm animals and machines show up on the photograph as white lines. Footpaths appear as fainter, greyer lines. Some gateways can be seen, while the positions of others can easily be deduced, and several of the old gateways between the yards and the river road still exist. And, in addition, we know from our interviews with Betty and Ambrose Hertzog, that there were stiles where footpaths crossed fences, and the locations of three of these have been identified.

It is important to reestablish the historic network of lanes and paths through the yards and Quarters, so that visitors can orient themselves and move about the site along these routes, experiencing similar sequences of views to those seen by the inhabitants and workers. The lanes and well-used paths had surfaces of bare, compacted earth for the most part, and in a few places these should be reestablished and maintained to indicate the intensive use these areas received. Although soil loss is not a serious concern on this flat land, these bare surfaces should be

stabilized by the addition of cement or a polymer to the soil to create a hardened earth pavement.⁵⁵⁸ This would facilitate their use, including their use by visitors in wheelchairs, as well as their maintenance.

Gateways and stiles should be provided in the appropriate locations. We know the general form of the stiles from photographs, and that should be a guide to their construction, but the exact construction details are not historically significant. We do not know details about the construction of all the gates, but their general character can be seen in photographs taken in the 1950s and '60s. Again, retention of the historic type is instructive, but precise details of construction are not important.

New paths are required in some areas, for example to provide safe access for visitors from the parking lot to the store and gin barn. In the historic period, the river road could be used without much danger from passing vehicles, but today that is no longer the case. New paths should follow direct lines like the historic paths, but their non-historic character should be reflected in the way they are formed and maintained. Most new paths will cross through areas in grass, and these paths can be formed and maintained by regular mowing. Where stabilization and reinforcement is necessary, the introduction of new materials such as fabric matting or wooden decking is appropriate for these non-historic paths. Where these paths intersect historic fences, gaps should be left in the fence. These gaps should be kept simple and should not be made to look like historic gateways or stiles, and they must be wide enough to permit access for visitors with disabilities.

Recommendations for Recovery of Historic Landscape Characteristics

It is only feasible to recover some of the characteristics of the historic landscape. In addition to the networks of fences, lanes and paths, we recommend preservation and restoration of some historic vegetation patterns, and reestablishment of the systems by which water was collected and drained from the site. Recovery of these elements would assist visitors to appreciate the unique geographical location and long history of land use, and in addition it would bring several practical benefits for both visitors and park management.

The rows of live oaks beside the overseer's house and on the western boundary of the property are amongst the most important features of the landscape. They have outlived multiple

⁵⁵⁸ Soil tests are necessary to determine which additive would be most effective.

human generations on the site and they continue to furnish habitat for a wide variety of wildlife; in addition, they provide areas of shade that are much needed in this humid subtropical climate. The preservation of these historic trees, therefore, must be a high priority for park management. This should involve regular inspections and appropriate arboricultural treatments in the event of storm damage, insect attack or disease, and protection from disturbances, such as compaction of the soils around their roots by vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

There are only a few other old trees in the yards, but those that exist are valuable because they give visitors a sense of the passage of time, and provide some shade. Most of them are pecans, a species with an unfortunate tendency to shed branches; nevertheless, they deserve similar protection and, in due course, replacements should be planted.

The cover of trees that once shaded the Quarters has become sparse, so we recommend the planting of some replacements. However, before action is taken, additional information about the appropriate types of trees should be obtained; this information may be found in the oral histories that have been collected. It is also important to consult with archaeologists about the placement of the trees, to minimize risks of disturbance to the archaeological record.

A few trees have established themselves in open spaces since the end of the historic period. They have minimal impact on the historic scene, and where they provide useful shade they should be retained. For example, a young pecan tree now stands close to the line of a track that once ran from the seed house to the gin barn. This track should be reestablished, and the pecan tree retained to provide a patch of shade along it.

More trees have grown up along fencelines since the historic period. While these alter the openness of the landscape they do provide some wildlife habitat and shade; and, in fact, the development of understory vegetation along fencelines does more to interrupt historic views than the growth of canopy trees. So we recommend the clearance of most of the understory that was not present in the historic period, but the retention of some of the canopy trees.

The plantation yards and the areas around the Quarters were used for a variety of purposes, and the vegetation of the ground layer in the historic period reflected this variety. While in most areas it is not feasible to reestablish the historic use and the exact vegetation characteristics associated with that use, it is important to indicate the major differences.

Most of the old gin yard was under cultivation in the late 1950s, producing crops of corn, cotton, and hay. Reviving the cultivation of cotton and corn is undesirable because of

environmental impacts that are unacceptable within a National Park, and because continued plowing could disturb remaining archaeological resources. One alternative would be to manage the area as a productive hayfield, and in many parks, hayfields are managed by leasing the land to a local farmer; however, it would be much simpler to continue the present practice of managing the existing cover of grasses and forbs as an unproductive meadow without concern for its floristic composition and nutrient value. Cuttings could then be timed with regard to the needs of visitors and wildlife rather than those of the farmer.

Other areas were used as pasture. With the restoration of fencelines, it would be possible to reintroduce livestock to these areas, and this might be done if farm animals were brought in for special programs.⁵⁵⁹ But the NPS is unlikely to keep animals on the site year-round, so for most of the time these areas should be managed as mown grasslands. A more frequent mowing regime than the one used in the meadow would maintain a shorter stand of grasses, around knee-high, and this should be sufficient to indicate the historic difference in land use.

The yards and pens that were used for corralling animals had bare patches and only a thin cover of grasses. Most of these areas now have a dense grass sward, and it seems unlikely that periodic use by livestock during special events, or the tread of visitors' feet at other times, will replicate the historic pressure on this vegetation. Therefore, we recommend that an area beside the store is cleared and maintained as bare earth. The exposed earth should be stabilized and hardened through the use of cement or polymers in the same way as the lanes and well-used paths. The rest of these yards and pens should be closely mowed to keep the grass cover short. This will enable visitors to wander freely about these central areas, and it will serve to indicate a high level of use in the historic period.

The residential yards around the overseer's house and Quarters used to contain a patchwork of diverse vegetation reflecting the mixture of activities that took place around the homes. Today nearly all the variety associated with human occupation has gone, with only a few long-lived ornamental plants surviving, such as aspidistra and persistent bulbs. The General Management Plan recommended a partial restoration of the overseer's house and two cabins in the Quarters, where much of the interpretation of life on the plantation would occur.⁵⁶⁰ In keeping with this proposal, it would be appropriate to carry out a partial restoration of the yards

⁵⁵⁹ *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, January 2001, 5.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

around the overseer's house and these two cabins, when adequate information is available to ensure historical accuracy. Around the other cabins, it is important to preserve whatever remains of the original vegetation, but otherwise the present practice of maintaining these areas in lawn to facilitate visitor access should continue. The restoration of pathways and fences should help indicate something of the patchwork character of these areas, and over the next few years, ongoing archaeological investigations will provide additional opportunities for interpretation.

Drainage of rainwater is a problem on the flat floodplain, and this is particularly noticeable as one moves away from the natural levée beside the river. Today, wet patches that are slow to drain can be found around the Quarters and in the meadow near the gin barn. It is, therefore, important to make sure that existing ditches function properly. This will involve clearing out ditches and ensuring they are still connected to each other and to the rest of the drainage network across the historic plantation. The main ditch on NPS property originates to the south of the overseer's house and drains northeastwards across the pasture where Betty Hertzog keeps horses, towards the crawfish pond and the head of a channel draining to Bayou Charette. That natural channel drains across land that was part of the Chopin portion of the historic plantation. Therefore the NPS will need to secure the cooperation of adjacent landowners to ensure the drainage system is effective. In some places the system has probably been neglected, since the mechanization of agricultural operations makes soil moisture conditions of less immediate concern to farmers than it was in the days of mule drawn ploughs; nevertheless, the maintenance of the system is in the best interests of all the landowners.

Ponding around foundations can cause problems for the preservation of building materials, as well as making visitor access difficult. These problems could be alleviated if the historic practice of collecting water from roofs was revived. The collection of water into cisterns was an important feature of the historic architecture of the Cane River region, where obtaining potable water was a problem before a piped municipal supply became available in the 1960s. It is regrettable that this aspect of the architectural heritage has been generally neglected to date. We know the location of some of the cisterns, but only the ones beside the store and gin barn have been preserved and the latter has been filled as a way of addressing safety concerns. We strongly recommend that the NPS conduct a study of the feasibility of reestablishing the historic practice of water collection because of both its historic architectural and landscape significance, and its practical advantages.

Recommendations for Each Area of the Historic Landscape

The Stable Yard/Parking Lot

Fences should be erected around the NPS parking lot to indicate the size and shape of the old stable yard. The exact size and shape can be seen in the 1958 aerial photograph. The entry to the parking lot is located at the southern limit of the yard where a lane to the Quarters began, so the fenceline will have to be erected slightly beyond the historic southern boundary of the yard.

In the 1950s, the fences at the northern end were constructed with wooden posts and boards, but at the southern end, wire had begun to replace wooden rails.⁵⁶¹ This mix may be attributed in part to the sharp decline in the numbers of horses and mules on the plantation towards the end of the historic period, and it should be reproduced. The board fences had five closely spaced rails and were painted white.⁵⁶² This type of fence should be erected along the northern sides of the yard, while post and wire fences should be erected next to the gin yard meadow, as shown on the Recommended Treatment Plan. Alongside the highway, there is a post and board fence north of the exit from the parking lot and a new post and wire fence south of this point. These should be retained.

Stiles should be constructed in the locations of the stiles that were used to cross the post and rail fences in the historic period. One was located beneath the large tree beside the highway at the northern end of the yard.⁵⁶³ The other was located on the opposite side of the yard. A historic path to the Quarters used these stiles, which eliminated a need for gates in an area that was full of animals for much of the historic period. Gaps should be left in the fences near the stiles, and wherever new paths intersect old fencelines.

The main paths that can be seen in the 1958 aerial photograph led from the yard to the Quarters or out onto the highway. One set of paths to the Quarters used the stiles and led to the cabins at the northern end of the Quarters. Just outside the southern end of the stable yard, a short lane led from the highway to the cabins at the southern end of the Quarters. This track, which was used by vehicles as well as by people on foot, should be recreated, beginning at the edge of

⁵⁶¹ Post and rail fences can be seen in historic photographs reproduced in Malone, figures 16 and 47; post and wire can be seen in figure 80.

⁵⁶² Existing post and rail fences near the store have only three or four rails; we think this change came after 1960 and was an economy measure.

⁵⁶³ It is difficult to tell from historic photographs whether this stile led from the highway to the stable yard or the enclosure next to the store, but as the second stile was located at the other side of the stable yard, we have concluded that it was located at the northern end of the stable yard.

the parking lot. The path that uses the stiles should be formed and maintained by closely mowing the grass areas that it runs across; however, the ground in the lane was bare earth and this should be recreated using a hardened soil surface. This lane should provide the main path from the parking lot to the Quarters, and it would provide a route accessible to visitors in wheelchairs. Park maintenance vehicles could also use it.

Although in the historic period, the highway was much used as a way of getting from one yard to another, today this is not a safe way for visitors to move from one part of the Unit to another. New paths are needed. One path leading from the northern end of the parking lot to the store is needed, and another leading from the southern end towards the gin barn. Both paths should be aligned close to the fence beside the highway, in part because they would be close to the historic routes, and in part because they would be in the shade of fenceline trees. Both paths should be formed by closely mowing the grass areas.

In the historic period there was little or no woody vegetation along any of the fencelines around the yard, but since then a row of trees has grown up near the highway. These trees should be retained in order to provide some afternoon shade for the parking area and paths. With these exceptions, fencelines should be kept clear of woody vegetation.

The parking lot has been surfaced with crushed stone, and has concrete aprons at the entrance and exit and at parking stalls for the handicapped. These materials were not used in the historic period, but are appropriate for these non-historic additions to the site. Most of the yard probably had a thin cover of grass for much of the historic period, which became thicker as the use of the stables declined. Today, areas around the parking lot have a cover of grasses and forbs. These areas should be maintained in short grass.

The Yard and Cattle Pens beside the Store

Throughout much of the historic period, the yard beside the store was a busy place full of livestock and farm equipment. In order to indicate something of this historic character, it is important to reinstate missing fences and allow the ground surface to retain a worn appearance.

The fence that separated this yard from the yard beside the blacksmith's shop should be rebuilt. The line of this fence, which originally ran beside the old central lane, can be seen on the 1958 aerial photograph. Photographs from the 1940s show a whitewashed post and board fence, but the remnants of a fence near the log crib suggest the boards may have eventually been

replaced by wire. We do not know when that occurred, so we recommend the erection of a post and board fence, and this should be whitewashed.

On the opposite side of the yard, behind the store, sections remain of the post and board fences that enclosed pens where cattle were corralled. These sections should be repaired and missing sections rebuilt to create the pattern of enclosures that is visible in the 1958 aerial photograph. All post and board fences near the store were painted white in the historic period and that practice should be continued.

By the 1960s, nearly all the old post and five-board fencing alongside the highway had been replaced with the type of fence that can be found there today. This is a two-board fence with woven wire stretched between the top and bottom rails. It should be preserved. The same type of fence can be found beside the overseer's house, but it has lost its lower rail. It should be repaired. The posts and boards in both these fences should be painted white.

In the late 1950s, there was a pair of wooden five-bar gates at the main entrance to the yard from the highway. We recommend that a similar pair of wooden gates be installed in place of the existing metal gates. And at the other side of the yard, the gate to the overseer's house has disappeared; it should be replaced. It was a small gate with white palings, and would serve as a reminder that at one time the overseer's yard was enclosed by a picket fence.

The store is the focus of this area, and visitors need to have access to the front of the building from the yard. This access is now provided by gaps in the post and board fence on either side of the store and these should be retained. Similar gaps should be left in the fence separating the store yard from the blacksmith's yard, and in the fences around the cattle pens, to allow visitors to pass to and from adjacent spaces.

A large part of the main yard had little or no grass cover. This evidence of heavy use should be retained between the main entrance beside the store and the cotton picker shed where some of the ground remains bare today. This bare patch should be stabilized by the installation of a hardened earth pavement. Elsewhere the existing cover of grass should be maintained. It should be kept short, but the well-manicured appearance of a lawn would be inappropriate, and instead a ragged appearance maintained by uneven and irregular mowing is recommended.

There were a couple of shade trees growing beside the highway in the historic period, but none growing inside the fence. Today there are a couple of young magnolias inside the fenceline.

These ornamental trees are inappropriate in this location and if they are allowed to mature they will occupy a lot of space. They should be removed.

The Blacksmith's Yard

We do not know when the forge at the blacksmith's shop ceased operation, but the shop cannot have been a busy place in the late 1950s. The yard beside the shop had taken a variety of forms and had been used for a variety of purposes over the years, but by 1958 it was in grass and had some large trees on its western and northern edges. It has retained that general character, and the restoration of historic fencelines is the only major change recommended.

The construction of a post and board fence along the old line of the central lane on the eastern side of the space has already been recommended. On the western side of the space, the remains of a wire fence can be found near the blacksmith's shop. This fence separated the main part of the yard from a lane that ran around the shop and then followed the line of live oaks towards the cook's house. Sections of this fence should be rebuilt near the shop and between the posts still standing beneath the canopy of the oaks. These sections would indicate the presence of the lane, but would not impede the movement of visitors in this area.

The historic post and two-board fence on the eastern side of the oaks marking the original edge of the front yard of the Big House has been removed, and the NPS boundary on the western side of the live oaks is marked by a new post and wire fence. We do not recommend the reinstatement of a fence along the historic line, since that would create a confusing multiplicity of fences in this area, but we recommend that steel posts be used instead of wooden posts in the NPS boundary fence to indicate its non-historic character.⁵⁶⁴ The posts in the NPS fence in front of the cook's house should also be changed to indicate its non-historic character.

The existing two board and wire fence beside the highway should be preserved, but the tubular steel gate beside the blacksmith's shop should be replaced with a wooden gate, similar in character to the ones we know were in use circa 1960. Betty Hertzog remembers there was a stile in the fence beside the highway, but we are not sure it was there in 1960, nor do we know its exact location, so we do not recommend its replacement.

⁵⁶⁴ The NPS should check whether horses are likely to be kept in the front yard of the Big House, since a wire fence could pose a hazard to horses. It may be necessary to replace the existing fence with a post and rail fence like the one along the highway.

The center of the yard should remain in grass. This should be mown with about the same frequency as the grass in the front yard of the Big House; that area retains much of its historic character as a place used for grazing livestock, but not subject to the heavy use inflicted on the yard near the store.

Paths for visitors should be created by more frequent mowing around the edges of the yard. In these locations, visitors will be able to walk in the shade of trees, and, at least along the western side, will be following a historic lane.

The importance of protecting the live oaks and other trees in this space has already been mentioned in the general recommendations.

The Yard of the Overseer's House

Restoration work is now proceeding on the overseer's house to return it to its condition circa 1960, in accordance with the recommendations of the Historic Structure Report.⁵⁶⁵ When this work is completed, the interior will be opened to visitors and used to tell the story of this historic building. It would be appropriate therefore to restore the yard to its condition circa 1960; but unfortunately we do not yet have sufficient historical information to be able to ensure accuracy. It may be that more information will be forthcoming in the oral history project, but until such time as adequate historical information is available, we recommend only a partial restoration. This should focus on the restoration of the fences around the yard and the preservation of the historic trees and ornamental plantings that have survived,

The remains of sections of fences can be found around the yard and the pens beside the outbuildings, and these provide a useful guide for the installation of the missing sections. Recommendations for the repair of the post and board fence at the front of the house and installation of a front gate have already been made. The remnants of the fences around the other sides of the house indicate they were made of post and wire. These should be restored and missing sections rebuilt. We do not know where gates in these fences were located, so we recommend that gaps be left at convenient intervals to allow visitors to move between the yard and adjacent spaces.

It appears from the 1958 aerial photograph that the fencelines at the back of the house were generally empty of trees, so we recommend the removal of all trees less than at least 60

⁵⁶⁵ "Magnolia Plantation, Overseer's House, Historic Structure Report," 91-97.

years old in this location. It is also important to remove all the underbrush so that there are clear views from the house to the north. The NPS Unit boundary line on the north side of the yard separates the house and yard from the land overseers used for a vegetable garden and cotton field, so the boundary fence should also be kept free of any volunteer vegetation that would obscure views. The non-historic fence should be constructed with steel posts and wire.

The live oaks at the front of the house may not be as old as those in the yard of the Big House, but they are important elements in the historic landscape and must be preserved and protected. Care should be taken to ensure that work on the house and the future use of the area by visitors does not damage these trees. The practice of whitewashing the trunks of these trees continued into the early 1950s at least. If oral histories suggest that it was still being done at the end of that decade the practice should be resumed.

The few historic photographs that show the yard indicate that most of it was kept in short grass, so the existing ground cover of grasses should be maintained as a lawn by regular mowing. But care should be taken to avoid damage to surviving clumps of aspidistras and other ornamental plantings. These could be protected from inadvertent damage by mowing machines by leaving areas near them unmown, and, where necessary, suppressing weeds with a cover of mulch.

The Historic Structure Report does not say how the water that was collected in gutters from the roof of the house was disposed of in the historic period. It is likely that cisterns were used, in the same way as they were elsewhere. The NPS should investigate the feasibility of reviving that system to avoid problems of water standing on the surface of the ground after heavy rain.

The Quarters and Pastures

The Quarters with their brick cabins are amongst the most significant of the park's resources, and it is very important to restore some of the historic characteristics of their landscape; however, archaeological investigations are ongoing in this area, and we are awaiting the findings of an oral history project. We recommend, therefore, that landscape restoration be planned in two phases. In the first phase, fences enclosing the Quarters and separating adjacent pastures should be reconstructed, historic paths reestablished, and drainage problems addressed. This work can proceed without waiting for the completion of the oral history project, and while archaeological

work is in progress. In the second phase, fences around yards and animal pens within the Quarters should be reconstructed, a canopy of shade trees replanted, and the yards of the two cabins that are to be interpreted to visitors should be partially restored. The timing of this work depends on the availability of additional historical information and the progress of the archaeological investigations.

Lines of fences around the Quarters and the three adjacent pastures can be seen in the 1958 aerial photograph. These fences were made of wooden posts and wire, and this type of fence should be reconstructed wherever the historic lines can be followed. Where the NPS boundary cuts across the pastures on a new alignment, fences should be built with steel posts to indicate the non-historic nature of the fenceline. At the northern end of the rows of cabins the new boundary line sits close to the historic line of the fence next to the cabins. It seems unnecessary to reconstruct the historic fence beside the cabins; but the fences in front of and behind the rows of cabins should not be extended, so a gap will be left between them and the boundary fence. At the southern end of the rows of cabins, it appears from an examination of the aerial photograph that fences followed a jagged line around yards and pens, but the exact line cannot be clearly seen. This section of fence should be omitted until the exact line can be determined. The archaeological investigations may prove helpful in this regard.

Existing shade trees in the Quarters should be preserved together with the trees along the fenceline immediately to the east of the cabins at the southern end of the Quarters. Elsewhere, only a few of the trees along the boundary fences should be kept, since there were few, if any trees along fencelines away from the Quarters in the historic period. Only trees that have some value for wildlife and might be useful in providing shade for visitors should be retained.

Historic photographs indicate that there were vines and woody species growing along fences around the Quarters, so some volunteer growth should be allowed to develop along the reconstructed fencelines. On the other hand, the fences around the pastures should be kept fairly clean of underbrush, which judging by the aerial photograph was their historic condition.

Paths used by residents of the Quarters can be seen on the 1958 aerial photograph. From the stile in the corner of the stable yard, the main path crossed the pasture to another stile near the second house in the front row of cabins. This path should be reestablished and the stile rebuilt. A gap should be left near the stile to provide access for those unable to negotiate steps. Inside the area of the Quarters the path divided with branches running to cabins in the front and

rear rows. Another path branched from this one and ran to the northern end of the Quarters. This should also be recreated. When these paths were busy with people going to and from the plantation store, stretches were probably bare dirt, but as use declined they must have begun to become overgrown. We recommend that both paths remain in grass and be maintained by mowing.

The southern end of the Quarters was connected to the highway by a dirt lane. A recommendation for reestablishing that lane has already been made. It should be broad enough to provide access for vehicles as well as those on foot, as it was in the historic period.

Because the Quarters are located at a slightly lower level than the natural levée along the riverbank, they are subject to drainage problems. As noted above in the general treatment recommendations, measures should be taken to ameliorate the situation that would be in keeping with the historic character of the area. The cooperation of adjacent landowners should be sought to ensure existing drainage ditches function properly. The ditch in the pasture between the Quarters and the stable yard was probably formed after the end of the historic period; nevertheless it should be retained to help drain this area. It was connected to the historic ditch that runs from near the overseer's yard towards the crawfish pond, but both ditches may need cleaning out. Where paths cross these ditches, simple bridging structures should be provided. In addition to these drainage improvements, the possibility of reestablishing the historic practice of collecting rainwater from the roofs of the cabins in cisterns or water-barrels should be pursued.

In the second phase of restoration work, the various fences in the patchwork landscape of small yards in the Quarters should be rebuilt, shade trees replanted, and some of the contents of the yards beside the two restored cabins reintroduced. But until that time, the present policy of maintaining the area in grass should be continued, with the grass being closely mown beside each cabin, but allowed to grow longer elsewhere. Care should be taken to protect the few clumps of lilies, narcissi, and bluebells that show themselves in early spring in front of the cabins.

As noted in the general treatment recommendations, the NPS is unlikely to reintroduce livestock into the pastures except, perhaps, for short times during special programs. These areas should therefore be managed as mown grasslands. They should be mown more frequently than the meadow in the gin yard, but the stands of grasses and forbs should be allowed to grow about knee high between each mowing. This should serve to direct visitors to established paths, create

some cover for wildlife, and help differentiate these pastures from both the meadow and the other yards. The cattle dip in the pasture to the east of the Quarters should be preserved as a valuable indication of the historic use of this field.

The Gin Yard Meadow

After the closure of the gin in 1939, this area was used for the cultivation of corn, cotton and hay. We recommend that it be managed as a hay meadow. As noted in the general recommendations, it is probably not worthwhile to manage the area for a commercial crop of hay; nevertheless, it should be cut at approximately the same intervals as it was historically. In most years, the hay was cut in June and September. The exact timing of the cuts will depend on growing conditions, but impacts on wildlife seeking cover in the long grass should also be considered.

It will be necessary to maintain an area of short grass around the gin barn as a fire prevention measure. When the gin was in operation the area around the barn was probably mostly bare earth, but by the 1950s there was a cover of grass up to the porches of the building. The hay-baling machine that stands near the gin barn could be displayed in this area.

A circuit of mown paths has already been established to allow visitors to walk from the parking lot to the gin barn, and from thence to the Quarters. We recommend this circuit be modified to follow historic paths where possible. We have already recommended that the lane running across the meadow to the southern end of the Quarters be recreated with a hardened earth surface, to provide a route for both pedestrians and vehicles. There was a path running beside the stable yard fence linking this lane to the paths that crossed the stiles to reach the Quarters, and this path should be reestablished by mowing beside the fenceline.

We think the line for the new path to enable visitors to walk from the parking lot to the gin barn should run close to the fence beside the highway until it reaches the site of the seed barn, and then it should follow the line of the historic track between that building and the gin barn. Keeping close to the fenceline would allow visitors to enjoy some shade from fenceline trees. On the other side of the meadow fenceline trees could also provide some shade, but there are advantages to the more direct line followed by the present path across the middle of the meadow. As mown paths are easily created and can be moved, park management should experiment with several alternative routes in order to find the best lines for these new paths – ones that avoid wet ground, are fairly direct, and take advantage of existing patterns of shade. If

the drainage in this meadow remains a problem in wet weather, it may be necessary to construct low-lying boardwalks at wet spots along these paths; these structures would not be visible from a distance because of the long grass in the meadow.

Except for the stretch of fence to the east of the Quarters, none of the fencelines around the meadow had sizeable trees along them in 1958. Today all the fences around the Unit boundary are lined with trees and some stretches have thick underbrush. The farmers of the adjacent property have recently cleared underbrush from the southern and eastern boundaries. This clearing has been beneficial in that it has reopened views from the Unit across the adjacent agricultural fields. We recommend that the underbrush be also cleared from the fenceline beside the highway, but that a scatter of trees be left along all the boundary lines to provide some shade and wildlife habitat.

All fences around the meadow should be constructed of posts and wire. Since these fences follow the lines of fences that were present in the historic period, it would be appropriate if they were all constructed with wooden posts. This is already the case along the highway and the eastern boundary, but the steel posts in the fence along the southern boundary should be replaced with wooden posts.

INTERPRETATION

The centerpiece of the Magnolia Plantation NPS unit's landscape is the complex of eight brick quarters; other significant structures include the slave hospital/overseer's house, the plantation store, a blacksmith shop, and a large gin barn with a rare cotton press and two types of cotton gins. These structures and outbuildings hold the potential to tell parts of the story of agricultural practices over the course of the history of the site, beginning with the first land grant in 1753 up to the 1960s with the end of the tenancy period at Magnolia. But actually it is in the fields surrounding the NPS unit that the true story of Magnolia's agricultural history can be best told.

The challenge in interpreting Magnolia, as with most cultural landscapes whose primary land use is agriculture, is that the contemporary size of the land holding is typically much smaller than it was at the peak of its historical production, making it difficult to communicate the scale and complexity of the farming operation—at Magnolia the NPS unit consists of 18.25 acres of the historic 2,570 acre plantation. It is also a challenge to communicate the processes of cotton

farming and processing to out-of-state visitors who have little experience with agriculture, let alone with a crop that is not a food crop. But because of the unique partnership of the park with the Cane River National Heritage Area, it is possible for the larger regional landscape to play an important role in the broad interpretation of Magnolia's story. Although production and processing techniques have changed dramatically over the course of the centuries that cotton has been grown at Magnolia, there are still nearby fields of cotton to be seen; and through sensitive and creative treatment and interpretive design, the story of the landscape of a cotton plantation on the Cane River, and the lives of the people who lived and worked there, can be told.

Parameters set by NPS Cane River Creole General Management Plan

The General Management Plan addresses planning for both Oakland and Magnolia Plantations, the two units of Cane River Creole National Historical Park. The overall interpretive theme for both sites is summarized in the document in very general terms as follows:

The long history of the plantations and the major cultural, social, and economic stories of Louisiana plantation lifeways and agriculture that they represent would be told (interpreted) to the public. Based on research and documentation, accounts of the lives and lifestyles of people who lived and worked at the plantations would be shared through media and programs.⁵⁶⁶

The relative sizes of the units and the unique nature of their resources led the NPS to propose different approaches to interpretation for each plantation, and these decisions serve as a starting point for this discussion of recommendations for interpretation at Magnolia based on the findings of the Cultural Landscape Report. While visitors to Oakland will experience more traditional, "active" interpretive formats such as demonstrations and tours led by interpreters, Magnolia is designated to become a site that is interpreted using a "quieter, more contemplative discovery experience," that will employ "more passive media such as brochures, wayside exhibits, or audiotapes."⁵⁶⁷ This more low-impact approach was selected because of the small size of the Magnolia Unit and because of the more fragile nature of the resources. This kind of interpretation is sympathetic to the nature of landscape experience in general, making it possible to attune more of the senses when one is left to explore more freely, without a specific script being recited by a tour guide, and without a specific directional view being dictated as a part of a

⁵⁶⁶ *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, June 2000, iv.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

programmed tour. In this more individualized, experiential approach that is recommended for Magnolia Plantation, the visitor will be offered the possibility to take more ownership of the learning that occurs in the landscape, making the possibility for prolonged engagement with the landscape greater.

The long-term goal of the landscape treatment and management recommendations is that the site reflect the appearance of the plantation when it was family-run and reliant on a resident labor force. Visitor orientation is proposed for the plantation store, where interpretive materials will be distributed. Other structures that will be accessible to visitors and which may include exhibits of artifacts are the slave hospital/overseer's house, two of the quarters (interpreting slavery and tenant periods of occupation), the gin barn (with focus on the two cotton gins and the screw press), and the cotton picker shed. Structures that will be interpreted from the outside include the remaining six quarters, the blacksmith's shop, the pigeonier, and the overseer's carriage house and shed. These are the major decisions that have been made thus far as a result of the General Management Plan and the public input process.

Scales of Interpretation

The story of Magnolia Plantation cannot be completely told within the NPS unit because many components of the landscape where the story took place are not within NPS ownership. What this chapter proposes is a Program of Landscape Interpretation that operates both within the NPS site, and beyond. The intent is to use the resources at the NPS Magnolia Unit to interpret the "heart" of the story of Magnolia, to use the resources immediately off-site and within view from the park to complete portions of the story that cannot be fully explained on-site ("borrowed views"), and then to use landscape resources that are visible along the highway connecting Magnolia and Oakland as a tertiary level of interpretation, so that the larger context of agriculture during the various periods can be more fully understood (Cane River/Highway 119 Cotton Context Driving Tour). While primary emphasis will be placed on recommendations for the interpretation intended for the pedestrian visitor who has come to Magnolia, parked in the designated lot, and who wants to tour the site within the park boundaries and see what can be seen and learned, the driving tour of the regional landscape will be an important complement of the on-site visit.

Resources for Interpretation

The obvious starting point for the development of an interpretive plan is with the story of the place. But history is an abstract series of names, dates, and places without being anchored or connected to something more tangible that the visitor can see, hear, feel, or relate to his personal experience. What the interpretive planner seeks is a bridge between the story and the place that can make the story become “real,” meaningful, and engaging. This “bridge” can be a document, an artifact, a part of the landscape, an animal—the selection of the resource that serves as bridge will be specific to each site, and it is important to review the myriad sets of resources before selecting the bridge or bridges for breathing life into the past. The surviving structures are obvious points of departure for interpretive messages, but often tours or interpretive designs that focus on architectural elements have a tendency to program the visitor to move from building to building, missing the subtleties of the spaces that exist between the buildings. Because the emphasis is the cultural landscape, the structures will not be the major organizing elements for this interpretive program, but rather the experience of the overall landscape as the setting for daily life of the various groups of people who lived at Magnolia.

In surveying Magnolia’s history, there are several unique elements that might serve to lead the visitor into the story, and each of these has merit:

- The 1858 Plat

Because this graphic map is so illustrative, colorful, and communicates so clearly the complete “picture” of antebellum Magnolia as a landscape – a place with spatial dimensions and relationships – it is an excellent document for interpreting the story of the larger life of the plantation before emancipation. Although it comes nowhere close to communicating the fact that there were a great many slaves working at Magnolia, living in an industrial village, it at least suggests that there were many more cabins than exist today, and that the Quarters was a village-like place. The plat also offers the possibility of serving as a guide-of-sorts for a walking tour, so that the visitor can begin to compare the past with the present, and time-travel in his mind’s-eye, filling in some of the many “blanks” that currently exist on-site. So this document offers precisely the kind of passive, contemplative experience that should be fostered through the design of an interpretive program for Magnolia.

- The photos and films of Ambrose Hertzog

These black and white images, both still photos and films, give the visitor the chance to see the landscape as a place that was and is inhabited, and in many ways celebrated, by the people who lived and worked at Magnolia. The most vital of all interpretive messages is that real people lived and worked here, and that the landscape shaped their lives and vice-versa. Magnolia is one of the few Louisiana plantations for which film images survive that capture the social life of the plantation population during the first half of the 20th century,

- **Archaeological artifacts**

The artifacts from the initial investigations are excellent elements to use as cues or bridges to interpreting the landscape. Fragments of tools, dishes, toys, and clothing have the potential to spark the visitor's imagination regarding the person or activity associated with the artifact, so that a landscape scene is created within the mind's eye. Since an archaeological excavation is to be undertaken in the near future, this dig can also become a useful entry into the story of the site. Depending upon where the project is to occur, the process of excavation could be observed, and incorporated into the experience of the visitor's walk through the landscape.

These are but a few of the possible resources that could be point of engagement for the visitor to "hear," "see," and "feel" the story of Magnolia. Other possibilities include a facsimile copy of a ledger book from the Magnolia Plantation Store, a copy of the 1938 article from *The Progress* on the farming practices of Matthew Hertzog, aerial photographs of the property and its larger context, or any of the taped interviews with former tenants by Ann Malone.⁵⁶⁸

Conceptual Models for Interpretive Plan Development

Though many resources are available from which to design an interpretive approach for Magnolia, ultimately a commitment must be made as to the nature of the visitor experience. The General Management Plan narrows the possibilities for that experience without dictating the actual approach. Based upon what has been learned from the research for the Cultural Landscape Report, including the historic documentation and the site reconnaissance, two basic conceptual

⁵⁶⁸ Some of these resources are in the collections of Betty and Ambrose Hertzog, so the NPS would require permission to use them.

models are recommended for a combined approach to the interpretive design — landscape archaeology and historical citations from Magnolia's historic record.

- Landscape Archaeology: "reading the landscape"

Landscape archaeology is a term developed by a group of British cultural geographers based upon the work of W. G. Hoskins. It refers to "reading" landscape cues that appear on the surface of the land rather than below, and inferring from these cues information relevant to human habitation or alteration. Using this model, the landscape becomes a text of sorts, and the visitor becomes an investigator looking for cues or clues that are legible enough to reveal a portion of the site's meaning.

One example is the use of "sentinel" plants as cues in reading the landscape. There are plants that occur in cultural landscapes because of certain human or animal actions. By identifying these plants, and working backward, it is often possible to understand past land uses or use patterns. For example, at Magnolia the group of "persistent" bulbs that pop up each spring in front of some cabins in the Quarters probably indicates the former existence of an ornamental garden. The pecan trees in rows on the site are an obvious orchard remnant. As one walks from the front of the site to the back, slight variations in the topography will become noticeable, either because there will be standing water if it has rained, or if not, there will be variations in the grasses and forbs in the lower areas—they will be greener and taller. These variations in the topography either indicate previous drainage patterns that have been interrupted in more recent time, and now hold water, or land that had been in cultivation at one time or another.

- Historical Citations from the Historic Record: "reading about the landscape"

Nothing can make the past come alive more dramatically than the actual words of those who experienced it first-hand, particularly if it is possible for the visitor to see the document written in the actual hand of the person. Through the act of a visitor reading a period document, processing its portent on the actual site, and then trying to visualize the scene in his own mind's eye, serious engagement occurs in a way that is more creative and enduring than, for example, watching a film of actors or even actual historic personages, as in the filmstrips of Ambrose Hertzog.

For example, this approach of reading excerpts from people at Magnolia might be useful in emphasizing the importance of the water levels of the Cane River, and how its fluctuations affected life and commerce, since it is difficult to see the river today, and its function has changed so dramatically over the course of the years. The quotes might also help the visitor begin to understand the complex hydrologic systems that planters were up against, with the threat of flooding from the backswamps, and the need to maintain levées located deep within their landholdings for flood protection.

You spoke of shipping freight at Durans Landing let me say to you
Not to do so for it is impossible to haul cotton there on the account
of little rivers being so bad to cross. . . .⁵⁶⁹

I think the river too low at present to get either Henry's or your flat
down, so I think we had better wait for rain, as it does not take much
to raise the river 8 or 10 inches,⁵⁷⁰

Our Levee holds the water back well — the River has fallon here
in front — about 7 inches — and back of the Levee about 12 in —
a good deal of our corn Land was over flowed though I think if
the River continues to fall — our Land will be all dry in the course
of 6 or 8 days more —.⁵⁷¹

The media for conveying quotations like these can range from carefully sited weatherproof wayside placards to an inexpensive printed brochure that can be changed from season to season, or be revised as more research and documentation becomes available.

Interpreting the Magnolia Landscape: The Sequence of Movement

As with all story-telling, it is in the way the story is told, the sequence in which the parts are unfolded and revealed, the way that relationships are made, the drama that is created, and the interest that is raised, that the value of the story is measured. Even though the objective is for the interpretive experience to be passive and somewhat personal, there must be a design for the visitor's movement through the site, and one or several sequences that ensure that the visitor is able to see most of the site features.

⁵⁶⁹ A. Wheeler to A. LeComte, 10 May 1855, Prud'homme Family Papers, SHC #613, folder 901, UNC.

⁵⁷⁰ W.S. Campbell to A. LeComte, 11 January 1862, Prud'homme Papers, copy in the collection of Betty Hertzog.

⁵⁷¹ W. B. Eddins to A. LeComte, 21 March 1851, transcribed in Keel, 85.

The following list outlines two connected routes for the purpose of demonstrating one way that the visitor could traverse the site. Although some of the places listed refer to buildings, the emphasis, once again, is on the landscape between, and the exhibits within. Both routes begin and end at the store; one takes visitors to the northwest, the other to the south. The challenge in making this approach successful will be to encourage visitors to break into groups of two or, ideally, one, so that the intended internalized visualization can take place.

Route One:

Plantation Store – orientation
Blacksmith Shop and Pigeonnier
The cook's house
Start of old central lane
Along the lane : fruit and pecan orchard
front levée and crawfish pond
fields and views to Hertzog Lake
set back levée and views to pastures
overseer's cotton patch and kitchen garden
Slave hospital/overseer's house

Route Two:

Plantation Store
Yards
Livestock areas
Hayfield
Gin Barn and view to Cloutierville
Quarters

Explanation of Sequence

If the visitor begins in the store, and if the store is not only interpreted as the social center of the plantation, but also serves as the point of information for visitors, as well as where the overview

of Magnolia occurs before the individual sets out into the landscape for the exploratory experience, the store becomes a very active place, even with only a handful of visitors at a time. And, of course, it is also the spot for visitor services (restrooms and water fountains). Perhaps there is enough space for a screen and a few seats where an overview film can introduce the visitor to the "people" of Magnolia, primarily through the photography of Ambrose Hertzog.

Once this initial encounter with the NPS has happened, it becomes important for the visitor to leave the controlled feeling of a "museum" setting and move into the landscape, making the transition from the structure of a traditional tour experience to the somewhat unorthodox invitation to "walk at will," although it will be important to guide visitors along a series of defined pathways.

Walking through the landscape at Magnolia is the ultimate way to see and feel this landscape. This is the way that has most typified movements across the plantation through the entire course of its use by humans. Certainly, there has always been horseback riding, and more recently the working of fields from tractors and other automated equipment, and a pick-up truck is the preferred vehicle-of choice of those concerned with today's farming operation at Magnolia, but by-and-large, whether it was a gang of enslaved workers planting or picking cotton, or a tenant farmer behind a mule plowing his acreage, or Ms. Betty Hertzog inspecting her horses in the pasture behind the Big House, this landscape has been experienced more "on foot" than by any other means of transportation. And so the visitor will do the same as those who have lived in this landscape – walk the site and see what there is to see on a given day.

Route One: the old central lane as a cross section of the site's geography

Although the visitor's first inclination might be to move from the orientation in the store, directly to the Quarters, because these brick buildings are the most compelling structures both visually and historically, the suggestion is for the visit to the Quarters to occur near the end of the second walking circuit instead, and for the visitor to move from the store along the front of the property north to the blacksmith's shop and pigeonier. Here there could be interpretation of the various roles of the blacksmith on a plantation, including information on the LeComte's (and the region's) involvement in horseracing, and their beloved champion, "Flying Dutchman." At this point, the pigeonier would be interpreted, and the significance of livestock in the operation of

the plantation over time interpreted, with explanation of where the various stables and horse tracks were at different periods in the history of the plantation.

A walk in the shade of live oaks takes one from the blacksmith's shop to the cook's house. This important structure is still in Hertzog ownership, but because of its proximity to the NPS unit and to the central lane, it offers the opportunity for a range of potential uses, particularly if an agreement could be reached for its stabilization and eventual use. It could be used for exhibits, including photographs of the cooks, and information about food and foodways in the Big House, and it could eventually be used to interpret archaeological investigations yet to be done that would relate more to life in the Big House than in the Quarters. The specific need by the park for this structure may not exist currently, but such a good period structure should be stabilized and eventually preserved, if at all possible, so that as much of the "village" character of the complex can be conveyed with a high degree of integrity. Too many tenant structures have already been lost due to attrition and disrepair. If nothing else, the structure would serve as a stopping point along the walk for visitors to rest and take a break from the sun.

The old central lane of the plantation ran perpendicular to the river road, similar to an arpent line, and passed just to the east of the cook's house. The bois d'arc trees that lined the lane can be seen beyond the NPS area of ownership. If the NPS could negotiate pedestrian access to the lane, and possibly assume management of a stretch, it could form an interesting transect by which a visitor might be able to view many of the most important topographic features of the plantation landscape. This walk would allow the visitor to see the Hertzog's orchard, the former location of the cotton patch and kitchen garden associated with the overseer's house, the remnants of the front levée, the triangular pasture beyond the crawfish pond that now contains Miss Betty's horses, and the setback levée; and he or she would obtain views across the fields between the levées towards the swampland at Hertzog Lake, and views into the pastures that replaced the forested swamps at the back of the plantation. Of course, walking this deep into the site would be only for the most energetic, and in mild seasons of the year. At the setback levée, there would be a signal to reverse and walk back along the lane experiencing views to the south and east.

After the lane has been walked, then the visitor would return to the yard near the store and walk around to the front gate of the yard of the slave hospital/overseer's house. This area will best illustrate the importance of fences in the plantation landscape, with the various

hierarchies of fence types that exist nearby. Interpretation that explains the concept of the control of movement in the antebellum plantation landscape, and how that changed with emancipation and tenancy could occur here. Inside the house, exhibits could interpret many of the parts of the history of Magnolia that are not represented by elements within the NPS unit.

Route Two: the gin barn and Quarters as parts of an industrial village

From the store the visitor would walk across the yard, once used as a mule lot, to the cotton picker shed beside the cattle pens. This would be an appropriate place to interpret the story of the way the land was worked, at first relying on animal and human muscles and eventually with powered machines, and the many activities that occurred in the yards when they were the organizational center of the plantation. Crossing through the cattle pens, the visitor would find the mown path through the meadow and follow it in the direction of the gin barn at the far southern edge of the NPS unit. The walk across this meadow, which originally contained a series of outbuildings, including the antebellum agency and stables, could focus on the fact that this is essentially an archaeological site. The long grasses and forbs would tend to deter visitors from leaving the path, but the vegetation would have its own seasonal interest. The composition of the vegetation is actually a fairly good indicator of the current hydrological situation in this field, making it possible to detect where the areas that hold water are located.

Before entering the gin barn, the view toward Cloutierville and the eastern limit of the antebellum plantation could be viewed. As Cloutierville contains the former home of Kate Chopin, this might be an appropriate place for a wayside that contained Chopin's description of the plantation house from her 1894 short story, "Ma'ame Pelagie," that is supposedly based upon the Magnolia house after it was burned in the Civil War.⁵⁷² Inside the gin barn, the screw press and the two gins can be viewed, and quotations from letters from overseers to the planter describing the cotton crop and its progress could be used to augment the machinery and interject the human dimension and voice into the experience of the space.

The final destination of the walk through the Magnolia landscape is that of the Quarters landscape. In its current condition, without any treatment, the patterns of the buildings and the spaces between have a powerful geometry and convey a great deal about the control of the planter during the antebellum period when these structures were constructed. The ability of the

⁵⁷²See quotation from collection of short stories *Bayou Folk* at top of chapter four.

visitor to enter two of the houses will offer the chance to convey much about the Spartan lives lived within, without the need for exhibitry or interpretation.

As historical data become available for treatment to occur, fences will be added, and the village-like character of the Quarters will become more palpable. What will always be difficult to convey is the density of human occupation at the peak of Magnolia's antebellum production in the 1850s. What is easier to communicate is the way life that was lived in the early decades of the 20th century, when these brick structures were the homes of day laborers at Magnolia. This simple kind of rural life can still be viewed in remote parts of rural Natchitoches Parish, on back roads, in frame houses that were once tenant houses on other plantations and farms. Poverty has a way of nearly stopping time, as does a culture that is strongly tied to the land and the traditions of its ancestors.

The important element in interpreting the Quarters landscape is the addition of the voices of those who lived here. No narratives survive for the former slaves living at Magnolia. But possibly there are slave narratives from Natchitoches Parish that could be used. And in the house that interprets the tenancy period, the oral histories of those who lived at Magnolia up into the 1960s should provide descriptions of the social ambiance and daily routines that characterized life at Magnolia.

No single way around the site is better than another; more important is that the visitor have the tone set for a contemplative experience that invites direct interaction with the site and its stories through the use of the techniques of landscape archaeology and through the reading of the words of those who inhabited this landscape in the past. The advantage of the flexibility of the sequencing is that visitors can set off in several different directions so that they have most of the site to themselves for exploration.

Driving Tour of the Regional Landscape

The driving tour should help visitors to understand the regional context for the development of the plantation. The map and itinerary for this tour can offer several alternative routes, depending on how much time the visitor wants to spend. The itinerary should emphasize the original boundaries of the property, arpent lines in the landscape, the dam and Cane River Lake, 24-mile Ferry, channels of the Red River, cotton fields, cotton gins and cotton storage, woodlands and

swamplands (examples can be found along Little River), livestock operations, sawmill operations, locations of former tenant houses, and locations of other plantations where relatives of the LeComte-Hertzog family lived. The brochure provided to visitors might include a glossary of agricultural terms, a calendar of seasonal agricultural practices, and a guide to related cultural events.

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APPENDIX ONE
CLASS C ESTIMATE

This estimate is for treatment work recommended for Phase One of the restoration of the landscape within the boundaries of the NPS Unit.

Reconstruction of Historic Fencing

Wood posts, 3 strands wire (smooth wire)

Total length: 2,700 ft. Cost per linear foot \$1.70. Total \$4,590.

Wood posts, facing board, woven wire stretched between 2 boards (whitewashed)

Total length: 100 ft. Cost per linear foot \$2.20. Total \$220.

Wood posts, facing board, 5 boards (whitewashed)

Total length: 775 ft. Cost per linear foot \$2.75. Total \$2,131.25

New Boundary Fencing

Steel T posts, 3 strands wire (smooth wire)

Total length: 1550 ft. Cost per linear foot \$1.50. Total \$2,325.

Reconstruction of Historic Gates and Stiles

Wooden 5 bar gates (vehicular entrances)

Total number 3 @ \$300 each Total \$900

Wooden picket gate (pedestrian walk)

Total number 1 @ \$150 each Total \$150

Wooden stiles (steps over fences)

Total number 3 @ 150 each Total \$450

Installation of Hardened Earth Pavement

(Estimate is for PolyPavement™ with a 2-inch mixed-in application)

Area beside store

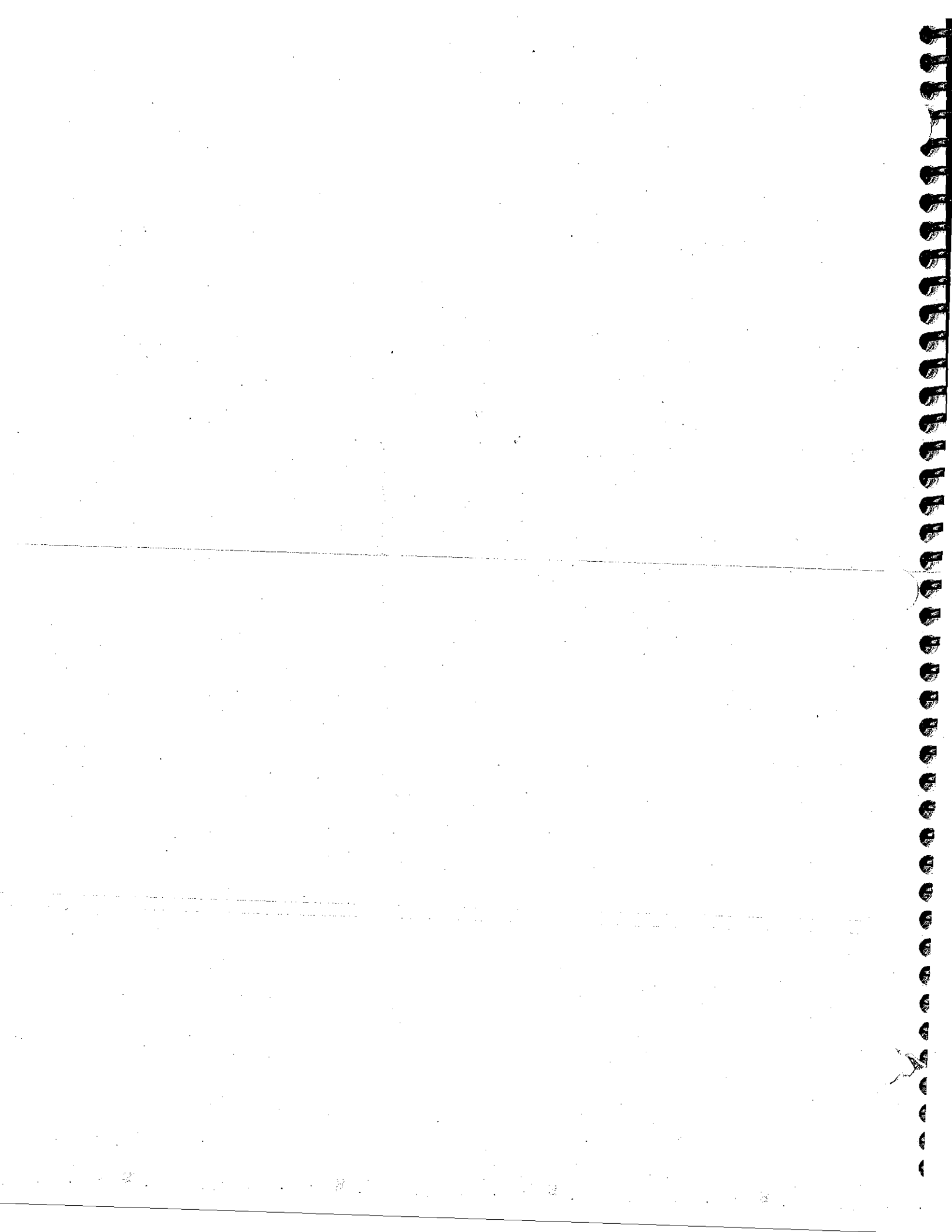
Total area 15,000 sq. ft. Cost per sq. ft. \$0.52. Total \$7,800.

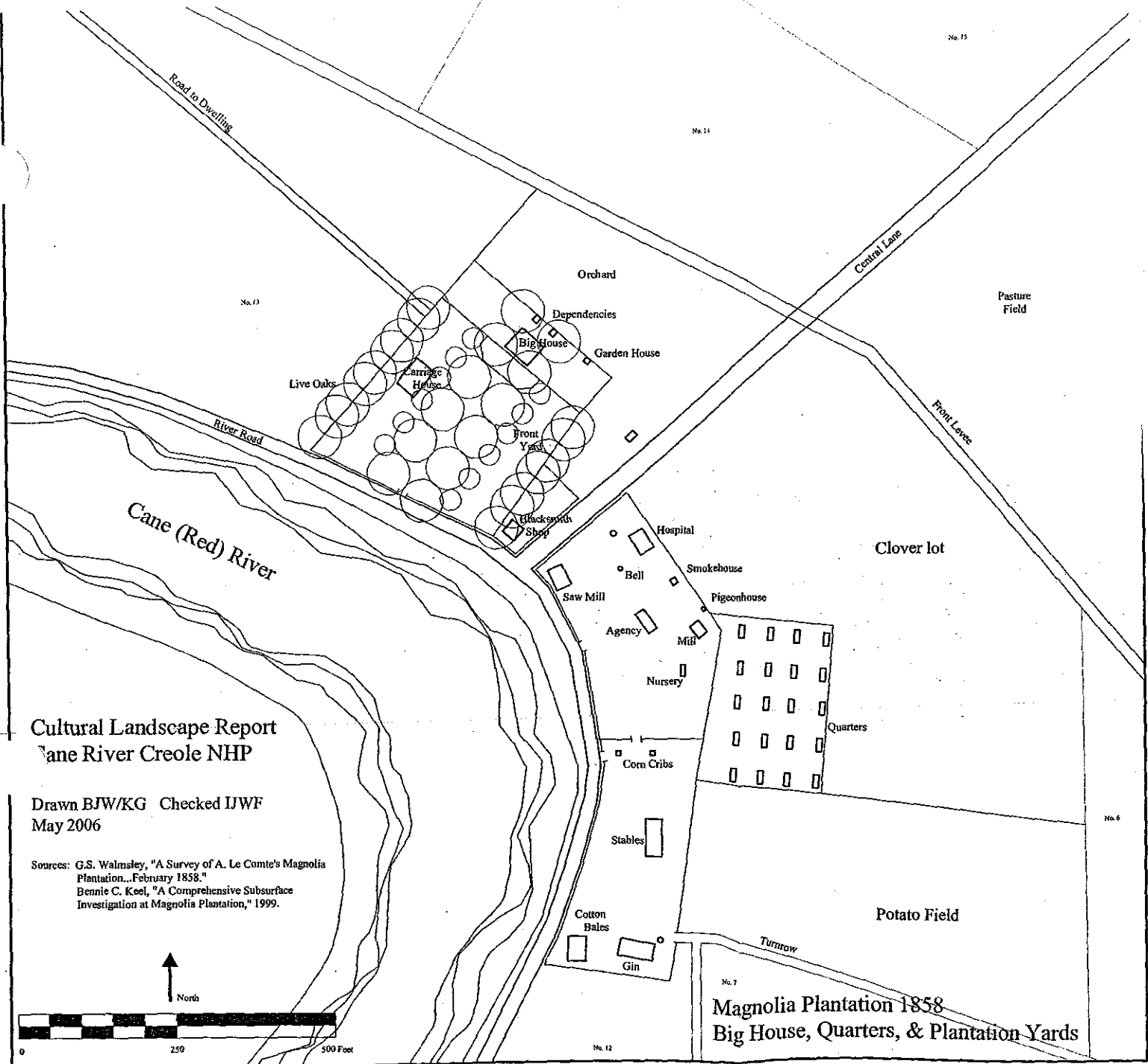
Lane to Quarters

Total area 4,200 sq. ft. Cost per sq. ft. \$0.52. Total \$2,184.

Project Subtotal \$20,750.25 + contingencies 20% ***Project Total \$24,900.***

Note: this estimate does not include recommended drainage work, fencerow tree removal, or grass mowing. These should be undertaken as routine park maintenance operations.





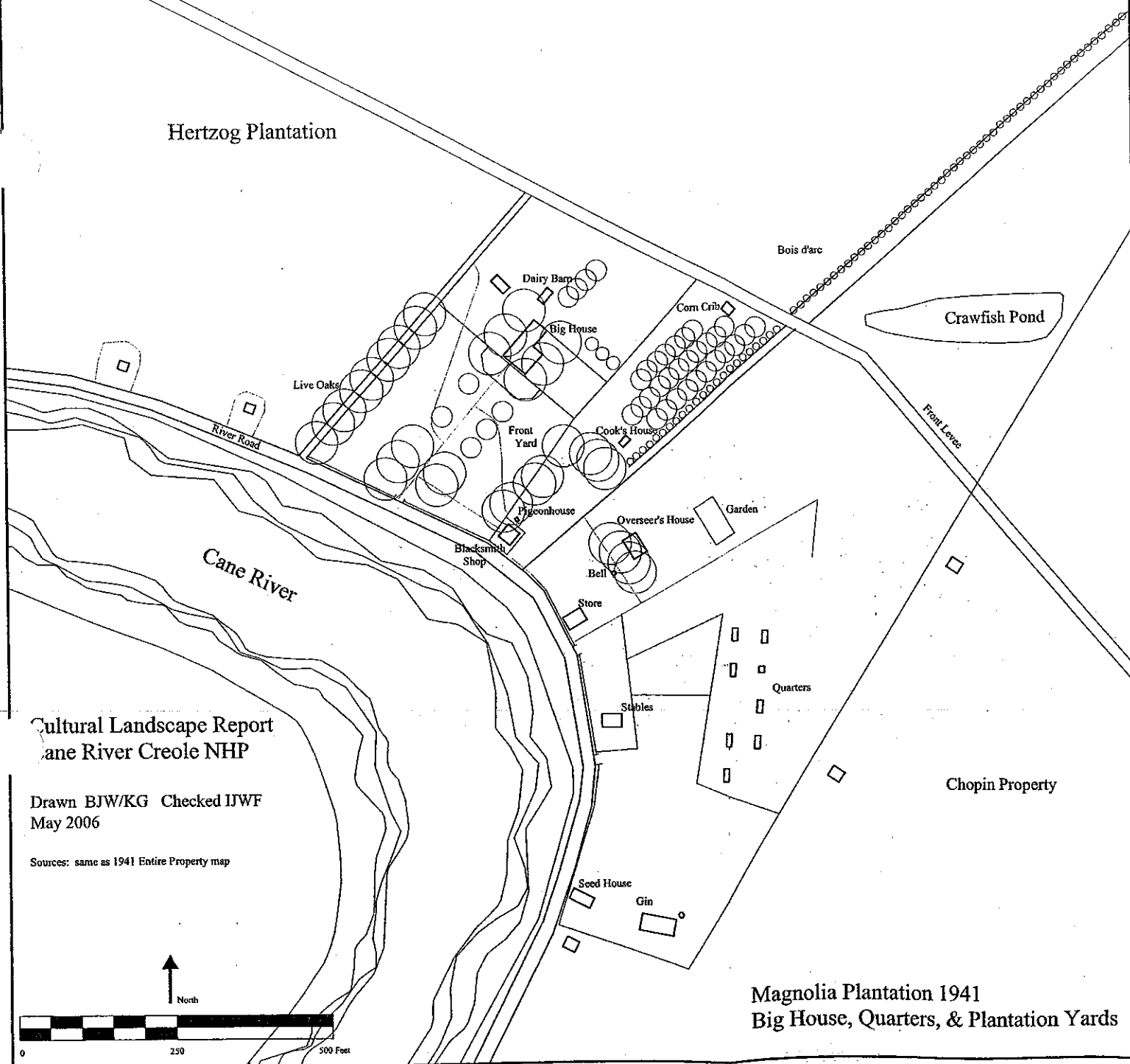
Cultural Landscape Report Cane River Creole NHP

Drawn BJW/KG Checked LJWF
May 2006

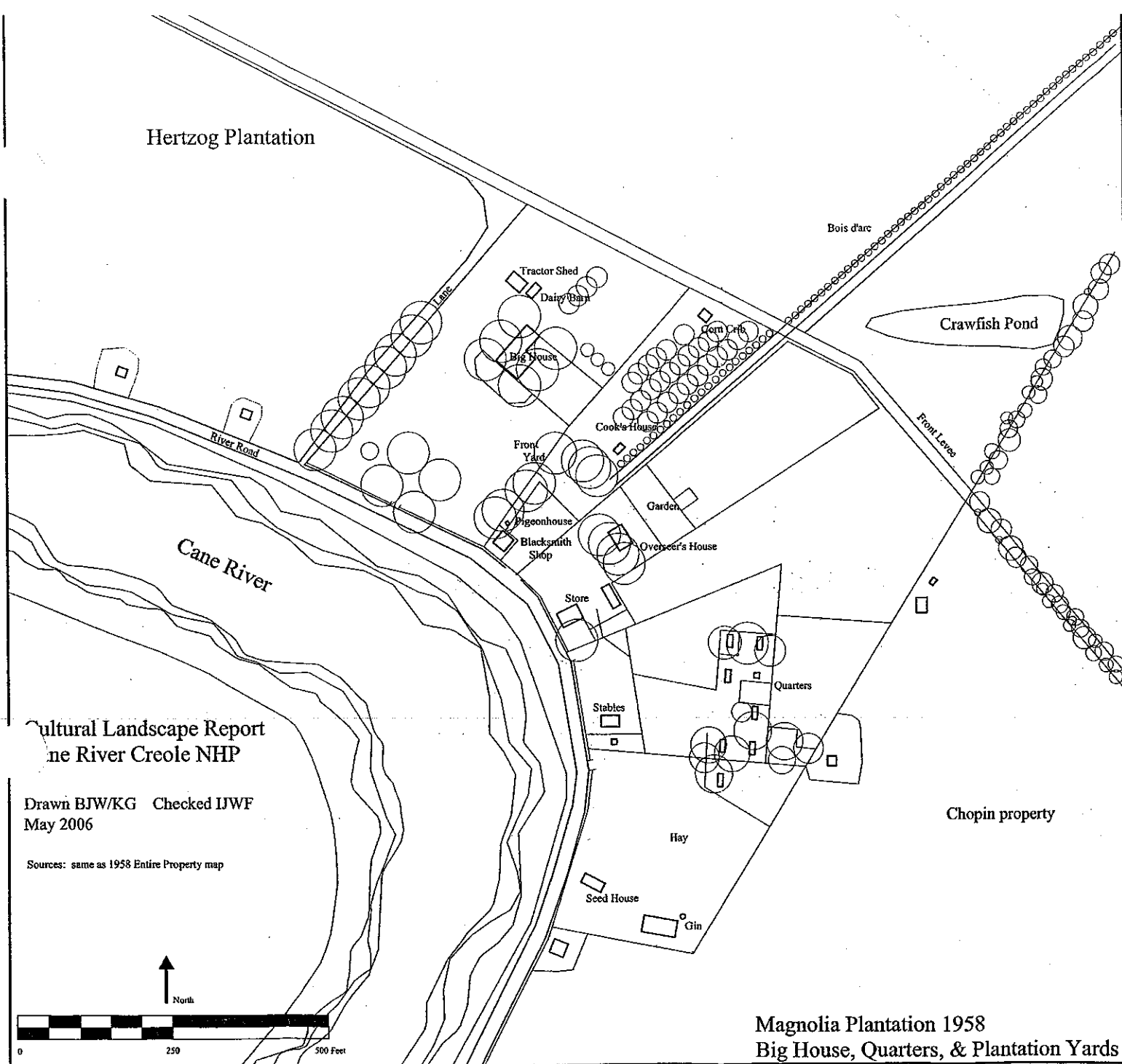
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Magnolia Plantation 1858
Big House, Quarters, & Plantation Yards

Hertzog Plantation



Hertzog Plantation



Cultural Landscape Report
Cane River Creole NHP

Drawn BJW/KG Checked IJWF
May 2006

Sources: same as 1958 Entire Property map

CANE RIVER CREOLE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

MAGNOLIA PLANTATION UNIT

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

These are digital images taken from the National Archives and Records Administration, and USDA photographs referenced in the report.

Aerial 1 – Cane River and the western third of the Hertzog Plantation – 19 January 1941

Aerial 2 – Hertzog Lake and the central part of the Hertzog Plantation – 5 April 1941

Aerial 3 – the Big House, Quarters, and Plantation Yards – 5 April 1941

Aerial 4 – the Hertzog Plantation - 16 December 1958

Aerial 5 – the Big House, Quarters, and Plantation Yards - 16 December 1958

Aerial 6 – the Hertzog Plantation – 28 January 1998

Aerial 7 – the Big House, Quarters, and Plantation Yards – 28 January 1998

PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Photographs were taken on 29, 30 and 31 March 2006.

1 – the highway beside the blacksmith's shop – looking southeast towards the store

2 – the sign in the new parking lot – in the area formerly used as the stable yard

3 – the new parking lot – looking towards the gin barn and the southern boundary of the Unit

4 – the gin barn with a baling machine beside the boundary fence – looking east towards Cloutierville

5 – the Quarters seen across the gin yard from the southwestern corner of the Unit

6 – cabins at the southern end of the first row of the Quarters – where a few clumps of lilies and narcissi survive in the yards

7 – cabins at the northern end of the first row of the Quarters – with the remains of an old cistern flagged in foreground

- 8 – the space between the rows of cabins – looking south from the northern end of the Quarters
- 9 – an area formerly used as a pasture and mule lot, with the northern end of the Quarters seen from the new parking lot
- 10 – the front porch of Magnolia Plantation Store
- 11 – the yard beside the store, seen from the entrance looking towards the shed built for the cotton-picking machine
- 12 – cattle pens behind the store – the Quarters can be seen in the background
- 13 – the entrance to the overseer's house, originally a slave hospital, from the yard beside the store
- 14 – sheds and live oaks in the yard on the northern side of the overseer's house
- 15 – looking into the blacksmith's yard from the yard beside the store – in 1960 these two yards were divided by a fence
- 16 – looking towards the store from the blacksmith's yard – remains of the fence dividing the yards can be found on the far side of the log crib
- 17 – the entrance to the blacksmith's shop and yard from the highway – looking northeast across the yard to the cook's house
- 18 – the blacksmith's shop and the pigeonier beneath one of the giant live oaks that stand between the blacksmith's yard and the front yard of the Big House
- 19 – the cooks' house at the southern edge of the orchard of the Big House – note this is not on NPS property
- 20 – the line of the lane that ran from the blacksmith's shop to the orchard, keeping in the shade of the live oaks at the edge of the yard
- 21 – the cook's house and the orchard seen from within the boundary of the Unit
- 22 – the blacksmith's yard seen from near the cook's house – the old central lane of the plantation ran on the far side of the two pecan trees standing beside the overseer's sheds
- 23 – the line of the ditch that runs from the plantation yards northeastwards towards the crawfish pond – the post in the NPS boundary fence stands in the center of this line
- 24 – the crawfish pond in the pasture on the north side of the line of the front levee
- 25 – bois d'arc trees on the northwestern side of the pasture with the pond – the bois d'arc trees mark the line of the central lane of the antebellum plantation

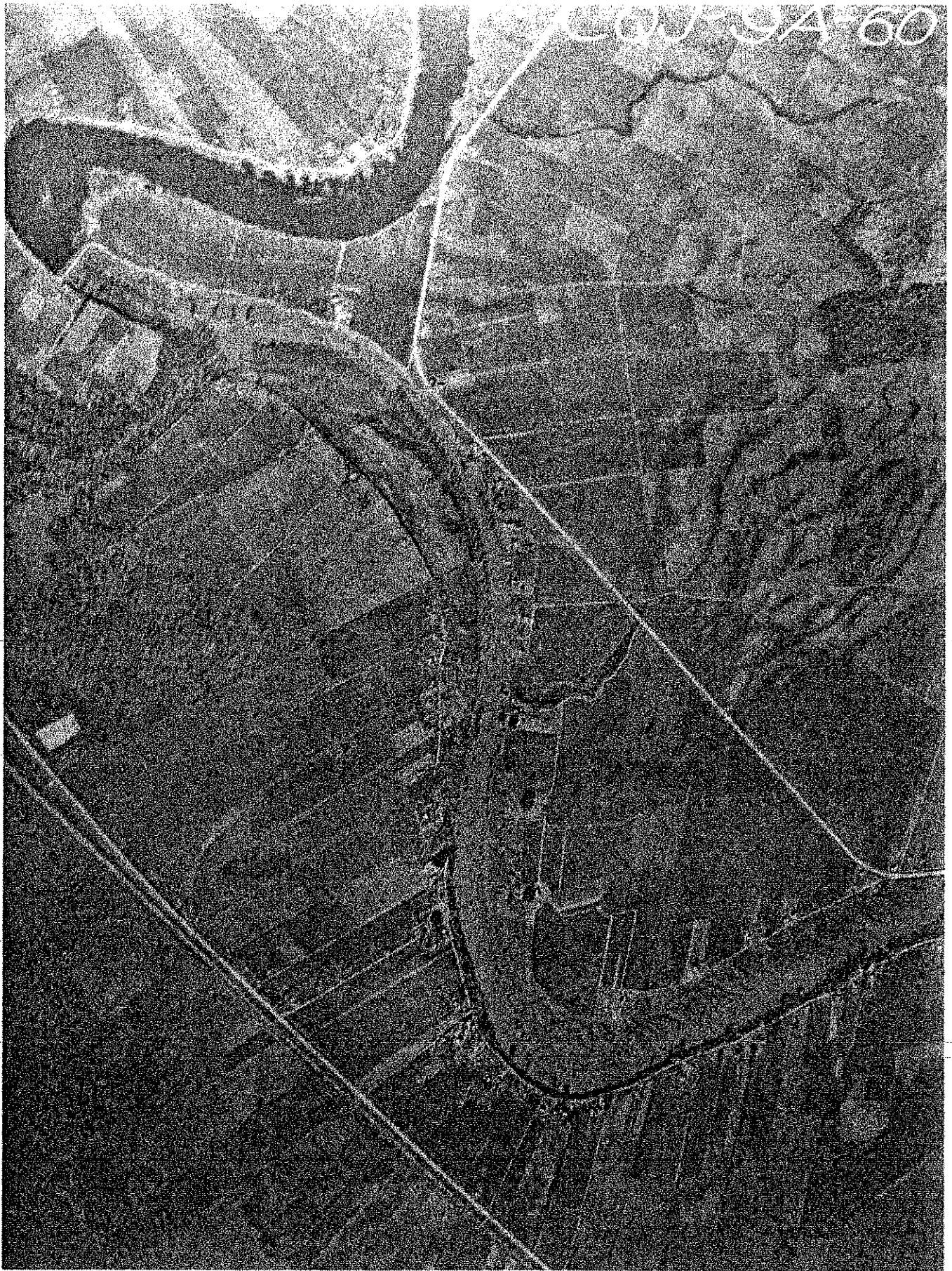
- 26 – horses belonging to Betty Hertzog grazing in the pasture with the pond
- 27 – trees along the line of the front levee, which was removed in the 1970s – the building is the corn crib in the Hertzog's orchard
- 28 – fields north of the Hertzog's orchard – the one in the foreground has been "set aside" from cultivation
- 29 – hackberry trees growing along a field boundary – there is no drain along this boundary, which does not date back to the antebellum period.
- 30 – the entrance from the highway to the Big House
- 31 – the live oaks near the entrance
- 32 – the flower garden and oak allee from the gallery of the Big House
- 33 – the flower garden in front of the Big House – right hand, or southeastern side
- 34 – the flower garden in front of the Big House – left hand, or northwestern side
- 35 – the garden on the northwestern side of the Big House – looking from the backyard towards the front
- 36 – the small yard at the back of the Big House, enclosed by the house ell and a cypress *pieux* fence
- 37 – the rear gallery of the Big House
- 38 – the yard and orchard behind the Big House – seen from the steps to the gallery of the ell
- 39 – the northwest side of the backyard – the dairy barn was located beside the large pecan tree seen near the right hand side of this photograph
- 40 – the entrance to the backyard, the building in the foreground is a privy and the one in the background was used as a tractor shed
- 41 – the old chicken coop near the entrance to the backyard
- 42 – the back of the Big House seen from the southeast
- 43 – the corncrib in the northeastern corner of the orchard – an area that was used for keeping hogs
- 44 – cultivated land west of the Big House – the woodland in the background marks the position of Hertzog Lake
- 45 – an abandoned tenant's cabin a few hundred yards west of the Big House

46 – front land – the fine sandy loams and silt loams of the natural levee are very productive soils, now used for growing soybeans as well as corn and cotton

47 – equipment sheds and an empty tenant's cabin beside the bridge to Derry on the Chopin half of the plantation

48 – Cane River seen from the bridge to Derry, looking upstream

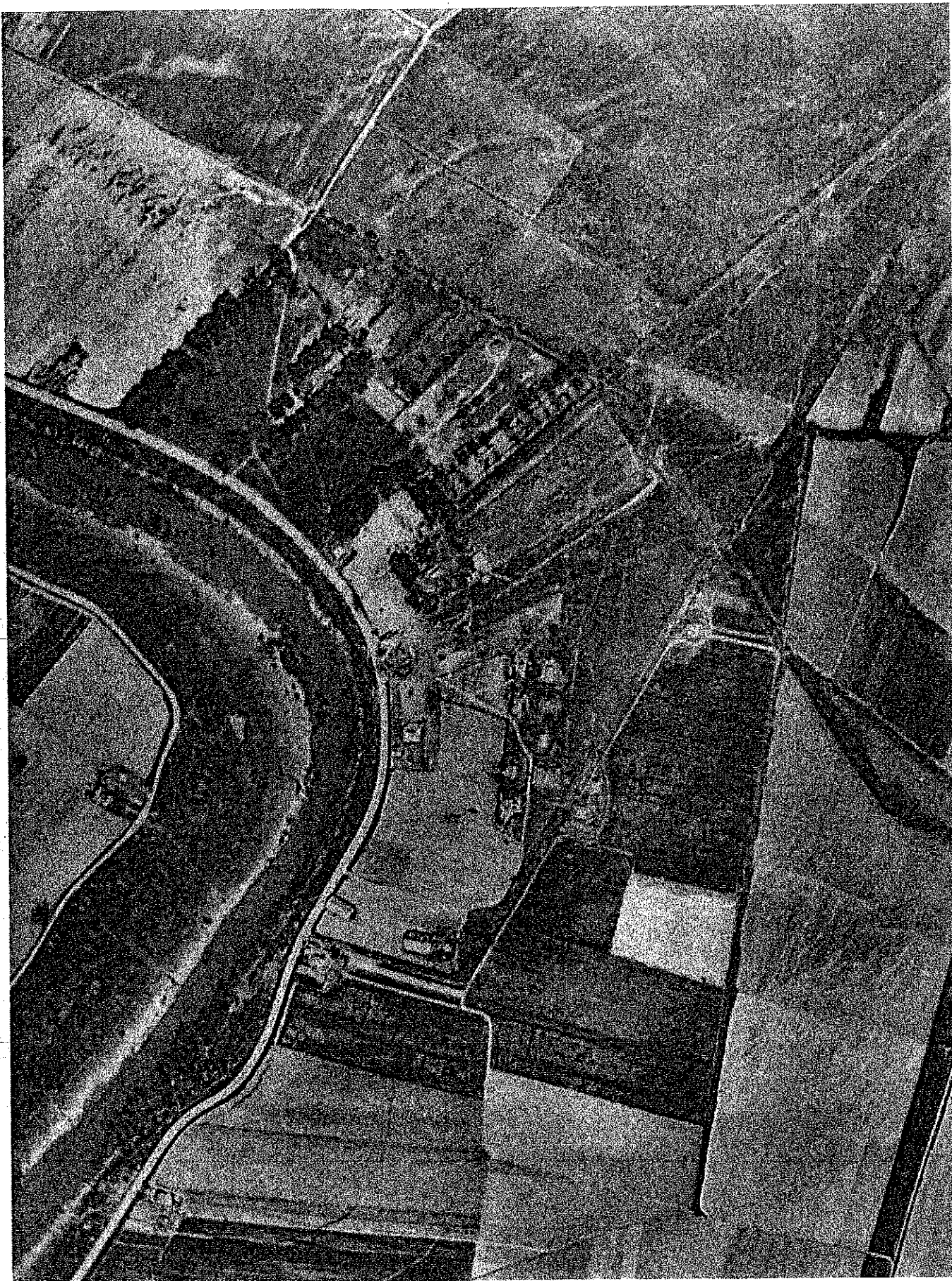
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Aerial 1



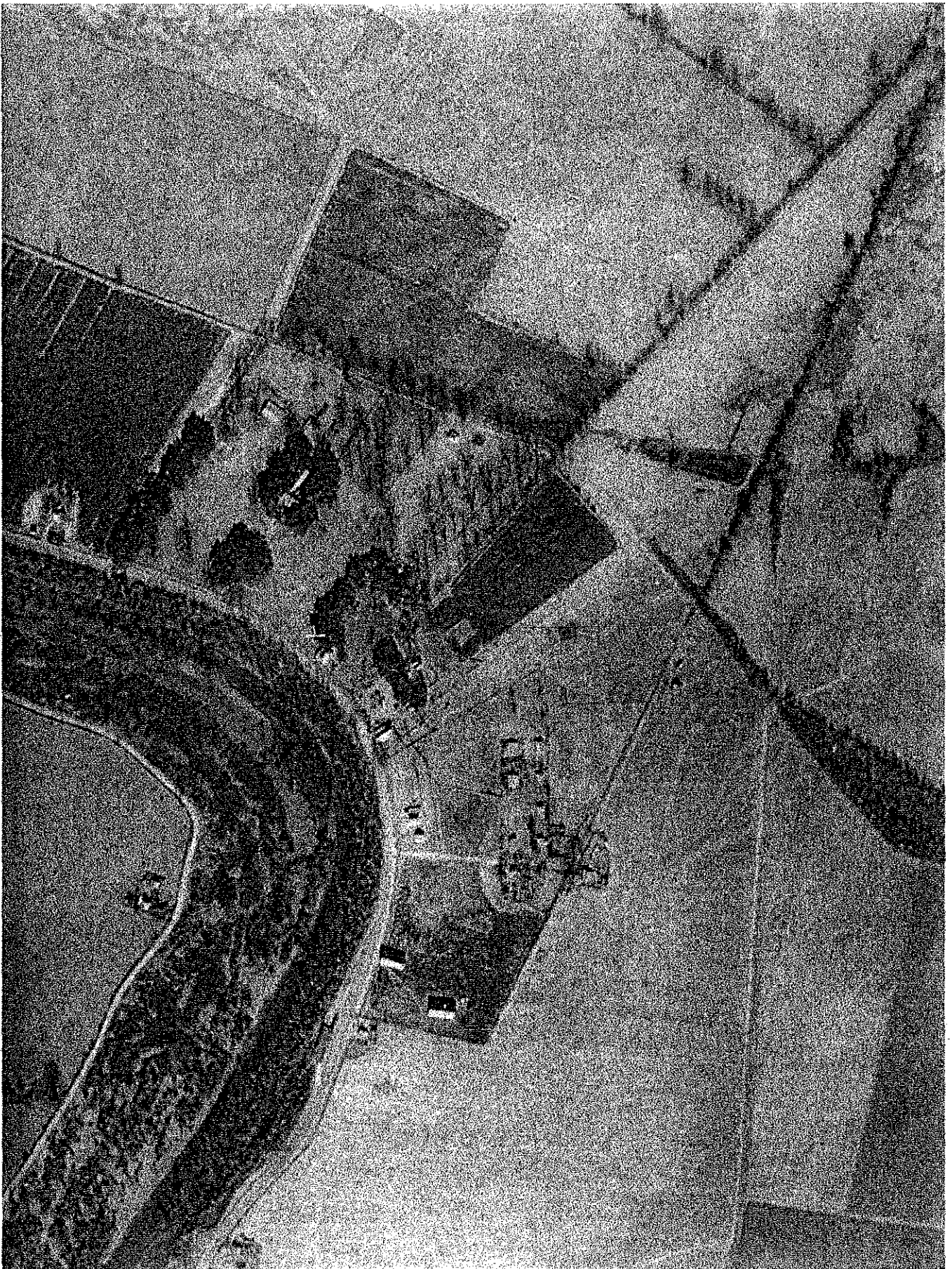
Aerial 2



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Aerial 4



Aerial 5

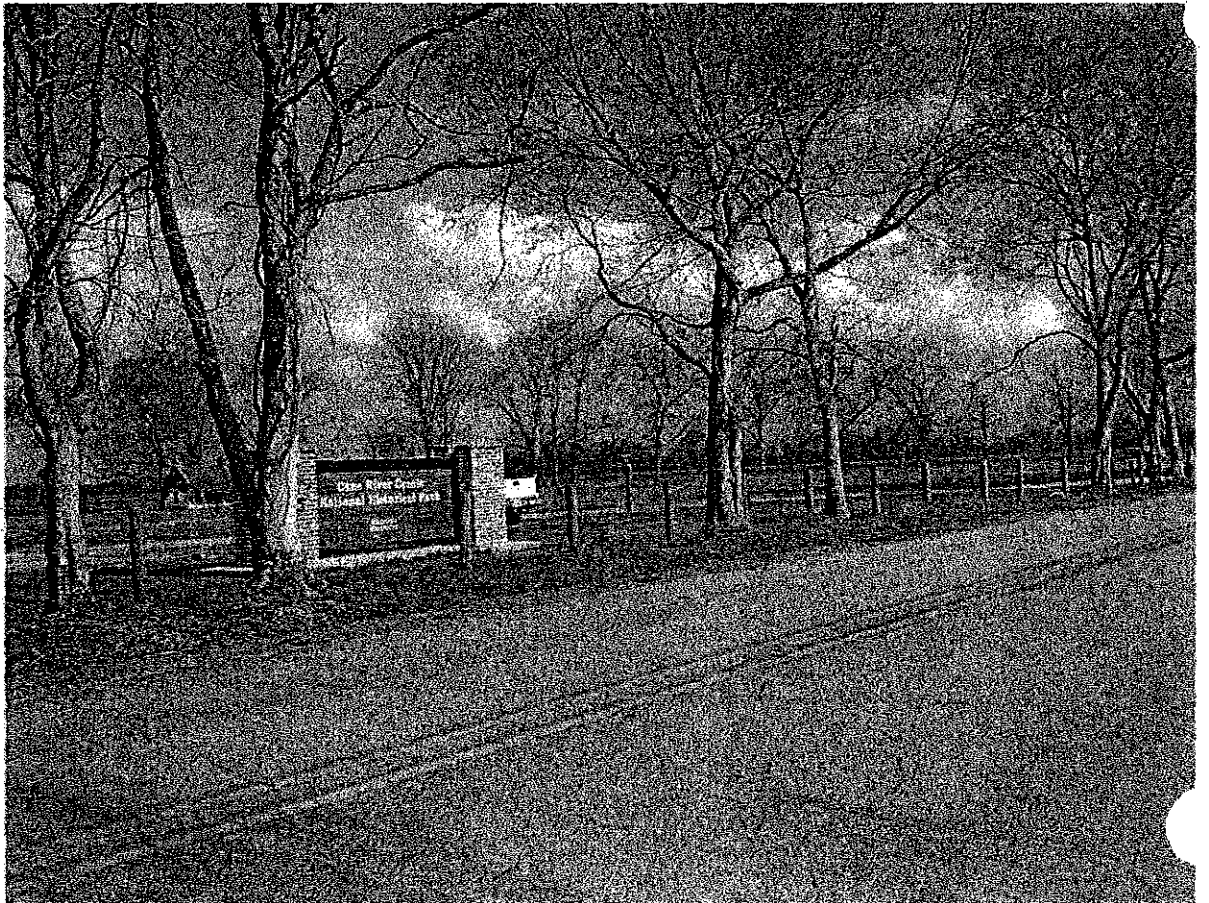




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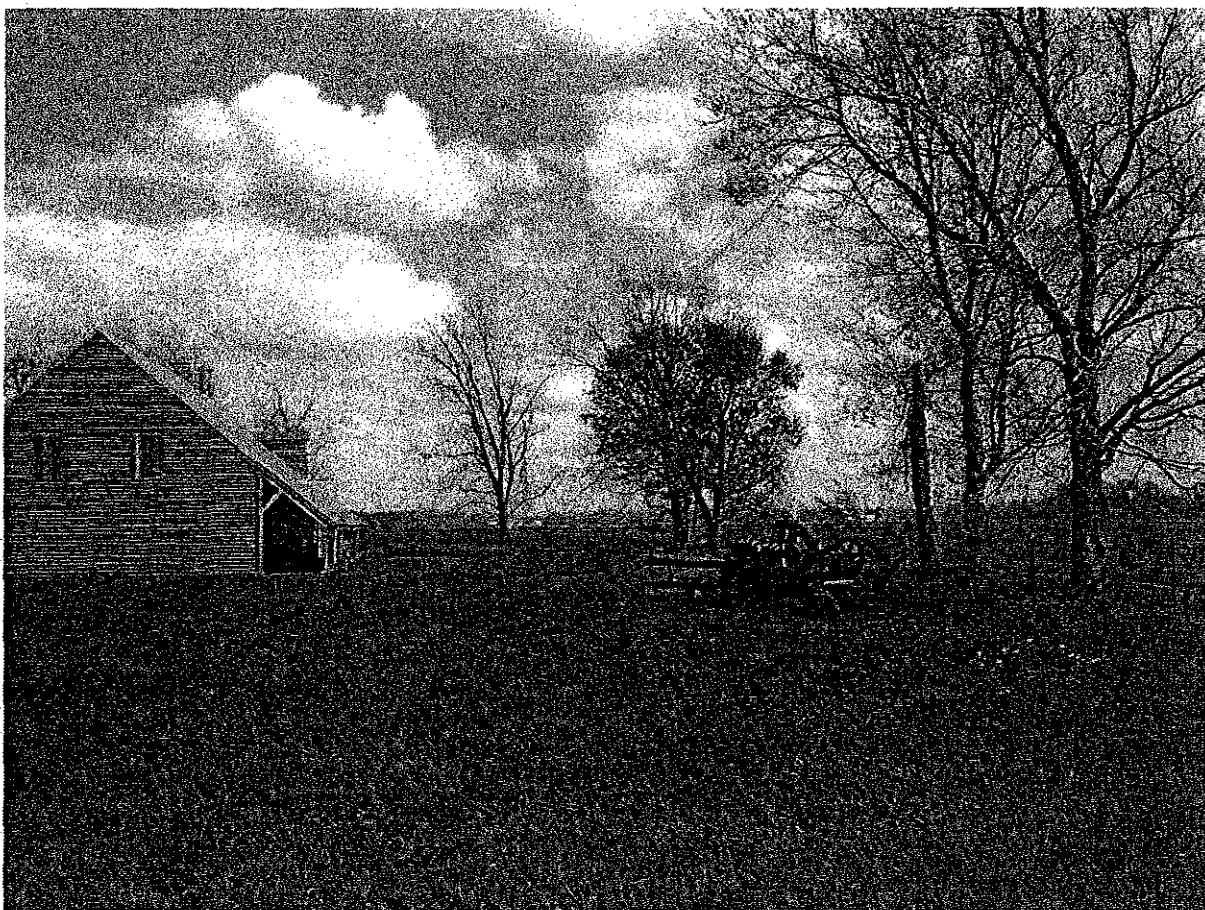


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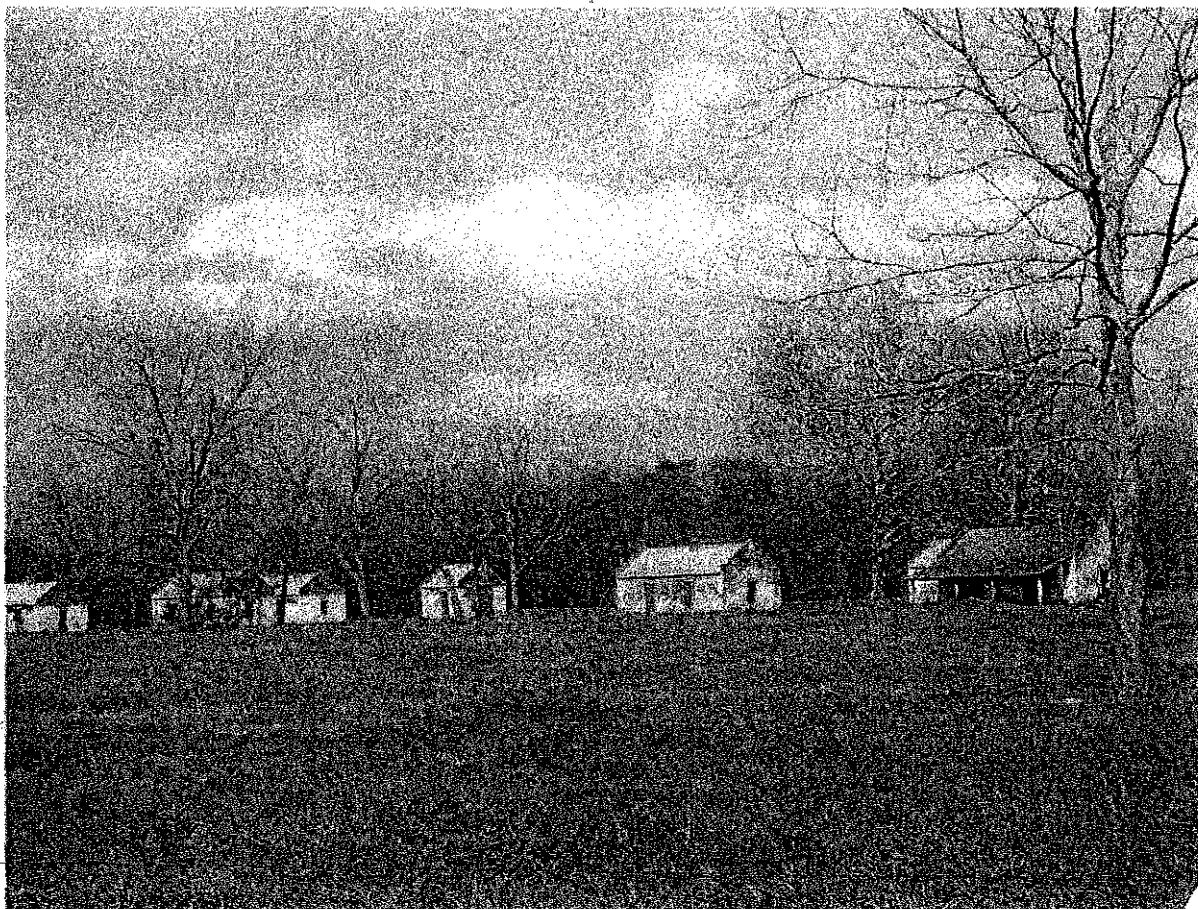




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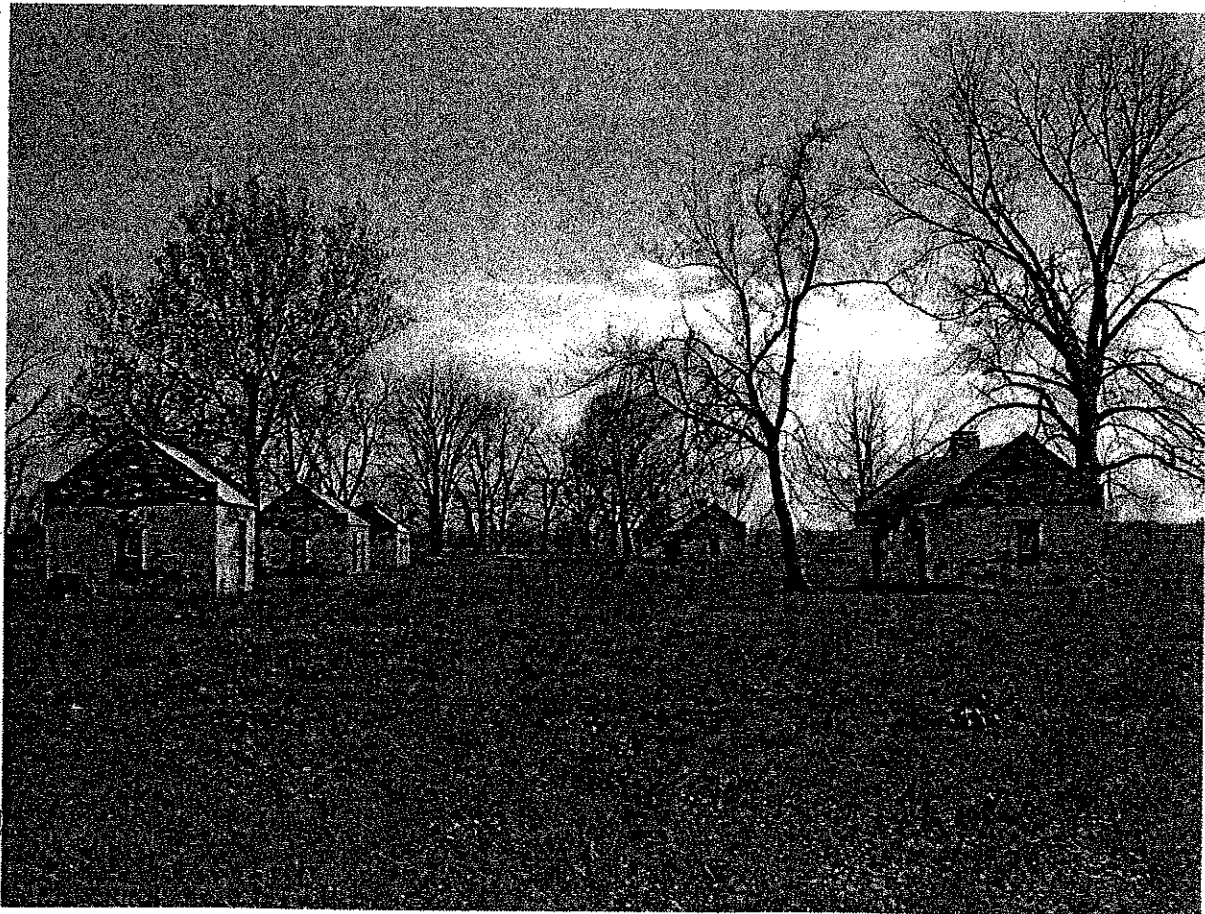
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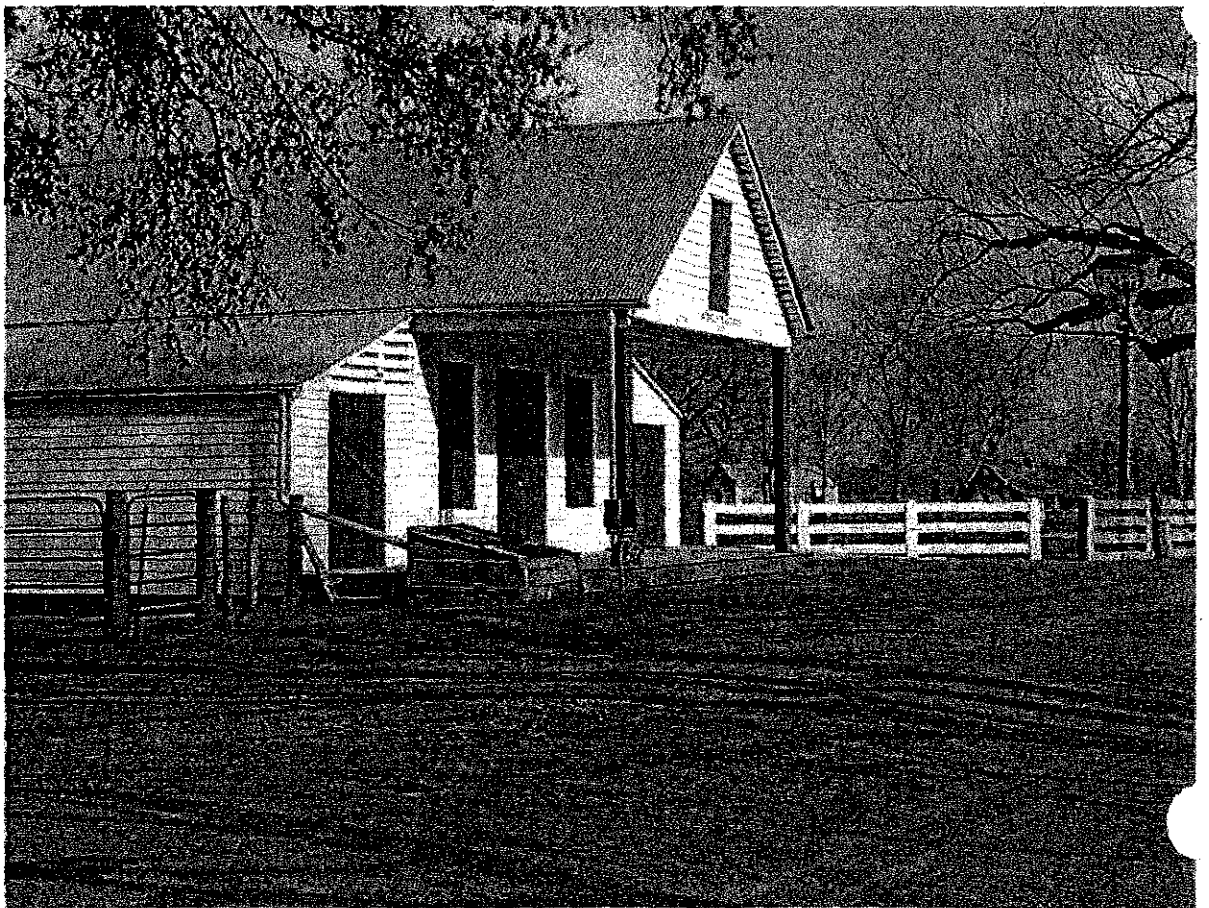


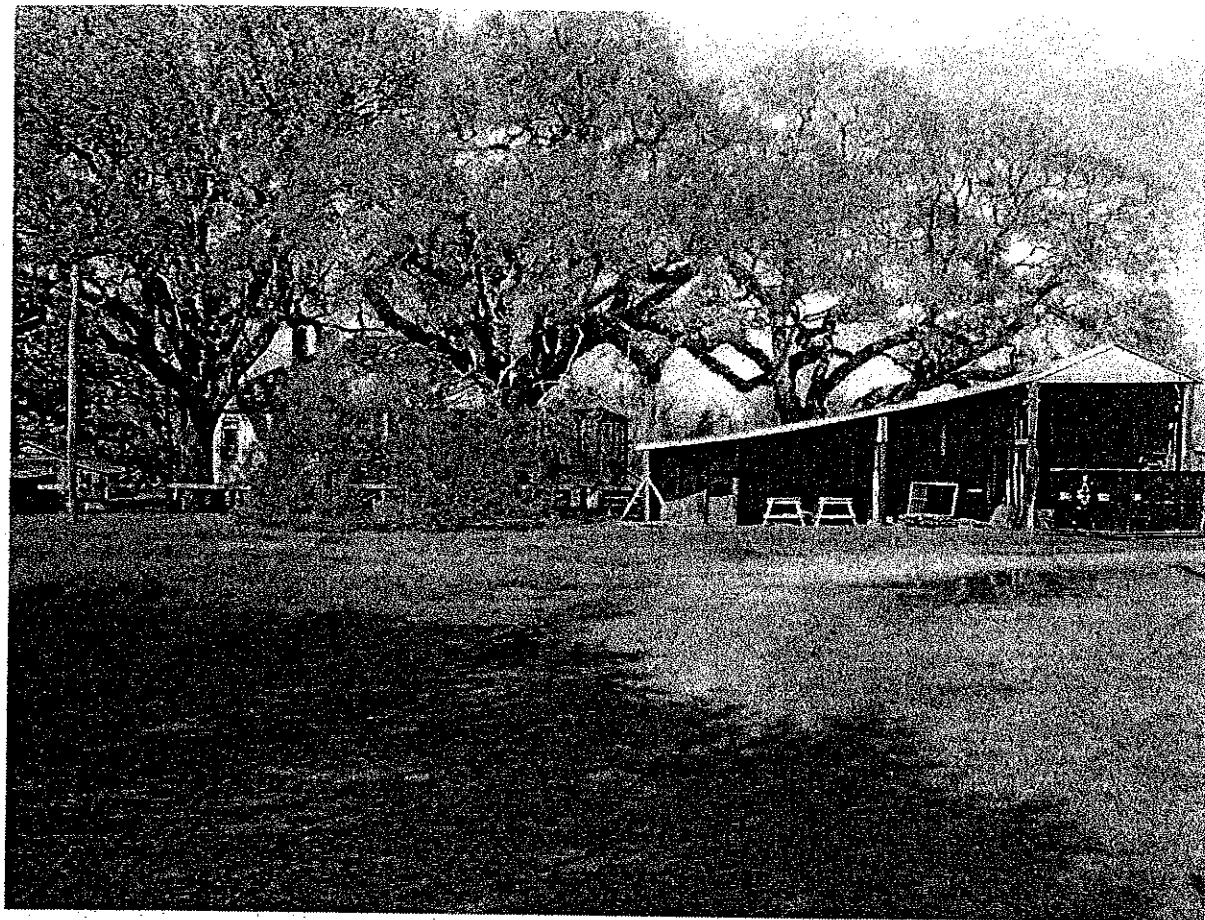
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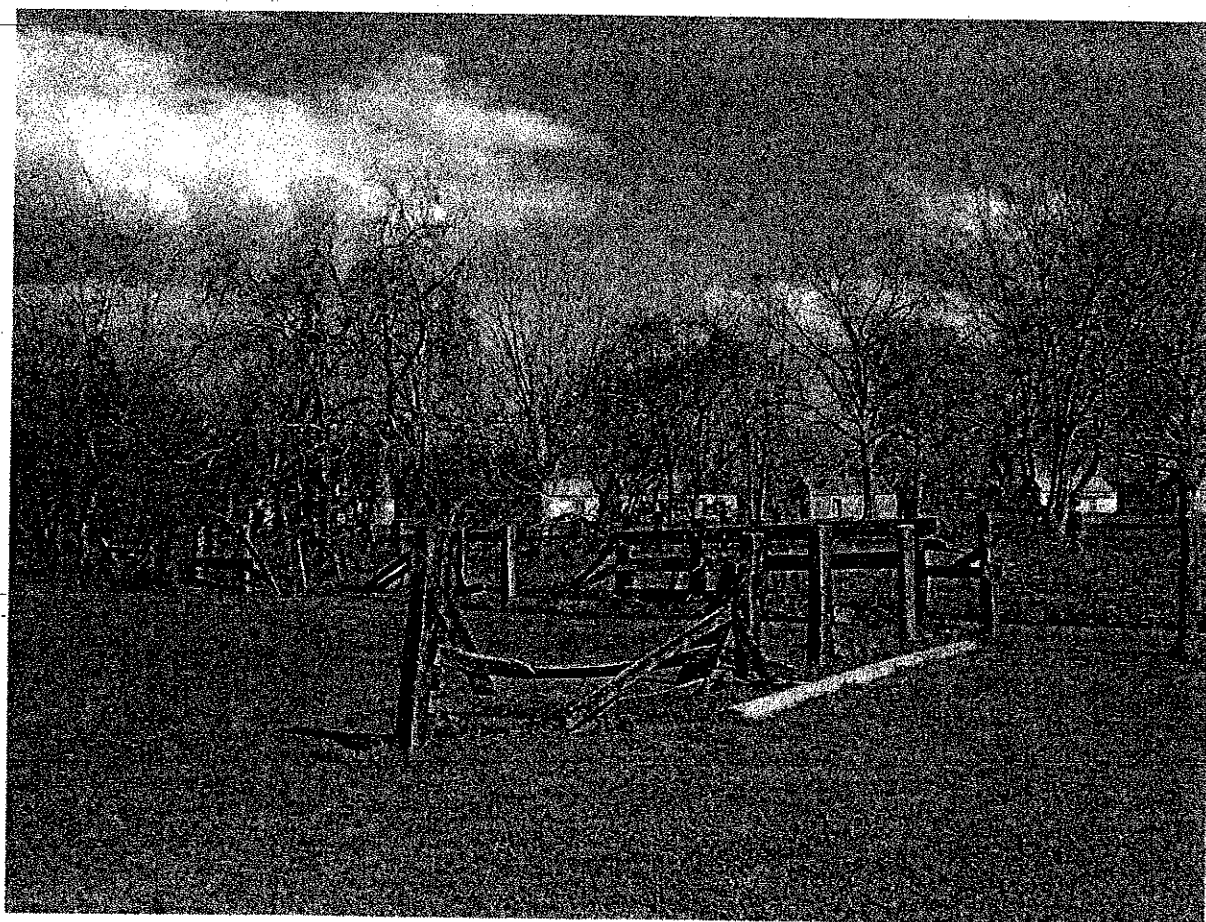


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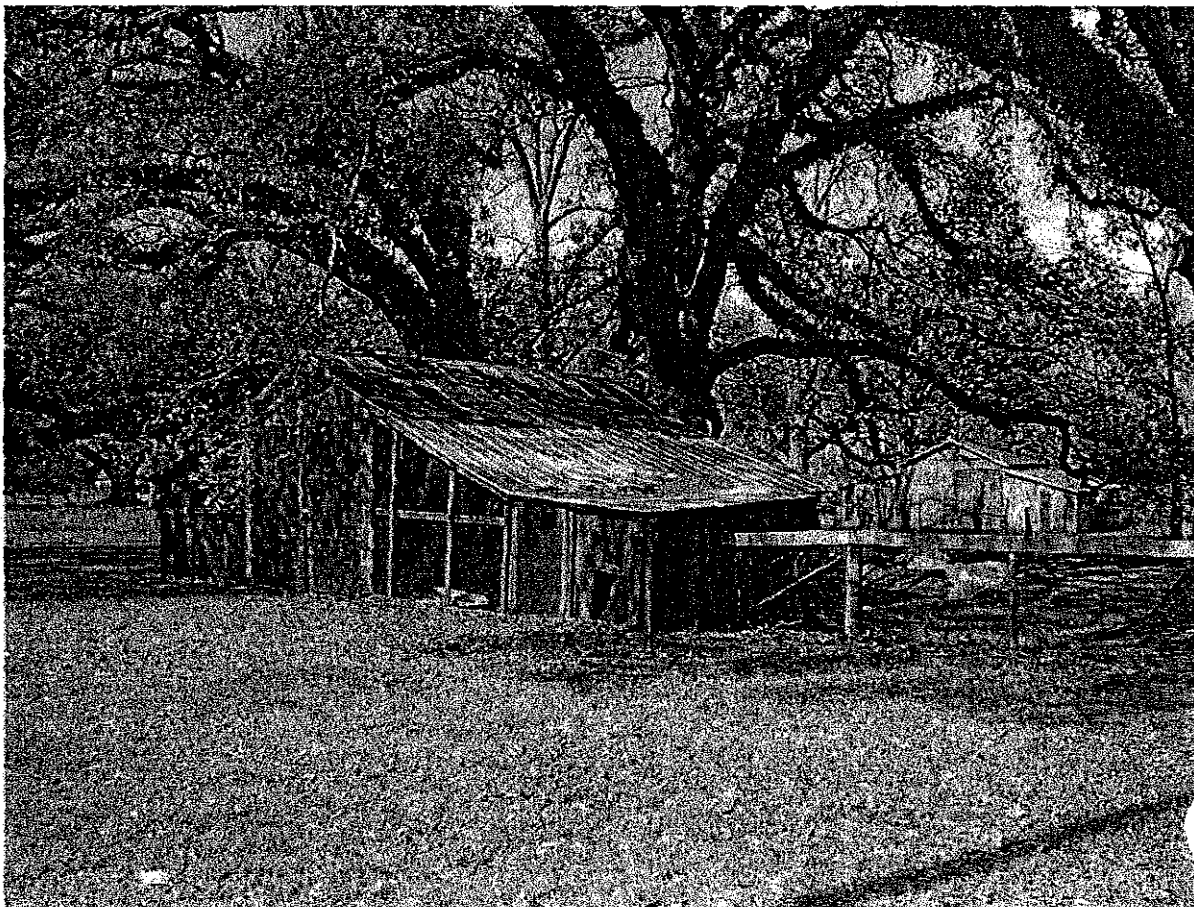


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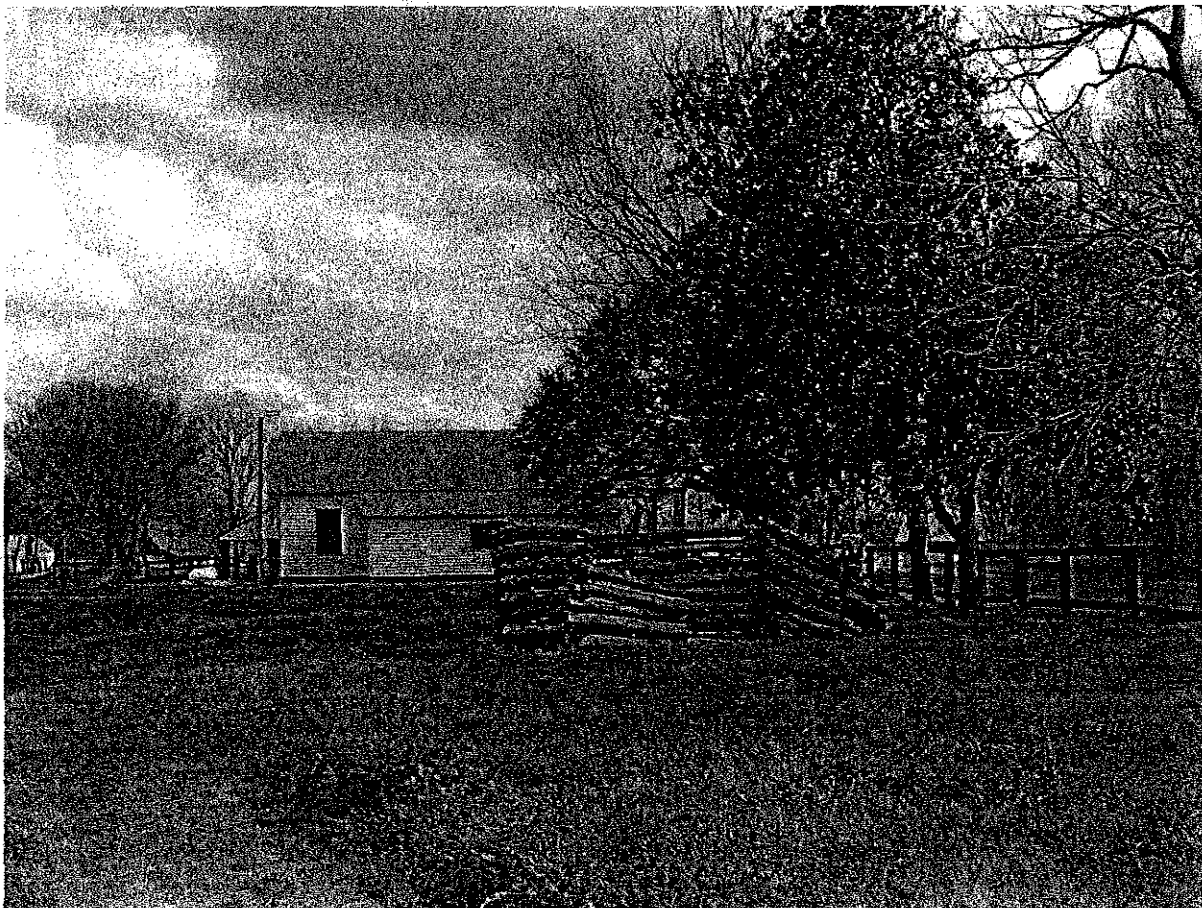


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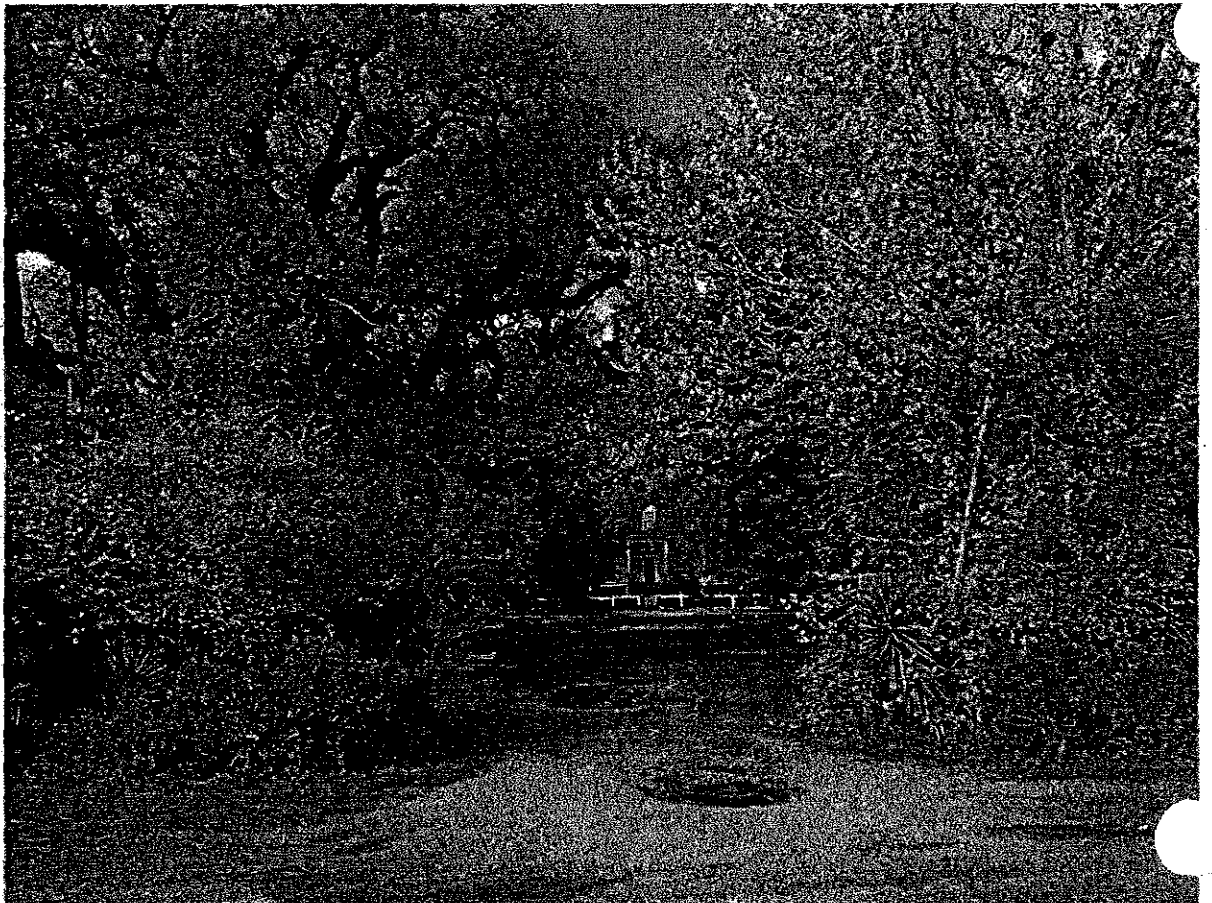


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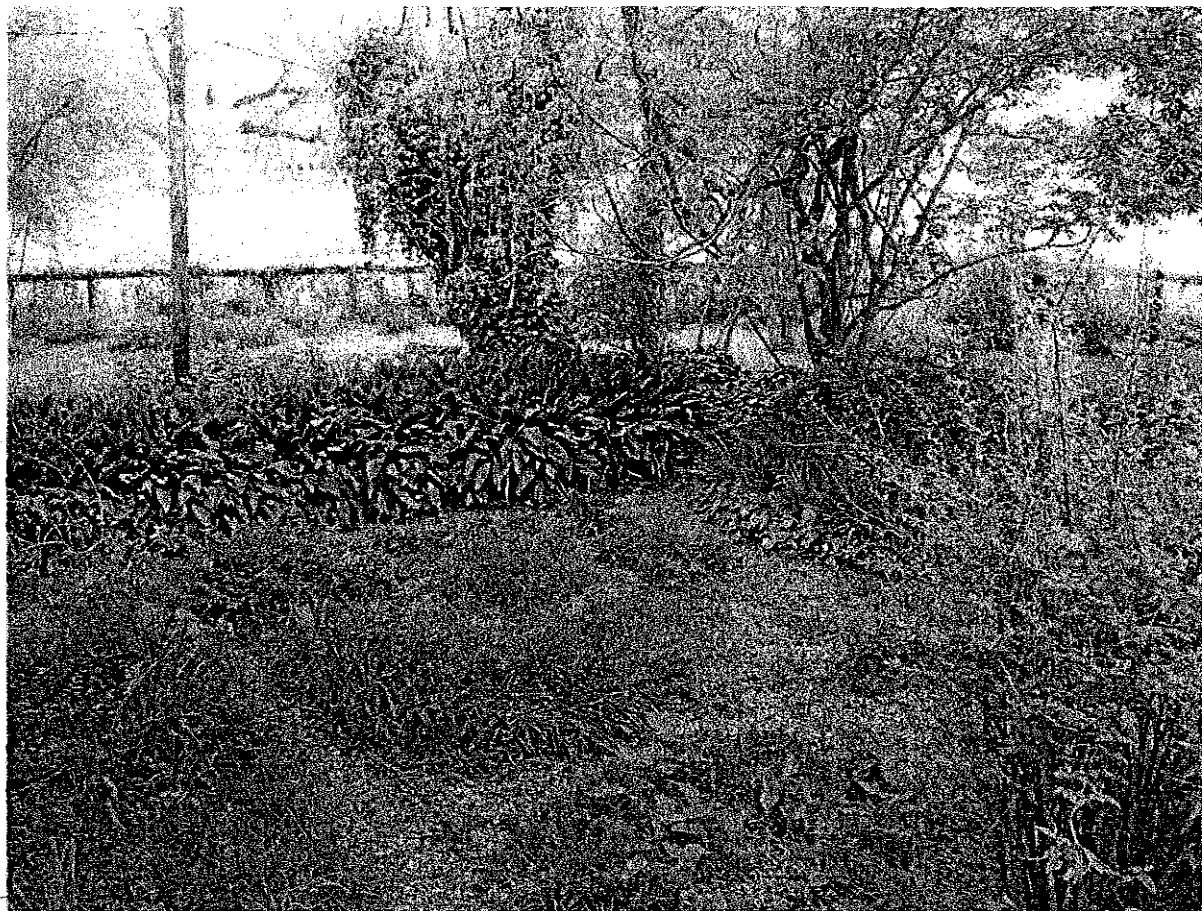


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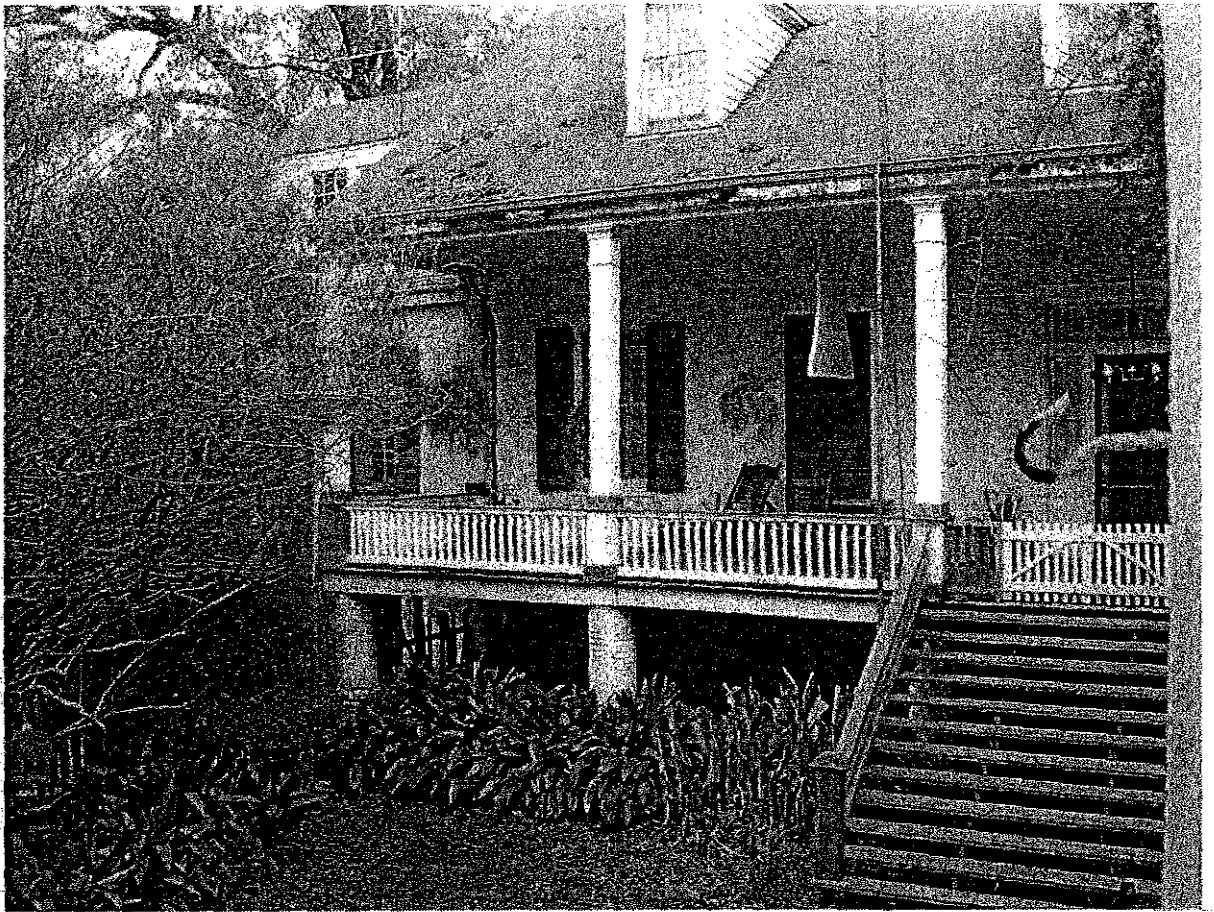


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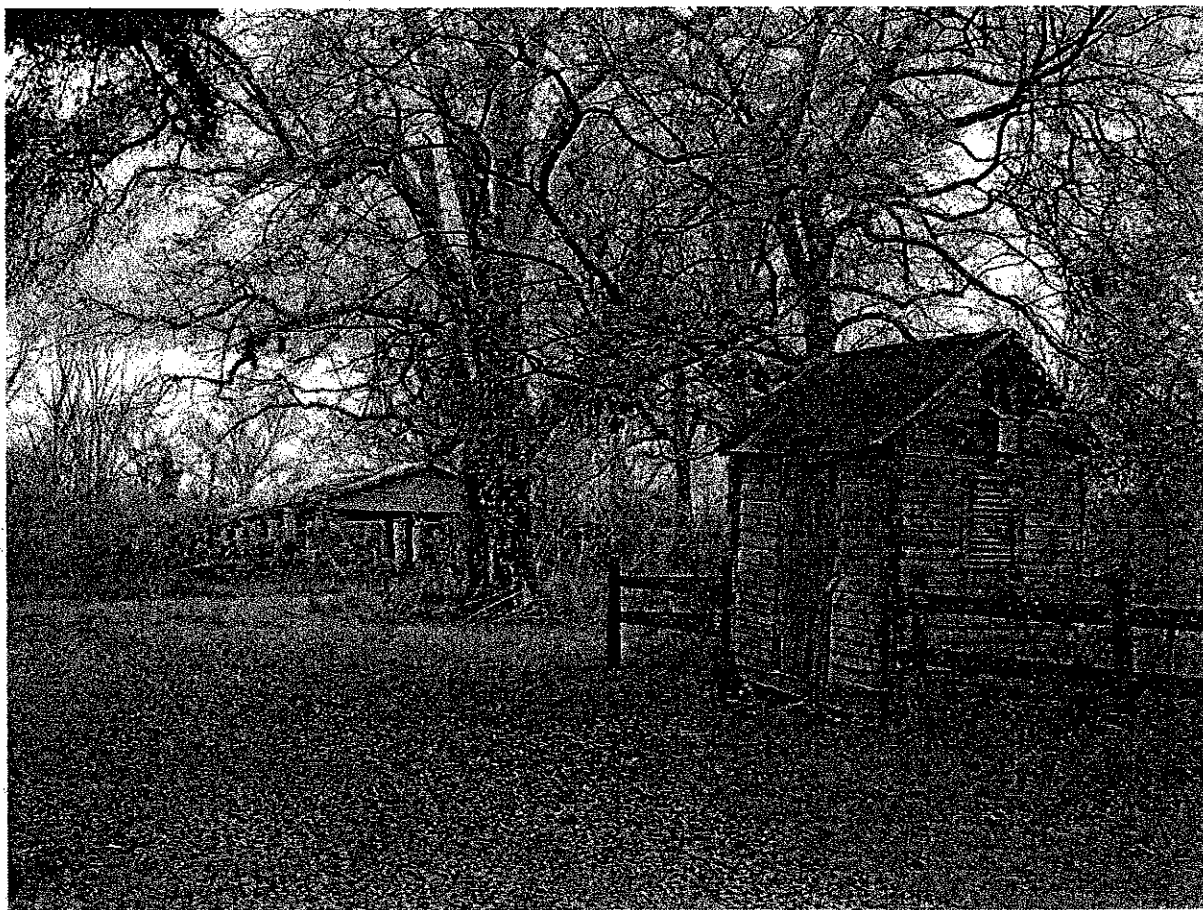


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