

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

COINCOIN-PRUDHOMME HOUSE

(Maison de Marie Therese)

HABS No. LA-1295

- Location: The Coincoin-Prudhomme House is located at the end of a dirt road off Highway 494 about one mile northwest of Bermuda.
- Present Owner
And Occupant: Henry Metoyer.
- Significance: The Coincoin-Prudhomme House is a rare surviving example of a basic Norman-plan Creole plantation house. Furthermore, it is one of very few extant Louisiana plantation houses from the middle-antebellum era that incorporated the Norman French-style roof truss system used by the French on their government, ecclesiastical, and military buildings in the early eighteenth century. The structure also has been traditionally associated with the Creole community in and around Natchitoches, particularly with Marie Therese Coincoin, and it has been thought of as her dwelling.

Part 1. Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The building was constructed roughly between 1828 and 1847.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners, uses:
 - a. The original house, built at some time between 1788 and 1794, was the property of Marie Therese Coincoin and was used as her dwelling house.¹
 - b. Shortly before her death in 1816, Marie Therese sold the section of her land where the house was located (on the right side descending down the Cane River), to Ailhaud St. Anne.²

¹ See, Map Collection, Land Plats of Natchitoches and Its Environs, 1793-1801, map 1, (State Land Office, Baton Rouge).

² Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Records, Book 3, 522-523.

- c. In his will, Jean Baptiste Ailhaud St. Anne left his entire holdings to Jean Baptiste (John B.) Prudhomme, who had married Ailhaud's daughter, Marie Therese Victorie St. Anne, in 1805. John B. Prudhomme purchased the remainder of the Coincoin land from her son, Toussaint Metoyer, in 1821.³
 - d. John B. Prudhomme bequeathed his land to his only surviving son, Gabriel St Anne Prudhomme (known as St. Anne Prudhomme), in 1843.⁴ It was during his ownership that the current house was rebuilt on the old homestead sight, probably upon the existing foundations.
 - e. Although, Gabriel Prudhomme donated sections of his land to his two older sons in 1857, it is not until 1879, after the death of his wife, Marie Aglae Prudhomme, that the land is divided up among the three sons.⁵
 - f. Apparently, it was the youngest son Ailhaud who was given the former Coincoin tract. In the early twentieth century, he leaves the land to his son Dr. Joseph Prudhomme, who in 1946 leaves the land to his son J.E. Prudhomme.⁶
4. Builder: The original house and the later house were both probably built with slave labor.
 5. Original plans and construction: The original plan of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was an asymmetrical two-cell Norman plan comprised of a salle (the larger room) and a chamber (the smaller room). To the rear of the two-cell base module, a full-length gallery was enclosed on each side with a cabinet room, with the space between the cabinets forming the loggia. In the front of the house, the roofline extended out over a full-length gallery, and in the rear, over the two cabinet rooms and the loggia.
 6. Alterations and additions: During an early renovation of the house, the rear loggia was enclosed using colombage framing filled with bousillage; this was a common way of increasing livable space in a dwelling of this type. During a twentieth-century renovation, lean-to shed roof additions were added on the northeast, southeast, and southwest façades, and the entire roof was covered with corrugated steel. None of the window sashes are original to the house, and in several of the window openings, the windows are either missing, or turned on their side. Originally there were shutters on at least the cabinet rooms, which were taken down and are

³ Ibid, Book 10, 42.

⁴ Ibid, Book 30, 98.

⁵ Ibid, Book 30, 227-230, and, Book 74, 32.

⁶ See, Louis R. Nardini, "By Local Historian and Author," *The Natchitoches Times*, 22 October 1972.

currently stored within the house.⁷ The rear cabinet door on the northeast façade was originally a window, as was the northeast exterior door in the chamber. Because underneath a loose plank of siding on the front façade the bousillage and post studs are covered with plaster, it is probable that at least the front and rear had an exposed bousillage façade that was rendered with plaster. Although they are fastened with the same nails as the rest of the house, it is probable that the current exterior siding was a slightly later addition.

B. Historical Context:⁸

The Coincoin-Prudhomme House is a one-and-half-story raised Creole plantation house with an asymmetrical two-cell Norman plan comprised of a *salle* (the larger room) and a chamber (the smaller room). The house is built with colombage framing set into a sill that is raised roughly 3' from the ground and infilled with bousillage. The house has asymmetrical bays, very little decoration, and its roof is framed using a Norman truss system with double rafters above both the front and rear load-bearing exterior walls. Upon a rudimentary survey, the house appears to be contemporary to the late 1790s or early 1800s. Yet, upon a closer analysis of its hardware, and by looking at extant examples of buildings from its supposed date of construction, it appears that the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was either rebuilt upon the foundations (possibly using the walls) of the earlier Marie Therese House, or it was an entirely new building constructed by the Prudhomme's on the footprint of the old house during the middle-antebellum era after they purchased the land from Marie Therese Coincoin. With the establishment of a construction date for the building, the Coincoin-Prudhomme House can be placed within its context and so serve as one more extant resource for research on Louisiana's plantation architecture.

The small town of Natchitoches in the central part of Louisiana is the oldest permanent settlement in Louisiana Purchase territory. Although founded in 1714 by Louis Juchereau de St. Denis to serve as a military outpost for the French Territory of Louisiana, the town of Natchitoches grew largely in accordance with its relationship to plantation slavery. Most slaves in French Louisiana were shipped directly from Africa, although some were transplanted from the West Indies. Of a total of 5,951 slaves imported directly from Africa to Louisiana, only 190 came after 1731.⁹ Thus there was a slave shortage in

⁷ The ghostmarks from the shutters is easily seen on the southwestern façade cabinet room.

⁸ Although the following essay deals mostly with dating the Coincoin-Prudhomme House, that is not its ultimate ambition. Hopefully, this study will help dispel certain myths about the "Creole" built environment, thereby creating a clearer documentary foundation for scholarly research on the Cane River's "Creole" culture. Furthermore, now that a realistic date for the house has been determined, it can serve as one more extant resource for research on Louisiana's plantation architecture.

⁹ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "Death and Revolt," in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1999) XI, 15.

early Louisiana, and therefore, the plantation economy developed rather slowly during the French era.

At the close of the Seven Years' War, all of the Louisiana territory was ceded from Louis XV to his cousin, Charles III of Spain. It was during the Spanish era that the African slave trade was reopened, and the aging Louisiana slave population was replenished with new bound laborers from West Africa, which created the necessary material conditions for the plantation system to grow. In Natchitoches, it was during the Spanish era that the plantation economy supplanted the frontier exchange economy, and a whole new set of social relations and discourses transformed the rural countryside into a thriving plantation landscape. As opposed to the French, the Spanish engendered some slaves with a realistic opportunity for manumission without the need for gratuitous emancipation.¹⁰ Although not officially a law, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Alejandro O'Reilly, introduced the *coartacion* policy in 1769, which stated that slaves with untarnished reputations could purchase their own freedom, and furthermore, if their owners allowed it, they could pay with installments. Some scholars have argued that the Spanish deliberately organized a three-class system in the colonies to keep any one group from gaining too much power; hence, a class of free people of color could offset the possibility of the planters revolting against the crown, and at the same time, a property owning free class of African Americans would have a stake in the economy and would therefore, align with the white planters during slave revolts.¹¹

During the Spanish era in Natchitoches, a small but influential class of former-slaves was able to secure land and form plantations south of the town in an area known as the Isle Brevelle. Although there were a half-dozen or so freed slaves in Natchitoches at the time of her manumission in the early 1780s, it was the former slave, Marie Therese Coincoin and later her children, who first made the transition from slaves to slaveholders. Although her manumission and her success as a plantation owner and slaveholder is often credited to her "determination, loyalty, industry, frugality, and mutual assistance," it seems that while she may very well have employed those personal characteristics, that notion leads to an over determination of social agency afforded to freed slaves, and furthermore, it slights the role of race in regard to dominant discourses within plantation society.¹² It seems more likely that she was able to establish herself as a free person of color who also was a slaveholder because of her intimate relationship with Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer, a French-born merchant who became a wealthy planter, which

¹⁰ Although the *Code Noir* did technically allow manumission, in Louisiana very few slaves were ever awarded their freedom. See, Thomas Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

¹¹ See, Ingersoll, *Mammon...*, and, Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," *Journal of Social History*, 3 (1970): 406-430.

¹² Gary Mills, *The Forgotten People*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1977) 49.

produced ten children. Metoyer helped Coincoin and their children to acquire land and probably, his influence allowed them to remain relatively safe from the other planters' class and race prejudice. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Spanish authorities had some interest in propagating a third social class of colonists. Finally, because Coincoin and Metoyer's children had a mixed heritage, other planters who fathered mixed children had a place to send their offspring instead of keeping them as slaves. Thus, the "Creoles" of Cane River perpetuated a "mixed-blood" identity, which probably originated out of necessity and negotiation rather than pride.

The original Marie Therese Coincoin land-grant appears to have been an eighty arpent tract with land on both the right and left descending banks of what was then the Red River, and what is now known as the Cane River. According to Gary Mills, the above mentioned tract was given to Marie Therese as a gift from Pierre Metoyer at some point between 1786 and 1793, and that her 1794 Spanish land grant was the tract of land directly to the southwest of the plot given to her by Metoyer.¹³ A closer inspection of the Spanish land-grant maps shows that the original eighty-arpent tract was indeed the Spanish land grant awarded to Coincoin, and additionally, the tract to the southwest of the land grant was awarded to Louis Verchaire also in 1794, not to Marie Therese.¹⁴ Therefore, it is certain that Marie Therese Coincoin received a Spanish land grant in 1794, which was located eleven miles down river from the town of Natchitoches, and the land grant included roughly eighty arpents with land on both sides of the river.

The location of the original Marie Therese House has, in the last few decades, been the topic of an intra-parish debate. The two warring factions are divided over the location of the original house, which according to the partisans, must be extant. In general, some believe that the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was the original house, while others argue that the Yucca House at Melrose Plantation was Coincoin's home. Whereas both groups have posed thoughtful arguments to defend their wishes, it appears, based on careful fieldwork, that the original house is no longer standing intact.¹⁵

A common practice among French and Spanish surveyors was to render actual buildings on the properties they documented with small sketches. On the 1794 land-grant map, on the land map designated as the property of "*marie Therese negress libre*," there is a small four line sketch of a house labeled the

¹³ Ibid, 28-34, and maps following page 54.

¹⁴ See, Map Collection, Land Plats of Natchitoches and Its Environs, 1793-1801, map 1, 4, 6, 7, 15, and 24. (State Land Office, Baton Rouge).

¹⁵ For the notion that the Coincoin-Prudhomme House is the original Marie Therese House, see, Louis R. Nardini, "By Local Historian and Author," *The Natchitoches Times*, 22 October 1972, Dayna Bowker Lee, "Cane River Community," *Creole Chronicles*, 1 (2001), and *National Register for Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form*, for Maison de Marie Therese. For those who believe Marie Therese Coincoin's House is the Yucca House, see, Mills, *Forgotten People...*, 69.

“*masion de marie Therese.*” After taking a global positioning system (GPS) reading of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House, and then recording the coordinates on a topographical map, it appeared that the extant house was in the identical space as the Maison de Marie Therese. This estimate was confirmed after the 1794 map was superimposed over the topographical map, and the point of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was in almost the exact same spot as the drawing of the original house. Because of the very small degree of error for GPS readings, it seems extremely probable that the Coincoin-Prudhomme House is on the footprint, and possibly on the foundations, of the original Maison de Marie Therese.

After determining that the extant house was indeed on the same site as Marie Therese’s original dwelling house, the next step was to resolve how much of the house was original. The most probable fragment left from the original house would be the brick piers that raise the house. The problem with the piers being part of the original house is that, based on surviving examples, plantation houses on the Cane River in the late eighteenth century tended to have the structural posts simply buried in the ground, or attached to an earthbound sill.¹⁶ Although some buildings incorporated a slight raise to support sill and girders while the vertical posts were still placed in the ground, the 3’ raise at the Coincoin-Prudhomme house would be too high to use that technique. Yet, according to Carolyn Wells, during the last few years of the eighteenth century, some houses did incorporate a raised sill.¹⁷

The walls of the house also appear to be new. Because the vertical posts that form the framing have a somewhat consistent length between them, and at the doors and windows that space is widened, it appears that the doors and windows were original to the framing. Above the window in the *salle* on the southwest façade, the small post that connects the lintel of the window to the wall plate to hold the bousillage in place, is held with a “type 6” machine-made nail.¹⁸ This was determined because the nail was cross-grained, face-pinched, and had burrs on the same face. These nails were used in Louisiana between 1828 and 1847. The only way the nail could have been used in an eighteenth-century renovation, would be if the entire section of the wall was knocked out and replaced, which would serve no conceivable function. Even if all the window and door framing was replaced, there would be no need to tear down the individual sections of the wall. Also, it seems that if that was done, it would be readily visible on the exposed bousillage in the interior. Another architectural fragment that tends to dispel the notion that the walls are original, is the chair rail and baseboards. Because the chair rail and baseboard

¹⁶ See, the Roque House for an example of a post-in-ground building, and, for an example of a post-in-mudsill, see the Yucca House. See also, Carolyn McConnell Wells, “Domestic Architecture of Colonial Natchitoches,” master’s thesis, Northwestern Louisiana State University, 1973.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ For nail terminology, refer to Jay D. Edwards, and Tom Wells, *Historic Louisiana Nails Aids to the Dating of Old Buildings*, Baton Rouge: Geoscience Publications, 1993) 54.

were needed to keep furniture from damaging the bousillage, and because they are held to the wall with machine-made finishing nails from the same era as the post nail, it appears that the walls, the exterior openings, and the chair rail and baseboard were all built at the same time. Thus it seems unlikely that the walls are original.

Another characteristic of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House that several astute researchers noticed as a colonial-era characteristic is the roof framing's Norman king post and double rafter system with a heavy roof ridge that runs from the front of the house to the rear. Although this roof type, which was originally used by professional builders and engineers on the early colonial government and ecclesiastical buildings, was seldom used after the middle eighteenth century, there are at least two other extant examples of this roof type in Louisiana that were built in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Furthermore, type six nails (ca. 1828-1847) were found holding the roof framing together. These nails are original to the roof because they fasten all the beams, rafters, purlins, and vertical posts; thus, it would be impossible to add the nails to the diagonal beams on the truss after the rafters were placed because the space between them is only an inch or so. The roof is not reused because there are no ghostmarks of earlier use, and the roof could not have originally been only constructed with pegging, and mortise and tenon, because the rafters are nailed not notched into the wall plate. Furthermore, the wood used in all the framing is identical. The reason for the archaic roof framing is a mystery. Austerlitz, an 1830's plantation house in Point Coupee Parish has a similar roof, which was designed by a free-man-of-color who was a refugee from Saint Domingue. Although there is no evidence to support the prospect, it is possible that a West Indian refugee also designed the roof of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House. The other possible explanation is that the builders of the new house simply copied the roof framing from the old house. Because the nails which held the strap-hinges on the old cabinet shutters have handmade heads on machine made nails (ca. 1791-1818), it is possible that they were reused from the original Marie Therese House, which would mean that at the time of construction on the new building, the old building was at least partially standing. Thus, it is likely that the new builders studied the original house and reused some of its parts.

The mystery of why the house faces northwest instead of toward the river, like all the other Cane River plantation houses, is also explainable once the house is properly dated. The Coincoin-Prudhomme House was built by the Prudhommes who had inherited the original Ailhaud St. Anne land. The St. Anne plantation, which is the tract of land on the northwest border of the initial Coincoin land grant, was the site of the original St. Anne plantation house, which served, until the 1850s when Cedar Bend plantation house was

¹⁹ See, Graugnard Farms Plantation House in St. James Parish, and Austerlitz Plantation in Point Coupee Parish.

built, as the family seat for that wing of the Prudhomme family. Based on the placement of the drawing of the *maison de St. Anne* in the 1794 land-grant map, it appears that the Coincoin-Prudhomme House faces the old homestead, which was roughly 150 yards to the northeast.²⁰ This would be consistent with most plantations landscapes where power radiated from the big house and all the other buildings were placed in deferential spaces that faced or were aligned with the center. Thus the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was probably an overseer's house or a garconniere.

In conclusion, the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was probably built on the footprint of the original Maison de Marie Therese, and possibly upon its foundations. The extant house exhibits no material evidence that it is earlier than the middle antebellum era. The plan, hardware, construction method, orientation, and decoration all point to a later date than earlier imagined. Hopefully, now that a realistic date has been deeded to the building, it can now be a useful tool for the study of Louisiana's plantation architecture.

Part 2. Architectural Information

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Coincoin-Prudhomme House is a one-and-half-story raised Creole plantation house with an asymmetrical two-cell Norman plan comprised of a *salle*, the larger room, and a chamber, the smaller room. The House is constructed of *colombage* framing, including both vertical posts and angle-bracing, filled in with *bousillage* laid on lath. A large steeply pitched hipped roof extends roughly 10'-6" beyond the main floor's southern exterior wall creating a full-length gallery that is supported by five chamfered posts. The living space is raised off the ground by roughly 2'-6", with five rows of structural piers, plus two additional square brick supports parallel with the chimney. Almost all the supports are squared brick masonry, except for the northern row of supports, which are mostly made of large unfinished Cypress blocks. A single internal chimney, located between the *salle* and chamber, has two openings. Consistent with most traditional Creole architecture, the Coincoin-Prudhomme House has very little architectural ornamentation. There is, however, one consistent type of molding for both the interior and exterior doorways and windows, which is double-faced with a bead, fascia, a very slightly curved ovolo, and a band.

²⁰ See, Map Collection, Land Plats of Natchitoches and Its Environs, 1793-1801, map 1, 4, Land Office, Baton Rouge).

2. Condition of Fabric: The condition of the house is poor to moderate. Structurally, the house seems sound, but the wood siding, exterior openings, fireplaces, interior woodworking, and interior and exterior painting all need repairs. At present, it appears that the house is in the very early stages of restoration because the shed gallery addition on the eastern and western façades have recently been removed.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Coincoin-Prudhomme House is a one-and-a-half-story building with a Norman two-cell base module floor plan flanked by a set of corner cabinet rooms and an enclosed loggia. The bays are horizontally and vertically asymmetrical. The south façade has four bays, the east and north façades both have three bays, and the west façade has two bays. The length of the house, including the gallery, is 30'-3" long and 30' wide.
2. Foundations: The foundations are made of brick and Cypress piers set into the ground.
3. Walls: All the walls of the house are composed of colombage framing that is filled in with bousillage and covered with horizontal wood siding on the exterior. The wood siding has a small bead and is tongue and grooved together. Like the interior, the exterior walls are painted, although very faded, with bright green, violet, and yellow. There are no walls in the attic.
4. Structural System, Framing: The main floor of the house rests on the load bearing brick masonry and Cypress block supports. The floor framing for the building consists of a large sill that supports the four load bearing exterior walls of the house, which is divided into three sections by two large girders that run the width of the house. The girders lie beneath the front and rear load bearing walls. The beaded ceiling beams in all the rooms, including the beams in the enclosed loggia, run the length of the house and are connected with tenon and mortise joinery into the sill and girders. On the front gallery, two short girders run the length of the house, and the floor joists run the width of the house. On the rear gallery addition, the floor joists are nailed into the sill and run the length of the house. The attic floor framing is identical to the principal floor. The walls are framed using colombage framing with both vertical studs and angle-bracing. The roof framing has a Norman king post and double rafter system with a heavy roof ridge that runs from the front of the house to the rear.²¹ The rafters are held up with a post-supported purlin.

²¹ Unlike the Marie Therese House, most Norman roof truss systems have a roof ridge beam that runs the width of the house and rafters that are pegged into the front and rear wall plates.

5. Stairways: The one staircase is centrally located, leading up to the gallery level on the south (front) façade of the house. It is a single run stair that is utilitarian in finish and constructed of commercial-grade wood lumber. The risers are 6 ½'' high and the treads are 9 ½'' wide. There is a simple wood rail to each side of the staircase.
6. Chimneys: The chimney extends roughly two feet beyond the exterior roof and is located at the center of the roof ridge on the eastern façade.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The building has five external doorways. All the molding for both the windows and doorways are double-faced with a bead, fascia, a very slightly curved ovolo, and a band.²² On the northwest façade there are two exterior doorways. On the doorway that leads into the salle, the inward-opening door has two wood panels below two large rectangular lights. The doors fit into a simple wood doorframe made with commercial-grade wood lumber, which is in turn nailed into the original decorative door surround. The doorway that leads into the chamber has a door that opens outward composed of vertical commercial-grade lumber nailed together and braced with horizontal planks, and the other door is a prefabricated screen door that opens inwardly. Similar to the door opening into the salle, the chamber doors fit into a simple wood doorframe made with commercial-grade wood lumber and the simple door surround is nailed into the original decorative door surround. There are two doorways on the northeast façade. The doorway that leads into the chamber has a door that opens outward composed of vertical commercial-grade lumber nailed together and braced with horizontal planks, and the other door is a prefabricated screen door that opens inwardly. The door fits into a simple wood doorframe made with commercial-grade wood lumber. The simple door surround is nailed into the original decorative door surround. The doorway that leads into the northeast cabinet room has a double-paneled door that opens inward. The door is fit into a simple wood doorframe made with commercial-grade wood lumber. The door surround is made of a single-face of commercial-grade lumber. There is one doorway on the southeast façade. The six-paneled door opens outward and is set into a wood doorframe. The door surround is made of a single-face of commercial-grade lumber.

²² See Architectural Character section.

- b. Windows: There are seven windows on the building. On the northwest façade, there are two window openings, which are both covered with wood boards. The openings have the original decorative molding.²³ There is one window opening on the southwest façade that is covered with shutters. The window opening has the original decorative molding. On the southeast façade there are two windows openings in the former loggia. The northeastern window opening has a double-sash window with a single light in each sash. The window is covered with a screen that is nailed over the opening. The window surround has a single-faced surround composed of commercial-grade lumber. The southwestern window opening has a double-sash window with four-over-four-lights. Because the window is placed into the opening sideways, it appears that the window was reused. The window opening has a single-faced surround composed of commercial-grade lumber. On the southwestern façade there are two windows. The window in the salle, has a double-sash with four-over-four-lights. The window is placed into a simple frame that is nailed into the original decorative molding. The lower sash is covered with a screen that is nailed into the framing. The window that opens into the southwest cabinet has a double-sash with four-over-four lights, and is placed into a simple frame that is nailed into the original decorative molding.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, Covering: The roof is a hipped roof with a steep pitch, and is covered with corrugated steel roofing.
- b. Cornice, Eaves: There is no cornice. The eaves are roughly a 1' wide on both the front and on the shed additions.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Main Floor: The Coincoin-Prudhomme is a raised Creole plantation house with an asymmetrical two-cell Norman plan comprised of a salle (the larger room) and a chamber (the smaller room). To the rear of the Norman base module, there is a loggia that is now enclosed, and two corner cabinet rooms. The front of the house has an open gallery that is shaded by the extended roof.

²³ Ibid.

On the rear of the house, there is a gallery addition, which, at one point, wrapped around the house and connected to the gallery.

- c. Attic: The attic has an open plan with timber plank floorboards, and an exposed chimney shaft.
 - d. Gallery: There is a front gallery with five hand-hewn chamfered posts supporting the edge of the roofline. On the rear, there is a gallery that is underneath the lean-to shed roof addition. Although not original to the house, there was, until recently, a gallery and cabinet rooms underneath the east and west shed additions.
2. Stairways: There are no interior stairways.
 3. Flooring: The interior floorboards appear original. They are made of wood and are between 5'' and 7'' wide and tongue and grooved together.
 4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The interior walls are bousillage rendered with plaster and painted. In many areas the plaster and paint have deteriorated and the bousillage and posts are exposed.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All the doors, door surrounds, and door framing were constructed with wood. The window and door moldings are all the same.²⁴ In the salle, there is a door with moldings that opens onto the gallery, a window on the southwestern exterior wall, an open doorway that leads to the loggia, and an interior doorway that leads to the chamber. The chamber has a door that opens onto the gallery, a door (which was originally a window opening) that opened onto the northeastern side-gallery addition (now torn down), and a window on the northeastern exterior wall. The loggia has an open doorway that leads to the salle, two doors that lead into the corner cabinet rooms, and an exterior door that leads to the rear gallery addition.
 - b. Windows: All the windows in the house have wood sills, jambs, and lintels. There are seven windows on the building. On the northwestern façade, there are two window openings with the decorative moldings, which are both covered with wood boards.²⁵ There is one window opening on the northeast façade, with decorative moldings, that is covered with shutters. The window opening has the original decorative molding. On the southeast

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

façade there are two windows openings in the former loggia. The northeast window opening in the former loggia has a double-sash window with a single light in each sash. The window surround has a single-faced surround composed of commercial-grade lumber. The southwestern window opening in the former loggia has a double-sash window with four-over-four-lights. Because the window is placed into the opening sideways, it appears that window was reused. The window opening has a single-faced surround composed of commercial-grade lumber. On the southwestern façade there are two windows. The window in the salle, has a double-sash with four-over-four-lights. The window is placed into a simple frame that is nailed into the original decorative molding. The lower sash is covered with a screen that is nailed into the framing. The window that opens into the southwest cabinet has a double-sash with four-over-four lights, and is placed into a simple frame that is nailed into the original decorative molding.

6. Decorative Features: As noted above, all the exposed ceiling beams in the house have a single bead on each side of the beam. Likewise, the randomly sized exterior siding has a single bead on the top of each plank, and a single bead molding that runs vertically from the sill to the plate on each of the buildings four corners. The posts that hold up the edge of the roofline on the gallery are chamfered at the top and at the bottom. Double-faced chairrails, with a bead, fascia, a backband, a fascia, and a bead, are located on the front gallery, the former loggia, and in the salle and chamber.²⁶ On the interior walls in each room of the building, there is a single-beaded baseboard. There are two decorative fireplaces in the salle and chamber. The salle fireplace has a wood mantle with one convex pilaster on each side, and a simple capital and base. The chamber fireplace has a wood mantle with one fluted pilaster on each side capped with a simple capital and supported with a typical base. In both rooms, the area above the pilasters has various moldings that roughly form a full entablature, with a very large fascia as the freeze. In the chamber, there is a wood mantelpiece. In both rooms, the hearth was once brick, but is now dirt.
7. Hardware: All the framing, moldings, siding, baseboards, chair rails, flooring, and exterior gallery posts have, using the terminology from *Historic Louisiana Nails*, type 6 (ca. 1828-1847) nails. The nails from these samples all have cross-grained shafts, face-pinching, and same face burrs. The screws that hold the door hinges to the wall also are from the same era as the nails. There are also a few type 3 (ca. 1791-1818) nails in the shutters, which are probably reused.

²⁶ The chair rail, moldings, and baseboards are original to the house, and predate the siding.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating: The fireplace is the only heating system.
- b. Plumbing: The house has running water.
- c. Electric: The house has electricity.

D. Site:

1. Historical Landscape Design: The original Marie Therese House was the central residence on a small but productive plantation owned by the freed-slave Marie Therese House, and worked by her slaves. It appears that there were she farmed indigo, tobacco, and later cotton.²⁷ It is likely, that the Prudhomme's used the land surrounding the house for cotton production.
2. Outbuildings: According to the sale of land from Marie Therese Coincoin to Ailhaud St. Anne, the original Marie Therese House was surrounded by various outbuildings.²⁸ When the Prudhomme's owned the site, the house was one of a series of lesser plantation buildings situated on an axis that designated power, with the big house being the center. Currently, there is one twentieth-century wood shed, and a permanently parked mobile home on the site.

Part 3. Sources of Information

A. Bibliography

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

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National Register for Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, for Maison de Marie Therese.

Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Records, Book 3, 10, 30, and 74.

²⁷ Mills, *Forgotten People...*, 28-49.

²⁸ Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Records, Book 3, 522-523.

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Part 4. Project Information

This recording project was sponsored jointly by the Cane River National Heritage Area, Nancy I.M. Morgan, Executive Director, and the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Laura Soulierre, Superintendent, together with the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record division of the National Park Service. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), E. Blaine Cliver, Chief of HABS/HAER, under the direction of Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS, Robert R. Arzola, HABS Architect, and Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS Senior Historian. Oversight of the historical component was provided by Virginia B. Price, HABS Historian. The project was completed during the summer of 2001 and was headquartered at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. The field supervisor was Caroline E. Wright (Tulane University); she was assisted in the field by architectural technicians Edward A. Pillsbury (Virginia Tech), Katalin Maksay (ICOMOS/Romania), and Maciej Gruszecki (ICOMOS/Poland). The project historian was Jon Lamar Wilson (University of Mississippi).

