

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

APR 17 1986
MAY 15 1986

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic G. B. Cooley House

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 1011 South Grand Street N/A not for publication

city, town Monroe N/A vicinity of

state LA code 22 ~~state~~ parish Ouachita code 073

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial (law <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational (office) <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Neal G. Johnson and Jerry L. Jones

street & number 1011 South Grand

city, town Monroe N/A vicinity of state LA 71201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ouachita Parish Courthouse

street & number 300 St. John P. O. Box 1862

city, town Monroe state LA 71201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA 70804

7. Description

Condition
 excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair unexposed

Check one
 unaltered
 altered

Check one
 original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cooley House is a fourteen room, brick and stucco, Prairie Style residence located next to the Ouachita River in the old residential section of Monroe. A design for the house was exhibited as early as 1910; however, it was not executed until 1926. The house and its matching garage have only been slightly altered over the years.

Some comment is required regarding the disparity between the date of the design and the actual date of construction. It is known that a design for a G. B. Cooley House in Monroe was exhibited at the Chicago Architectural Club in 1910, that Cooley acquired the property in question in 1924-25, and that the present house and garage appear on a 1926 Sanborn map. The reason for the time lapse is a mystery. One local story has it that Cooley commissioned the design, but waited until he had amassed enough money to execute it.

Most Prairie Style houses are planned around a primary axis and a major secondary axis. But the plan of the Cooley House is so linear that there is really only one axis--i.e., from front to rear. The plan is anchored by a two story living room with a massive free-standing fireplace at the back. In front of the living room are a couple of small rooms, one upstairs and one down. The upstairs room can only be reached by narrow balconies which run either side of the upper part of the living room. Behind the living room is a somewhat higher two story block which contains bedrooms upstairs and a dining room, study, and stair hall downstairs. Further to the rear is a lower two story wing which contains the kitchen area. In front of the house is an oblong reflecting pool which continues the dominant front-rear axis of the house into the garden. The pool has a decorative brick surround.

The massing of the Cooley House consists of a central two story block with slightly lower two story front and rear wings. All parts of the house are set under broad low pitched roofs which extend two to three feet beyond the exterior walls. These roofs cast heavy shadows which emphasize the horizontal massing of the design. Horizontal feeling is also given by the squat chimneys, the low brick walls encompassing the terraces, and the numerous bands of casement windows. The house does feature one vertical element--the stucco piers which separate the windows. This represents more vertical articulation than most Prairie Style houses have. All the windows are ornamented with screens of Japanese-inspired fretwork. The thirty degree angle used in some of the fret members echoes the roofline of the house. This fretwork style is echoed in the two lamp standards located at each of the major entrances.

The interiors are fairly regular and contained, but there is some interpenetration of spaces (principally between the living room and the dining room). The rooms feature light colored walls with Japanese-inspired dark wood strips which emphasize the architectural members. Unlike some Prairie Style houses, the Cooley House does not have wood accents which attempt to contradict the shapes of the rooms. The two story living room and most of the bedrooms have pitched ceilings to follow the pitched roof of the house. The fireplace features a pronounced two-sided fire hood with a vigorous geometrical surround. On each side of the flue is a recessed niche designed for sculptural display. The house retains most of its original illumination, including recessed lighting in the living room and fretwork sconces in other rooms. There is also an original built-in vacuum cleaning system.

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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received
date entered

Continuation sheet G. B. Cooley House

Item number 7

Page 1

7. Description (cont'd) Ouachita Parish, LA

To the rear of the property is a matching Prairie Style garage which is linked to the house by a low brick wall. This, of course, is listed as a contributing element.

Alterations

Since construction, a few extra ceiling lights have been added and a tertiary bedroom has been fitted with ceiling tile and plywood paneling. Also, a covered walkway leading from the kitchen to the garage has been added. The garage has been fitted with a new front door and its interior has been reworked for a law library. In our view, these changes should be regarded as minor. There is certainly no question of integrity loss.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1910; 1926 **Builder/Architect** Builder; G. B. Cooley
Architect; Walter Burley Griffin

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C

The Cooley House is of state level significance in the area of architecture because it is Louisiana's only known Prairie Style house, and indeed one of very few ever built in the South. In addition, it is the work of Walter Burley Griffin, an internationally known Prairie School architect.

The Prairie Style is an important architectural phenomenon for the United States because it was largely a homegrown product. It is one of relatively few instances in which American architecture did not simply reflect European trends. The Cooley House is, of course, very much a part of the Prairie School phenomenon. When it was designed, the drawings were exhibited by the Chicago Architectural Club, which was at that time something of a forum for progressive architecture. The Cooley House is believed to be Louisiana's only true Prairie Style house, and it is one of very few ever built in the South.

Scholarly assessments differ as to Griffin's importance in the Modernist Movement. Some declare that he was merely an expert practitioner of other peoples' concepts, while others assert that he contributed to the development of the Prairie Style while an associate of Frank Lloyd Wright (1902-1906). Wright is generally acknowledged as the single most important figure in the Prairie School, and Griffin is usually thought of as one of a small coterie of designers who were important but on the "second rung." It is well known that Griffin did not merely "sit at the feet of the master." He developed his own mode of the Prairie Style (as can be seen at the Cooley House) and ultimately evolved his own style totally apart from the Prairie School. Instead of "breaking up the box" and reaching out into the garden as Wright would have done, Griffin increasingly sought a closed mass with four monumental facades. In his mature style he drew the mass of a house together in what one scholar has called a "tall prism."

As his career developed, Griffin became better known as a land planner than as an architect, although he continued to design individual buildings to the end of his life. His most important work was the design for the new Australian capital of Canberra. In 1912 he won an international competition for planning the new town, a feat which brought him tremendous publicity in the United States. It also took him to Australia, where he practiced for many years.

Griffin's stature as a major Prairie Style architect is beyond doubt. He is the subject of at least two books himself and is featured prominently in numerous scholarly works on the Prairie Style. For example, in H. Allen Brooks' The Prairie Style, which is regarded as the standard book on the subject, Griffin has almost a page-and-a-half of citations in the index. In addition, he is important enough to be mentioned in general works such as Marcus Whiffen's American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles. The Cooley House is most likely the only example of his work in the South.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property @ 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Monroe South, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 15 583240 3595180
Zone Easting Northing

B [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
Zone Easting Northing

C [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

D [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

E [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

F [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

G [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

H [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundary lines follow property lines of the two lots on which the house and garage stand, said lots being legally described as Lots D and E of Layton's First Addition to the City of Monroe. See enclosed map for lot dimensions.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff
Division of Historic Preservation ASSISTED BY OWNER

organization State of Louisiana date February 1986

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 922-0358

city or town Baton Rouge state LA 70804

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Robert B. DeBlieux*
Robert B. DeBlieux date March 27, 1986

title State Historic Preservation Officer

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Allous Ryan
Keeper of the National Register Entered in ~~1986~~ National Register date 5-15-86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet G. B. Cooley House Item number 9 Page 1

Ouachita Parish, LA

9. Bibliography

Birrell, James. Walter Burley Griffin. University of Queensland Press, 1964.

Book of the Twenty Third Annual Exhibition of the Chicago Architectural Club, 1910.
Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Brooks, H. Allen. Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School. New York: George Braziller, Inc., in association with the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1984.

Brooks, H. Allen. The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries. University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Conveyance Records, Ouachita Parish Courthouse.

Griffin, Walter Burley. Schematic Drawing of G. B. Cooley Dwelling, Monroe, Louisiana (no date, one 8½ x 11 sheet, in possession of owner).

Peisch, Mark L. The Chicago School of Architecture: Early Followers of Sullivan and Wright. New York: Random House, 1964.

Sanborn Insurance Company Map, Monroe, 1926.

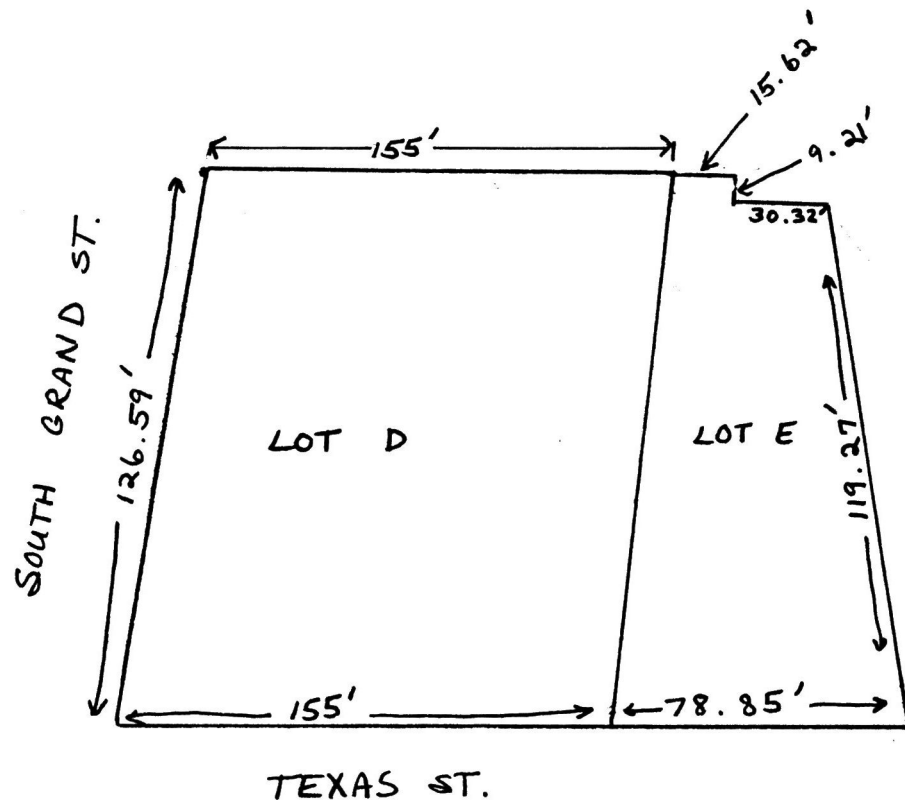
Spencer, Brian A., ed. The Prairie School Tradition: The Prairie Archives of the Milwaukee Art Center. New York: Whitney Library of Design, An Imprint of Watson - Guphill Publications, 1979.

Van Zanten, David T., ed. Walter Burley Griffin: Selected Designs. Palos Park, Illinois: Prairie School Press, 1970.

BOUNDARY MAP

Cooley House
Monroe
Ouachita Parish, LA

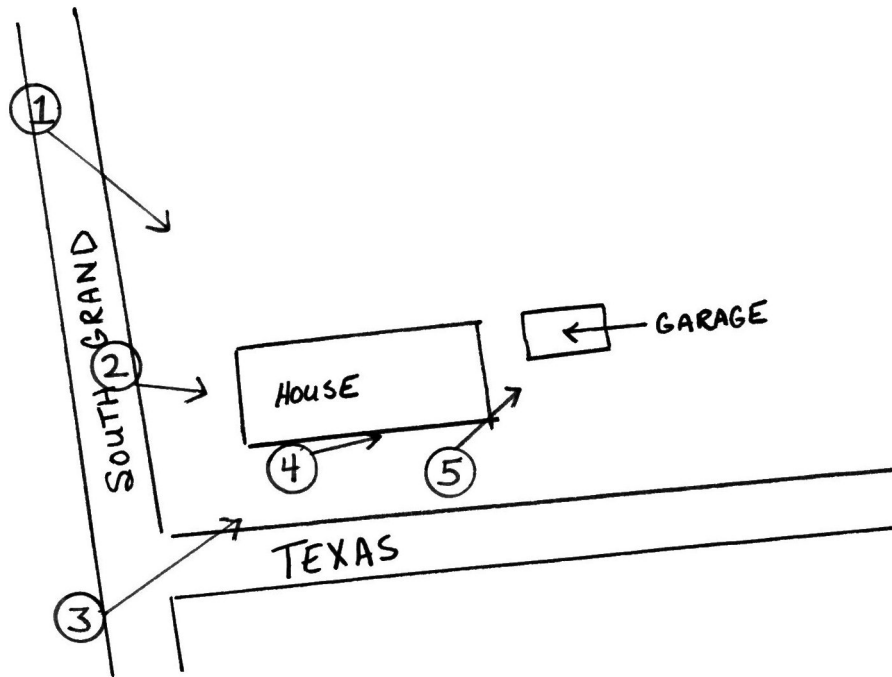
NOT TO SCALE



LOTS D + E OF
LAYTON'S 1ST
ADDITION TO THE
CITY OF MONROE

PHOTO DIRECTION MAP

Cooley House
Monroe
Ouachita Parish, LA



NOT TO SCALE

86001060

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Cooley, G. B., House
Ouachita Parish
LOUISIANA

Working No. APR 17 1986
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/87
Date Due: 5/15/86 - 6/1/86
Action: ACCEPT 5-15-86
 RETURN
 REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

Entered in the
National Register

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____



Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #1
Southeast



Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #2
East



LAW OFFICES OF
NEAL G. JOHNSON
Attorney at Law
JERRY L. JONES
Attorney at Law
JACK HERRING, JR.
Attorney at Law

Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #3
Northeast



Attorney at Law

1011

Cooley House

Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

Jonathan Fricker

LA State Historic Preservation Office

February 1986

Photo #4

East - lamp standard



Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #5
Northeast - contemporaneous garage



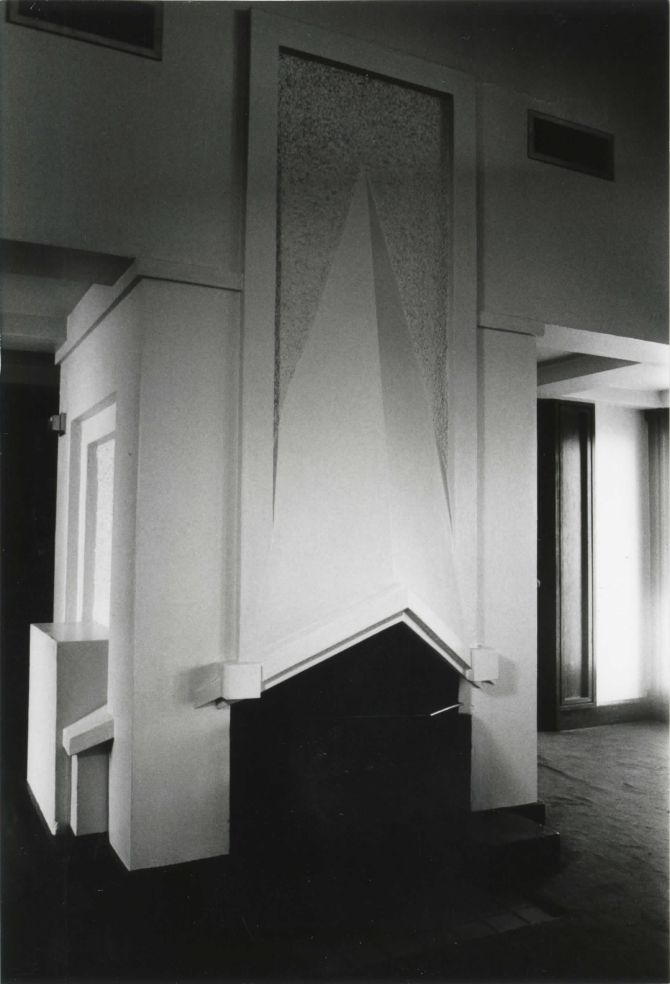
Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #6
Interior View - Living Room



PAT DILLONS



Coolley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #7
Interior View - Upstairs Bedroom



Coolley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #8
Interior View- Living Room Fireplace



Cooley House

Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

Jonathan Fricker

LA State Historic Preservation Office

February 1986

Photo #9

Interior View - Door



Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #10
Window Detail



Cooley House

Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

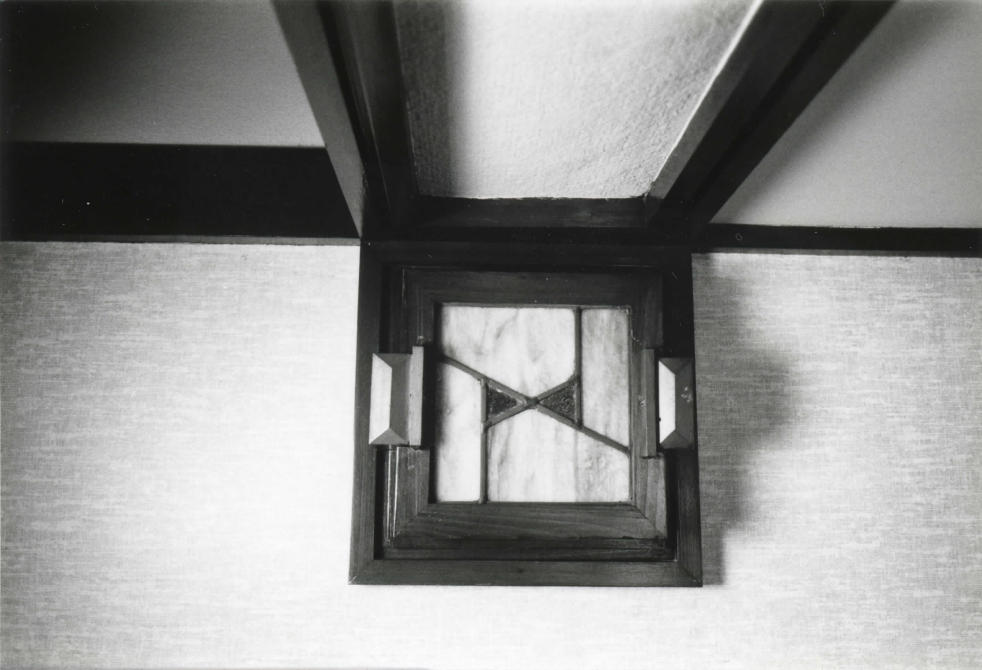
Jonathan Fricker

LA State Historic Preservation Office

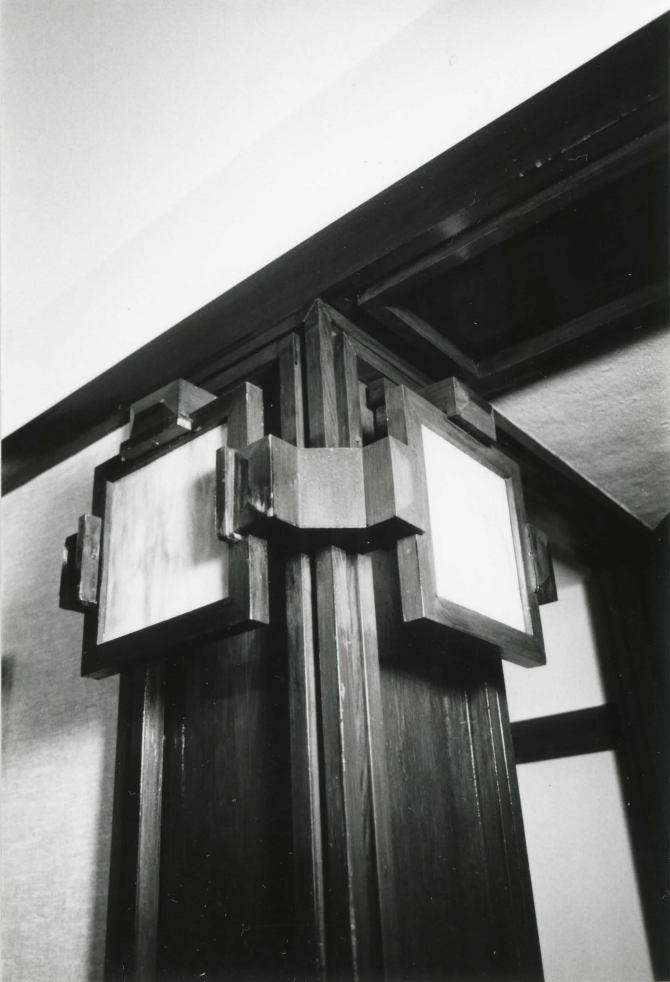
February 1986

Photo #11

Interior View - Upstairs door detail



Cooley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #12
Interior View - original *SCONCE*



Coolley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
Jonathan Fricker
LA State Historic Preservation Office
February 1986
Photo #13
Interior View -- original sconce





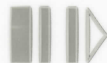
Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

Donna Fricker

March 2009

LA SHPO Digital Archives

Photo # LA_Ouachita Parish - Cooley House - ceal.tif
E/SE





Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Montroe
Ouachita Parish, LA

Donna Fricker

June 2009

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E/NE



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Montroe, Parish, LA

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Photo # LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House-0003.tif
North



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe, Louisiana
Ouachita Parish, LA

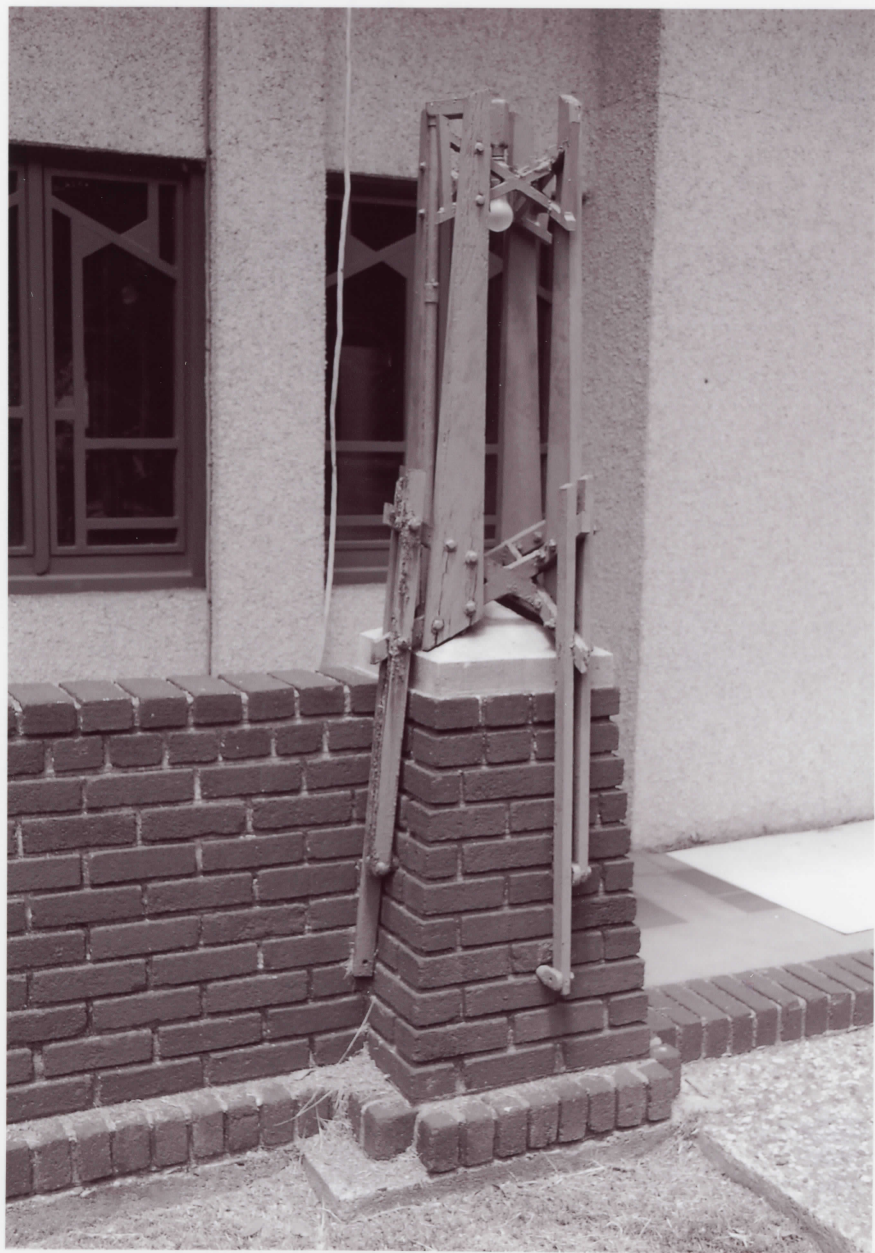
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East



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Morange, Ouachita Parish, LA

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Photo # LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House-0005.tif
North



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe,
Ouachita Parish, LA

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Photo # LA-OuachitaParish-CooleyHouse-0006.tif
North



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

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June 2009

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Photo #: LA-OuachitaParish-Cooley House-0009.tif
Living Room, Interior



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
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Photo #1 LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House-0008.tif
Living Room, Interior



Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

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Photo #: LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House-0009.tif

Living Room, Interior





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Photo # LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House-0010.tif

Staircase screen, Interior





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Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
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June 2009

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Photo # LA-Ouachita Parish - Cooley House - Coll..tif
Door, Interior



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Photo # LA-OuachitaParish-CooleyHouse-0012.tif

Upstairs landing, Interior



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Photo# LA-OuachitaParish-CooleyHouse-0013.tif
Upstairs facade window, Interior



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Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
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Photo # LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House-0014.tif
Upstairs room, Interior



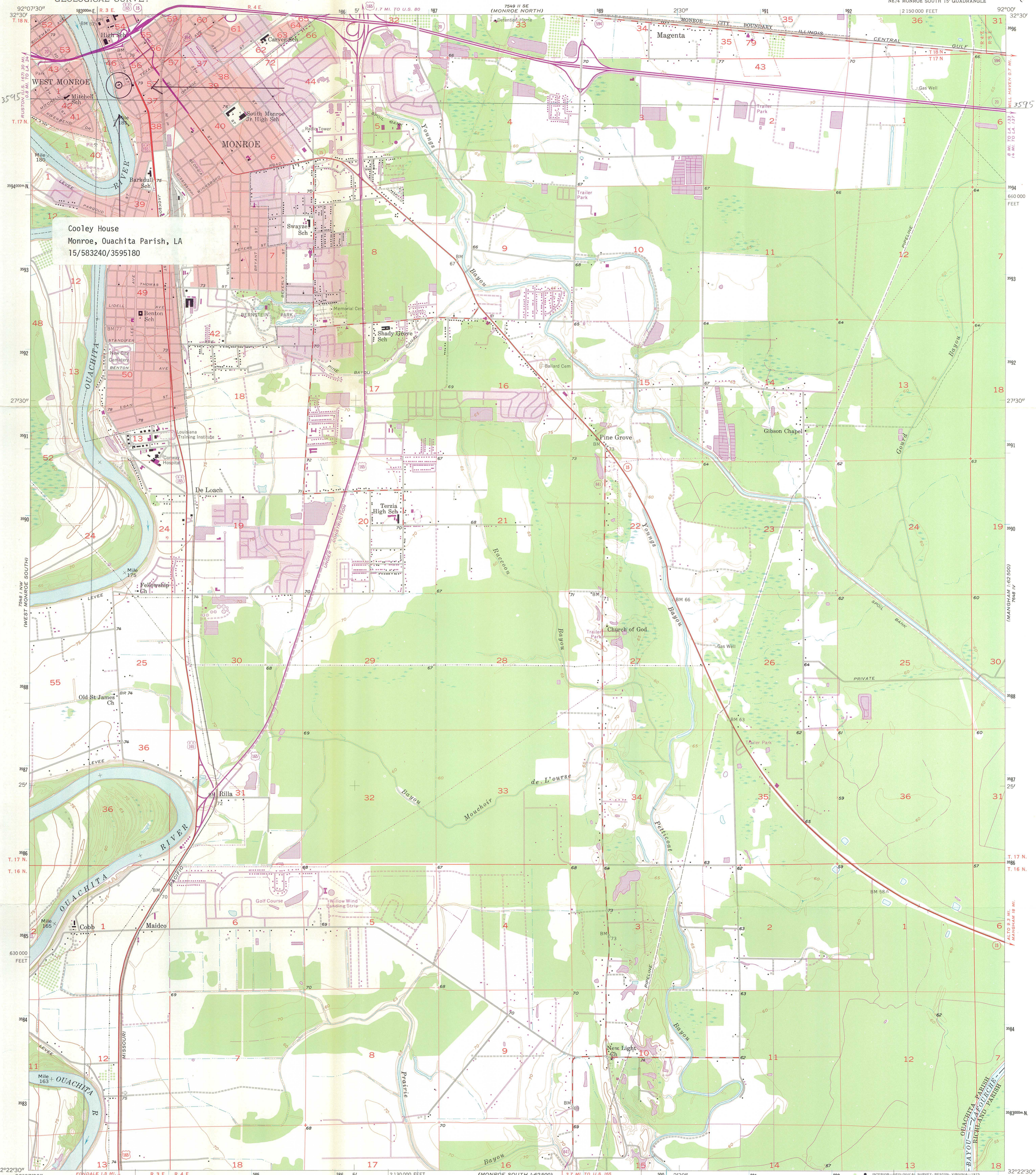
Cooley House Add'l Documentation
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

Donna Fricker

June 2009

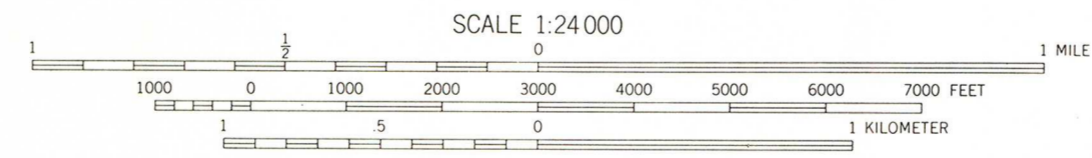
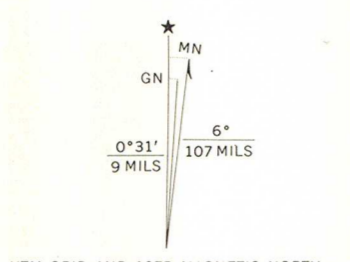
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Photo # LA-Ouachita Parish-Cooley House_0015.tif
Upstairs bathroom, Interior



Coolley House
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA
15/583240/3595180

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and Louisiana Geodetic Survey
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1956. Topography by planetarius surveys 1957
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Louisiana coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with
Louisiana Department of Public Works from aerial photographs
taken 1969 and 1975. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND BY THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

MONROE SOUTH, LA.
NE/4 MONROE SOUTH 15' QUADRANGLE
N 3222.5 - W 9200 / 7.5

1957
PHOTOREVISED 1969 AND 1975
AMS 7548 1 NE-SERIES V885

46B

300



EDWIN W. EDWARDS
GOVERNOR
NOELLE LEBLANC
SECRETARY

State of Louisiana

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

ROBERT B. DEBLIEUX
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 27, 1986

DIVISION OF ARCHAEOLOGY
KATHLEEN BYRD, DIRECTOR

DIVISION OF THE ARTS
ALBERT B. HEAD, DIRECTOR

DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ANN REILEY JONES, DIRECTOR

FOLKLIFE PROGRAM
NICHOLAS R. SPITZER,
PROGRAM MANAGER

Chief of Registration
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1100 L Street N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Sir:

Enclosed please find the completed and signed nomination forms, along with maps and photographs, of the following properties:

Walker House, Orleans Parish
National American Bank Building, Orleans Parish
Alexandria Hall, Louisiana College, Rapides Parish
Cooley House, Ouachita Parish

If any additional information is required, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

Robert B. DeBlieux
State Historic Preservation Officer

RBD/DF/bc

Enclosures

Rec'd

APR 17 1986

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY Cooley, G.B., House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, Ouachita

DATE RECEIVED: 09/17/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/30/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 86001060

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 10/22/2009 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached comments

RECOM./CRITERIA *Return*

REVIEWER _____

DISCIPLINE _____

Phone _____

Date _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments *Y* see attached SLR Y/N

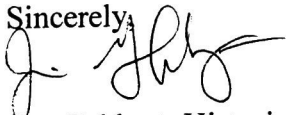
If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

House. Does documentation address the intended setting of the 1908 design? Does it compare to the 1925 fruition of the design?. Was the house sited (in 1925) in an urban environment as it is today? Or has development encroached on its surroundings?

A source not in the bibliography is Christopher Vernon, who wrote about Griffin as a landscape architect and about his work in Asia and Australia.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this nomination and hope that you find these comments useful. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (202) 354-2275 or email at <James_Gabbert@nps.gov>.

Sincerely,



Jim Gabbert, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
11/03/08

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**National Register of Historic Places Additional Documentation
Cooley House, Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA**

Part 3 State Certification

As the designated authority under the National historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally.



3-29-10

Signature of Certifying Official
Phil Boggan, Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Date

Title **Cooley House Additional Documentation**

Prepared by Donna Fricker,
Fricker Historic Preservation Services, LLC

Part 8

Applicable National Register Criteria: **C**
Area of Significance: **Architecture**
Period of Significance: **1925**

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The G. B. Cooley House in Monroe, Louisiana was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 at the state level of significance. The purpose of this submission is to raise the level of significance to national.

SUMMARY

The G. B. Cooley House is nationally significant under Criterion C because it is an important work of one of the nation's most important Prairie Style architects, Walter Burley Griffin. It is a major commission among his Prairie School houses and exhibits many of the distinctive hallmarks of his personal interpretation of the style. It is particularly notable for its singular (within the body of Griffin's work) two-story living room and its intricate, abstract window designs.

It is generally conceded that American architecture on the whole has been largely derivative, looking to Europe for inspiration. There are only a few notable exceptions – distinctly American styles or building types – American contributions to world architecture. Some are vernacular and some reflect engineering or business needs (such as skyscrapers). If one considers architecture as art – high style buildings – the exceptions are even fewer. Among this small elite group is the Prairie Style (1900-1914). Prairie School architects designed houses, principally in the Midwest, that looked radically different from the prevailing norm of European-derived historic revival styles.

Frank Lloyd Wright is the name most closely associated, indeed synonymous, with the Prairie Style. Griffin, who worked at Wright's Oak Park Studio from 1901-06, is considered by Prairie School scholars to be among a small number of other architects who were masters of the style. Indeed, some scholars consider him second only to Wright (no small achievement) for his contributions to the Prairie Style. And, importantly, Griffin was recognized as a major Prairie architect at the time. In a short American career of 13 to 14 years, Griffin produced some 130 designs (about half of which were built). In May 1912, he won an international competition to design a capital for the newly federated nation of Australia. He practiced architecture in that country for almost two decades and is considered the "father of modern Australian architecture."

THE PRAIRIE STYLE

In the first year of the twentieth century a young unknown architect named Frank Lloyd Wright created a new American house style. In that year he produced four designs in what would later come to be known as the Prairie Style. The *Ladies Home Journal* commissioned two of the houses (never constructed) and published them the following year (1901), entitling one "A Home in a Prairie Town." Wright's other two designs, the Hickox and Bradley houses in Kankakee, Illinois, were built in 1900. They have the broad overhanging eaves of the mature Prairie Style but lack the

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horizontal, "hugging the prairies" qualities of the same. And they have gabled roofs rather than the low hip roofs of his later houses. One year later, in 1901, with the construction of the Ward Willits House in Highland Park, Illinois, Wright's new style had emerged with its now iconic elements. Walter Burley Griffin was not far behind. The design for his first Prairie Style house, built for William H. Emery, dates to 1901-02.

These "radical" new houses were on the whole horizontal expressions. With their long and broad overhanging roofs, they hugged the ground tightly. Roofs were generally hipped, although Griffin's Prairie houses are almost to a man gable-roofed. Eaves were particularly conspicuous, typically extending two or three feet ("powerful eaves," to quote Prairie School scholar Mark L. Peisch). The dominant horizontal line was reinforced with bands of windows (often of the casement type) and a pronounced ("emphatic," to quote H. Allen Brooks) belt course or shelf roof between the stories. "Against these horizontals," writes Brooks, "a spirited interplay was established with short vertical accents, such as piers, mullions and subsidiary masses. Every feature of the building was clear, precise and angular." Wright's Prairie houses were generally asymmetrical compositions, while Griffin's were typically symmetrical. Secondary features include broad, flat chimneys, the use of contrasting materials, and the use of balconies and terraces.

Wright's Prairie houses "break up the box" with a sophisticated horizontal spatial sequence, as one room flows into another. By contrast, the vertical manipulation of space is a signature of Griffin's Prairie houses. As can be seen at the Cooley House and others, his sophisticated spatial planning is achieved via the penetration of a horizontal composition with a vertical mass.

Several of the most noted among the small band of Prairie School architects worked in Wright's famed Oak Park Studio. Griffin was there from 1901 to 1906 (see Griffin section below). Regardless of where they worked or trained, Prairie School architects looked to professional publications such as *The Western Architect* to disseminate and highlight their work. Of particular importance were the annual exhibition catalogs of the Chicago Architectural Club. Founded in 1885, the group counted among its members most of the city's progressive architectural figures. The work of what was known then as the Chicago School dominated the exhibitions between 1902 and 1916. (Griffin exhibited fourteen designs in 1910, among them the Cooley House.)

In its day the new style was called the Chicago School -- a source of much confusion, for today this term refers to the tall buildings of Chicago built beginning in the 1890s. H. Allen Brooks, in his still definitive *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries* (1972), explores the terminology change in some detail. Another important scholar, Mark L. Peisch, uses the original nomenclature (*The Chicago School of Architecture: Early Followers of Sullivan and Wright*, 1964). Both men did much of their research in the 1950s and were able to interview Wright, other Prairie Style architects, and their clients. (Griffin was not among them. He died in 1937.)

Regardless of terminology, it is clear that the emergence of a new school and its importance was recognized very early by architecture observers and critics. Arthur C. David, in the *Architectural Record* in 1904, wrote of "a group

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of western architects, resident chiefly in Chicago, who are . . . departing from the allegiance to the strict European tradition which prevails in the East." "The number of the protestants is not as yet great," he continued, and they "differ considerably in the extent to which they push their search for an individual vehicle of expression." Some have not gone too far, but "others have become absolutely revolutionary in their ideas . . . They are seeking to make one big jump from a condition of stylistic servitude to that of irreverent and self-assured independence. The radicals among the group are seeking for a rational and consistent basis for American design and ornament. The more conservative are merely seeking to reduce their debt to the European tradition . . ." While David named no names, clearly the early designs of Wright and Griffin referenced above were among the "radical" designs.

Thomas E. Tallmadge in 1908 coined the term "Chicago School" in an article of the same name published in *Architectural Review*. Griffin was among the architects Tallmadge mentioned by name as part of the "little band of enthusiasts who had raised their standard of revolt against the disciplined ranks and array of custom." That same year Frank Lloyd Wright described the emergence of a new school in his paper "In the Cause of Architecture," referring to it as "The New School of the Middle West." Many years later, in 1936, Wright used the less wordy "prairie school." ("Prairie school" or "Prairie style" came into use in the 1950s and '60s, as interest in the school revived. The original "Chicago School" had come by then to equal Chicago architects of tall commercial buildings.)

It is impossible to know how many Prairie School houses were built in the United States. They were confined largely, but not entirely, to the Midwest. And it was a distinct minority of clients who asked for such a house. (The author is not including houses that might be said to partake of the style – for example, a foursquare with broad, overhanging eaves.) More often than not clients were well-educated and well-off. Wright, in particular, was able to design such large houses because of the generous size of his patrons' bank accounts. Griffin's clients, on the whole, were not as wealthy. Most of his houses are medium to fairly small in size. Several were speculatively built.

H. Allen Brooks concluded that the "average [Prairie School] client was largely unaware of what he was getting in terms of architecture." In interviewing owners of Prairie houses, Brooks found that they had often seen a design in a magazine and liked it, but didn't know why. The magazine in question might well have been *House Beautiful*, a long-established publication originating in the Midwest which did much to publicize the style.

But for all its vibrancy and the talents of its architects, the Prairie Style was a fairly short-lived experiment in creating a new distinctly American house. The last Prairie houses appeared in *House Beautiful* in 1914. In 1917, when the Chicago Architectural Club's annual exhibition opened, Thomas Tallmadge lamented: "What is . . . regretted is the absence of any evidence that the [Prairie school] as a potent style of architecture any longer exists . . . Clients, the wives of whom at least have received their architectural education in Boston or New York, now have turned back to pretty Colonial or the fashionable Italian. Where are Sullivan, Wright, Griffin and the others?" (The answer: Sullivan, who had inspired Wright, Griffin and others with his call for a new American architecture free from historical precedents, was

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largely a spent force. Wright's Oak Park Studio had closed its doors in 1909. Wright in that year left for Europe with the wife of a client. The next several years were the lowest point of his career. Griffin was in Australia.)

It is beyond the scope of this document to go into detail about the "why" of the Prairie Style's demise. What follows is but a summary by leading scholars. Peisch emphasizes the loss of the leaders, referring by name to Sullivan, Wright and Griffin (per the Talmadge quote above). "Once these leaders were gone," he concludes, "the followers gradually made their peace with the traditional taste that had never ceased to be a decisive element." Other factors he cites are the coming of the First World War and the ensuing conservatism – a changing "temper of the times." H. Allen Brooks cites many factors. "To avoid the historical styles," he writes, "yet win acceptance, became increasingly difficult." He then quotes Wright's 1924 obituary of his mentor, Louis Sullivan: "Not long ago . . . Louis said to me . . . that it would be far more difficult now to do the radical work he did – more difficult to get accepted than when he worked." In the 1920s, architects who had designed in the Prairie Style either built what the client wanted (historic revival styles) or moved away from residential work. (On a brief return trip to America in 1925, Griffin lamented, "Why is it that, in some things so bold, our countrymen are such cowards in aesthetics?")

Brooks' "obituary" on the Prairie Style bears quoting at length: "Post-war America turned its back on this more inventive aspect of her architectural past . . . There was no immediate sequel to the Prairie School; America was not ready to support one, any more than she was prepared to extend the life of the school itself. Yet buildings are their own best testimony and the work of the Prairie School inevitably tempered the derivative designs of successive years, 'quieting the skyline, broadening and strengthening the mass, ordering the openings, reducing the fancy-feathers, [and] marrying all of them to the ground,' as Wright was wont to phrase it." The prairies of the Midwest, Brooks ends, "are dotted with buildings that nestle quietly into the broad, flat landscape where they seem to belong. Silently they pay homage to the Prairie School. For here remains the record of one of the most native, original and dynamic developments in the history of American architecture."

WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN (1876-1937)

Biographical Sketch:

Griffin was born November 24, 1876 in the Chicago suburb of Maywood, IL. He graduated from high school in nearby Oak Park. In the fall of 1895 he began his architectural studies at the University of Illinois and graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Architecture in 1899.

1900 was an important year for the young architect. He was employed as a draftsman in the office of Dwight Perkins in the Steinway Building in downtown Chicago. Here he became part of the "Steinway group" – an informal association of architects who had offices in the building, many of whom were seeking new expressions in architecture.

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It was in the Steinway lofts that Griffin met Wright. Also, in 1900, Griffin joined the Chicago Architectural Club, and (in another venue) heard Louis Sullivan's famous oration, "The Young Man in Architecture." He later recalled that it "completely changed my life."

In the summer of 1901 Griffin joined Wright's Oak Park Studio, where he remained until 1906, when he established a private practice in the Steinway Building. It is clear that Griffin was a major player at the Studio (rather than one of many who were employed there over the Studio's several year life). From Brooks we learn that Griffin "increasingly took charge of running the office, and eventually became the office manager – and a job superintendent as well." When Wright left on a three-month trip to Japan in February 1905, he entrusted the Studio to Griffin.

Over the course of his practice in the United States, Griffin produced some 130 designs, ranging from a few large houses (such as the Cooley House) to small speculative houses. (About half of the designs were executed.) He was also a landscape architect and urban planner, creating landscape plans for individual houses and designing several communities and subdivisions (only two of which were built). On June 29, 1911, Griffin married architect Marion Lucy Mahony, whom he had known for many years. Mahony, a truly gifted architectural renderer, had worked at the Oak Park Studio for many years and co-designed a couple of houses with Wright. Shortly before the Griffins married, the Australian government announced an international competition to design a capital city of 75,000 residents. In May 1912 the couple learned that Walter's proposal had been selected, from among 137 entries, many say due to the stunning renderings of his wife.

In early 1914, Griffin moved to Australia, with Marion joining him later. In addition to his town planning work for Canberra, he had a flourishing private practice with offices in Sydney and Melbourne. His large Australian output, over some twenty years, included town and subdivision plans, houses, a major theatre, a university, and in the 1930s, a series of extraordinary garbage incinerators for local government councils. Griffin returned briefly to the United States, once in 1925 (during which time he visited the Cooley House construction site) and again in 1932.

In September 1935 Griffin's design for a new library at Lucknow University in India was accepted. He traveled there in October 1935 and Marion joined him in May 1936. During Griffin's short time in India he received some 40 commissions and published numerous articles. Seeking to develop a "modern Indian architecture," he created what architectural historian Paul Kruty calls "exuberant, expressive" designs reflecting the character and spirit of the locale. In February 1937 Griffin became ill after a banquet given by his benefactor, the Raja of Mahmudabad, and died of peritonitis several days later. Marion Mahony eventually returned to the United States, where she died in 1961 at the age of 90.

Griffin's Architecture:

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It is standard among scholars (whether they be Prairie School or specifically Griffin) to divide Griffin's work into two phases. One body of work is what this author will call his "Prairie School Phase" – when his designs were in that tradition, although with notable differences from Wright, his mentor. In 1911, Griffin began to design buildings that bore little if any resemblance to the Prairie School. Some of the designs are truly one-of-a-kind. But during the same years the architect also continued to design "mainstream" (author's term) Prairie Style houses. For the next two decades in Australia, Griffin fully realized his new personal expression.

Griffin's Prairie School houses were different from Wright's (and other Prairie School architects) and therein lies part of his significance. Griffin's Prairie School houses were distinctive in the following ways: (1) His houses tend to be symmetrical. (He even designed side-by-side Prairie houses that were mirror images of each other.) (2) While the overall lines generally are horizontal, his houses do not hug the ground as tightly as is typical of the Prairie School. (3) In general, Prairie school houses feature an interplay of the horizontal and vertical. But in Griffin's designs there is a stronger emphasis on the vertical, achieved largely through gabled roofs (rather than the more typical low hip roof), oftentimes quite massive corner piers that strongly define space, and floor plans with vertical manipulation of space (sometimes via split levels). (4) Virtually all of Griffin's Prairie School houses have gabled roofs, several with a particular articulation that is something of a Griffin architectural stamp. As seen at the Cooley House, the architect was fond of a Japanese-looking low, broad gable with gable end returns that extend dramatically to form Peisch's "powerful eaves." (This type of gable is found on several Griffin houses, some as exaggerated as at Cooley and some less so.) (5) Because of Griffin's preference for gables, his houses (including Cooley) are noted for their triangular and/or diamond windows that extend up to the peak of the roof, lending a sense of weightlessness to the design. (6) While Wright and other Prairie School architects used art glass windows (windows with designs in the glass panes), Griffin often created windows with distinctive and sometimes intricate glazing patterns. The patterns sometimes took their cue from the geometry of the houses, presenting particularly unified compositions.

As noted above, Griffin's first Prairie Style house was the William Emery House in Elmhurst, Illinois, designed in the winter of 1901-02, soon after he started working at Wright's Oak Park Studio. (It was an independent commission. Wright emphatically denied providing any assistance when interviewed on the subject by H. Allen Brooks.) The Emery House, because of its early date, is certainly among Griffin's most important Prairie Style houses, probably the most important. Brooks writes: "The date of the Emery house, when compared to Wright's chronology, is startling. It follows closely [in date] the Kankakee houses The roofs and trim of the Emery house recall the Kankakee houses, but little else."

According to Mrs. Emery, her husband had two architects in mind, Wright and Griffin, both of whom he knew. He chose Griffin, she related, because he wanted some input, and Wright had a reputation for being "too uncompromising." With Emery as his patron, Griffin, writes Peisch, had "one of the few commissions by any member of the Chicago School [Prairie School] that approached the work of Wright in size or the budget of its builder."

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At the Emery House Griffin introduced what became something of a signature in his Prairie Style houses—massive piers at the front corners – in this case one-and-a-half stories in contrasting brick. The white stucco gabled upper story seems to hover above the brick lower story, secured by the piers. “His [Griffin’s] hallmark,” writes Brooks, “was the corner pier which rose to the second floor, or beyond, and secured and confined the central mass.” The “massive pylons” at the Emery house, writes Peisch, “gave a dramatic firmness to the design.” Two years later (1904), similar “massive pylons” defined Wright’s famous Larkin Building. (The inference among some scholars, including Brooks, is that Wright was influenced by the Emery House, but this, by definition, cannot be proven. As Brooks himself stated in an interview, “we’ll never know.”) The Emery House also introduced Griffin’s experimentation with the vertical extension of space (in this case, via interlocking levels).

The Emery House was Griffin’s sole independent commission while working at the Oak Park Studio. His next design was not completed until he launched his independent practice in 1906, a diminutive one-and-a-half story gabled house built for Harry V. Peters in Chicago, with plans completed in October of that year. In this house he introduced the L-shaped plan, or open plan, with the living and dining room flowing into each other and anchored with a fireplace located at the corner of the L. (Paul Kruty observes that Wright published this type of plan, a staple of Prairie School houses, a year later.) Over the next few years (in the United States) Griffin saw some 55 of his house designs built, plus one commercial building and a library. Many of the houses are on the smallish side; several were built for investment.

In 1911 Griffin designed a house, “Solid Rock,” that bore absolutely no resemblance to his Prairie Style houses (other than his predilection for heavy forms). In fact, it’s almost as if it were from a different architect. Built in Winnetka, Illinois as investment property, the aptly named re-enforced concrete house takes its name from the builder, the Solid Rock Construction Company of Chicago. The small one-story, flat-roofed residence would look more at home in the Southwest than the Midwest. Here was a house of “hard” materials and a “solid, massive” form (despite its small size); “severity reigned supreme” (Brooks). “Solid Rock” was the type of design Griffin introduced into Australia. Regrettably, with the addition of a massive hip roof (over the original terraced roof) and a porch, the house has been remodeled almost beyond recognition.

In the next couple of years, Griffin designed several other unusual houses and a library (Stinson Memorial Library, Anna, Illinois) in his “new phase.” Some of these were built; others exist only in design (the latter including his own house). Although not Solid Rock, these new designs had similar qualities of abstracted, severe, solid forms. Kruty describes them as “massive, cubic buildings that were flat-roofed and bereft of Wright’s overhanging eaves.” Two of the one-of-a-kind houses (as well as a house that might be called transitional and two “mainstream” Prairie houses) were built in the eighteen-acre Rock Crest-Rock Glen subdivision in Mason City, Iowa, also designed by Griffin. Easily the most unusual of the Mason City houses is the stone and re-enforced concrete Melson House. Clearly a one-of-a-kind design, the house looks more like a craggy fortress than a residence. Built of rough quarry-faced limestone on a rocky cliff top overlooking a stream, it has, to quote Paul Kruty, a “primordial appearance.”

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Griffin's Importance:

Walter Burley Griffin's stature as a major Prairie Style architect was recognized at the time and has been validated since in scholarly studies, both in general works on the style and specific works on the architect himself, as detailed above. To summarize, while Griffin did not invent the Prairie Style house, he was a very important practitioner. He gave it a stamp of his own. As detailed above, Griffin's Prairie Style houses, with but few exceptions, are markedly different from Wright's and other Prairie School architects. With signature features such as gables, vertical manipulation of space, symmetry, and strong corner piers, they "say" Walter Burley Griffin to the trained eye.

And, very importantly, as referenced earlier, Griffin was recognized as a Prairie School leader early on. Thomas Tallmadge, lamenting the demise of what he called the Chicago School, asked in 1917: "Where are Sullivan, Wright, Griffin and the others?" Hugh Morrison, in his landmark 1935 study of Louis Sullivan, concluded: "Perhaps the best of these [Chicago School followers of Sullivan] were Frank Lloyd Wright, George Elmslie, George W. Maher, and Walter Burley Griffin."

Both Peisch and Brooks, in what are still the standard works on the Prairie School, give extensive coverage to Griffin's work, in both text and illustrations. Peisch refers to Wright and Griffin as "the main spirits of the Chicago School in domestic architecture." Then there are various books specifically on Griffin (see bibliography attached). The two main scholars of Griffin's American work are Paul Sprague, professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, and Paul Kruty, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Kruty has researched, written, and lectured about Griffin more than anyone else. A particularly important contribution is *Walter Burley Griffin in America* (1996), co-produced by photographer Mati Maldre and Kruty. Invaluable to this author, the book presents a chronology of Griffin's commissions, a photo essay by Maldre (among them the Cooley House) and an essay by Kruty.

Recognizing Walter Burley Griffin in the National Register of Historic Places:

Among the small band of Prairie School architects, Griffin was and is regarded as a major figure – a leader – someone who mastered the style at an early date and gave it his own personal stamp. The various distinctive features – features that "betray the hand of Griffin," to quote Kruty, are detailed above. Griffin's status within the Prairie School is of huge importance because the Prairie Style is one of very few distinctly American contributions to the history of architecture. Given this, how does one recognize Griffin's contributions to creating a distinctly American architecture via the National Register of Historic Places? Which of his designs are of sufficient importance to be nationally significant?

Using National Park Service records and the Illinois SHPO on-line database, the author found the following Griffin designs to be listed on the National Register:

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1. the Cooley House, Monroe, LA, listed in 1986 at the state level of significance;
2. the Gauler Houses, two side-by-side twin speculatively built houses in Chicago listed on the National Register in 1977 at the national level of significance;
3. the Orth House, one of two side-by-side twin speculatively built houses in Winnetka, Illinois, listed in 1976, national level of significance; no indication of why both houses weren't included;
4. the Stinson Memorial Library, Anna, Illinois, 1977, level of significance not noted, but national implied;
5. the Emery House, Elmhurst, Illinois, listed in 2004 at the local level of significance;
6. the Rock Crest-Rock Glen Historic District, Mason City, Iowa, listed in 1979 at the national level of significance;
7. the Ricker House, Grinnel, Iowa, listed in 1978 at the state level of significance;
8. the Ridge Historic District in Chicago, a large district with houses from various periods, including 12 by Griffin and several others by notable Prairie School architects, listed in 1976 with level of significance not indicated. Of the 12 Griffin houses, 10 were speculatively built as investment properties.
9. Frederick B. Carter, Jr. House, Evanston, Illinois, listed in 1974, no indication of level of significance;
10. Decatur Historic District, Decatur, Illinois, listed in 1976, no indication of level of significance. Griffin's name is not mentioned anywhere in the nomination, but he designed the landscape for three of the houses noted in the inventory (Edward P. Irving, Adolph Mueller and Robert Mueller) and was co-designer, with his wife, of one of the houses (Adolph Mueller).

Eight of the above ten nominations were written and accepted in the 1970s at a time when documentation standards for National Register nominations were not as high as they are presently. They are typical of early nominations, regardless of state, in being brief and generally lacking in documentation for assertions made. Many of the Griffin houses listed on the Register (either individually or as part of the Ridge Historic District) were built as investment properties and would be regarded as relatively minor examples of Griffin's work – and certainly not of

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national significance, as claimed for the Gauler Houses and the Orth House. Of the above, the Cooley House, Stinson Memorial Library, the Emery House, the Ricker House, the Carter House, the Adolph Mueller House and the houses in the Rock Crest-Rock Glen historic district would be considered major expressions of Griffin's architecture. Some of these represent his so-called "first phase" (what this author calls his Prairie School phase), while others represent his second phase (see preceding discussion).

None of the above referenced nominations done at the national level of significance (all from the 1970s) adequately document their general statements. Ironically, among the very most important of Griffin's works, the Emery House, is listed at the local level of significance. This seminal very early Prairie School house (as interpreted by Griffin) is clearly of national significance.

THE COOLEY HOUSE

History:

How did a house by a progressive Chicago architect come to be built on the Ouachita River in Monroe, Louisiana, in the Deep South? The answer lies with Griffin's client, the self-made entrepreneur Gilbert B. Cooley (1865-1952). Cooley was born in Savanna, Illinois, a small town on the Mississippi River west of Chicago. His father was a riverboat captain, and steamboating remained the son's life-long love. Gilbert Cooley settled permanently in Monroe in 1894. His brother Stoughton was educated in Chicago and lived in that city's new suburb of Maywood. Among his neighbors were the parents of Walter Burley Griffin. Although the Griffins had moved to nearby Oak Park by 1882, it is assumed that Stoughton Cooley's friendship with Griffin's parents is the connection between a house in Louisiana and Walter Burley Griffin.

At the time of the Cooley House commission, the thirty-one year old Griffin was in his third year of independent practice and had seen six of his houses constructed. The architect conceived the design in the summer of 1908. The now lost original presentation drawing was dated July 21 of that year. (A photograph of the dated drawing is in the National Library of Australia and is available to researchers on-line.) Griffin exhibited the original rendering in October 1909 at the Cleveland Architectural Club and the following April at the annual exhibition of the Chicago Architectural Club. A second, better known and undated presentation drawing, by Marion Mahony Griffin, is at the Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University.

The Cooley House design, however, was not realized until 1925. Why did Cooley take so long to actually begin construction on the house? The standard, but undocumented, story is that he needed to amass enough money. In the meantime, Cooley clearly kept in touch with Griffin. At the end of July 1913, before leaving for Australia, the architect visited Monroe to meet with a prospective new client, the board of directors of the newly organized Riverside Club.

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While there, as noted in the local newspaper, Griffin was a guest of the Cooleys. He received the club commission, producing one of his signature Prairie School designs anchored by massive piers. The clubhouse was demolished in the late 1930s as part of a flood control program.

By 1924 it seems that Cooley was finally ready to build his Griffin-designed house. In February of that year he purchased two lots along the Ouachita River. In Australia, the Griffins were making plans to return to the United States for a brief stay. In addition to visiting their families, according to Paul Kruty, "Walter arranged to visit buildings that had been completed after he had left . . . as well as try to continue projects like the Cooley House that had been put on hold." The Griffins were in Chicago by early January 1925. On January 22, Walter sent a postcard to Marion, who had remained in Chicago, postmarked "Monroe, LA." In the possession of Australian Griffin scholar James Weirick, the postcard does not make mention of the Cooley House, but clearly the architect was there to discuss the project, given the timing of the construction. Griffin obviously remained interested in seeing the Cooley House built. Why else would he make such a lengthy detour from the Midwest to Monroe, Louisiana during his brief return to the United States?

Knowing that he would be returning to Australia, Griffin arranged for an Australian named Henry Pynor, who had worked for him in that country but was now in Chicago, to oversee construction. Griffin referred to Pynor as "our right hand man from Melbourne . . . who came across from Australia for experience and whatever assistance he could afford us here in odd jobs." Working drawings were prepared by March 12, 1925 with revisions on June 16. On May 1, 1925, Cooley purchased an adjoining rear parcel of land (where the garage is located). Construction on the house began sometime in 1925 (per a photograph in the National Library of Australia collections dated January 1926 showing the exterior virtually complete). In July of 1926, according to Kruty's research, Pynor sent Griffin a photograph of the completed house.

In fact, easily the best documentation on the house are a series of early photos, both interior and exterior, held by the National Library of Australia. They are dated (on the back) between January 1926 and August 1928. Presumably they were sent to Griffin from Cooley and/or Pynor.

Cooley lived in the house until his death in 1952. It was occupied by a law firm when the original National Register of Historic Places nomination was prepared in 1986. After that it was vacant for many years and slipped perilously close to being lost due to "demolition by neglect." It was an abandoned house in a declining neighborhood with a badly leaking roof. Certain far-sighted citizens in Monroe, realizing the house's importance, launched a "Save the Cooley House" campaign, and not a moment too soon. The City of Monroe acquired the property in 2008 and replaced the roof, funded in part by a grant from the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation. A Friends of the Cooley House private non-profit was founded the same year. This group is working with the city on a master plan to restore and open the house as a museum. While progress has been made, the house's future is not secure. At this point, the City of Monroe and the Cooley House "friends of" group believe that the Save America's Treasures (SAT) grant program is a critical part of future funding. SAT requires that a building be listed on the Register at the national level of significance

**United States Department of the Interior
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(or be a National Historic Landmark). To aid in this important effort, the LA SHPO, via the Certified Local Government Program, funded a proposal from the City of Monroe to hire an architectural historian to update the Register nomination, claiming national significance. This document is a result of that grant.

Setting:

The Cooley House is located about a mile south of downtown Monroe in an early twentieth century streetcar/automobile suburb. It occupies a flat parcel of land at the corner of Grand Street and Texas Avenue. It faces Grand and is sited close to the northern property line (see below), with lawn between the house and Texas Avenue. Immediately beyond Grand Street is the Ouachita River. Today the immediate environment looks much as it would have in 1925 when the house was built. But at that time Cooley would have had an unobstructed view of the Ouachita River. The present concrete wall between Street and the river is of later vintage.

It is impossible to determine with certainty which piece of Monroe property Cooley had in mind for the house in 1908 when the design was conceived. He owned various parcels of land at that time, and there is no surviving correspondence between architect and client to shed any light. (Scholars in America and Australia have researched the house exhaustively. They have not uncovered any evidence as to whether or not the house was designed for a specific piece of property. There is no evidence of Griffin visiting Monroe prior to designing the house in 1908.) The important point, though, is that any land in Monroe (where the house was always intended to be located) would have looked much like the parcel on Grand Street where the house was built. The city is located in the Mississippi Delta, where the land is uniformly flat.

Scholars have not located any evidence to prove (or disprove) whether Griffin had any input on the landscaping at the Cooley House. Among the early photographs referenced above is a closeup of the pond and fountain located in front of the house. Written on the back is "pond built April 1928." The same note also tells the viewer to "note ball playing on fountain." And, indeed, clearly shown is a small ball suspended in the air via a vertical jet of water. The water jet mechanism is no longer extant. The patterned driveway that runs from Grand Street along the left hand side of the house (where the entrance is located) and extends back to the garage appears in photos dated as early as July 1926. The garage, which is original to the property, was designed to complement the house.

Some of the early photos held by the National Library of Australia have notes on the back about plant materials. One can only presume that Cooley and/or Pynor were keeping Griffin apprised on this subject. From a photo dated August 9, 1928, showing the pond in the foreground: "This lily pond is encircled with a profusion of crimson verbena, crimson hibiscus, purple petunias and dusty milles [sic.], close to terrace are Pittisporum ligustrum." From another image bearing the same date: "Plumbaso & weeping lantana a mass of lavender blooms in garden walls." ("Garden walls" clearly refers to the low brick retaining walls that accent the house -- see current photos.)

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The house's location is skewed toward the northern property line (the latter just beyond the driveway), as dictated by Robert Layton when he sold the land to Mrs. Selena Cooley. Layton's family home (known locally as Layton's Castle) is located to the south, across Texas Avenue, in an estate-like setting. Layton clearly wanted any new construction to be set back from Texas. A covenant attached to the deed stipulates that the residence be placed "not less than 25 feet of the East line of Texas Avenue, which provisions and conditions are to be in force and effective for a period of twenty years from and after this date . . ." (Clearly "east line" is a mistake, for there is no east line of Texas Avenue, only north and south lines. The same covenant was attached to the sale of the rear lot by Layton and here the wording is "not less than 25 feet of the north line of Texas Avenue.")

The Design:

The Cooley House is among the most horizontal of Griffin's compositions. The plan (see attached) is organized along one long (83 foot) axis. The massing consists of a central two story block with slightly lower and narrower two story front and rear wings. The very low spreading gable defining the façade is echoed in the central block. The gables, with their strong Japanese feel, are a favorite Griffin device. Their end returns in effect extend to form the roof's generous overhang (Peisch's "powerful eaves"). The fascias are battered.

In true Prairie School form, strong vertical elements contrast with the overall horizontal lines. Heavy two-story corner piers on the façade seem to contain the house's volume. They are not as dominant, not as striking, as other Griffin designs – largely because they are of the same material as the body of the house (plaster over hollow tile). The long side elevations, with their horizontal bands of casement windows, are punctuated with verticals.

The glory of the interior is a dramatic two-story living room (20' x 20') with a tent ceiling. Three of the room's four sides are defined almost entirely by windows. The space culminates at the rear with its one window-less wall, with a fireplace at the center. Facing toward the Ouachita is a great window echoing that of the upper façade. The façade window is just beyond, terminating the upper floor sunroom. The windows take their shape from the gabled roof. They are formed of a series of casement windows – windows that can be opened independently, as visible in an extraordinary very early photo of the room held by the National Library of Australia. At the ground level the living room flows, via a series of doors, into the ground floor sunroom with its wide window. Narrow hallways at the mezzanine level run along each long side of the living room to connect the upper sun porch with rooms at the rear. The halls have low solid walls overlooking the living room. (The walls would definitely not meet today's life safety codes. The wooden restraining bars shown in the attached photos were installed on a temporary only basis.) Running along the long halls at the upper level are bands of windows. Below are bands of taller windows.

The house as built is fundamentally the same one designed in the summer of 1908. Adjustments were made in 1925, but they were made by the original architect, in the spirit of the original design, and they actually enhanced the house's architectural significance. The original design shows the front façade ending with a porch on each level inset

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into the body of the house, behind two story piers. As built, the porches were enclosed with magnificent windows that add much to the house's architectural character. As Professor Kruty correctly observes, the most notable changes occurred in decoration. This is most important in the windows, for there are so many of them. Those shown in the Mahony presentation drawing feature a rather ordinary rectangular decorative design. The new, intricate and abstract design has, writes Kruty, "a complex triangular pattern with solid pieces [of wood] interspersed." Kruty, in an article written for the journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, pegs the windows as "immediately suggestive" of many of Griffin's Australian designs. This author would note that Griffin designed several houses in America with similar windows, even in his so-called first phase. Intricate Interlocking designs can also be seen in the wooden screen accenting the front door and the wooden screen setting off the staircase. Two exterior lamp standards (one on each side) feature the most elaborate interlocking wooden members.

The fireplace in the great two story living room also changed. Mahony's cutaway drawing shows a rectangular brick fireplace. Kruty describes the as-built fireplace as a "massive triangular solid rising halfway up the room." In the 1920s, in Australia, "Griffin produced any number of variations on this arrangement," writes Kruty in the article referenced above.

The fact that the Cooley House's final construction falls a few years outside the conventional date range of the Prairie Style should not cloud an evaluation of the significance of the house. It is what it is as a work of architecture. And it should be emphasized that Griffin was manifestly the author of the complete final design. And, in fact, it is actually fortunate that Gilbert Cooley delayed construction. The delay resulted in an even more significant work of architecture than the one designed in 1908.

The Cooley House as Nationally Significant:

As a major designer in a style uniquely American, and as one who made his own distinctive imprint on that style, Walter Burleigh Griffin is clearly deserving of recognition in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance. But while Griffin himself is nationally significant, not all of his designs would meet this high standard for National Register documentation. In determining which ones might be nationally significant, it is helpful to keep the architect's two phases in mind. There will be particularly important buildings from each phase that will be nationally significant – those that represent significant (but different) aspects of Griffin's work.

The Cooley House is an important representation of the architect's first phase – his Prairie School phase. It is a major commission, as opposed to smaller houses, particularly the many Griffin houses that were speculatively built as investments. The architect, generally, could develop his design aesthetic more fully in a bigger house for an individual patron with a bigger budget. An advanced architect who has a willing client with a big purse can be a rare combination in the history of architecture.

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From a review of the Kruty and Maldre catalog of Griffin's work, this author counted some fourteen major Prairie Style commissions, as roughly defined above. Other than the seminal Emery House, it would be challenging, indeed subjective, to rank the fourteen in order of importance.

The Cooley House is among Griffin's largest commissions and exhibits many of the distinctive characteristics that "betray the hand of Griffin," to quote Paul Kruty – the features that he contributed to Prairie School architecture. Signature Griffin features include vertical spatial planning inserted into a horizontal composition; piers defining the corners; a gabled roof (with exaggerated gable end returns forming eaves); triangular and diamond windows extending to the peak of the gable, and the architect's most intricate, abstracted window glazing pattern (at least in America).

Griffin scholar Paul Kruty considers the Cooley House to be particularly notable among Griffin's major commissions for its grand two-story tent ceiling living room (its "great hall"). "This dramatic composition," observes Kruty, "is unique in Griffin's work." And, of course, this is of immense significance because the vertical manipulation of space is a distinguishing feature of Griffin's Prairie School designs.

Griffin is also known for his often distinctive window treatment (as explained elsewhere). The Cooley House windows, which exist in large numbers, are particularly noteworthy for their abstract pattern echoing the lines of the house.

Add to the foregoing the almost pristine integrity of the house (including original interior light fixtures). As a major and particularly distinctive expression of a uniquely American house style by one of the style's most significant practitioners, the Cooley House meets National Register requirements for architectural significance at the national level. To quote Mark Peisch, in *The Chicago School of Architecture: Early Followers of Wright and Sullivan*, "In terms of livability, charm and intelligent design, it [Cooley House] represents Griffin at his very best."

Addendum Prepared (Summer 2009) and Revised (March 2010) by:

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Cooley, G. B. House

County and State Ouachita Parish, LA

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)
NA

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Name of Property Cooley, G. B. House

County and State Ouachita Parish, LA

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)
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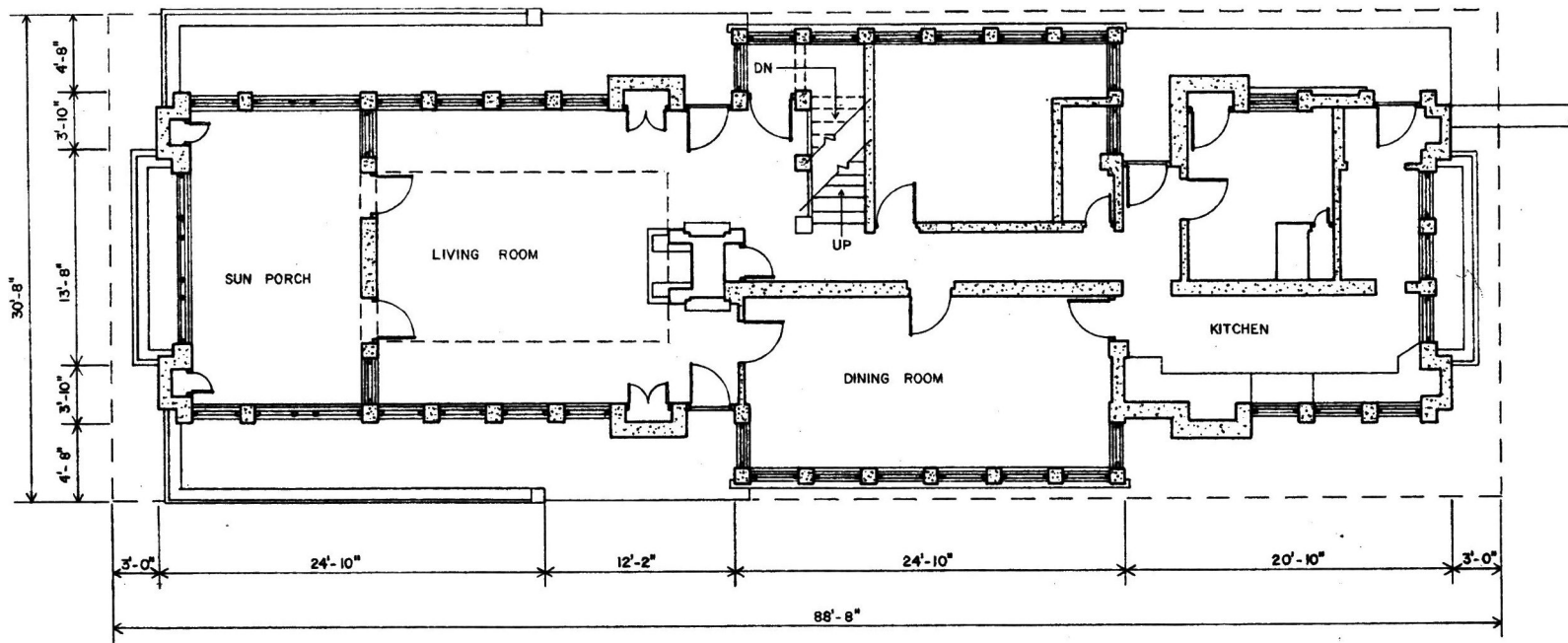
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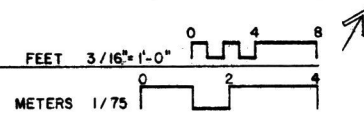
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www.walterburleygriffin.org. This is the website of the American Griffin society.

www.pbs.org/wbgriffin. This website was created to accompany a PBS documentary, *Walter Burley Griffin: In His Own Right*. It was valuable to this author for providing transcripts of interviews done with leading Griffin and Prairie School scholars (Kruty, Brooks, Sprague, etc.).



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



1992 CHARLES E. PETERSON PRIZE COMPETITION

DRAWN BY: DAVID ZEIGLER 11/01/91

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

G.B. COOLEY HOUSE

1011 SOUTH GRAND STREET

MONROE

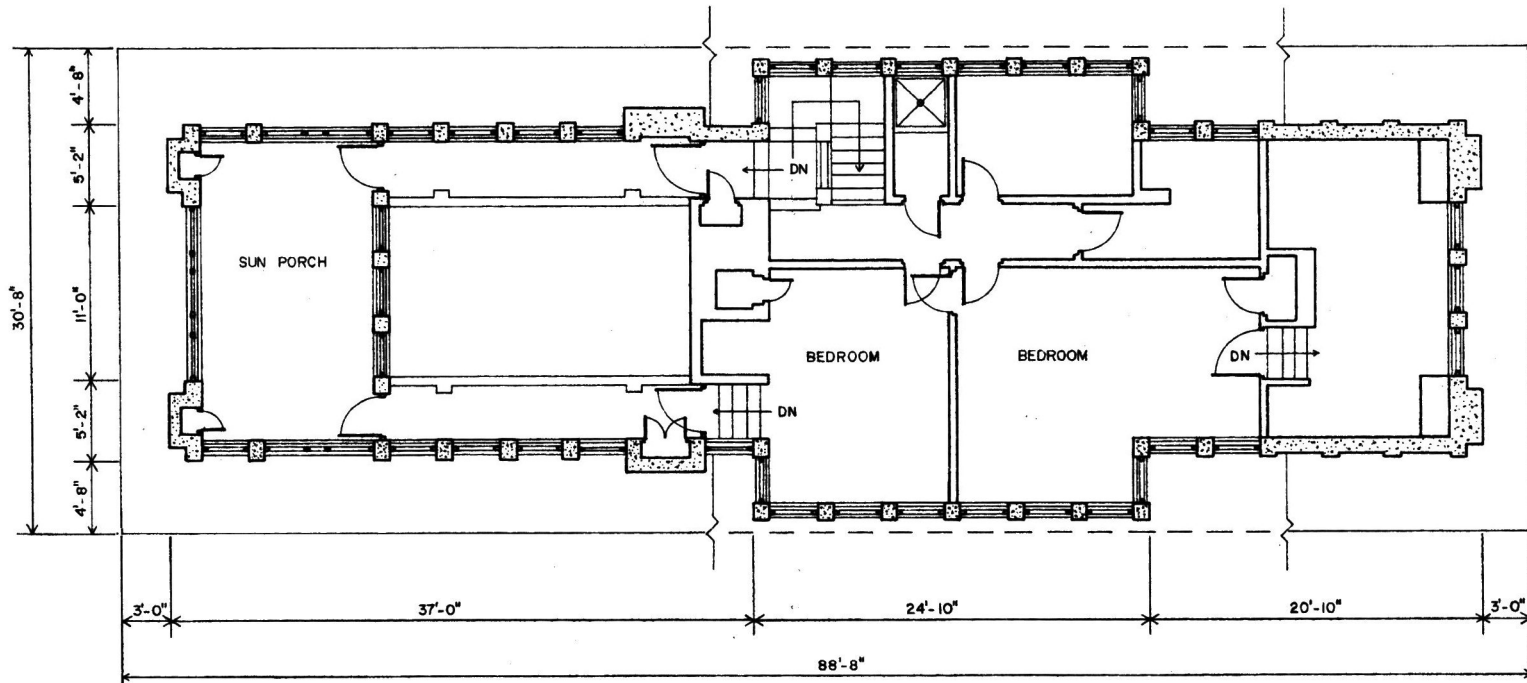
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LOUISIANA

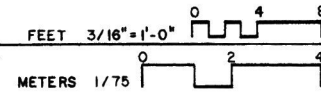
SURVEY NO.

LA-1230

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 2 OF 7 SHEETS



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



1992 CHARLES E. PETERSON PRIZE COMPETITION

DRAWN BY: DAVID ZEIGLER 11/01/91

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

G.B. COOLEY HOUSE

1011 SOUTH GRAND STREET

MONROE

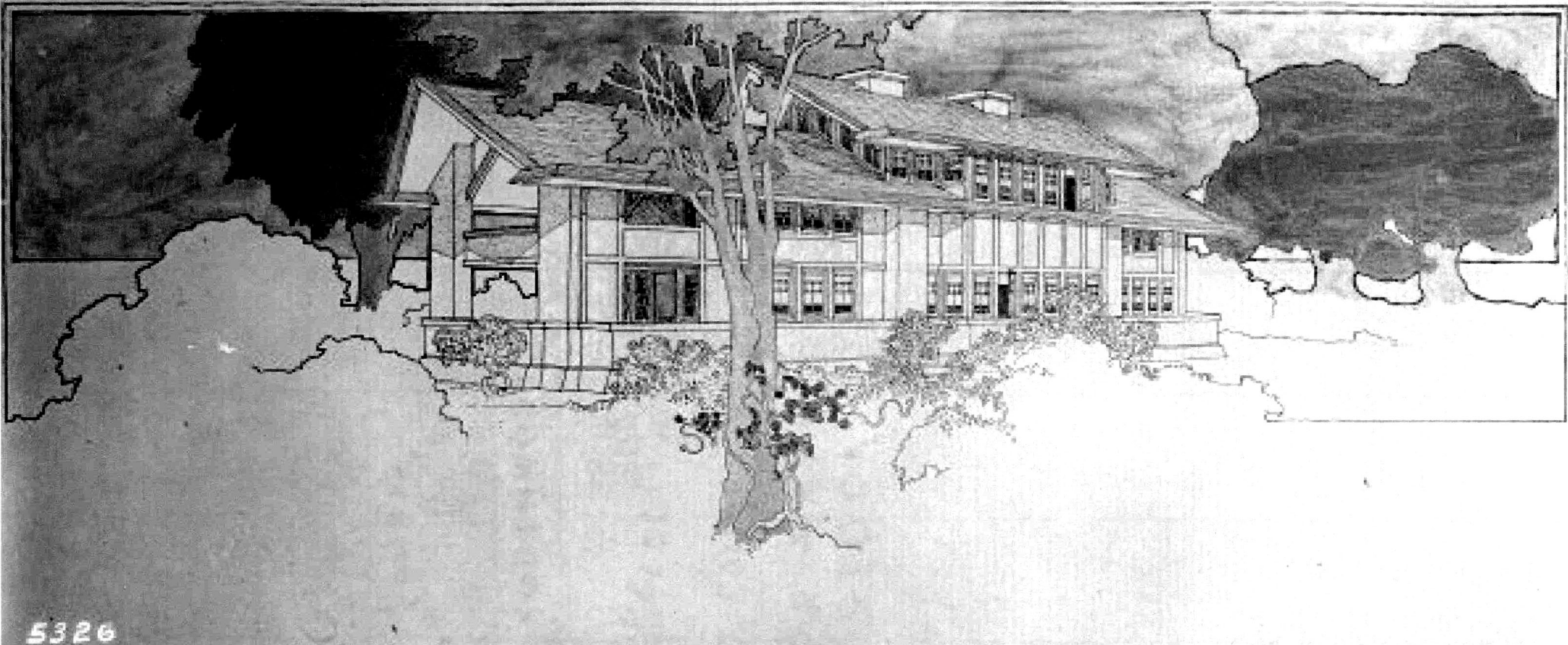
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LOUISIANA

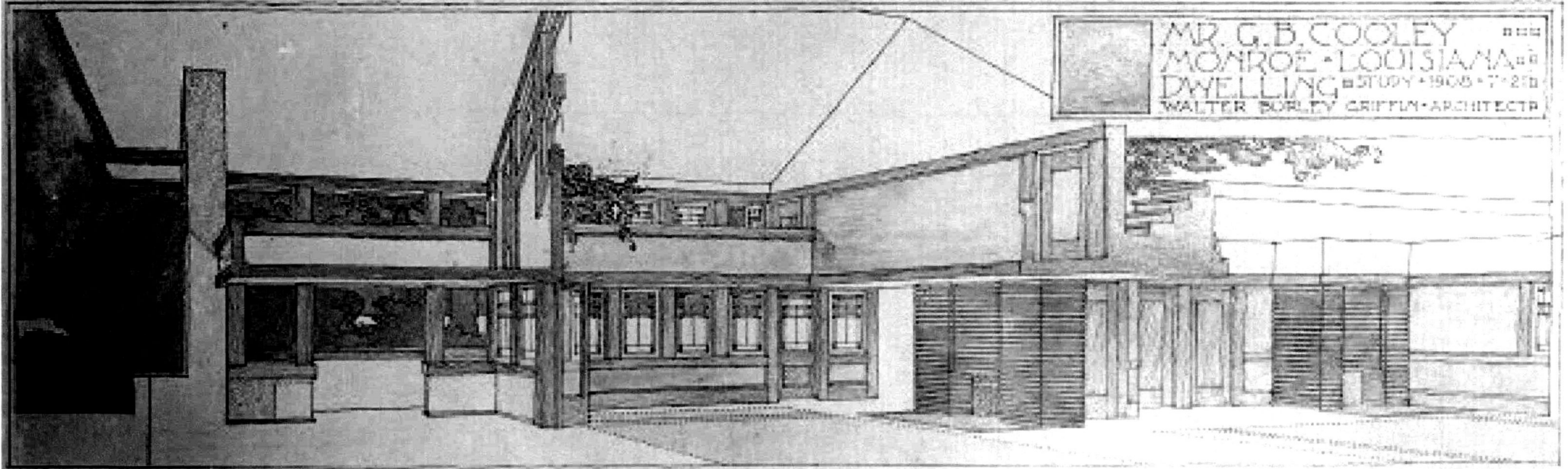
SURVEY NO.

LA-1230

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 3 OF 7 SHEETS



5326



MR. G. B. COOLEY
MONROE, LOUISIANA
DWELLING
STUDY 1908 7' 2 1/2'
WALTER DORLEY GRIFFIN ARCHITECT



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

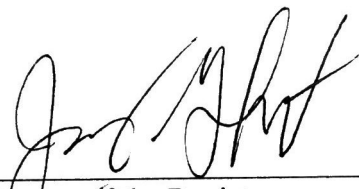
County and State

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Cooley House
County: Ouchita
State: LA

The Additional Documentation for the Cooley House (86001060) is accepted.



Keeper of the Register

4/14/2010

Date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION OF ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY Cooley, G.B., House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, Ouachita

DATE RECEIVED: 04/02/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 05/17/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 86001060

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/14/2010 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Resubmission addressed comments.
Cooley House is a Nationally significant example of the work of a noted Master architect. It is an example of the matured development of the Prairie school and although constructed later, was supervised by Griffin.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept C

REVIEWER J. Grubb DISCIPLINE _____

Phone _____ Date _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/ see attached SLR /N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



MITCHELL J. LANDRIEU
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SCOTT HUTCHESON
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 29, 2010

National Park Service 2280, 8th Floor
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: **Resubmission of:**
Cooley House Additional Documentation, Ouachita Parish, LA
Expedited Review Requested

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find the revised version of our documentation and supporting materials for upgrading the level of significance for the above referenced, previously-listed property. We request **expedited review** of this material. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595.

Sincerely,

Patricia Duncan
Architectural Historian
National Register Coordinator

PD/pld

Enclosures