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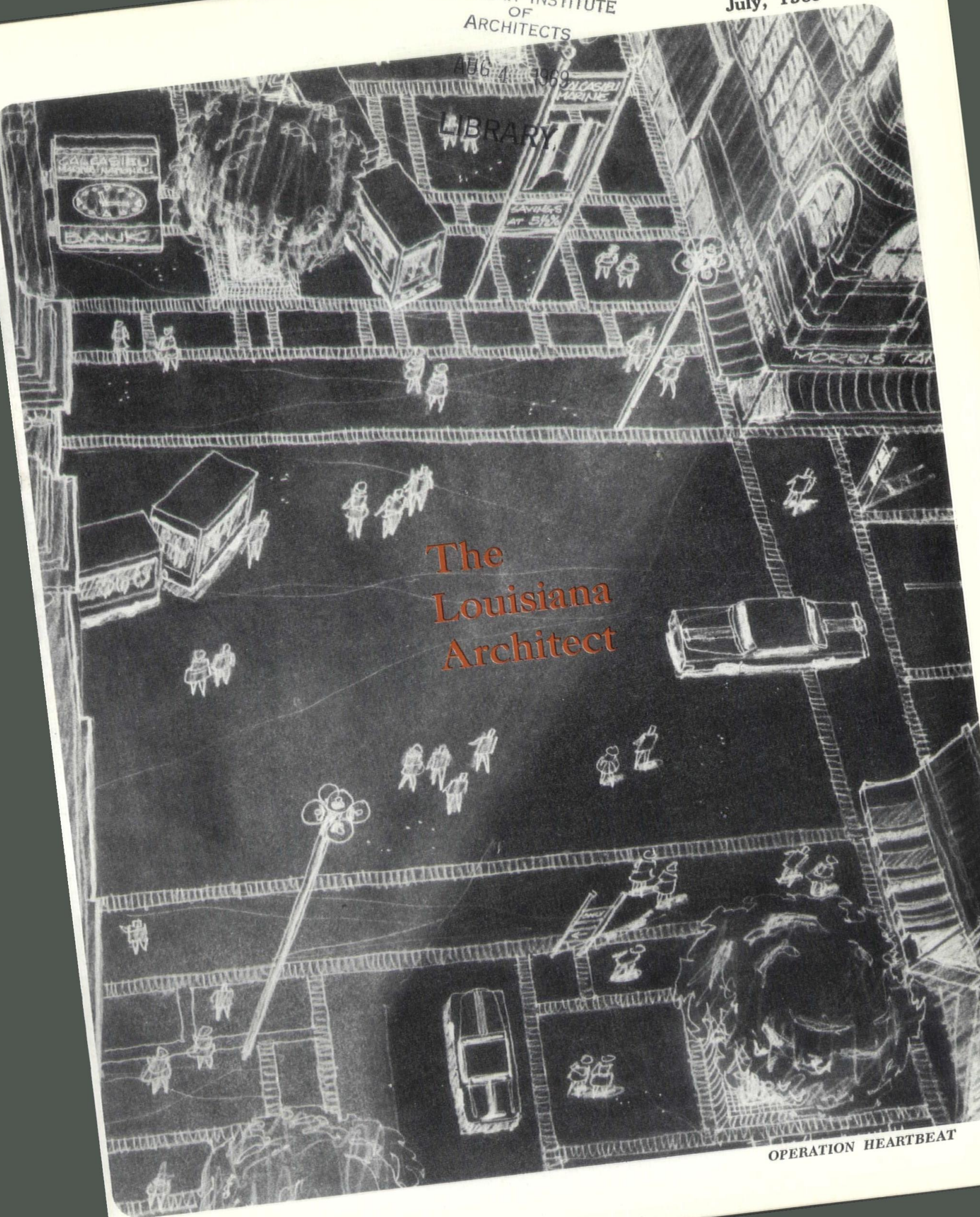
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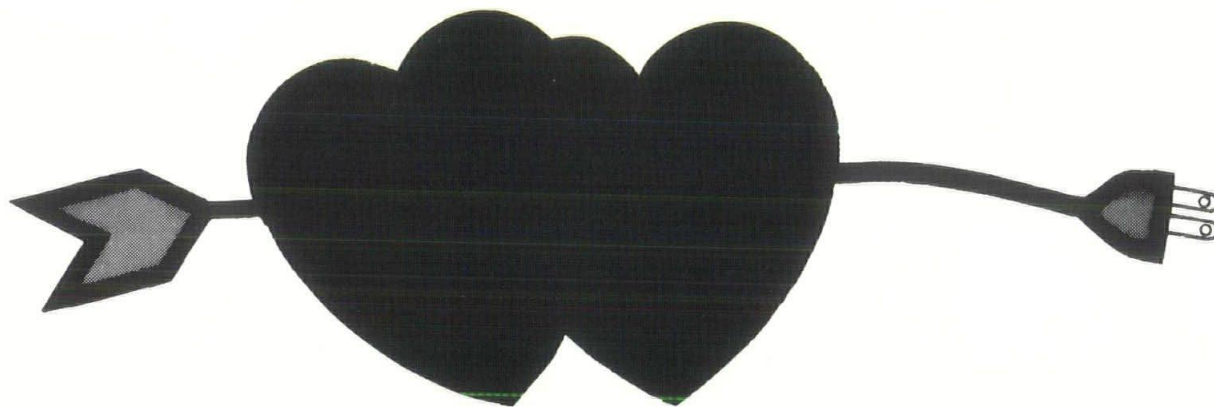
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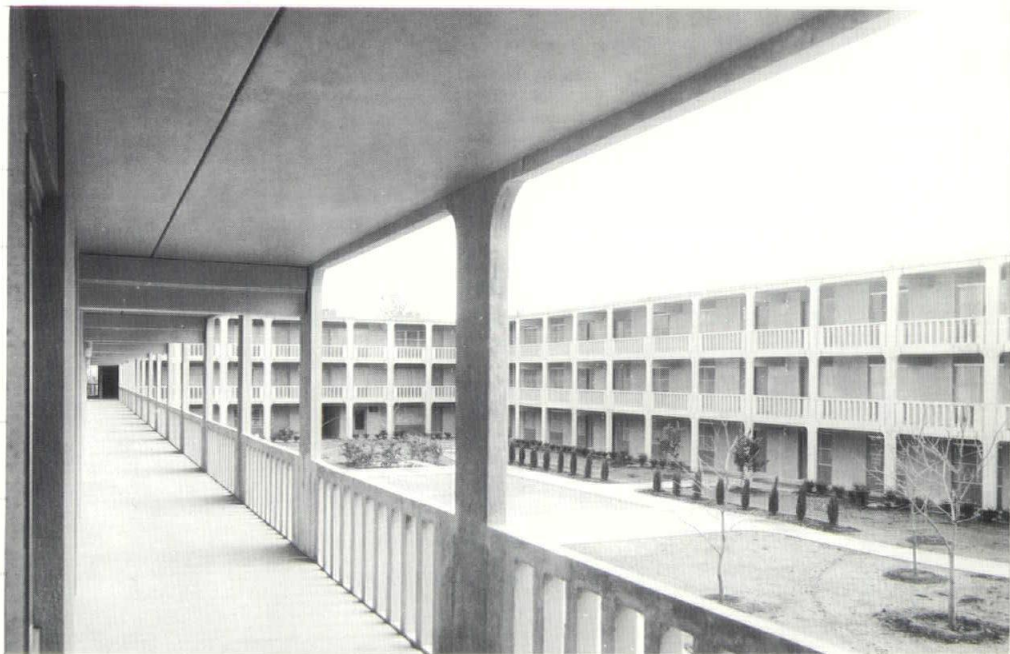
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# The Hope For Construction Cost Savings

Why can't the mass production techniques that crank out millions of cars every year be applied to housing, where the need for great quantities of new units at lower costs is becoming critical?

They can, but only theoretically. You can't mass produce unless you have a mass market. A car is a finished consumer product designed for mobility. A house is neither.

Housing is still a regional, rather than a national market. A mass market big enough to create effective mass production will be created only when local building codes with individual and contradictory requirements are eliminated, labor unions agree to end jurisdictional disputes that prevent the use of prefabricated building units, and when financing is universally available for low-income housing. These conditions do not exist at present, nor are they likely to in the near future.

## PREFAB UNITS EXIST

Prefabrication already exists in housing to a considerable degree. Roof trusses, bathroom and kitchen components, window and stairway units, and wall panels are available. Some experts believe that further savings may come, not from houses manufactured in factories, but in the creation of small factories or assembly operations on the building site.

But, while experiments in reducing housing costs through new technology must not be discouraged, architects with broad experience in housing say that a more realistic promise of savings will come through more efficient use of land. Land and financing costs often amount to more than half of the price of the house purchase. A new wall or structural system could, at best, affect the overall cost by one or two percentage points. But, if higher densities can be achieved through better planned "mixes" of house types, with townhouses and highrise apartments predominating in a town-like setting, development costs per acre of land can be lowered, and public services—roads, schools, sewage and water lines, police and fire protection, etc.—won't be stretched out so far. These situations will be reflected in lower costs and lower taxes.

## HIGH-SPEED TRANSIT VITAL

Such compact communities can be planned and built at varying scales and at considerable distances from the city if certain criteria are met. Housing experts say they will be most successful when fitted competently into a comprehensive master plan for the metropolitan area, and linked to the city by high-speed transit. A high-speed rail system, usually found as a combined subway and surface system, can handle 20 times the number of passengers of a highway, and do it without parking problems.

Thus, as the cost squeeze worsens, the California Rambler, or what passes for it in many housing sub-divisions, will be on the way out in the years ahead. Towns and villages will be on the way in. Higher densities are coming, whether we like it or not.

The ideal will be a future fusion of better planning—including the hookup of satellite towns and parent city through high-speed subways and rail transit—with a genuine mass production technology that creates well-designed housing units for a single and unobstructed national market.

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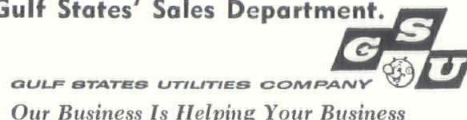
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# Evergreen Plantation

WALLACE, LOUISIANA

One of the finest groups of plantation buildings surviving in Louisiana is the collection of splendid structures comprising Evergreen Plantation, near Wallace in St. John the Baptist Parish. It was purchased and restored some twenty-five years ago by Mrs. Matilda Gray, its present owner.

The builder of these buildings appears to have been Pierre Clidament Becnel, whose grand-parents, Pierre Becnel and Magdaline Haydel, were married in the parish church of St. Charles, on June 2, 1772. It was from his grandmother's estate that P. C. Becnel bought the plantation on May 21, 1830 for \$77,000. Probably soon after this, he built a new master's house with its assorted out-buildings, for in the act of sale, the buildings were described as "a very fine master's house with an upper story, kitchen, oven, garden, poultry yard, etc.: a fine sugar house, refinery, a new animal-power mill, storehouse, rice mill, 12 large negro cabins on sills, roofed with shingles, with brick chimneys, etc." These are undoubtedly some of the buildings that still stand on Evergreen Plantation, but in an 1835 inventory, two master's houses are described.

Through many years, some beset with financial difficulties, and numerous business arrangements with other members of his family, Pierre Clidament Becnel always retained "this portion of land fronting the river on which is found (his) residence . . . the master's house . . . the other buildings or constructions, fences and surroundings," as they were described in an act of sale of a half interest in the plantation to his cousin, Lezin Becnel, on May 21, 1846. Lezin Becnel eventually became full owner of this plantation and it remained in his family until 1894.

No records have been found to verify the date of the building of the principal house at Evergreen, but the similarity of so many of its details to those of the Le Carpentier-Beauregard House in New Orleans built in 1826, would indicate a somewhat similar date, perhaps 1830. Francois Correjolles was the architect of the Le Carpentier house and James Lambert, the builder. Evergreen could conceivably be the work of these same men. The curved front stairway, the pedimented portico, and the similarity of details in the dormer and interior wood work, lend support to this possibility.

It is also possible that Norbert Soulié, one of the principal creditors at a meeting of the creditors of P. C. Becnel held in 1835, may have had a part in its design or construction. According to a letter written by Soulié to the noted architect Benjamin Latrobe, upon the death of his son Henry of yellow fever, in New Orleans in 1817, Soulié, who appears to have been a principal agent or foreman of Henry Latrobe, mentions that it was

to Henry that he chiefly owed his knowledge of the arts. He could not have had a better teacher, for at the time of his death at the age of twenty-four, young Latrobe had become one of the leading architects of New Orleans. He had designed the Orleans Ball Room and a monumental lighthouse at the mouth of the Mississippi. He had built houses for some of the principal citizens of the city, including William Kenner and Bernard Marigny. At the time of his death in 1817, he was engaged in the construction of buildings in New Orleans for Richard Butler of Ormond Plantation, and for Madame Chabot Honoré Landreaux, the Charity Hospital on Canal Street, and others. Norbert Soulié, with a background of training under so accomplished a master of classical architecture, might well have designed such a house as Evergreen.

The name of Louis Pilié also appears in the 1835 list of creditors, and his brother Joseph, who was then city surveyor, might have been involved in the design of Evergreen, as he surely must have been in the design of nearby Oak Alley built in 1837, for his daughter Josephine, wife of Jacques Roman. Joseph Pilié, designer of the Vegetable Market in New Orleans in 1823, also designed a splendid building for the Mariner's Church which unfortunately was never carried out to completion. In this design, drawn in 1827, Pilié used a well detailed columned portico with pediment, and revealed a command of the classical idiom in the years before the Greek Revival took over as the dominant style of the South. As in the case with so many notable Louisiana buildings, the name of Evergreen's architect must remain a matter of speculation until some contemporary document is found to reveal it.

In the legal proceedings in which Norbert Soulié's and Louis Pilié's names appear as creditors, Pierre Clidament Becnel presented a petition to the First District Court, stating "that from various misfortunes and unforeseen events, he finds himself unable, at present to meet the payment of his just debts." Annexed to this petition is a schedule of his debts and property, duly sworn to. In it the land is described as follows:

## LAND.

A plantation situated in St. John the Baptist Parish and possessed in joint-tenancy by P. C. Becnel and Madame Widow Francois Haydel,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to this latter and the other  $\frac{3}{4}$  to P. C. Becnel, the plantation established in sugar-works, having 12 arpents and 33 feet of front by a depth of 70 arpents, the line opening  $17\frac{1}{2}$  degrees, and giving by this means, an area of around 1158 acres of land, 320 arpents of which all cultivated in cane, 50 arpents in corn . . . 10 arpents in rice . . . 40 arpents are in yards and orchards, and 75 arpents in savannah.

Structures on the plantation are described as a sugar refinery composed of three buildings with a steam engine and a horizontal mill from the West Point Foundry. One master house, probably the one described in the 1830 act of sale, is here said to be "a master house in wood on brick pillars, roofed with shingles and measuring 40 feet by 56." This is perhaps the house now used as an overseer's residence. Several other simple structures are listed including "a kitchen, 4 servant's rooms with brick chimneys, surrounded and roofed with stakes, . . . a pigeon house on brick foundations, . . . a storehouse on brick pillars, roofed with shingles, surrounded with planks and measuring 56 feet by 28, . . . a rice mill constructed in the same manner and of similar dimensions . . . a shop on sills, brick foundations, surrounded with planks, roofed with shingles, measuring 32 feet by 21, . . . 12 negro cabins, double, on sills, surrounded with planks, roofed with shingles, with brick chimneys, and measuring each 12 feet by 24." These cabins may be some of those still standing in rows flanking the fine avenue of live oaks to the rear on the upper side of the plantation. The buildings described in this part of the list, all belonging jointly to P. C. Becnel and to Madame Haydel all probably date before 1830 and are of types of construction that had been used by the French in Louisiana since the early eighteenth century.

The schedule of P. C. Becnel's properties concludes with the following listing:

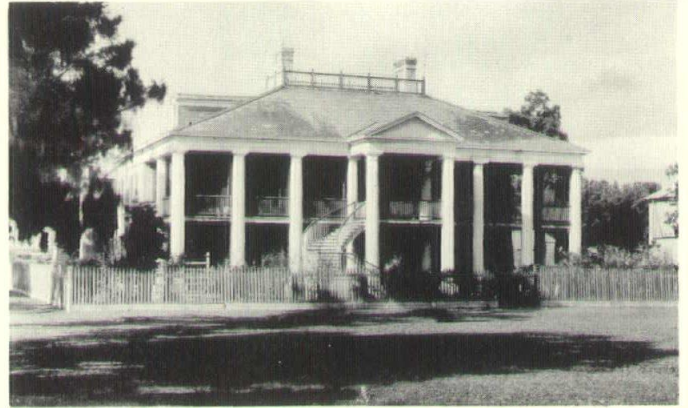
A two story master house, with brick columns, measuring 66 feet in length by 40, galleries front and rear, and on the sides, belonging to P. C. Becnel, according to an act, a copy of which is here attached, estimated - \$10,000. Two brick pigeon houses 14 feet square, 20 feet in height; two small houses serving as kitchen and servants chambers, coach houses, store houses, stables, etc., the whole estimated by the appraisers of the Union bank - - - \$3,000. An (entourage) inclosure of 8 arpents in area - - - \$1,500.

These are undoubtedly the much admired buildings of Evergreen Plantation, perhaps the most important group of plantation buildings surviving in Louisiana.

After the Becnel family gave up Evergreen in 1894, it was purchased by the Songy's who owned it for many years. Then for some years it was unoccupied; a potential prey to vandals until rescued in 1944 by Mrs. Gray, who, with architects Richard Koch and Douglass V. Freret successively, restored the plantation and its grounds, one of the show places on the old River Road.

SAMUEL WILSON, JR., FAIA





Evergreen - Front before restoration

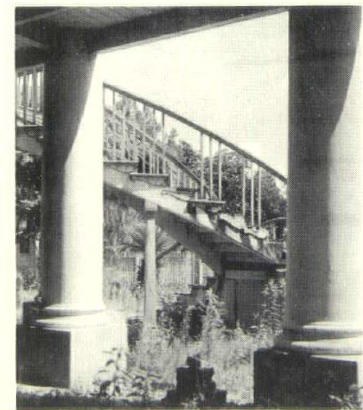
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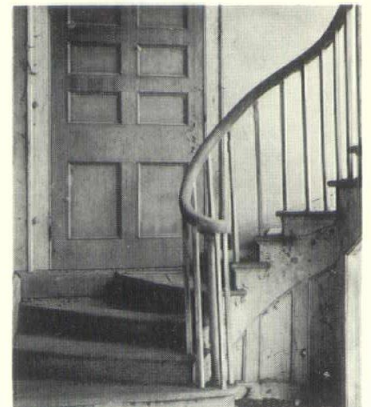
Evergreen today



Entrance door

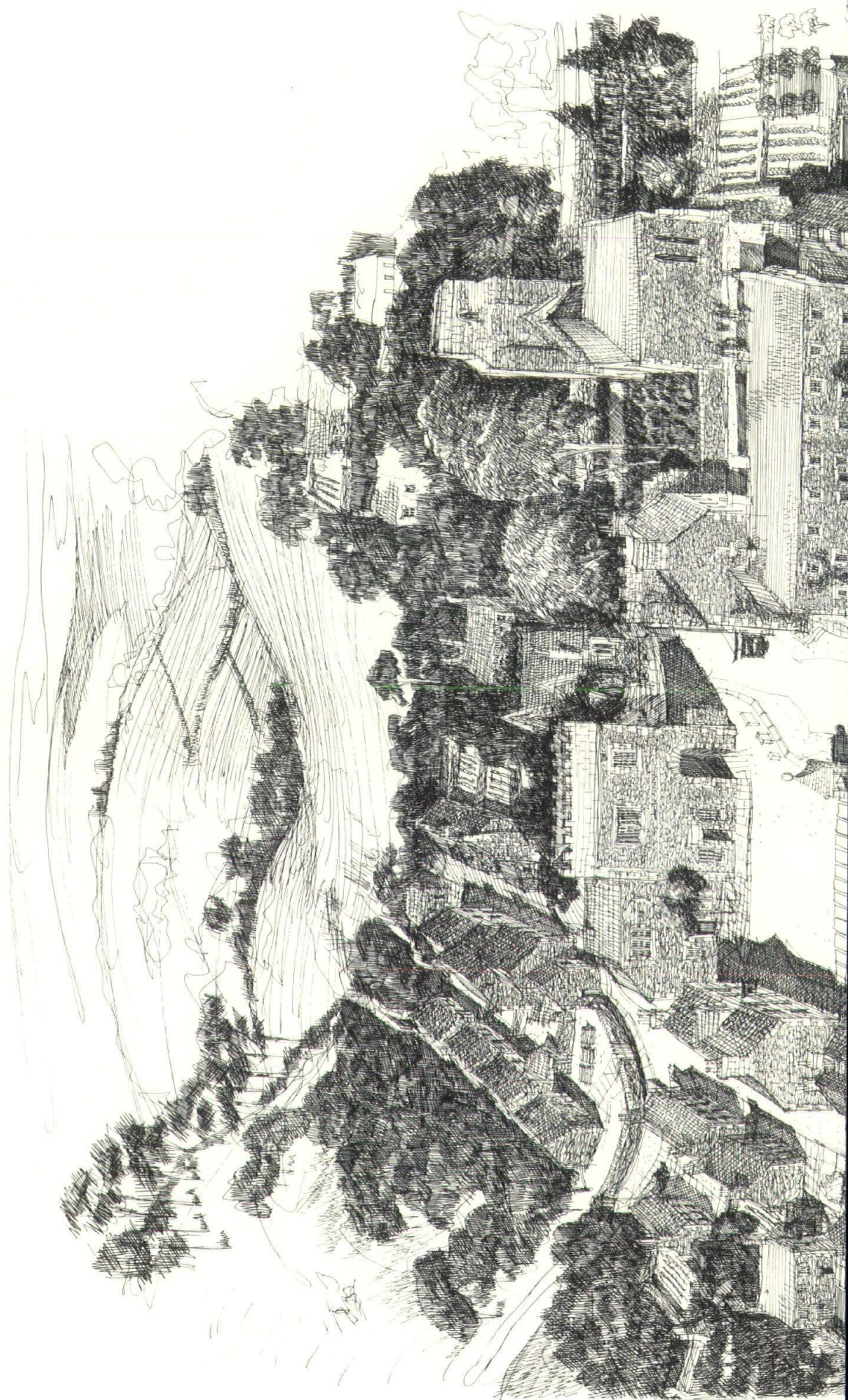


Stair detail - front



Back stair









## Stone Village

BLANCHLAND, NORTHUMBERLAND, ENGLAND





A detailed aerial photograph of a city model. At the top, a large, modern building with a curved roof is labeled 'AUDITORIUM & CONVENTION CENTER'. Below it, a large parking lot is visible. The city is divided by several streets: 'BROAD ST.' runs diagonally from the middle left towards the bottom; 'DIVISION ST.' runs vertically in the center; 'RYAN ST.' runs horizontally across the bottom right; and 'MILL ST.' runs vertically at the bottom. A shopping area labeled 'RYAN MALL' is situated between Division St. and Ryan St. The model includes numerous small trees, building footprints, and street markings to represent a realistic urban environment.

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# Operation Heartbeats

BROAD ST.

DIVISION ST.

RYAN MALL

RYAN ST.

MILL ST.



## Lake Charles Downtown Redevelopment Project

J. J. CHAMPEAUX, AIA  
Director, Office of City Planning

Downtown Lake Charles has experienced the plight of all cities as they make the transition between 50 and 100 thousand population; it has outgrown its capability to effectively serve the urban community as the only retail center. Problems and symptoms of greater problems are apparent everywhere. There are 34 vacancies in the 5 major blocks of Ryan Street, Lake Charles' traditional "main street". Assessed valuation is low and dropping steadily. Parking lots are prevalent, but largely unpaved and uninviting. Traffic congestion is almost unbearable with trucks, busses, taxis and automobiles all using the same paths through downtown, forcing pedestrians to seek safety on the sidewalks. All of these characteristics are painfully obvious today, and the

The primary catalyst in OPERATION HEARTBEAT is a fully landscaped, four block Pedestrian Mall, which extends from the Courthouse and City Hall along the four major blocks of Ryan Street. The Mall includes, in addition to landscaping, five pavilions to be used for sidewalk sales (rotation basis among adjacent retail stores). The multi-level pavilions will also serve for public activities such as art exhibits, display area for the Petro-Chemical Industries, McNeese State College, and Civic Clubs for any public-oriented activities. Colorful banners will identify sales and public activities, and a coordinated canopy scheme will provide cover for inclement weather.

Street and parking improvements, including the four lane traffic loop, is es-

timated at \$650,000 and the first phase of construction is under contract as of June 4, providing two legs of the traffic loop. Completion of all street improvements is anticipated by March, 1970 (9 months) and the Mall construction will begin at that time.

convention facilities will support up to 6000 delegates, and the arena is a flexible, multi-use facility with a capacity of 7200 seats. The Capital Improvement Program will finance the facility, and urban renewal funds were used to clear the previously blighted lakefront and provide the land fill and retaining wall to support the civic complex.

OPERATION HEARTBEAT, together with the Auditorium-Convention Facility on the Lake, is expected to be a strong catalyst in a total Downtown Redevelopment, and many retail businesses have begun planning expansion and renovation of existing structures. Long range plans call for major East-West and North-South arterial streets to tie into the Inner Traffic Loop, providing maxi-

## THE MILLION DOLLAR MIRACLE

Downtown Merchants Association has requested remedial action of the City Council and City Administration.

On December 3, 1968, the Director of City Planning presented to the Downtown Merchants a series of proposals aimed at total downtown redevelopment. The merchants reviewed the proposals, combined into one project entitled OPERATION HEARTBEAT, and gave tentative approval to the approach, but asked for further details about cost, specifics on parking improvements and better visual commitment of street furniture and landscaping. On May 6, 1969, OPERATION HEARTBEAT was again presented with architectural sketches and a scaled model of the entire downtown redevelopment. That day the Downtown Merchants Association and Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce each gave a unanimous endorsement to the project, and OPERATION HEARTBEAT came alive as an on-going project.

Included in OPERATION HEARTBEAT is the creation of an eight square block inner traffic loop, four lanes wide with two way traffic. The existing parking inventory reflects over 5000 parking spaces, but most are shell lots and none are landscaped. OPERATION HEARTBEAT provides for hard surfacing of all lots in the eight block core as well as those adjacent, and the use of 2000 parking spaces on the new lake fill will provide parking capabilities to support the downtown area through 1985.

The Mall is estimated to cost approximately \$350,000 for the four block development between Kirby Street and Mill Street. Costs of the Mall will be assessed to abutting property owners along Ryan Street at approximately \$100.00 per front foot. The traffic loop will be financed the same way, cost per front foot varying according to construction necessary. The traffic loop costs will be equalized so that no property owner will be forced to carry greater than his share of the developments.

Support of OPERATION HEARTBEAT has been community wide, and the major financial institutions have indicated a desire to contribute beyond their front footage assessments in order to lessen the burden on some of the smaller establishments within the downtown area. Ribbon cutting ceremonies are anticipated in October of 1970, and the following Christmas season is anticipated to be an astronomical event for Lake Charles.

Two blocks from the Mall will be the \$10,000,000-plus Auditorium, Convention facility due to be completed in 1972. The well-appointed theatre will seat 2000,

maximum accessibility for the Pedestrian Mall.

The design of the Traffic Loop and Pedestrian Mall was completed in six months by J. J. Champeaux, AIA, Director of City Planning. During this period, over 30 business and civic groups received slide presentations by Champeaux explaining the problems existing in the Downtown area, and groundwork was laid for the receptive thinking of merchants and businessmen to support OPERATION HEARTBEAT as finally presented.

The Southwest Louisiana Chapter, American Institute of Architects, and Faculty and Students of Architecture at McNeese donated much of their time and talents in assisting Champeaux with the presentation phase of OPERATION HEARTBEAT, as reflected in the drawings and model used to gain public support of the project.

In the interest of establishing Downtown Lake Charles as a regional center for retail trade, finance, business, government and culture, OPERATION HEARTBEAT has reflected a coordinated effort of business and professional leaders, citizens, public officials, members of the American Institute of Architects, students of Architecture, and also reflects the goal of the Director of City Planning for total community involvement in the Planning Process.







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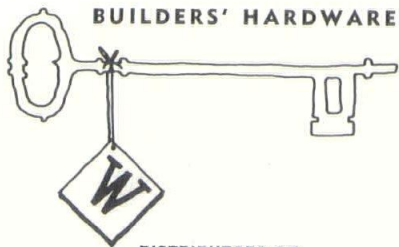


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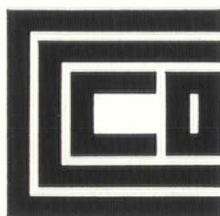
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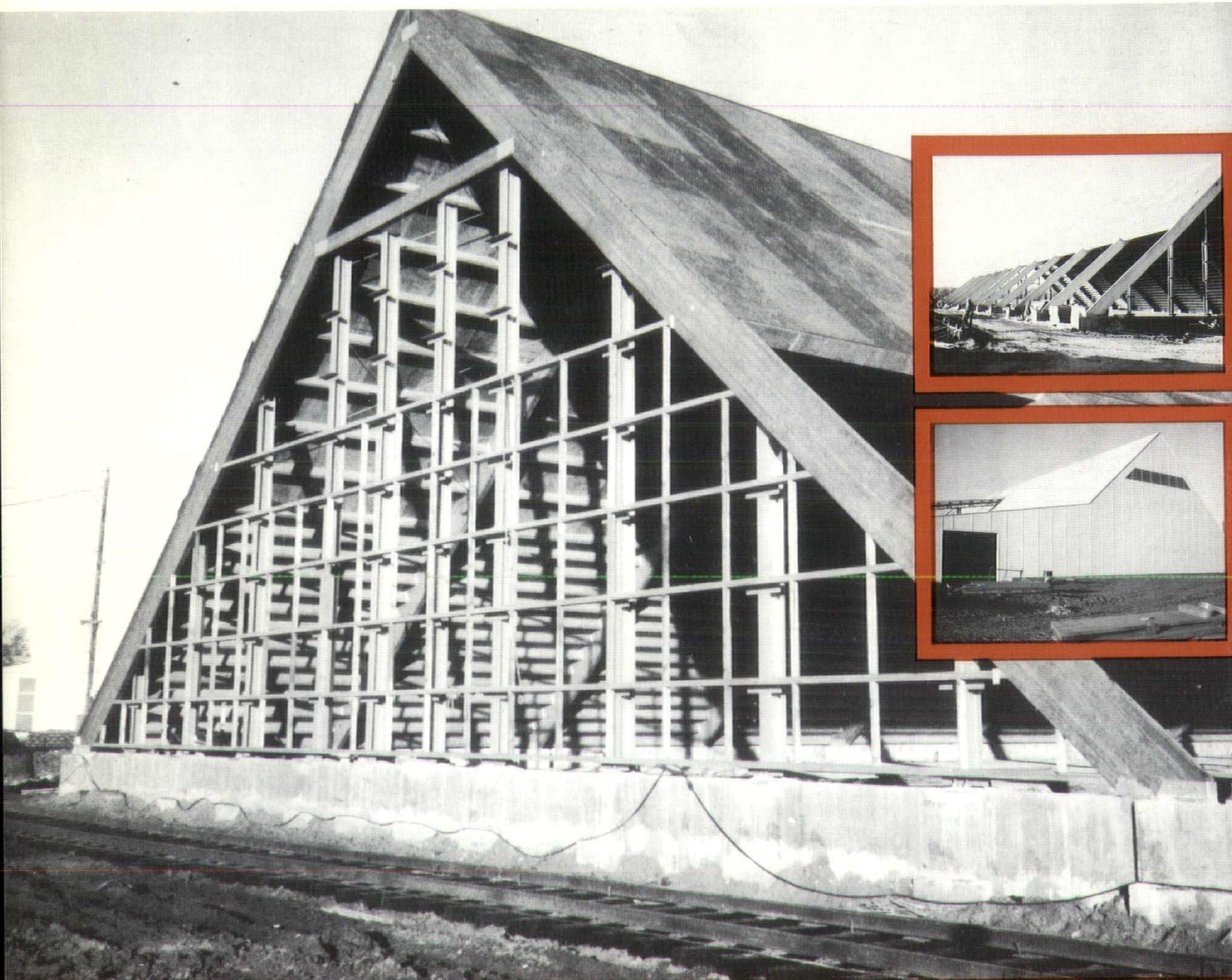
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