The Railroad at Oakland Plantation

The New Orleans & Pacific Railroad (later called the Texas & Pacific) was organized shortly after the Civil War; in 1871, Natchitoches appointed an agent to negotiate with the company to have the rail line brought through the parish. In 1875, Alphonse Prud'homme and others, including Benjamin Metoyer, even donated rights of way for the railroad through their property; but, when the line was actually constructed in 1882, it bypassed the town of Natchitoches entirely. Nevertheless, with a station at Cypress, railroad transport quickly replaced the majority of river-borne transport after 1882.

Threatened with economic ruin as a result of the routing of the railroad, the business leaders in Natchitoches incorporated their own railroad company in 1885 and, two years later, levied a special tax to commence construction of a "Tap Line" railroad from the Cypress station north to Natchitoches. Surveyed by Alphonse Prud'homme, the spur line paralleled the present route of Louisiana Highway I, bringing rail service through the heart of Isle Brevelle and within a couple of miles of Oakland Plantation. 20 By 1895, and probably before, Brevelle Station (sometimes called Prud'homme Station) had been constructed near the railroad crossing at Bayou Brevelle, about half-way between Natchez and Cypress. According to Mayo Prud'homme, Alphonse Prud'homme "put a side track there [to] pick up cotton, or anything else that had to be shipped." 21 Eventually, however, Prud'homme closed the station to reduce cut- through traffic on the Oakland farm road that began near the store and Big House

and ran southwesterly to the railroad station.

By the early 1900s, a new station was built west of Oakland at the growing community of Natchez, which provided somewhat more convenient railroad access for the plantation. This also may have contributed to Prud'homme's decision to close the Brevelle Station. 22,1

- 1.Oakland Plantation Prud'homme's Store HSR National Park Service pp. 16-18
- 20. Southern Publishing Company, Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana (Tuscaloosa, AL: Mills Historical Press, 1985 reprint of original 1890 edition), p. 315.
- 21. Malone, "Oakland Plantation ..., " p. 161.
- 22. Interview with Kenneth Prud'homme, 9 May 2001; "Natchez, Louisiana," unpublished MSS, Creighton Coll. (Folder 5), Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Watson Memorial Library, Northwestern State University of Louisiana.
- 23. Lambre Prud'homme was the brother of the diarist Pierre Lestan Prud'homme. Their parents were Jacques Lestan Prud'homme and Marie Eliza Lambre.
- 24. Interview with Kenneth Prud'homme, 3 April 2001.
- 25. 1900 Federal Census, Natchitoches Parish.
- 26. "Plantation and Store Ledgers, 1873," Series 3.1.6, Prud'homme Coll., UNC.
- 27. Ibid., folders 295-298; Solomon Williams was one of the Prud'hommes' tenants who bought lobster on more than one occasion.