

Prud'homme's Plantation Store

The range of goods available at Prud'homme's store expanded through the first half of the twentieth century, and the store remained a center of community life into the 1950S. By then, however, improved roads (La. Hwy. I was paved from Alexandria to Natchitoches in 1936) and widespread use of automobiles greatly expanded how and where people shopped and supplied their material needs. Many if not most of the Prud'hommes' clientele recognized the relatively high cost of goods at country stores and used the store less and less as better options became available.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, Alphonse Prud'homme II recalled, the store "had everything from something to eat, to something to work, to something to wear."³² In addition to its function as a retail outlet, the store housed the Prud'hommes' plantation office in a room added at the rear of the building around 1880. This is where plantation accounts were kept and settled with the sharecroppers and tenants who worked the land. Interpretation of this role is as important as interpretation of the retail use of the store itself. Prud'homme's Store also housed the Bermuda Post Office sporadically after its establishment in 1877 and continuously from 1924 until 1967, when the post office was finally discontinued. The presence of the post office reinforced the overall importance of the store to the entire community around Oakland Plantation, although the store itself continued to

operate until 1982.¹

32. Oakland Plantation, Its People Testimony by Anne Malone p.126

1. Oakland Plantation - Prud'homme's Store HSR National Park Service
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