

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Bright-Lamkin-Easterling House (1890) is a two story frame Queen Anne Revival residence located near downtown Monroe in the city's old residential area. The house has been little altered since construction.

The asymmetrical plan consists of four major rooms upstairs and down. The house is entered via a foyer which features the principal staircase and a corner fireplace. If the room were larger, it could be considered a living hall. The foyer connects with the front parlor via paneled pocket doors. At the rear of the parlor is another set of pocket doors opening into the library. This yields a somewhat open floor plan. The dining room is set to the rear of the foyer, and further to the rear is a kitchen wing with a porch and servant's staircase. The foyer is encompassed on the exterior by an Eastlake porch with arched trellises.

The exterior design is similar to prototypes published in Pallister's New Cottage Homes (1887). Although no specific plate was used, one must admit that the Bright-Lamkin-Easterling House is closer to the high style East Coast Queen Anne Revival than one usually finds in Louisiana. This is due mainly to the two story vertical mass and the relatively small verandahs. The massing is enlivened by two small balconies, two polygonal bays, three imbricated shingle gables (one of which also features panels), three Elizabethan chimneys, two dormers, and a cast-iron rooftop balustrade.

The interior details are fairly conventional for the period except for the five painted slate mantels (three downstairs, two upstairs). These are designed in various versions of the basic aedicule shape. The painterly treatment consists of contrasting panels of different decorative marbles, stylized plant and star forms, and panels depicting natural scenes.

Alterations:

In about 1920 the rear porch was glazed in for a sun room. More recently a set of French doors was installed in the principal bedroom in the opening leading to the side balcony. Finally, one chimney in the rear has been removed. (There were four; now there are three.) In our opinion, these changes should be regarded as minor.

To the rear of the house is a contemporaneous servant's cottage which, of course, is listed as a contributing element.

Immediately behind the house is a tiny frame shed of indeterminate date which is listed as a non-contributing element.

Specific dates 1890
Builder/Architect Builder: William A. Bright

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Bright-Lamkin-Easterling House is of state significance in the area of art and of local significance in the area of architecture. It is significant in the area of art because of its painted slate

mantels, which are rare examples within the context of the state. It is significant in the area of architecture as Monroe's finest Queen Anne Revival-Eastlake residence.

Art - State Level:

The Bright-Lamkin-Easterling House is one of a number of large Victorian residences found across the state. Its painted slate mantels are what makes it important among period homes. During the late nineteenth century manufactured cast-iron and slate mantels were sometimes given a marble treatment. This work was done by hand, but at the factory rather than onsite as it might have been done in earlier times. No survey exists as to how many examples remain in Louisiana or how many there were at one time. However, one assumes that there must have been a fair number of them in better class houses across the state. But, as far as the State Historic Preservation Office can determine, there are probably less than ten surviving period buildings in Louisiana with mantels of this type.

The mantels at the Bright-Lamkin-Easterling House are important as examples of Victorian art because they show the Victorian fondness for elaborately contrived effects. [In all cases the veining is more pronounced and intricate than real marble. Moreover, in addition to the marbling treatment, the mantels feature panels depicting natural scenes? stylized plant and star forms, and other decorative motifs.

Architecture - Local Level:

The Easterling House is locally significant as Monroe's finest Queen Anne Revival-Eastlake residence. For the most part, Monroe's older residences are confined to the Colonial Revival, Mission, and Bungalow styles. There are, however, a dozen or so examples of the earlier Queen Anne-Eastlake style, most of which are cottages. The Easterling House is one of three exceptions - i.e., not cottages but full two story residences. The other two examples are inferior to the Easterling House in one respect or another. One is very plain and the other has suffered considerable loss of integrity (aluminum siding and modern aluminum windows throughout).

Historical Note:

Melinda T. Layton sold the property on which the house is located to William A. Bright on February 26, 1890. The deed required that Bright construct a residence on the property by September 1, 1890 or automatically forfeit it back to Mrs. Layton. Bright held the property until May 31, 1894. By deed dated December 6, 1898, E. Tyler Lamkin acquired the property, and it remained in the Lamkin family until August 8, 1979. Mrs. Marguerite Lamkin Easterling owned the house from May 13, 1927 until August 9, 1973.

Major Bibliographical References

Conveyance Records, Ouachita Parish Courthouse.