

Killarney (c. 1855) is a one-story, frame, Greek Revival style cottage located in rural Concordia Parish. It stands upon approximately four acres situated across State Highway 569 from Lake St. John (an ox-bow lake of the Mississippi River). Although previous owners have estimated the home=s construction date to fall between 1835 and 1855, the architectural evidence (see below) points to a date between 1850 and 1860. Thus, a date of c. 1855 will be used for the purposes of this nomination. Although the house has received alterations over the years, it retains its National Register eligibility.

Killarney is a five-bay galleried cottage which is raised approximately three feet on brick piers. Its exterior Greek Revival motifs include square gallery posts and matching corner boards, all of which feature molded Doric capitals; a simple entablature outlining the gallery roof; and a front entrance highlighted by a transom, sidelights and door surround with a pediment shaped lintel and shoulder molding. The original rear entrance also has a transom and sidelights but lacks the specific Greek Revival characteristics found surrounding the entrance on the facade. Four aedicule style mantels comprise Killarney=s interior Greek Revival details of importance. These are composed of pilasters (with simple bases and capitals) which support a broad entablature surmounted by a simply molded mantel shelf. The molding profiles found on these mantels were popular in Louisiana during the 1850s. Although not specifically associated with the Greek Revival style, the house also has numerous four panel doors typical of the period. The window surrounds feature a very simple molding pattern and the tall baseboards are somewhat primitive in appearance. An interesting feature is the home=s pegged construction, which can be viewed in the unfinished attic. The floorplan features two rooms on each side of a wide center hall.

Alterations to Killarney since its construction include the following:

- 1) the enclosure of the home=s original rear gallery and the later construction of a utility room at one rear corner of this space, the installation of beaded board ceilings in the two front rooms, and the addition of closets in the two rooms used as bedrooms,
- 2) the removal of two of the building=s four chimneys and the covering of the sides and rear elevation with asbestos shingles, and
- 3) a 1996 restoration/renovation which added a staircase (leading to the unfinished attic), a powder room (beneath the stairs), and two fiberglass ceiling medallions to the central hall. At this time built-in display shelves were also added to two parlor walls and molded cornices were placed in each of the original interior spaces. The enclosed rear gallery was also remodeled at this time; it now contains a modern kitchen, breakfast room and bath.

Although the installation of the asbestos shingles to the sides and rear is regrettable because it removes the horizontal lines of the clapboards which characterized the home=s historic exterior, Killarney=s Greek Revival facade and mantelpieces remain true to their c. 1855 appearance. Thus the features (pedimented and shoulder-molded entrance, Doric pillars and corner boards, and the above-mentioned mantels) which make the home Greek Revival and contribute to its architectural significance survive intact. Because buildings exhibiting marks of high-style design are extremely rare locally (see part 8), Killarney is a noteworthy Concordia Parish landmark.

Non-Contributing Elements

Three outbuildings stand on the property surrounding Killarney. These include a wooden combination barn/garage, a large wooden shed standing on poles, and a storage building with walls of wood and metal. All three structures have metal roofs and date to 1900 or later. Because they do not contribute to Killarney=s architectural significance and are not significant in and of themselves, they are being counted as non-contributing elements.

Significant Dates: c. 1855
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Criterion C

Killarney Plantation House is locally significant as a rare architectural landmark within the context

of Concordia Parish. It achieves this distinction because of its Greek Revival styling.

Legally established in 1805, Concordia is one of Louisiana=s oldest parishes. The first land grant for which a record exists occurred in 1796. Two years later Don Jose Vidal obtained several grants for himself and his sons directly across the river from Natchez; this site is now the community of Vidalia, Louisiana. By the time the parish was established shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, most of the land on the west bank of the Mississippi as far north as neighboring Tensas Parish, and the land around the borders of lakes Concordia and St. John, was inhabited. (Before its final boundaries were set in 1843, Concordia Parish extended north to a point opposite Vicksburg.)

Concordia=s economic background has always been predominantly agricultural, and large communities never developed there. The parish=s eastern side was claimed by planters with large land holdings and many slaves, but the majority of these planters were absentee owners who actually lived in Natchez. The western side of the parish developed into smaller holdings often worked by the owners. Although lumbering and other small industries developed after the arrival of the railroad between 1880 and 1890, cotton was the primary product during the historic period. During modern times, however, farming has become more diversified.

Partly due to its developmental history and partly due to natural causes, Concordia has retained very few buildings which can be classified as architectural landmarks. This fact is reflected in the Division of Historic Preservation=s Historic Structures Survey of the parish, which records only 611 buildings which are 50 years of age or older. Although one small commercial historic district is listed on the National Register (included because it is the only concentration of historic commercial buildings in the parish), the vast majority of the parish=s historic buildings are small, undistinguished vernacular cottages, shotgun houses, bungalows and similarly plain commercial buildings. Only approximately twenty structures make any attempt to include features of architectural styles on their exteriors. Although a few of these are altered antebellum homes, more than half are extremely restrained examples which apply only one or two elements of the Queen Anne, Eastlake, Colonial Revival, or Neo-Classical styles to otherwise unconventional facades. Only seven of the twenty can be classified as legitimate architectural landmarks. These include a small Gothic Revival church, one home featuring a notable Queen Anne style living hall, one raised cottage, and four antebellum examples of the Greek Revival style. Killarney is one of the latter, as are Lisburn and Roseland (both already listed on the National Register). Thus, Killarney=s rarity makes it a prime candidate for Register recognition.

Historical Note

The first mention of the tract which would become Killarney Plantation occurred in 1820, when William Primm, Sturges Sprague, and John Maxwell purchased the land from the federal government. Maxwell had established a plantation on the site by 1830 (what happened to his two partners is unclear). Although one cannot be absolutely certain who constructed the house, records indicate that two slaves living on the plantation between 1835 and 1855 had the necessary carpentry and bricklaying skills. The plantation changed hands several times before then owner John T. McMurren (owner of the Melrose house in Natchez) gave it to his daughter Mary as a wedding present. (It was McMurren who named the property Killarney after his family completed a European tour. Today Killarney is the only survivor of the five plantations McMurren once owned in Louisiana.) Mary married Farah B. Conner in 1857. During the Civil War Conner, a Confederate captain, sustained a serious head injury which left him mentally incapacitated. In 1888 Conner=s son sold the property to Audley Britton, the father of Farah B. Conner=s sister-in-law. Britton, in turn, gave the property to his daughter (the wife of Farah B. Conner=s brother). Conner apparently regained his health around 1900, and his brother then gave Killarney back to him. The property remained in Conner family hands until 1915. The new owners changed its name to Alabama Plantation. After several more sales, Killarney/Alabama was purchased by the Godbold family, in whose hands it remained until 1984. It experienced two or three more ownership changes and a restoration/renovation before being purchased by Carol and William J. Tomko in 1998.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Division of Historic Preservation, Historic Structures Survey of Concordia Parish, Louisiana.

History of property submitted by owners, typescript; copy in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.