

Describe the present and original (it known) physical appearance

The Guy House (c.1850) is a large one-and-a-half story frame Greek Revival dwelling located in a pastoral setting about five miles south of Mansfield. Although there have been various twentieth century accretions and a few other modifications, the house retains all of its numerous Greek Revival stylistic features.

It is a symmetrical pitched roof galleried cottage with three oversized Greek Revival dormers. There was never a rear gallery. Windows are six over six, including those on the gallery and dormers. The two chimneys are located against the gable end walls of the house. The front gallery features six Doric posts, end pilasters, a plain balustrade, and a full entablature. The massive aedicule motif doorway has a denticular cornice and a secondary set of smaller pilasters separating the door and side lights. The four gallery windows are framed by pilasters and have bolection molded panels below the sill. The dormers are styled like small temples. Each has a fully developed pediment, a full entablature, corner pilasters, and a secondary set of pilasters framing the window. Other exterior Greek Revival features are the pediment shaped window tops on the side elevations and the small rather awkwardly placed pedimented portico on the western side elevation. Small side porticos are occasionally found on Greek Revival houses in the region, and this one is clearly original.

The Guy House originally had a central hall plan with two rooms on each side. However, the hall was subsequently bisected by a wall with a wide square opening. The staircase, which ascends from back to front, is located at the back of the hall within its own walled off stair well. It was originally accessible only by a door at the rear of the hall, but sometime in the twentieth century a second door was cut into the stair room from a rear room. At that time, the quarter turn winding stair was adjusted to accommodate the new entrance. Except for very deep ear molds on the doorways, the interiors are fairly typical. Mantels are of the standard aedicule motif type.

Alterations:

(1) As previously mentioned, the central hall has been bisected, the stair adjusted, and a secondary door cut into the stair room.

(2) The front door is a modern replacement. (The owner recently found the original door in storage elsewhere on the property and will put it back in place as part of an upcoming restoration project.)

(3) A larger window opening was cut on the rear of the western side elevation and double plate glass windows were inserted.

(4) A lean-to addition was attached to the rear portion of the eastern side elevation. It begins behind the chimney and extends beyond the rear of the house. It was subsequently fitted with a lean-to garage.

(5) There have been two other small one-story rear appendages.

Assessment of Integrity:

None of the above modifications has seriously impacted the house's Greek Revival character. Fortunately, they have largely been in the form of rear additions rather than loss of original architectural fabric. As previously noted, the house's numerous Greek Revival character-defining elements survive. Because the various appendages are small-scale and set to the rear, the original Greek Revival main block is dominant. It also should be noted that some of these accretions will be removed as part of an upcoming restoration project to be undertaken in consultation with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office.

Specific dates c.1850
Builder/Architect Builder: Samuel Eldridge Guy

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Guy House is locally significant in the area of architecture as a vital part of the distinctly Greek Revival architectural heritage of DeSoto Parish.

Northern Louisiana parishes such as DeSoto were settled between roughly 1830 and the 1850s by individuals from Alabama, Georgia, and other nearby states. Of course, Greek Revival was literally the rage at the time, and DeSoto settlers embraced it with a vengeance. Although many examples from this architectural flowering have been lost, including the impressive Keachi Female College, an astounding number survive. Excluding New Orleans, DeSoto is one of three parishes considered to be major centers of Greek Revival architecture in the state. Whereas other parishes average about a half dozen Greek Revival residences, DeSoto boasts at least twenty, not to mention three Greek Revival-Gothic Revival churches, a Greek Revival temple fronted store, and a Greek Revival Masonic hall. Although a few of DeSoto's Greek Revival houses are impressive two story examples, none are grand "Gone With the Wind" piles. The one or one-and-a-half story examples tend to be galleried cottages (often with a tripped roof), although a few have a pedimented portico. It is also important to note that the Greek Revival in DeSoto was a rural phenomenon guided by local builders and carpenters who interpreted the style in their own way. This special heritage really represents the parish's architectural apogee. With the exception of a few landmarks, there has not been an architectural flowering in the parish since then.

In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, any intact example of the style is significant as a vital part of the parish's architectural identity. Except for the five two-story examples, it would be rather arbitrary to separate the other roughly comparable residences into gradations of importance. Particularly distinctive features of the Guy House include the temple-like dormers (believed to be unique in the parish), the heavy shoulder molded interior doorways, the bolection molded panels underneath the gallery windows, the pilasters framing the gallery windows, and the pediment shaped window tops on the side elevations.

Historical Note:

Although the builder, Samuel Eldridge Guy, acquired the property in 1840, the architectural evidence suggests a c.1850 date. The house has remained in the family and is currently owned by the great great grandson of the builder.

Major Bibliographical References

Conveyance Records, DeSoto Parish.

Louisiana Historic Structures Survey, DeSoto Parish.