

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Louisiana Governor's Mansion was built in 1930 by Governor Huey P. Long. It was used as the official residence for 32 years and is now an arts and science center.

The architects for the Neoclassical mansion were Dreyfus, Weiss, and Seifert of New Orleans. Construction was supervised by Mr. Weiss and the furnishings by Mrs. Leo Weiss. The cost of the structure was almost \$150,000 and the furnishings were purchased for another \$22,000.

The building has two floors, a full basement, and an attic. It is plaster over brick and painted white. The slate mansard roof has open balustrades and fourteen dormers. Four large thirty-foot Corinthian columns support a pediment adorned with carving depicting a pelican feeding her young framed by ornate scroll work, a design based on the Great Seal of the State of Louisiana.

The house has an east-west orientation. The building has plaster walls and ceilings throughout and either terrazzo or hardwood floors.

The ground floor, or basement, originally consisted of a six car garage, laundry, cold food storage vault, boiler room, and lavatory. Minor modifications have been made to permit the rooms to be used for storage of collections and/or display. The six-car garage was converted into a 200-seat auditorium in 1965. The laundry area was converted into an exhibit area the same year; the rest of the basement area remains basically unchanged and is used for janitorial and maintenance storage.

The first or main floor contains the last Room or formal reception area, the State Dining Room, kitchen and pantry, breakfast room, den/library, guard station, offices, bedrooms, restrooms, and storage.

The second floor was the family living area, with an oval room used as a small sitting room, a solarium, bathrooms, and seven bedrooms. The solarium was added by one of the residents.

The attic was only partially, finished and contained living quarters for the help in the west end of the structure.

The main entrance has double doors with a fanlight framed by pilasters. French doors from the oval room above the main entrance lead to a small balcony with a patterned wrought iron banister over the main doors.

The vestibule leads to the main foyer through another set of double doors with a leaded glass fanlight. The foyer is 23' and 28' and contains a curving white marble stairway with black wrought iron banisters.

Off the main foyer is the East Room, a 33' x 55' reception area with a 16' ceiling and three large crystal chandeliers, a carved marble fireplace, and two gilt-bordered mirrors on the north and south ends. A matching mirror is above the mantel. The East Room ceiling has deeply carved plaster in a floral and leaf motif with a frieze of scrolls and florals edged with a dentil pattern. The plaster walls are sectioned into panels by pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The East Room is now used for changing exhibits in art and sculpture.

The dining room has floor-to-ceiling windows on the south and is entered from the foyer through double doors topped with a plaster arch decorated with a pelican. The dining room walls above the wainscoting are prepared in original hand-printed Zuber paper made in Alcase depicting early American scenes. The room has been restored to its original state complete with chandelier, dining table formally set for ten, and custom made carpet and drapes. The ten dining chairs have been recovered in bargello needlepoint.

The den/library is noted for its mantel which is nine feet long and made of ten-inch thick cypress with a centered carving of a pelican feeding her young. This area is now known as the Governor's Room and displays photographs and short biographies of all elected governors of Louisiana from W. C. C. Claiborne to John J. McKeithen. The cases also contain personal memorabilia donated by families and friends of the governors.

The kitchen and pantry area has been converted into a sales and snack bar area with vending machines and seating arrangements. The breakfast room is now the Natural Science Room, exhibiting mounted specimen of Louisiana wildlife.

The offices, guard rooms, and baths on the first floor remain unchanged.

SECOND FLOOR

The Oval Room, which faces the stair landing, has been restored to its original use as an informal sitting area through the interest and financial support of the Junior League of Baton Rouge, Incorporated, and the LASC Guild Restoration Fund. The room is painted turkey red with white trim and ceiling, and is centered with a leather-top drum table and four chairs. Gold gilt-edged mirrors center black lacquered benches on the east and west walls; four original wood-block acrylic prints are mounted in the wall insets and electric sconces adorn the walls. The pale blue, pink and cream colored oval rug was custom designed for the room.

One of the bedrooms in the East Wing was recently restored by Governor James H. Davis who lived in the Mansion from 1944 to 1948 and from 1960 to 1962. Governor Davis has recreated as closely as possible the furnishings and adornments as they were during his tenure. The three remaining bedrooms now house permanent exhibits -- miniature furniture collection, dioramas on the naming of Baton Rouge, Galvez's attack on the British fortress at Baton Rouge just prior to the American Revolution, a scene of Baton Rouge before the Civil War, and the building of the New State Capitol.

The West Wing is used totally for exhibits now -- a replica of an Acadian House, a Country Store, a Tibetan Religious Art Collection, and a mummy of an Egyptian priestess that lived over 2000 years ago.

The Sun Porch at the extreme West end of the second floor was originally screened from floor to ceiling and entered from the master bedroom or center hall. The screen was replaced with glass and an exterior awning added in 1950 during the administration of Governor Earl K. Long. This room is in the process of being restored by the family of Governor Murphy James Foster (1892-1900). The awning is being removed.

The patio or solarium facing the south was originally screened and overlooked the back drive and rose garden. The screen was replaced with glass during the first term of Governor James H. Davis (1944-1948). The room now serves as a Weather Station for educational purposes and broadcasts reports from Ryan Station at frequent intervals. There are no immediate plans for restoring this room, although eventually the whole mansion will be restored.

The two metal fire-escapes exit onto the rear parking area. The West end fire escape was added around 1965 with entrance from the roof through the attic area. The East end fire escape was added in 1974, and is entered from the second floor through the extreme Southeast bedroom. Both were installed to meet City and State fire regulations.

A Zeiss planetarium building was added in 1967 and connects to the Mansion on the West rear by a corridor leading from the once family dining area. The planetarium stands in what was an enclosed side yard and rose garden. The planetarium can be entered from the Mansion area, the rear parking area, and from St. Charles Street.

The grounds slope from the front of the house to the boulevard, and the only change there is the recent addition of a jet fountain within a circular pool.

Many of the features of the Old Louisiana Governor's Mansion are reminiscent of those in the more ornate White House in Washington, D. C., thus enforcing the popular story that Huey Long patterned his new residence after the President's home to "get in practice."

Both have a portico supported by four smooth columns with denticulation outlining the tympanum. Both have open balustrades on the second floor roof line. The west wings, accented with eyebrow windows, are both one story and more simple than the main portion of the house. The first floor windows of the Old Louisiana Governor's Mansion are topped by bracketed segmental pediments while the White House alternates segmental and plain pediments.

The floor plans are also similar. Both have entrance foyers, formal East Rooms, and State Dining Rooms. The second floors both contain centered oval rooms although they are on opposite sides of the building and have their main axes in opposite directions and in both cases, provisions were made for housing distinguished guests in the east wing while the family quarters are in the west end of the building.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Old Louisiana Governor's Mansion is a symbol of the ideas and ambitions of Huey P. Long.

T. Harry Williams, Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University, states as follows:

"The edifice or building in Baton Rouge now known as 'the Old executive mansion' came into being in an important and exciting moment in the history of Louisiana. Huey P. Long had been elected governor in 1929 on a platform advocating progressive change. Although Governor Long did not put it in these words, his purpose was really to move the state into the modern era. As a part of his drive, he erected buildings that were intended not just for use, but as symbols of the new day that had come to Louisiana. Thus he saw to the construction of a magnificent modernistic capitol. He also insisted on replacing the run down ante-bellum executive mansion with a new house. But whereas he had selected a modernistic design for the Capitol, he chose a graceful and traditional architecture reminiscent of the Old South. The building was completed in 1930, and Huey Long lived in it during the remainder of his term. In it lived other governors for approximately thirty years. Within its walls much History was made, and it remains a symbol of a vital era in Louisiana's history."

Huey Pierce Long believed in action. In January, 1929 he received conditional permission to destroy the ante-bellum mansion and to borrow \$150 000 from the Board of Liquidation of the State Debt to erect a new structure. In February in spite of much public disapproval he had the termite-ridden mansion razed by convicts from the State Penitentiary.

By the end of March, Governor Long's political moves had led to impeachment proceedings. One of the 19 articles of impeachment was that he had destroyed the ante-bellum governor's mansion and another accused Long of destroying and disposing of property and furniture from the Governor's mansion, the Capitol, and State offices. In the impeachment hearings evidence was presented that Long had indeed misused state funds earmarked for the Governor's residence, but the proceedings were halted by the famous Round Robin which called the impeachment move illegal.

Huey's new house, now known as the "Old Governor's Mansion" was completed in 1930 and members of the State Legislature attended the official housewarming party on June 27, 1930. Later that same year Huey Long was elected U. S. Senator, but he retained control over the State Legislature (he was not sworn in as Senator until January 26, 1932) and still used the Governor's Mansion.

In 1961 Governor Jimmy Davis officially moved into the "New Governor's Mansion" and the Old Mansion was left vacant, waiting for a buyer under terms of a 1960 State law. However, public-spirited citizens were able to have subsequent legislation introduced which allowed the structure to be used for an Arts and Science Center beginning in 1964.

The structure is currently undergoing renovation for use as an historic house museum of the Long era.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Professor T. Harry Williams

Williams, T. Harry. Huey Long. A Borzoni Book. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969.