

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Asphodel is essentially the same as originally built with the exception of the enclosure of the back porch.

The type of architecture may best be described as Greek Revival Cottage. Six Doric columns span the front gallery. The symmetrical arrangement of doors and windows across this facade is a little strange because there are two entrance doors leading into the double parlors (one into each) flanked by two windows on either side.

The wings repeat the central theme with two columns, one door and two windows each.

All four entrance doors are to the first (main) floor. The floor above shows two dormer windows repeating the detail of the pediment over the entrance to the wings.

There is absolutely no architectural change on the interior except the enclosure of the porch as stated above and the stairs which were originally into the dining room and were re-routed to the new room.

The house was built into the side of a slope making the main floor at the back on a two story level.

The two end rooms of the enclosed gallery were in existence as a milk room and a morning room. Both are now bathrooms.

Below this area using existing foundation walls have been added six rooms. Only two walls were newly built to achieve this.

Attached is a complete floor plan with notations as to any change and where they occur.

The exterior rear has had an open arm stair and balcony added at the time of the rear enclosure. There are two dormer windows, duplicates of those on the front. The balcony is supported by two Doric columns and the stair rail is ornamental cast iron from the Marigny House in New Orleans.

Neither the north or south facade had any windows originally except two each in the upstairs bedrooms. There is now one in the south side main floor level and a utility door on the basement level. The north side has four windows at the basement level.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Lyle Saxon has called Asphodel the "jewel of Louisiana" because it epitomizes an era when great fortunes could be made in the Old Southwest by the cultivation of cotton.

Here in the Felicianas of Louisiana were men of much culture and sophistication. Many designed their own dwellings with great ability not only from their knowledge of art but also from an understanding of the climate in which they built.

Benjamin Kendrick is an example of one of these men who built with much care a house that has some of the finest interior woodwork to be found anywhere. The construction of Asphodel began about 1820 and lasted nearly 10 years. The fine workmanship, the attention to detail, the knowledgeable application of symmetry and elegance were never planned with some future in mind that might turn Asphodel into a museum. It was built as a gift for his wife, Caroline.

The original noun asphodel means any lilaceous plant - daffodils to the 18th century English and French poets and narcissus to their Greek counterparts of a much earlier era. Thus as the builder, he left for posterity a fine example of classicisms, the marriage of language and architecture. The year that construction of Asphodel was completed, Benjamin Kendrick died leaving one daughter, Isabel, who married Col. Robert Fluker.

During the 10 years the house was under construction, John James Audubon painted the portraits of Kendrick's daughter, Isabel Kendrick Fluker, and the first two (sons) of her twelve children by Robert Fluker. These paintings are now in Virginia and bear the inscription "painted at their beloved Asphodel."

The Civil War changed the life style of the Flukers as it did for many other Southerners. During the Battle of Port Hudson, a group of Union soldiers set fire to Asphodel. Miraculously, the fire went out.

After the War, Poverty was the guest who stayed longest at Asphodel as at many of the other great houses in the South. For approximately 40 years until their deaths in 1945 and 1948, the Misses Smith were guardians of the family heritage at Asphodel. In all this time, they never left the grounds, and when they died they were buried in the family plot on the grounds.

Then the John Fetzers bought Asphodel in 1949 and set about restoration. Much of the work was done by John and his sons. Following the death of Mr. Fetzer, the house was sold to the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Couhig, in July 1958.

Major Bibliographical References

Spratling - Old Plantation Houses in Louisiana

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John Desmond A.I.A. - Louisiana's Antebellum Architecture
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