

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The McNeely House (1883-85) is a two-story brick and frame belated Creole structure located three blocks from the Red River levee in Colfax. Despite a few changes, the house retains its architectural integrity.

The house began in 1883 as a greatly enlarged Creole cottage with two major rooms upstairs and down, a large central chimney, a pair of cabinets on each floor, and a full front gallery. At that time the only way to reach the upstairs was via a pair of staircases set at the ends of the front gallery.

Stylistically the house is mainly characterized by late-nineteenth century Renaissance Revival elements. There are, however, two major exceptions. One is the mantels which are more or less standard Greek Revival aedicule motifs. The other is the upper gallery columns. These are solid posts with square molded tops with the upper two-thirds turned in a Doric shape. Columns of this type were common in Creole plantation houses of the early-nineteenth century, but were well out of fashion by the Civil War. Late-nineteenth century stylistic elements include the heavy, corbelled, brick lower gallery posts; the bracketed cornice; the pedimented fenestration on the upper gallery; and the painted ceiling in the upstairs parlor with its elaborate design of geometrical shapes and foliage.

In 1893 a pair of small side wings were added, one of which lengthened the front facade. The gallery was extended to cover the addition in the Queen Anne Revival manner with a curving gallery terminus. The other addition was a bedroom set within a semioctagonal bay under a gable. This addition has the most elaborate woodwork in the house with barge boards, imbricated shingles, multiple brackets, and a pair of lancet arches.

In the twentieth century a small rear wing was added, the rear gallery was glazed in, and an interior staircase was installed.

Assessment of Integrity:

In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, the aforementioned changes should be regarded as minor. In any case, they have not affected the basic form and plan of the house, its size, or its painted ceilings, which are the basis of its significance.

Specific dates 1883-85; 1893
Builder/Architect Builder: John Hodges McNeely

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The McNeely House is locally significant in the areas of art and architecture within the context of the parish seat of Colfax. It is the largest house in the town and stands therefore as an architectural landmark within that context. When it was being built, contemporaneous newspaper accounts hailed it as the town's finest residence. Its decoratively painted Renaissance Revival ceilings are particularly noteworthy. Although ceilings of this type appeared in some of Louisiana's grander late-nineteenth century residences, the McNeely House has the only ones in Colfax. Finally, the Creole two-story galleried house was something of a standard model for larger country houses

in Louisiana from the colonial period until as late as c.1880. The McNeely House is the only example of this in Colfax.

It should also be noted that the McNeely House is an essentially French house type in a parish which is largely characterized by Anglo-Saxon settlement. The house is believed to have been patterned after the Kate Chopin House (N.R.), which is across the Red River in Natchitoches Parish, an area noted for its French influenced architecture.

Major Bibliographical References

Colfax Chronicle, September 1, 1883; February 9, August 16, 1884; May 23, June 6, 13, July 18, 1885; June 17, 1893.