

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Darby is a two-story house with open galleries on two sides. The plan of both levels is typical in that a central hall transects the building from front to rear with two generously dimensioned rooms flanking either side of the hall. The house, inhabited until the late 1960s, has recently been adjudged to be in a structurally sound condition.

The lower floor of Darby (basement level), constructed at ground level, is of solid native brick, originally plastered on both inner and outer faces. Interior partitions of this level are similarly constructed. The original flooring here was of black and white marble tile, but, today, bare ground serves as the only floor.

The upper floor reflects the early Louisiana French style of building referred to as briquete entre poteaux. This means of construction incorporates heavy cypress structural members, to effect stability, with full brick or broken brick filling the spaces between the "posts." This combination of brick and wood is layered over with plaster on inner surfaces and cypress siding on the exterior upper surface.

The roof is gabled and extends over the front gallery. A modified hip roof on the east gable projects over the side gallery. Of the three original galleries only two remain. The front gallery is in a state of dilapidation. The side gallery is in fair condition, and the rear gallery has been removed. The roof of the upper front and side galleries is apparently supported by a colonnade composed of masonry columns on the ground floor and wooden ones on the upper level of a turned, classical design. There is no evidence of the original rear gallery design, but it is believed to have approximated that of the front gallery.

Other notable features include a substantial flight of wooden steps which climb along the front face of the house to connect the upper gallery. There are also three underground cisterns, built in the shape of a jar, projecting approximately four feet above grade.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Darby, one of the oldest structures in Iberia Parish, is located on Darby Lane approximately one-tenth mile outside the New Iberia city limits. The home is an excellent example of rural Louisiana colonial architecture, particularly that found in the Teche region of the state. Because of this rural character the house possesses less elaborate detailing, but remains a fine compliment to its setting amid giant live oaks and sugar-cane fields.

The immigrant ancestor, Jonathan Darby, an Englishman, sailed from France to Pensacola in 1719. In 1737, he married Demoiselle Marie Corbin Bachemin, a native of France. His grandson, Francois St. Marc Darby, inherited the Darby plantation from his father Jean-Baptiste St. Marc Darby. Darby House was built between 1813 and 1820 for Francois and his wife, Felicite de St. Amant, and remained in the possession of their pioneer family for more than 150 years.

The Attakapas Historical Association is in the process of acquiring the property in the hope of fostering a renovation program. Immediate steps have already been initiated to prevent further deterioration to the building.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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