

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Typical of the late 1850's, "St. Louis" reflects the Louisiana styles of colonial architecture and the emerging "gothicness" of the New Orleans Garden District.

Typically, it is two stories high with an attic under a tripped roof. As in other Louisiana and colonial homes, each floor has four large rooms with a huge hall down the middle.

What makes the house distinctive are the galleries around each story. Each has a story-high row of six columns, with the bottom gallery fluted Ionic and the top row a more fancy, fluted Corinthian. The flavor is that of the Greek revival of the period.

There is a belvedere, or captain's walk, on the top of the house which affords the only view over the levee to the Mississippi.

Two things make the house unusual. Each gallery has beautiful, and ornate grillwork in a grapevine pattern, and there is sloped and guttered cellar, partly below ground level, which at times was used as a prison.

In the rear is a wing with an old, preserved and beautiful kitchen, plus storage and servants' rooms. There is a French recessed porch on that side.

The grounds are landscaped in oak and magnolia. On one side is a slightly neglected Victorian garden, with cross paths meeting at an old urn Picayune and green roses, jessamine and oleanders, still grow.

Interior decoration includes a proliferation of huge mirrors, a tradition started in Erwin's "Peach Blossom", where the girls used to wear the rugs out in the hall by standing so often between the mirrors on each side. The downstairs hall is dominated by a 10 x 5 mirror between gold columns, brought on a mule cart from "Rosedale Plantation" long ago.

Each downstairs room is graced by a large marble mantle over a fireplace. Purportedly carved in Italy, the mantles are in different shades. There is an ornament, called a rose, on each. The Gay family bought them in Philadelphia when the plantation was built.

A quite similar house, built at the same time and perhaps by the same builder, is in the Garden District, at 1134 First Street.

Statement of Significance

The house was built in 1857 by Edward J. Gay who came to Iberville Parish from St. Louis, Missouri. He also laid out the gardens and grounds which surround the house.

Mr. Gay's early background was as a merchant in St. Louis. There he was the first to engage in the direct importation of coffee by cargo into St. Louis. He was at the head of a firm whose trade extended from New Orleans to the sources of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

After moving to Louisiana in 1856, he became the largest and one of the most influential planters in the state. He was first President of the Louisiana Sugar Exchange of New Orleans. He was active in opposing the secession movement in Louisiana, partly because his grandfather had

been a soldier of the Revolutionary War. However, after the die was cast he sided with the people of Louisiana. For reasons of health he did not serve in the War between the States, but his eldest son served in the Confederate Army. The elder Mr. Gay remained at home and saw around him the ruin and destruction that followed. After the war he bent his energies to rebuilding the economy. He was reluctant to take part in the politics of Reconstruction, but Louisiana leaders assured him that only by his going to Congress could the Kellogg carpet-bag rule be abolished. In 1884 he ran against Kellogg himself and was elected by a handsome majority after a hard fought battle. He had a distinguished career in Congress serving on the Appropriations Committee, and was reelected twice. In 1889, while still serving as a member of Congress, he died at the St. Louis residence.

After Mr. Gay's death the house was occupied by his widow and then by his son, Andrew H. Gay. In 1909 the grandson of the founder, also named Edward J. Gay, brought his bride to live in the residence, and there they raised their five children. Young Edward J. Gay served with distinction as a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives for sixteen years, and was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. In 1918 Mr. Gay was a candidate for the United States Senate to fill the unexpired term of Senator Robert Broussard. His opponents were former Governor Luther Hall and Mr. John Overton of Alexandria who later served in the Senate himself. Mr. Gay was nominated in the first primary and served Louisiana as United States Senator until 1921. He did not run for reelection. Later in his life Mr. Gay was on the Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University and served as Chairman of the Building Committee when the University was rebuilt on its present site.

Thus the St. Louis Residence was the home of at least two historical figures who made their work in history. One was Joseph Erwin who came from Tennessee to establish the St. Louis Plantation in 1807, after his son died in a duel with Andrew Jackson.

The other was Colonel Andrew Hynes of Tennessee who married Mr. Erwin's daughter. Colonel Hynes took part in the Battle of New Orleans, and his accounts of that battle and the events leading up to it were found years later in the attic of the St. Louis Residence, preserved there by Colonel Hynes' son-in-law, the first Edward J. Gay. The New Orleans Times Picayune called the collection of papers "one of the most important discoveries of original Battle of New Orleans material found in many a day".

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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