

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Raziano House is a large two-story brick residence in the Colonial Revival style. Constructed in 1946, it stands on a sizable corner lot in the Jefferson Parish community of Kenner. The house has experienced little alteration since construction and retains its National Register eligibility.

The home's first floor plan is reminiscent of the Federal style because it is organized around a semi-oval foyer and stairway located in the center of the home. An entrance vestibule flanked by a closet and a powder room separates the foyer and the building's facade wall. A small hallway, a boiler room, and a breakfast room are located to the rear of the foyer space. On the west side of the foyer stands a deep parlor which opens to a polygonal sun room of moderate size. A dining room fills the front corner on the opposite side of the home. Behind this area is found a butler's pantry, a short hall, and a servants' stair. The kitchen stands behind these utilitarian spaces. It is joined to an adjacent combination garage, store room, and servants' quarters via a screened breezeway. The second floor contains two large baths and four spacious bedrooms. Two of the latter connect to a deck located above the first floor's polygonal sun room. The third floor, designed for entertaining, contains a large party room with a raised bandstand on one side and a built-in bar at the other end.

In addition to the semi-oval foyer, two large oval windows located on the Raziano Home's facade are also suggestive of the Federal style. Other Colonial Revival motifs found on the house include:

- 1) an entablature with denticulated frieze which encircles all but a small portion of the home,
- 2) colossal granite columns (four) and pilasters (two) with Corinthian capitals,
- 3) an over-scaled swan neck pediment (located above the front door) with a central pedestal from which an urn rises,
- 4) three dormers featuring pilasters with Doric capitals, pediments with raking cornices, and gable end returns,
- 5) two plaster ceiling medallions in the parlor and one in the foyer. The latter is comprised of a series of concentric circles; the parlor's feature floral motifs, and
- 6) a mantel featuring large dentils and shoulder molding.

Other features of interest found in the Raziano House include a watertable; an entrance with a leaded glass transom and sidelights; first floor windows articulated as French doors with operable transoms above; the curved staircase's wrought iron curving balustrade with mahogany railing; the staircase's mahogany paneling and the rest of the home's mahogany woodwork; the use of cast iron as decorative panels within the deck's brick balustrade; French doors connecting the foyer to the parlor and the dining room; and the presence of picture rails in each bedroom.

The most serious alteration to the Raziano House has occurred within the sun room. Here the walls have been paneled, a tile ceiling has been installed, and the surrounds encasing the two entrances connecting it to the parlor have been changed. Minor alterations to the home include the sealing of the first floor windows and the installation of a ceiling medallion in the dining room.

None of these changes have impacted the home's exterior, and the features which contribute to the building's architectural significance survive intact. As the most pretentious (see Part 8) and largest residence in the City of Kenner, the Raziano House stands as a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

Significant Date: 1946

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Criterion: C

Area of Significance: Architecture

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Raziano House is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a landmark within the Jefferson Parish community of Kenner. It achieves this distinction because of its size and its status as the town's most pretentious building.

Located along the east bank of the Mississippi River, the City of Kenner stands on ground under cultivation as early as 1720. By the mid-1840s these lands (consisting of three plantations) were owned by four brothers--Minor, William Butler, George R., and Duncan Farrar Kenner. (The latter achieved fame as a Confederate States diplomat and, later, for his innovations as a sugar planter.) By 1852 Duncan and George had sold their Jefferson Parish lands to their brothers, so it was Minor and William Butler who decided to subdivide the area into a townsite when the newly formed New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad announced a proposed route across the Kenner plantations. The subdivision was apparently delayed by the 1853 death of William Butler Kenner; Minor was not able to hire a surveyor to complete the work until 1855. Kennerville, as the village was first known, developed very slowly. Although a foundry opened around 1858, it apparently brought few settlers to the town; and it appears that the majority of lots sold before Minor Kenner's 1864 death were used as truck gardens. German, Irish, and Italian immigrants, and a number of freed African-Americans, settled there after the Civil War. Kenner was incorporated in 1873 but lost its charter thirteen years later. Lumber and vegetable packing businesses opened there in the 1880s, a new city charter was granted in 1913, and the community was connected to New Orleans via the Orleans-Kenner Traction Company (a streetcar line) in 1915. Nevertheless, Kenner remained a small agricultural village far into the twentieth century.

Today Kenner is a largely modern suburb of New Orleans. Because Jefferson Parish has not been officially surveyed, the National Register staff conducted a windshield survey to gather information on extant structures. This survey found four general types of buildings:

- 1) modern strip developments,
- 2) a few low-key historic commercial structures, most of which have been altered,
- 3) humble bungalows and cottages dating from the 1920s to the 1940s, and
- 4) slab-on-grade ranch houses dating from the 1950s and later.

Only five buildings are exceptions to these findings. These include a restrained Neo-Classical school; a shotgun featuring Eastlake trim and Queen Anne fishscale shingles; a bungalow with a small porte-cochere; a small house with a Colonial Revival porch and door; and the Colonial Revival style Raziano House. With its colossal columns and pilasters, over-scaled swan neck pediment, and twin oval windows, the Raziano House is by far the most pretentious of the five. In addition, it is unquestionably the largest residence in the community.

Historical Note

Also known as Mahogany Manor, the candidate house was built for Henry Raziano, a wealthy local businessman, and his wife Amelia. Raziano was active in the timber industry and the construction business. He also owned a local movie theater and a restaurant. For recreation, he raced thoroughbred

horses. Raziano died in 1970; his wife later in that decade. The home now belongs to Albert and Maudrey Brodtman, who are rehabilitating the structure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Swanson, Betsy, *Historic Jefferson Parish: From Shore to Shore*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 107-109.

Windshield survey by National Register staff.