

The Funk House (c.1895) is a two story frame house with Queen Anne and Eastlake details. It is located in an old residential section of Jennings near the downtown. The exterior is virtually unaltered.

The massing and overall architectural character of the house are reminiscent of the work of Andrew Jackson Downing. This can be seen in its crisp, vertical proportions with a prominent, steeply pitched gabled projection at the center of the facade. On either side of the gabled projection is a small entrance porch. The porches are identical except that the one to the south is recessed, being intended as a secondary entrance. Behind the forward facing gabled projection is the two room wide main block. There is also a steeply pitched one story kitchen wing at the rear with a shed roof side porch that has since been enclosed.

The Funk House is intricately detailed. The Queen Anne Revival love of surfaces with varying textures can be seen in the elaborate shingle patterns found in the front and side gables. There are three or four patterns, depending upon the gable, with no two gables being the same. Designs include scallops, diamonds, and a shape resembling blind arcading. In the center of each gable is an attic vent with a pointed top. The ground story window on the front gabled projection has a flared shingled hood, a heavily molded cornice above a sawtooth band, and elaborate ornamentation cut on a jigsaw, including scroll brackets with ball drops. Each porch has a flared roof, a heavily molded cornice with a sawtooth band, and curved brackets with ball drops and cut out designs in the spandrels. Between the brackets is a scalloped band. There is a turned column at the corner and matching pilasters. The flared hood over the front window and the flared roofs over the porches are reminiscent of the Second Empire style, albeit in a watered down vernacular version. The detailing on the porches and the decorative work around the front window reflect the Eastlake taste.

The floorplan consists of an entrance vestibule, three rooms (one in the gabled front projection and two in the main block) and the rear kitchen wing. The utilitarian staircase was not meant to be a major architectural feature, being located at the rear of the main block. It begins its rise to the second story off an enclosed porch to the kitchen wing. (Because the kitchen wing is so steeply pitched, it is possible for a stair to ascend to the second floor.) Apparently there was originally a walled off stair landing, because otherwise the stair would have been accessed from an open porch.

The interiors are relatively plain, considering the elaborate detailing on the exterior. Noteworthy original features include richly molded baseboards, door and window frames with bull's eye cornerblocks, and a set of pocket doors. The house's chimney had been cut off and the fireplace removed when the present owners acquired the house. The simple cornices and picture moldings were installed by the present owners when the house was sheetrocked. The ceilings have been covered with acoustical tiles.

Assessment of Integrity:

With the exception of an enclosed rear porch and the lack of a chimney, the house's exterior, the source of its architectural significance, is unaltered.

Non-contributing Element:

At the rear of the property is a deteriorated garage that is not contemporaneous with the house. It is being considered a non-contributing element.

Significant dates c.1895
Architect/Builder Unknown
Criterion C

The Funk House is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a landmark in the late nineteenth century residential architectural heritage of Jennings. It achieves this distinction chiefly because of its unusual massing and overall articulation. With crisp, vertical proportions and minimal porches it best reflects the Midwestern origins of the town. Secondly, its porches and front window exhibit some of the very finest Eastlake ornamentation to survive in Jennings.

Jennings was just a stop on the recently completed Southern Pacific Railroad when S. L. Cary, who is regarded as its founder, migrated there in 1883 from Iowa. At that time, there were only four buildings, including the depot. Due to Cary's promotional efforts, what was once a mere spot on the southwestern prairies became a thriving boom town of transplanted Midwesterners. Employed by the railroad as an immigration agent, Cary had attracted about one hundred fellow Iowans to Jennings by the end of 1883. The town had sufficient population to be incorporated as a village in 1888. By 1890, the population was 412, and by 1900, it had increased almost fourfold. The settlers came from various states in the Midwest, but the majority were from Iowa. Midwestern migration continued in the very early years of this century, spurred by the discovery of oil in 1901.

Because of its Midwestern origins, Jennings has a collection of late nineteenth century houses that are rather atypical for Louisiana, being more vertical in proportion than the rambling one and one-and-a-half story cottages with generous galleries being built elsewhere in the state at the time. The Funk House is particularly conspicuous in this regard. With its crisp, strikingly vertical massing, symmetrical articulation, prominent front facing gable, and minimal entrance porches, it more closely resembles conventional Midwestern "Victorian" architecture than virtually any other period house in Jennings. From an architectural standpoint, it is the "signature" of the town's Midwestern origins.

In addition, the Funk House features some of the most elaborate Eastlake detailing in town. Historic photos show that exuberant Eastlake ornamentation was once quite common in Jennings. However, the town has lost most of its finest Victorian residential architecture, and the examples that survive tend to have either Colonial Revival details or simple Eastlake features such as turned columns. Only a very few even have Eastlake ornamentation in the gable peaks or perhaps some spindlework. By contrast, the porches and front window at the Funk House feature richly three dimensional ornamentation, including scroll and curved brackets, ball drops, cut out designs, and scallops. Although small elements, these make quite an architectural statement.

Historical Note:

The nominated house is identified in a collection of photos dated 1900-1905 as the home of Reverend G. N. Funk. Reverend Funk was the pastor of the First Congregational Church in the early years of this century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Souvenir: Jennings, Louisiana, Products and Industries. Published by Walter D. Morse, 1907. This promotional piece contains numerous photographs of Jennings residences.