

The S. A. Pennington House (1911) is a two story frame dwelling located at the intersection of two quiet residential streets in the small north Jefferson Davis Parish community of Elton. Although elements associated with other popular turn-of-the-century styles are used to decorate the home, its primary style is the Queen Anne Revival. The house remains eligible for National Register listing despite some alteration.

Queen Anne features found on the Pennington House include:

- 1) a marked verticality culminating in a tripped roof with cross gable massing.
- 2) a wraparound gallery with a roof supported by thin Colonial Revival columns displaying slight entasis.
- 3) a fully developed, two story polygonal turret surmounted by a faceted roof with a pinnacle. A band of stained glass windows decorates the turret just below its roofline.
- 4) a footprint characterized by bays on its east side and projecting rooms on the west. In addition to the bay formed by the turret's angled walls, a polygonal bay distinguishes the eastern elevation. It is formed by forty-five degree corner cuts and is accented by Eastlake corner brackets. It also contains an Eastlake door opening to the wraparound gallery.
- 5) subdivided windows. Four windows with upper sashes outlined by small panes of glass are found on the first floor. Additional subdivided windows are located within the front and eastern gable peaks. These take the form of Palladian motifs in which the square side windows and semicircular upper windows are subdivided. The central portions of the two Palladian motifs are clapboarded.
- 6) the use of textured surfaces. These include a wide wooden entablature encircling the house, applied turret and corner boards suggestive of the Victorian Stick Style, and the sheathing on the turret. Each of the turret's angled lower floor walls is divided into three panels. The lower panels consist of narrow textured boards applied at a diagonal angle. Two of the large center panels are filled by identical narrow textured boards applied vertically. (The other three central panels contain windows.) The upper panels on the lower floor, as well as the turret's second floor exterior walls, are sheathed in horizontal clapboards matching the siding on the rest of the house. These clapboards are slightly unusual because they have a more rounded profile than is generally seen.

Other features of architectural interest found at the Pennington House include:

- 1) two ornamental Eastlake grilles, one of which is supported by columns,
- 2) two typical-of-the-period mantels with overmantels,
- 3) an Eastlake stairway balustrade with a fluted Colonial Revival newel post surmounted by an urn. This balustrade continues around the U-shaped second floor landing. A second fluted newel post with an urn is located at the point where the second floor balustrade turns a corner.
- 4) an entrance surrounded by a transom and sidelights,

- 5) a pediment shaped lintel above double windows which pierce the western projecting rooms,
- 6) pocket doors (now inoperable) between the parlor and dining room, and
- 7) narrow beaded board paneling applied to the staircase's outer wall, the under side of the flight rising from the landing to the second floor, and the wall beneath this flight of stairs.

Alterations to the Pennington House include the installation of French doors beneath the above mentioned flight of stairs, the conversion of a small lower floor side porch adjacent to the eastern bay into a half bath, the enclosure of the back porch, and the loss of the balustrade which once lined a second floor balcony above the gallery. It is also possible that a balustrade on the gallery itself has been lost. In addition, a major renovation has been completed within the last year. This renovation included:

- 1) the installation of insulation, new wiring and plumbing, storm doors and windows, gutters with downspouts attached to the gallery columns, sheetrock on all interior walls, carpet and linoleum, an attic stair, a hinged lattice surrounding the house at foundation level, and central air and heat. The latter involved the installation of ducts in the upstairs hall and along the perimeter of the dining room ceiling. This resulted in the creation of a cove ceiling in the dining room.
- 2) the alteration of the floorplan to create larger rooms and closets. (See attached before and after remodeling floorplans for the first floor.) As part of this change, a door and window which connected the dining room to the back porch were removed. In addition, the walls between the kitchen and enclosed back porch, the two downstairs bedrooms, and two of the upstairs bedrooms were removed. Additional closets were created on the second floor by taking space from a hallway and small dressing room. Another closet and a utility room were created on the first floor by using space formerly allocated to a half bath and a hallway.
- 3) the expansion and reconfiguration of the upstairs bath.
- 4) the replacement of the tile in the parlor's fireplace surround and hearth, and the removal of the home's original etched glass front door. The latter has been stored in the attic.

Although the renovation of the interior has been extensive, the loss of the balcony's balustrade is regrettable, and the installation of the gutters is inappropriate, the major features of the Queen Anne Revival style which give the Pennington House its significance remain intact as outlined above. Most importantly, the home's turret is virtually unchanged. The importance of this feature cannot be overemphasized, for it is one of only two fully developed examples surviving in Jefferson Davis Parish (see part 8). As an important contributor to the parish's identity as a center of the Queen Anne Revival style, and as an example of a home displaying a rare Queen Anne stylistic feature, the S. A. Pennington House is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

Note: The shed in the rear yard was not considered to be "substantial in size and scale" in relationship to the house and hence was not included in the count.

Significant dates 1911
Architect/Builder unknown
Criterion C

The S. A. Pennington House is locally significant in the area of architecture because it makes an important contribution to the distinctly Queen Anne Revival architectural heritage of Jefferson Davis Parish.

The State Historic Preservation Office considers Jefferson Davis Parish to be one of three centers of Queen Anne Revival architecture in the state outside New Orleans. (The other two are the nearby towns of Lake Charles in Calcasieu Parish and Crowley in Acadia Parish). In Jeff Davis Parish, the greatest concentration of Queen Anne homes is in Jennings. In addition to the Pennington House in Elton, there are four noteworthy examples of the style in Lake Arthur in southern Jeff Davis Parish.

Although Pennington himself was from Mississippi, the majority of Jeff Davis Parish's settlers were Midwesterners attracted to the area by railroad recruiters who extolled the agricultural possibilities of Southwestern Louisiana. The houses these Midwesterners built, on the whole, do not resemble the typical Queen Anne Revival house in the state, but instead are more like the national norm. The standard Queen Anne residence in Louisiana is a one or one-and-a-half story conservatively styled cottage with a polygonal bay and perhaps some shingling and gable peak ornamentation. By contrast, Jeff Davis Parish had a heavy concentration of two and two-and-a-half story Queen Anne houses, reflecting the Victorian fondness for marked verticality. These houses also tended to be more elaborately ornamented and massed than was typical in Louisiana -- i.e., resembling more closely textbook examples of the style. It should be noted that this special heritage represents the parish's architectural apogee. The surviving building stock in Jeff Davis Parish reveals that there has not been an architectural flowering since then, with the exception of a few notable landmarks. In short, the parish's Queen Anne Revival houses are its architectural identity, so-to-speak.

Sadly, the parish has suffered a dramatic loss in its historic building stock. Historic photos reveal that, clearly, the parish's most splendid examples of the Queen Anne Revival style are gone. Two of the most important examples were lost in the last four or five years. The extent of this depletion can be seen in a compilation of historic photos published in the 1960s. It shows some fifty major two story Queen Anne houses in Jennings, the vast majority of which are quite elaborate. Ten sport turrets or towers. Of these fifty landmarks, only ten survive in the town. If one takes into account all surviving two story Queen Anne homes in Jennings, the number totals about 20, some of which are too plain or too altered to warrant Register nomination. In addition, there is the Pennington House in Elton and four noteworthy examples of the style in Lake Arthur, as noted previously. In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, roughly fifteen of the Jeff Davis Parish Queen Anne houses are of sufficient quality and integrity to merit Register listing. Each is significant because it contributes to the parish's identity as a center of Queen Anne Revival architecture. The Pennington House is an especially important component of this rich architectural heritage. Although altered on the interior, it retains the majority of its significant Queen Anne features, including the verticality which distinguishes Jeff Davis Parish houses from the state's Queen Anne norm. Very importantly, it is one of only two Queen Anne houses in the parish with a fully developed turret, a hallmark of the style.

Historical Note

Dr. S. A. Pennington is credited as Elton's first resident physician. Educated at the University of Tennessee at Nashville, he received his M.D. degree in early 1900. After completing a post graduate course at the New York Graduate School of Medicine in 1905, he opened a practice in Jacoby, Louisiana. Two years later, Pennington moved to Elton, where he remained for eleven

years. In addition to his medical duties, he served as State Representative for two terms and was a delegate to the 1913 state constitutional convention. After leaving Elton, Pennington spent three years in New Orleans before opening an office in Baton Rouge. In 1920 he relocated to Port Arthur but died in 1922 before moving his family there. Pennington's youngest daughter lived in the Elton home until approximately two years ago. The house now serves as the parsonage of the First Baptist Church of Elton.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Morse, Walter D. "The Birth of Jennings." This 1960s compilation contains numerous photographs of early Jennings residences. Available at Jennings Public Library.

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Site visit by National Register staff.