

The one story brick building now known as the Snyder Memorial Museum and Creative Arts Center was built in 1929 as a private residence for Charles and Esther Snyder. It is located on a roughly two acre landscaped parcel of land amidst modern strip development in the parish seat of Bastrop. The house is difficult to pigeonhole stylistically because it represents the eclecticism which characterized early twentieth architecture. It borrows from the "English cottage" style in its massing, but certain features give it an Italian or Mediterranean flavor.

Although the Snyder House's many gables are not as steeply pitched as is typical of the "English cottage" style, its massing is perhaps best viewed within that tradition's penchant for a picturesque look. There are no less than eight gabled projections: two on the facade, one of which is an entrance porch, three on the eastern side elevation, two on the western side elevation, and a small one on the rear. Add to this a prominent front chimney (a favorite of the "English cottage" style). This "busy" massing and complex footprint belies the house's conventional central hall plan.

The Snyder House is clad in brick in shades of brown and beige. Its roof is clad in tile. The most noteworthy decorative feature is a large, handsome Palladian window dominating the facade. It marks the location of a sunroom. Framing the front chimney are round arch openings with French doors.

The interior of the house is rather plain with the exception of the living room. The room is entered from the hallway via a wide opening whose frame curves at the top in a Baroque-like manner. Dominating the room is a hooded chimney breast supported by large Persian columns. The firebox opening is in the form of a late Gothic arch. At the arch's point is a teas relief plant motif with a slender rod-like vertical design to each side. Above this composition is a chevron motif spanning the space between the Persian columns. Although the chimney-piece is eclectic, its hooded shape is most closely associated with Italian architecture.

Other noteworthy interior features include rough texture plaster walls, a vaulted ceiling in the front sunroom, round arch built-in cabinets in two rooms, the original tile floor in the kitchen, and two tiled bathrooms.

The Snyder House is well preserved, with the few alterations that have occurred being confined almost entirely to the interior. Most of these are associated with the house's conversion to a museum in the 1970s. Alterations since construction are as follows:

(1) The middle gabled projection on the eastern side elevation was originally a glassed-in porch; or sunroom. All but two of its many large openings have been filled in with wood to facilitate use as an office for the museum's curator.

(2) Interior modifications include the re-texturing of the ceilings and the installation of track and recessed lighting in most rooms, the removal of doors to facilitate the use of some rooms as art galleries, the installation of removable exhibit boards in the hall and one room, the conversion of a closet at the back of the hall into a glass museum display, and the plastering over (inside only) of a double door leading from the entrance porch to the front sunroom.

Assessment of Integrity

The Snyder House is virtually unchanged on the exterior and has had limited changes on the interior. All of its original character-defining features remain intact and hence its Register eligibility.

Contributing Element

To the rear is a contemporaneous three car garage of matching brick and tile roof. One presumes that the gabled projection off the side was a washroom or something similar. The building's conversion to a meeting room involved changing the garage openings to large plate glass windows with wood trim below. The other side elevation is intact except for the insertion of a double door opening filled with French doors. Despite these alterations, the building is still clearly a matching dependency. Hence it is being counted as a contributing element.

Significant dates 1929
Architect/Builder Architect: H. H. Land, Sr.
 Builder: A. G. McBride

Criterion C

The Snyder House is of local architectural significance as a major landmark in the town of Bastrop (population 15,000-20,000).

The parish seat of Bastrop was founded as a result of the creation of Morehouse Parish in 1844. It was incorporated as a village and remained so until 1909 when its status was changed to a town. Bastrop's population grew dramatically in the 1920s and '30s due to various wood-related industries, most notably two huge paper mills. The population in 1910 was 854, but by 1940 it had grown to 6,626.

Despite this long history and periods of growth and prosperity early in this century, the town has a decidedly modest historic building stock. Its architectural heritage consists almost entirely of plain turn-of-the-century cottages, low-key folk bungalows, and simple early twentieth century commercial buildings (most of which have been seriously altered). There are four major exceptions to this generally undistinguished patrimony: (1) the 1915 Beaux Arts courthouse, (2) the Gothic Revival Christ Episcopal Church (1897), (3) a Greek Revival galleried cottage, and (4) the Snyder House. Other buildings with a modicum of distinction, within their context, are the Rose Theatre, which has slight influences of the Arts and Crafts taste, and a large two story house which is unadorned except for a one story columnar entrance porch. Within the context of Bastrop, the eclectic Snyder Museum, with its multi-gable massing, handsome Palladian window, and striking living room, is a major landmark to even a casual observer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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