

The Dr. Joseph Angel Villien House (c. 1895) is a one-and-one-half-story frame Victorian cottage in the Queen Anne Revival style. It stands on a generous parcel of land located on the outskirts of Maurice, a small village in Vermilion Parish. The home has received alterations since construction but retains its National Register eligibility.

Although the Villien family (still owners of the home) believes the house to have been built c. 1890 and remodeled to achieve its present Queen Anne appearance over the next few years, there is no conclusive architectural evidence to support this. For the purposes of this nomination, the house will be dated to c. 1895.

Queen Anne features distinguishing the home include:

1. an asymmetrical floorplan accompanied by cross gable massing,
2. three polygonal bays,
3. a wraparound gallery, and
4. the presence of texture, created by:
 - a) the front gallery's elaborate Eastlake columns, balusters and brackets,
 - b) additional brackets (of a different design) above the forty-five degree corner cuts of the polygonal bays,
 - c) the use of corner boards on the angles of the polygonal bays,
 - d) decoratively molded chimney tops, and
 - e) the back gallery's cutwork balustrade.

The home's floorplan (please refer to drawing) has evolved over the years -- at least at the rear. The plan is organized around a central hall flanked by multiple rooms on each side. Sometime during the historic period there was an expansion/remodeling at the rear of the house, as is clear from a c. 1908 photo. The photo shows a gallery (partially enclosed) across the rear and continuing down a two-bay kitchen ell wing. According to family tradition, the rear was changed to its present appearance in the 1920s. Historic materials were evidently re-used, adding to the difficulty of determining with absolute certainty the exact evolution of this elevation. Apparently the old kitchen ell was incorporated *in the expansion. The re-worked rear features a gallery with a small room at one end. The gallery, with its Eastlake posts and brackets and a cutout balustrade, matches that shown in the c. 1908 photo. Presumably old materials were reused.

At some point the home's staircase, which was located in the north side rear (dining) room and turned at a right angle, was moved into the central hall and its configuration changed to a mostly straight flight with a sharp curve at the bottom. It was also probably at this time that one room was finished in the attic area.

The building's interior decorative woodwork features molded door and window surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks, a wide opening surmounted by a seven light transom separating the parlor and dining room, four period mantels (one with overmantel) apparently chosen from catalogs, four-panel doors, and the stairs.

Recently, the home has been rehabilitated by a descendant of the original owner. Work associated with this project includes the following:

1. modernization and relocation of the kitchen from the former "ell" to the third room on the home's north side (the former dining room), and relocation of the dining room to the north side's central space.
2. the replacement with storage closets of a bath created during the 1920s additions. The closets open into the central hall. The rest of the original kitchen (in the former "ell") has been subdivided to create a hallway and utility/butler's pantry. The hallway opens into the room on the corner of the rear gallery. A small Eastlake portico providing entrance to the new hallway has been constructed on the home's north side.
3. the installation of new floors in two rooms, as their older floors had been damaged beyond repair; and the installation of additional foundation piers at the rear of the home.

4. the subdivision of the south side rear room to create a small half-bath opening into the central hall and a larger master bath suite and closet connecting to the south side's middle room.
5. additional subdivision and finishing of the attic space and rebuilding of chimneys which had previously been cut off at the roofline.

Despite the modern changes, the home retains all of its Queen Anne Revival features. It is these motifs that give the residence its architectural significance. As a landmark within the architectural heritage of Maurice, the Villien House is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

Contributing Elements:

Six additional buildings on the Villien property are being classified as contributing elements because they appear to be contemporaneous with the home and served it as dependencies. All are located in a rough line behind the house. They include a large mule barn, a potato shed, a "helper's house" (perhaps built before the main house was started and where a hired man later lived), a privy, a small building where power (presumably carbide gas) for the main house's lights was generated, and a second large barn. All are made of wood (mainly board and batten) and have metal roofs.

Non-Contributing Elements

Two more buildings are located on the property. These include a new (built in 1999) board and batten storage shed with metal roof and a late 1940s frame garage with an asphalt shingle roof. The latter served the house for only a brief time during the historic period and will soon be replaced.

SIGNIFICANT DATES: c. 1895
ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown
CRITERION: C

The Dr. Joseph Angel Villien House is locally significant as an architectural landmark within the Vermilion Parish village of Maurice. It achieves this distinction because of its rarity as well as its elaborate Queen Anne Revival decorative features.

Maurice is named for town founder Maurice Villien (father of the physician for whom the Dr. Joseph Angel Villien House is named). Maurice Villien was a merchant who had operated businesses in New Orleans and New Iberia before coming to Vermilion Parish. He also seems to have had landholdings in the area. Villien and his wife built a combination home and grocery store (not the candidate) at the present site of Maurice in 1870. Incorporation as a town came in 1911. Electricity arrived in 1929. A private telephone service operated until Bell South absorbed it in 1946. Population was 330 in 1930, the first time the village was included in the census. It had risen to 478 in 1980, but has probably fallen since that date.

Today Maurice is a small village dominated by the four lane highway (US 167) which bisects it. The community has no central business district; instead, its few businesses are scattered on both sides of the highway. There are no commercial buildings of architectural interest. For the most part, the village's domestic buildings are equally uninspired. A windshield survey of the community found a few simple bungalows, a number of simple frame cottages and asbestos shingled houses dating from the 1920s through the 1950s, some slab-on-grade ranch houses, many trailers, and eight dwellings showing the influence of the Queen Anne style. Of the latter, the candidate is by far the finest, for its stylistic details are more ornate than those found on any of the other examples.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Historic photographs of Villien House; copies in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Vermilion Historical Society, *History of Vermilion Parish, Louisiana*. Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1983.

Windshield survey of Maurice by National Register staff.