

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

Constructed in 1906, the Greenlaw House is a one-and-one-half story frame residence in the Queen Anne Revival style. Located in the Washington Parish seat of Franklinton, it stands within a historic neighborhood across the street from the town's 1938 high school. Although it has received alterations over the years, the home's National Register eligibility has not been compromised.

Queen Anne features found in the Greenlaw House include:

- 1) a wraparound gallery.
- 2) classic massing elaborated in the form of multiple cross gables and a flared-roof turret top which rests upon a polygonal gallery projection. Three of the gables are associated with projecting rooms, the fourth surmounts a polygonal bay with forty-five degree corner cuts, and a fifth and smaller gable covers a projecting entrance pavilion.
- 3) the presence of texture, applied in the following manner:
 - a) the placement of shingles (now partly obscured by paint) on the turret,
 - b) the use of corner boards, and
 - c) the treatment of the turret's three windows. Each contains a central diamond-shaped pane within a rectangle outlined by multiple small panes of glass.

Other features of interest on the exterior include bracketed Eastlake gallery columns, a Colonial Revival balustrade, a main entrance with transom and sidelights, a side entrance whose door contains an oval glass pane, and the treatment of the central portion of the roof, which is truncated.

The interior contains typical period mantels, including one in the Eastlake style. Also of interest inside the home are the unusual corner blocks of the door and window surrounds, which feature a sunburst-like motif; beaded board wainscot in the dining room and rear hall; and molded baseboards with unusual pinnacle-like elements rising at each corner in the parlor. As constructed, the home's floorplan contained a central hall with two rooms and a bath on one side and four rooms on the other.

Changes to this floorplan are the most significant alterations experienced by the home. During the historic period the Greenlaw family altered the plan by removing the wall (including a set of pocket doors) between the parlor and the hallway, installing glazed double doors between the enlarged parlor and remaining part of the central hall, enclosing approximately a third of the wraparound gallery to create a sleeping porch, installing glazed double doors between this porch and the adjoining bedroom, installing closets in several places, finishing the attic into one large room reached by a stairway constructed at the rear of the hallway, taking small amounts of space from two adjoining bedrooms to create a small bathroom, and partially enclosing the home's rear gallery. Alterations made by Greenlaw descendants include the completion of the rear gallery enclosure, the attachment of a small plywood utility room and a metal carport to the rear elevation, and the reconfiguration of the large attic room into several small rooms and storage spaces. The latter included the installation of four shed roof dormers, one on each of the home's elevations. The home is currently undergoing a rehabilitation by its new owner, and much of the work is restorative in nature. Changes associated with this work include the removal of the home's original Eastlake front door (which will be installed at the rear) and its replacement with a historic door purchased in New Orleans, the replacement of the gallery stair and its balustrade, the installation of a copper awning over the front sleeping porch, and the reconfiguration of the space formerly occupied by the home's rear room and back porch.

Although this list of alterations at first sounds serious, the changes are not as significant as they might seem. The majority of the alterations have occurred on the interior. On the exterior, two-thirds or more of the gallery still wraps around the facade and side of the home (the elevations which form the

building's principal view), and the other important exterior stylistic elements which identify the house as an example of the Queen Anne Revival survive. Most importantly, these survivors include the home's classic cross gable massing and turret--an expensive-to-build feature which is rare within Franklinton. The turret alone makes the Greenlaw House an architectural landmark and a prime candidate for National Register listing.

Non-Contributing Element

A modern garage with wooden walls, a metal door and a metal roof also stands on the property.

Significant Date: 1906

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Criterion: C

Area of Significance: Architecture

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Greenlaw House is locally significant because it is one of only seven architectural landmarks within the Town of Franklinton. It achieves this distinction because of its classic Queen Anne massing, which culminates in a turret.

Franklinton is an old community which has experienced distinct periods of growth. The first began in 1819 with the creation of Washington Parish and the temporary designation of a rural spot five miles from Franklinton's current location as parish seat. That same year, John W. Bickham donated to the parish government 30 acres of land at what would become Franklinton's permanent location. A year later, the Louisiana legislature designated the location as the temporary parish seat and in 1821 gave the community its name. However, it appears that parish officials did not relocate the courthouse until a July 4, 1826 election made the town's designation as Washington Parish's seat permanent. A post office was established in 1829, and a brick courthouse had been completed by 1830. The town received a charter in 1861 but apparently its municipal government remained largely inactive. Another charter was issued in 1888. At that time the town's corporate limits encompassed one square mile of land with the courthouse at its center. From this time forward, city fathers actively governed the town. Significant growth occurred when the railroad arrived in 1907. A promotional booklet published c. 1908 shows the town's original street grid partly surrounded by a new grid of lots and squares more than three times the size of the old. And, from a population of 236 in 1900, the community had grown to 814 inhabitants (an increase of over 300%) by 1910. However, this phenomenal growth did not continue, and today Franklinton is a small parish seat/commercial center serving a largely agricultural countryside.

Despite its age and previous prosperity, Franklinton has very few historic buildings of architectural significance. Because Washington Parish has not been officially surveyed, the National Register staff conducted a windshield survey to gather information on extant buildings. This survey found the central business district to contain a series of undistinguished vernacular structures dating from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1940s. These buildings face streets organized around a grid system focusing upon a modern courthouse. Residential neighborhoods were found to contain three general types of dwellings:

- 1) simple unstyled cottages dating any time from the turn-of-the-century to the present day,
- 2) modest and unpretentious interpretations of styles such as the Queen Anne Revival, Colonial Revival, and English Cottage, and

- 3) modern slab-on-grade brick ranch houses.

Only seven buildings rank as notable exceptions to these findings. These landmarks include a well-preserved c. 1900 commercial building, a Romanesque Revival commercial structure, a Spanish Mission style church, a Late Gothic Revival (Collegiate Gothic) style high school, one home illustrating the transition between the Queen Anne and the Colonial Revival styles, and two significant examples of the Queen Anne. The Greenlaw House is one of the latter. In addition, it is the only building displaying a turret, a feature which distinguishes better Queen Anne style houses from lesser examples.

Historical Note

The house was built in 1906 by Edward Runnels Greenlaw (a businessman with interests in sawmills and railroads) for his parents, Captain Lawrence Dade Greenlaw and Dora Runnels Greenlaw. Captain Greenlaw was a Civil War veteran; Mrs. Greenlaw founded the Baptist Missionary Society of Washington Parish and published three books of poetry. The dwelling remained in the hands of Greenlaw descendants until its recent purchase by Lisa Foster, who is rehabilitating it as her residence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Edward Runnels Greenlaw,” typescript; copy in National Register file.

Historic photograph of Greenlaw House; copy in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Windshield survey of Franklinton by National Register staff, May 5, 1998.