

The Trudeau House, c.1830, is a two story brick and frame structure with hesitant touches of the Greek Revival style. It is located in a hilltop setting in rural West Feliciana Parish. Despite a few alterations and some deterioration, the house retains its National Register eligibility.

It is commonly believed that the house in question is eighteenth century in date and associated with Oliver Pollock, regarded by historians as "the financier of the (American) Revolution in the West." Pollock during the war operated out of New Orleans and had various real estate investments in the Louisiana colony, including the land upon which the present house is located. Pollock apparently acquired what he called Tunica Plantation (after the Tunica Indians and the settlement of the same name) in the early 1770s. He owned it until 1782, when he left Louisiana and the plantation was acquired by Carlos Trudeau. Pollock returned to Louisiana in 1788 and regained Tunica Plantation in 1789; however, in 1813, the portion upon which the candidate is located was sold by his family to a neighbor, Phillip Alston. Pollock himself had returned to the eastern seaboard in 1791, where he lived until 1819. From 1819 until his death in 1823, his legal residence was in Pinckneyville, Mississippi, home of his daughter.

Architectural historians with the Division of Historic Preservation examined the house with the foregoing in mind and concluded that the present house on the site dated from a period after Pollock's ownership of the property. The architectural evidence for a c.1830 date of construction is unmistakable. All of the nails used in the house, from small lathing nails to large constructional spikes, are of the square-headed manufactured type commonly in use from about 1820 to the 1870s. If the house were eighteenth century, one would expect hand-forged "rose head" nails. Secondly, the surviving historic hinges in the house feature two gudgeons and are held in place by screws. This type of hinge was commonly in use in Louisiana during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Again, if this were an eighteenth century house, one would expect to find hand-forged strap hinges held in place by clinched nails. Thirdly, the surviving historic windows are nine over six with the upper sash fixed in place. This type of window was commonly in use during the 1830s and '40s. In an eighteenth century house, the window panes would have been smaller and more numerous. Finally, all of the decorative features are in the Greek Revival style and all of the decorative moldings are of types associated with the Greek Revival era. In Louisiana the Greek Revival style first appears in the 1820s and more commonly the 1830s in rural areas.

The house evidences some Creole influence in its construction. Characteristics include: (1) the fact that the lower story is of brick and the upper story is frame; (2) the fact that the upper story has a higher ceiling than the lower and is the principal floor; and (3) the rear elevation of the upper story which features a cabinet and loggia range.

There are also some Anglo-American features, including:

- (1) the pegged frame of the two front rooms on the second story. This frame has English angle braces in the corners. Some might assert that this frame, which is of the type in use in the eighteenth century, suggests that at least some of the house is earlier than 1830. However, frames of this type continued to be built in Louisiana up until the middle years of the nineteenth century. In addition, the frame is not pegged at every joint. Some of the joints are held in place by nails, and in these instances, the nails are of the manufactured type previously described.
- (2) the previously noted Greek Revival features.

## **The Plan**

The principal (second) story features a capacious front gallery, two large front rooms, each with its own entrance door, and a rear range of two cabinets and a loggia. It is reached by a full flight of exterior steps both front and rear. The lower story consists of two front rooms and two smaller

rear rooms without a loggia. All four of the front rooms have fireplaces which feed into a pair of end-wall chimneys. The house is encompassed by a massive broken pitch gabled roof.

The front wall of the second story, the ceilings in the upper front rooms and the ceilings downstairs are covered with wide random width tongue and groove flush boards. In addition, the partition walls downstairs are one plank thick featuring tongue and groove boards. The walls in the upper front rooms are covered with wide random width rough-sawn boards. Evidently, these were meant to be covered with paper or canvas. The widest of the boards noted in the house is over sixteen inches. The brick walls on the lower story were originally plastered, some of which survives. Curiously, the side walls of the loggia are covered with wide clapboards. A clapboarded protected wall is something seldom seen in antebellum Louisiana. Even more curious, the rear wall of the loggia is covered with lathe and plaster. The interior walls of the cabinets are also lathe and plaster. Surviving boards nailed in the attic suggest that at one time the cabinets and the loggia may have lacked ceilings and been opened to the rafters.

### Greek Revival Features

The mantel in the upper north front room features an entablature and flanking pilasters with crude molded cuts. Most of the doors feature two vertical bolection molded panels raised on one side. Hinges indicate that many of the doors have been moved around, but two of the doors retain their original hinges and are in their original locations. The large square columns found on the loggia are made from wide planks and feature blocky capitals and bases distinguished by a forty-five degree angle cut.

Other decorative features include beaded baseboards, molded and beaded window and door surrounds and two mantels in the upper and lower south front rooms. These identical mantels feature a molded surround, top and side boards and a molded shelf. Evidence indicates that the fireplace in the lower north front room never had a mantel.

### **Alterations**

The original columns on the upstairs front gallery have been replaced, although two surviving columns are stored in the attic. Also, the front staircase is not original. Some of the original clapboarding has been lost. The upper side elevations have been partially sheathed in corrugated metal. Finally, sometime in the mid-twentieth century, the rear elevation was fitted with a massive shed porch resting upon cut tree trunks.

Significant dates	c.1830
Architect/Builder	unknown
Criterion C	

The Trudeau House is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of a limited number of buildings left to represent West Feliciana's early architectural history. Although this Mississippi River parish is well known for its antebellum architecture, particularly plantation houses, there are actually not that many survivors when compared to the number of major buildings in the parish on the eve of the Civil War.

West Feliciana Parish is one of the state's early areas of settlement, although practically nothing survives from the colonial period (pre-1803). When Louisiana became a state in 1812, the area in question was part of what was known as Feliciana County, which in 1824 was divided into

the current West and East Feliciana. In the prosperous decades prior to the Civil War, West Feliciana, with its fertile lands, was a plantation landscape, with some of the state's wealthiest planters residing there. St. Francisville, the parish seat, was a bustling town. Given the history and settlement patterns of the region and as evidenced from census figures and historic maps, it is clear that there were literally hundreds of major historic buildings (residences, schools, businesses, churches, etc.) in the parish on the eve of the Civil War. However, today, despite West Feliciana's deserved reputation for its antebellum architecture, there are only 30-40 major examples (as previously defined). And while this may sound high in the abstract, it is not relative to the number that once existed. The Trudeau House, of course, is one of these survivors, and as such, is of local architectural importance.

Regarding the name of the candidate, although Carlos Trudeau owned the property before the present house was built, it nonetheless has been known traditionally as the Trudeau House.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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