

THE GENTILLY TERRACE COMPANY-COLIER HOUSE
4615 St. Roch Avenue

Architectural Rating: Blue

Construction Date: 1912

Architect: Design Department, Baccich & DeMontluzin

Nomination Information

Date: October 15, 1981

Nominated by: Camille Strachan

Seconded by: John Ernst, Eugene Cizek

Recommended by: Staff

Site Description

Square 25, Lot: 43, 44 & 45

3rd M.D., 8th Ward

Zoning: RS-1

Lot Size: 25' x 128' 4" 3' 11" for each lot

Owner: Mr. & Mrs. William Collier

The nomination of this property was based upon its architectural significance. Each of the four areas of criteria used in determining landmark qualification, as outlined in City Ordinance #5992 MCS, will be examined on an individual basis in order to produce information upon which a final decision will be made whether or not to designate the property.

Architectural Significance

According to records in the Notarial Archives, the land on which this building stands was acquired by the Gentilly Terrace Company on May 20, 1909. The Company, which was established on February 25, 1909, was a subsidiary of the real estate development and construction firm of Baccich and DeMontluzin. The property was sold by the Company on April 18, 1912 to Henry W. Bihli for \$5,454.42, with buildings listed in the description of the property. The house appears in the May 1912 issue of Architectural Art and its Allies, which was published monthly from 1905 to 1912 by the Louisiana Architects Association. The house is noted as the residence of Henry W. Bihli, and is said to have been designed by the Design Department of Baccich and DeMontluzin.

This frame one story structure is perhaps the finest example in New Orleans of what is best known as a California Style bungalow. The association of the state's name with this house type results from the great popularity of the bungalow house type in California in the first two decades of this century. The house, while small, is extremely complex in terms of its exterior elevations. The main body of the house is covered by a low pitched gable ended roof, the eaves of which overhang the two side elevations of the house. As was characteristic of the style, the asymmetricality of the structure is immediately apparent. As one approaches the house from St. Roch Avenue, the most dramatic feature to be seen is the elaborate entrance porch. The porch rests upon a pair of battered brick piers, with the upper section of the porch consisting of a spectacular display of wooden beams and brackets. The structural nature of this porch is most impressive, with the vertical slats that form the open pediment being the only purely ornamental item. To the left of the porch is a small bay which projects out slightly from the facade, supported on wooden corbels. The window unit in this bay features a large casement window at the center, with two smaller casement windows to either side. The front doorway is more or less centered on the facade. The frame uses a lintel which extends past the vertical members of the frame, a typical design feature of bungalows of this period. The door itself is divided into four glass panels. To the right of the doorway is a very large and unusual window unit. The center section of this unit uses double hung sash, with the upper section divided into six vertical panes of glass. The smaller windows to either side are of casement design.

The Gentilly Boulevard side of the house continues the variety of fenestration found on the St. Roch facade. Just back of the facade is a triple window unit featuring casement sash. Further back on this side of the house is another triple window unit, which uses double hung sash. The center section is taller than the two that flank it. The upper section of the window is divided into vertical panes of glass. The other windows in this group use single panes of glass.

At the rear of the Gentilly Boulevard side of the house is a glass enclosed porch which must have been open or simply screened originally as a sleeping porch, another favorite element of bungalow design. The overhang of the roof on this side of the house is supported by four strut brackets.

The Carnot Street side of the house is dominated by the buttressed brick chimneypiece which stands just back of the main facade. The base of the chimney is articulated by a pair of stepped brick buttresses. Once the chimney breaks through the roof, it rises in two sections, the taller of which contains the flue. The chimney is flanked by small casement windows. Further back on this side is a small projecting bay which is sheltered by a shed roof supported on brackets. A band of casement windows opens up the top of this bay. Five strut brackets support the roof overhang on this side of the house. A detail of particular interest is the fact that the walls of the house flare outwards at the base, giving the house an Oriental character.

Architect

Unfortunately, it is difficult to reconstruct the exact nature of the process which produced this house. Judging from the photographs in Architectural Art and its Allies, Baccich and DeMontluzin's office ~~must have been aware of~~ of progressive trends in American design, for the office interior was full of Craftsman style furniture. It is likely that some of the inspiration for the designs built by the firm may have come from the pages of The Bungalow Magazine, which was published for most of the first quarter of this century. An incomplete copy of the brochure for the Gentilly Terrace development indicates that Baccich and DeMontluzin were able to offer interested clients a wide range of house designs at a modest cost. Most of these houses were rather small, with an occasional large house appearing on the streets of the Terrace.

Historic Personages

None

Cultural, Political, Economic and Social History

None