

STAFF REPORT ON THE LANDMARK NOMINATION OF
THE LULING - WELCK MANSION
1436-38 LEDA STREET

The huge, four-story Italianate style mansion, now surrounded by modest, early twentieth century homes, once stood alone on a vast estate, developed by Florence Luling in the 1860's. Luling, who had immigrated from Bremen, Germany in the 1840's, reportedly escaped from his homeland after having participated in a revolution. He did not own the mansion grounds for long, selling it to the Louisiana Jockey Club in 1880, some fifteen years after construction. The Jockey Club, that had operated the nearby Fairgrounds as a racetrack since 1872, used the mansion as their headquarters and clubhouse for many years. The residence is now owned by the Welck family.

James Gallier, Jr.'s firm of Gallier and Esterbrook, Architects, designed the mansion for Mr. Luling. After long delays and heated correspondence, the building was completed in 1865 or soon after. The main portion of the house had twenty-two rooms, including a billiard room and bowling alley, and it was embellished on the interior by marble mantelpieces from Italy and ceiling and wall frescos. The side pavillion housing the bowling alley has been demolished, as has the original kitchen wing. Few other changes have altered the original appearance of this colossal stone mansion. Resembling an Italian Renaissance villa,^{the}architecture of this building is a superlative example of the high Italianate style. It is set on a heavily rusticated base with round-arched openings that echo the arched windows on the upper two floors. These floors are surrounded by a turned balustrade. Deep, overhanging eaves crown the design of the mansion.

Based upon a careful consideration of the four areas of criteria determining landmark qualification, any one of which will qualify a property for designation, the staff of the Historic District Landmarks Commission finds that the Luling-Welck Mansion at 1436-38 Leda Street meets all four categories, in that it reflects the broad cultural political, economic, and social history of the nation, state, and community; is identified with historical personages in state and local history; embodies distinguishing characteristics of architectural types, inherently valuable for a study of periods, styles, methods of construction, and indigenous materials or craftsmanship; and represents notable works of architects whose individual ability has been recognized.

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