

The Shwartz-Long-Levy House
#14 Audubon Blvd.

Architectural Rating: Purple
Construction Date: 1923
Architect: Emile Weil

Nomination Information

Date: April 19, 1979
Nominated by: Jane Ferguson
Seconded by: William Pitts, Howard Green
Recommended by: Staff

Site Description

Square B, Lots 16, 18, 20, 22, 24
6th M.D. 15th A.D.
Zoning: RS-1
Lot Size: #16: 165'11"0" x 30, #18: 165'7" 0" x 30', #20: 165'3"0" x
30'; #22: 165'11"0" x 30", #24: 164'7"0" x 30'
Owner: Audrey L. Sternberg

The nomination of this property was based upon its association with a historic personage, its architectural significance, and the fact that it was designed by a noted architect. 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 Office of Conveyance, the land on which this building stands was acquired by Simon J. Shwartz, Jr. in March, 1923.1 Real Estate Tax assessment books indicate that the house was built between 1923 and 1924.2 The house was designed by Emile Weil and was pictured in a book published in 1928 illustrating various examples of his works.3

This masonry two story house built on an L-shaped plan is a fine example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style, which first appeared in California, can be said to be a Western answer to the Colonial Revival style so popular in the Northwestern U. S. Spanish Colonial Revival structures took their inspiration from the 17th and 18th century missions, churches and houses of the Spanish Southwest and Mexico. The appearance of several such designs at the Panama-California Exposition at San Diego in 1915 generated public acceptance of the style, which flourished through the 1920's.

The house in question is situated to one side of its extensive grounds, and is placed upon a low terrace set back from the street. The house presents an asymmetrical facade to Audubon Boulevard, the entrance set slightly to the right of the center line of the house. The facade is divided into six bays, three are to the left of the entrance, two are to the right. Among the trademarks of the style in evidence are the low-pitched hipped roof covered in red barrel tiles, the flat and undecorated stucco finish of the exterior walls, and the concentration of decoration around the entrance bay of the house. One approaches the entrance on a wide paved walk which leads to the low terrace on which the house is built. Four steps flanked by large planting urns ascend this terrace. Three additional steps rise up to the entrance portico, which is flanked by another pair of planting urns. The portico projects slightly from the facade of the house, and is roofed in red barrel tiles. The walls that flank the entrance itself are barren of ornament until the upper portion of the wall, which features a decorated stucco panel atop a Corinthian capital with no column attached. The arch which frames the entrance is an unusual and elaborately detailed design based upon Baroque sources. The arch springs from Solomonic columns with Corinthian capitals, and rises in two scrolls to an elongated Key-stone. The spandrel panels are embellished with Renaissance instriped stucco decoration. The openings which flank the entrance are all round arched with fan transoms. These

openings are fitted with full length glazed French doors. The lower portions of these openings are enclosed by simple wrought-iron railings. With one exception, all second floor openings are square-headed. The three openings to the left of the entrance bay feature glazed French doors and small wrought-iron balconies, so underscaled that it is unlikely that people were meant to stand outside on them. A large round arched opening with French doors is set above the entrance. The arch rises from Solomonic columns similar in design to those which frame the entrance. An elaborate stucco molding of Baroque inspiration enframes this opening. To the right of this arched opening is a unit comprised of three square-headed openings with single casement sash. The undersized balconies noted earlier appear beneath these openings as well.

Spanish colonial residential architecture is generally oriented to the outdoors, a feature particularly suited to our New Orleans climate. The rear of this house particularly reflects this aspect of the style. A solarium opens onto a raised terrace surfaced in red terracotta and surrounded by a curved concrete balustrade. The terrace in turn steps down to a central landscaped patio. Access to the patio is also reached through a rear door in the center of the house under a triple arched arcade. The triple arched motif is repeated in the doorway leading onto the terrace and the triple windows above the arcade. Contrasting with the arched openings are the triple rectangular windows above the solarium entrance and the rectangular windows on the rear wing overlooking the patio. This interplay of curves and rectangles repeats the contrast seen in the more formal front elevation.

The asymmetry and contrasts of size and shape of openings characteristic of Spanish Colonial architecture are more evident on the rear elevation. In the left rear wing especially, the varied openings and the stepped roof levels reflect the changing interior levels in this wing.

Architect

Emile Weil, a native of New Orleans, was one of the most prestigious architects in the City during the first third of the 20th century. His work includes the Saenger Theatre, the First N. B.C. Building at 210 Baronne Street, Touro Synagogue, and the Bohn Motor Company on South Broad Street. He also designed several fine residences on St. Charles Avenue.

Historic Personages

Huey Pierce Long, governor of Louisiana from 1928-1931 is perhaps the most important political figure in Louisiana in the 20th century. Born in Winnfield, Louisiana on August 30, 1893, Long studied law at Oklahoma University and Tulane University. He was admitted to the Louisiana Bar in 1915.

Long practiced law throughout his life, even while holding public office. In 1921 Long was elected to the United States Senate, an office he held until his death on September 10, 1935, two days after he was shot by an assassin. As governor, Long instituted programs to eradicate illiteracy, pave state roads and distribute free text books in the public schools. He founded the Louisiana State University Medical School, drafted legislation for building the State Capitol, enlarged Charity Hospital, and built the Huey P. Long Bridge.

Social, Economic and Cultural History

On August 25, 1938 the board of curators of the Louisiana State Museum purchased this property to be maintained as a memorial to Huey P. Long. The purchase was authorized by Act 16 of the 1938 regular session of the Louisiana legislature.⁵ The house with all of its furnishings was open to the public from November 1938 until August 1952. Huey Long acquired #14 Audubon Boulevard in February 1932⁶ maintaining it as his residence while serving as United States Senator. It is the last residence of Senator Long and the only building in the City directly associated with him.

Footnotes

1. Conveyance Office Book 365, Folio 64
2. 15th Assessment District Books, 1923-1924, 1924-1925.
3. Illustrations of Selected Work of Emile Weil Architect, New Orleans LA. 1900-1928.
4. Who Was Who in America, Vol. I, 1897-1942. Chicago, 1942.
5. Biennial Report of the Board of Curators, Louisiana State Museum, 1952-53.
6. Conveyance Office Book 465, Folio 498.