

THE WALTHER-WAHLIG . E
1934 Marengo Street

Architectural Rating: Blue
Date of Construction: 1903
Architect: Unknown

Nomination Information

Date: March 8, 1984
Recommended by: Staff
Nominated by: Jacqueline McPherson
Seconded by: Joanne Whitley, Jane Brooks

Site Description

Square 474, Lots 13, 14, 15 and parts of 11 and 12.
6th Municipal district, 14th Assessment District.
Zoning: RD-2
Lot Size: 90' along Marengo by 148' along Danneel Streets.

Owners: Mrs. Frances Wahlig Rein, Jeanne Wahlig Ray, Floy Wahlig Gardemal,
and Frederick D. Wahlig.

The nomination of this property was based upon the building's architectural significance. Each of the four criteria used in determining landmark qualification, as outlined in Ordinance No. 5992 M.C.S., will be examined on an individual basis in order to produce information upon which a final decision whether or not to designate this property will be made.

Architectural Significance

According to the earliest records available on this property in the Conveyance Office Books, the entire square bounded by Marengo, Milan, Dryades and St. Denis, (now Danneel) Streets was owned by Thomas Quincy Adams Fellows in 1880. In 1889, half of the square, fourteen lots of ground, was sold to Elizabeth H. Friend for payment of Fellows' 1872-78 taxes. The property was sold by Mrs. Friend's heirs in 1895 to John McCloskey, and Mr. McCloskey in turn sold lots 11-17 and the back portions of lots 23 and 24 to Otto Walther, a builder, for \$7050 cash on July 22, 1902.

The assessed value of these lots was listed at \$3200 in 1902. The 1903 assessment of \$9000 seems to reflect an increase due to the purchase the previous year by Walther. The assessment value jumped again in 1904 to \$13,000, probably indicating that a house was built on these lots in late 1903. This assumption is supported by a report in the September 1, 1904 issue of the Daily Picayune indicating that Otto Walther had taken out a \$3500 building contract within the previous year. The City Directory first lists Otto Walther as residing at 1934 Marengo Street in 1903, and this address is indicated as his residence in the 1903-04 Tax Assessment records. All this evidence leads us to believe that Otto Walther built his home at 1934 Marengo Street in late 1903.

The house at 1934 Marengo is a two-and-one-half story wood frame structure. It is raised about 3 feet above the ground on a masonry base. The house plan is asymmetrical, with an irregular layout that is reflected in the shape of the roof. There is a main side-gabled roof that has a large cross gable extended forward from the left side of it. To the right in the sloping front portion of the main roof is a pedimented dormer window. On the right side of the building

there is a smaller secondary gable that protrudes from the main gable and covers a two-story projection. A hipped-roof portion with its own hipped-roof dormer covers the rear of the structure, and appended to that is a second floor enclosed porch that has its own shed roof jutting out from the rear facade. On the left side of the building is a two story porch, enclosed on both levels, with the same type of shed roof as the rear porch.

From the front view, the building's facade is dominated by the steeply-pitched projecting cross gable and the flat roof of the one-story entrance porch. The porch spans three-quarters of the width of the building and its roof provides a strong horizontal emphasis. The main entrance is very simple with a plain frame. To its right is a short stained-glass window in a similar frame. The part of the facade that projects forward under the gable is, on the first level, similar to an octagonal bay. The front of the bay has no windows, but the corners do: one full-length window next to the front door, and three short ones with one-over-one light sash rounding the lower 1 ft corner of the facade. The porch is supported by six panelled box columns with square capitals. They are grouped in threes at the porch corners. The upper parts of the columns are decorated with applied wooden ornamentation. Engaged pilasters of the same pattern mark the point where the porch railing meets the wall of the building. The railing itself is composed of rather closely spaced turned balusters. The newel posts are merely shortened versions of the porch columns. At the top of the porch a molded cornice stands out under the delicate iron balustrade of the second floor balcony.

The building's first story is covered with horizontal weatherboards, but the second story has a "skin" of patterned shingles. In fact, there are two separate shingle patterns in evidence - a tightly-knit one circling the upper few feet of this level, which contrasts with the more broadly spaced shingles found on the rest of the second story, as well as on the gables. A single short window is centered in the second floor wall above the doorway. Its sash is of decorative glass - the pattern is three tall pointed rectangles side by side. In the projecting area to the left are two windows. One is full-length with one-over-one light sash and gives access to the roof of the entrance porch. The other is shorter, also one-over-one light, and has green louvered shutters. A cornice beneath the roofline features a band of decorative molding in a pattern similar to an enlarged bead and reel motif. Two large scroll brackets support the projecting front gable.

Completing the view of the house from the front are the steep gable on the left side and the dormer window on the right side of the roof. The gable is shingled and contains a double window with the same kind of decorative glazing found in the second floor window. The dormer window has diamond-paned glazing and a shingled triangular pediment. A band of decorative molding runs under the pediment's overhang. Ceramic cresting in a crenellated design sits on the ridge of the roof, adding a decorative touch at the top of the building.

From the Danneel Street side the view of the house is dominated by the broad expanse of the main gable-end. The gable is shingled, like the one in front, and has two windows placed close together in its center. These windows have the diamond-paned glazing like the front dormer window, with the flat cornice of the other gable window. There is a secondary gable projecting sideways from the main gable at the rear. Its small gable is shingled but has no windows.

The wall surfaces of the side facade are like those in front: weatherboard on the first level and shingles on the second. The shingled portion curves out slightly at the bottom of the second floor, creating about a four-inch overhang that helps protect the wall surface below it. There are four stained-glass windows on this side of the house - two small square ones side by side on the first level, and two larger rectangular ones set at such an angle to each other as to suggest that they form a background for an interior stairway.

Under the secondary gable is a two-story projection that has its own one-story screened porch. The roof of this porch has an iron balustrade and is used, like the roof of the front entry porch, as a second-story balcony. The porch has its own cornice with a band of molding. The two-story section has two shuttered windows with one-over-one light sash on both the first and second levels.

The rear of the structure, under its hipped roof, is covered with weatherboards on both levels. The second story porch, supported by box columns identical to those on the front entrance porch, has eight windows with six-over-six light sash. The area beneath these windows is panelled. There are one-over-one light shuttered windows on the side and back of this rear portion. The hipped roof dormer has two small single-paned windows.

Three tall brick chimneys, invisible from the front of the house, dominate the rear view of the structure. The decorative ceramic cresting runs the top ridge of the main gable, with a peak ornament, or finial, at the end.

This building shows many of the architectural characteristics of a subtype of the Queen Anne style called "Free Classic". Virginia and Lee McAlester in A Field Guide to American Houses, typify this style as lacking the decorative spindlework of earlier Victorian Queen Anne houses, and having many classical details such as cornices with decorative moldings. Window and door surrounds are usually simple, and one-over-one light sashes were the most common. This style was dominant in the years after 1890, in part as a reaction against the highly ornamental Victorian style that preceded it. It did, however, keep many characteristics of the earlier Queen Anne such as "a steep-pitched roof of irregular shape, with a dominant front-facing gable and patterned shingles. The facade is usually irregular, with a partial-width, flat-roofed porch, one story high." This building has all of these characteristics, plus such details as the decorative brick chimneys, the ceramic cresting and ornaments on the roof, the elaborate glazing in the upper windows, the use of stained glass in various places in the house, the grouping of columns in twos or threes, and particularly the use and variety of the patterned shingles. The existence of all of these characteristics qualifies this house as a very good and consistent example of the "Free Classic" Queen Anne style.

Architect

Research has not located any evidence linking an architect with this building.

Historic Personages

None

Cultural, Political, Economic and Social History

None

Staff Recommendation

For Designation.

This building is a fine example of the "Free Classic" Queen Anne style. "Free Classic" is a subtype of the popular style that is not so well represented in New Orleans. Relatively few Queen Anne structures of any sort survive that retain as many of the original details as this building does, particularly away from St. Charles Avenue. The Walther-Wahlig House is essentially unaltered, and the staff believes worthy of landmark status, particularly when consideration is given to its impact on its street if it were appropriately painted and maintained. We recommend, however, that the designation include only the main building, not the three outbuildings on the lot.