

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION

GIROD-SIMKIN BUILDINGS
701-03 Tchoupitoulas Street

Architectural Rating: Blue
Construction Date: c. 1831
Architect: John Fitz Miller, Builder

Nomination Information

Date: May 25, 1978
Nominated by: Diane Manget
Seconded by: Michael Duplantier
Imre Hegedus
Recommended by: Staff

Site Description

Square 125, Two undesignated lots
1st M.D., 3rd A.D.
Zoning: CBD 8

Lot Size: Corner lot: 21'2"4" X 88'0"0"
Lot next to corner lot: 20'3"0" X 91'4"0"

Current Use: Restaurant in corner building
Adjacent building unoccupied

History of Property

Current Owners: Mr. Joseph Simkin

Date of Acquisition: Acquired Succession Leo Simkin

The nomination of this building was based upon its architectural significance. Each of the four areas of criteria used in determining landmark qualification, and outlined in City Ordinance No. 6699 MCS, will be examined on an individual basis in order to provide information upon which a final decision will be made on whether or not to designate the property.

Architectural Significance

According to records in the Notarial Archives, the property on which this building stands was sold to Nicholas Girod on April 28, 1814.¹ On April 30, 1831, Nicholas Girod leased this property to John Fitz Miller for a period of twenty years.² According to the lease agreement, John Fitz Miller bound himself to construct a two story building with separate kitchens on this site. The structure was to face Tchoupitoulas Street and to be constructed of local brick. Although the design details are not specified in the agreement, the structure which John Fitz Miller agreed to build on this site is undoubtedly the building under nomination. The arched openings with barred transoms rhythmically spaced on the ground floor are a style prevalent in the early 1830's, however most of the examples still in existence today are located in the French Quarter. The fenestration detailing on the second floor: two bays featuring two six-over-six light sash openings flanking a French door, is unusual and appears to be one of John Fitz Miller's trademarks. Three other buildings, those at 630, 634, 640 Carondelet Street feature this same type of fenestration and are known to have been constructed by Fitz Miller in 1832.³ An archival rendering of February 9, 1859 also shows a structure facing Girod Street that exhibits the same second story openings. In his lease agreement with Girod, Fitz Miller also agreed to build a two-story brick building facing Girod near Magazine.⁴

These buildings are fine examples of early 1830's commercial residential architecture. This combination within a single building of both commercial and residential use featuring an arcaded commercial ground floor is a product of Louisiana Colonial architecture. These buildings are rare and unique examples of this type. There is documentation for other examples within the Central

Business District of this type in the Notarial Archives plan books, however this building is one of the few surviving examples left. It is the only surviving example of this type in the Warehouse District. The staff believes that the buildings in question are the earliest structures still standing in this area. They are also unique because of their unusual second story fenestration treatment. This is the only example in the city of two window lengths on one story placed above an arcaded ground floor.

The building under nomination features four arched openings on the ground floor of the Tchoupitoulas elevation with the triple windows of each bay centered above these two arches. While the Girod Street elevation also features four arched openings on the ground floor, the six second story windows are all sash openings with six-over-six lights. Most of the arched openings on the ground floor have lost their original doors and have been infilled with more recent treatments. The building undoubtedly originally had a second story balcony either extending the full length along the Tchoupitoulas front or smaller individual balconies situated in front of the French doors.

The building's hipped roof extends to encompass the adjacent structure on the Tchoupitoulas side. This building was probably identical to the Girod-Simkin property, but has lost its original facade. While the soft brick of the building under nomination was originally surfaced with smooth plaster, it is now covered with 20th century rough cement.

A rendering of the entire square bounded by Tchoupitoulas, Notre Dame, Magazine and Girod dated June 1, 1846, reveals that two, two-story brick buildings existed on this site at that time. Although the buildings are only drawn in the plan, these are undoubtedly renderings of the structure under nomination. The overall dimensions and the configuration of the openings in the drawings match those of the existing structure. The plans indicate a row of four common wall buildings on the corner of Tchoupitoulas and Girod, fronting on Tchoupitoulas Street. A passageway which leads to the courtyard and rear service buildings is indicated between the third and fourth buildings from the corner. This configuration still exists on the interior of the structures today.

Architect

John Fitz Miller was a builder active in New Orleans in the 1830's. In addition to 701-03 Tchoupitoulas Street, he also constructed the row of five two-story buildings on Carondelet Street for John Prendergast in 1832. 6

Historic Personages

None.

Cultural, Political, Economic and Social History

None.

Notes

1. Act before M. De Armas, N.P., April 28, 1814.
2. Act before L. T. Caire, N.P., April 30, 1831.
3. New Orleans Architecture: The American Sector, p. 153.
4. Act before L. T. Caire, Ibid. Fitz Miller agreed to construct this building within eight years.
5. Notarial Archives Plan Book #86, p. 10.
6. New Orleans Architecture: The American Sector, p. 153.