New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission
Landmark Nomination Report
7632 Hampson Street



Meeting Date: October 4, 2023

Property Address: 7632 Hampson Street

Owner: Benjamin L. Clark
7632 Hampson Street
New Orleans LA 70118

Architect: Unknown

Construction Date: 1889

Significance: Associated with a historic person

Nominated by Keith Hardie

Maps (Figures 1 – 3)

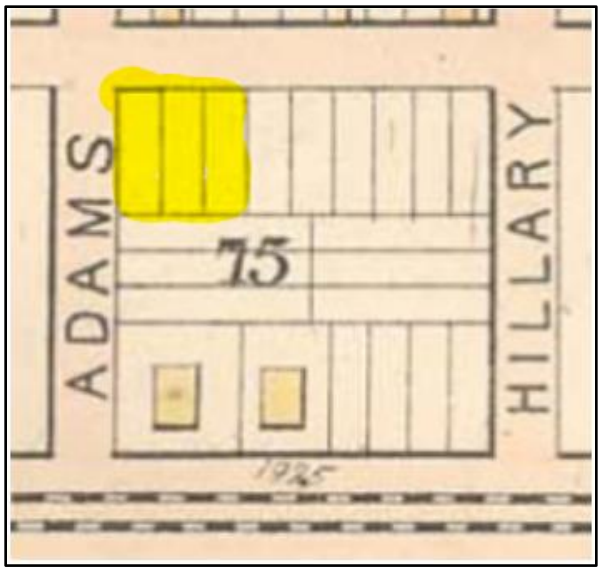


Figure 1. Robinson Atlas, 1883

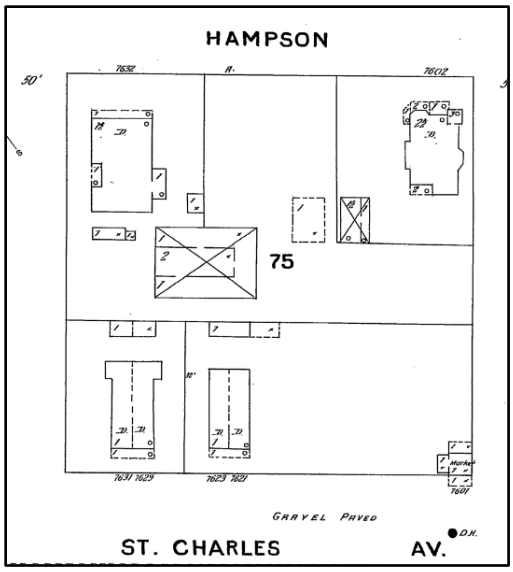


Figure 2. Sandborn Fire Insurance Map, New Orleans 1896



Figure 3. City of New Orleans Property Viewer, 2023



Figure 4. Google Maps Image, 2023

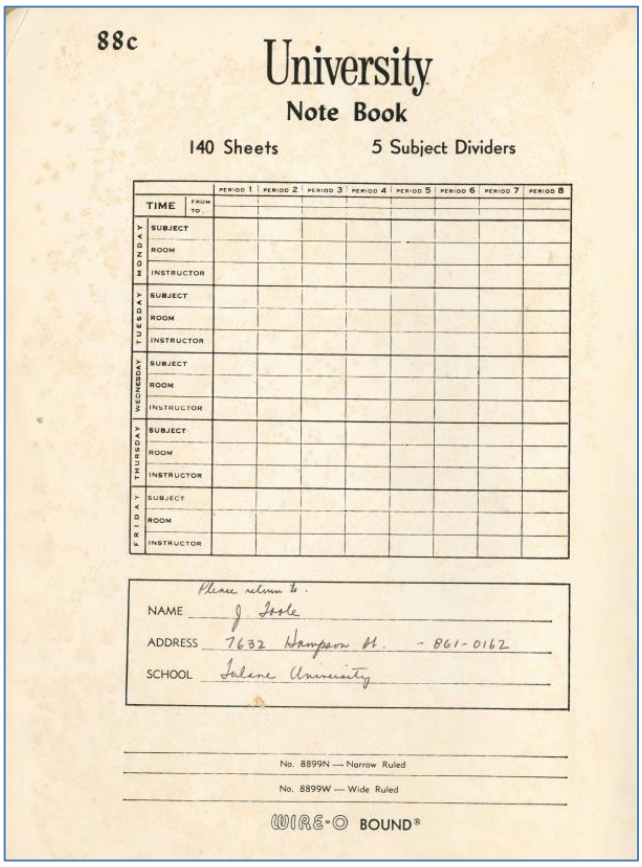


Figure 5. Toole's five subject notebook containing notes on English phonetics and literature, 1968

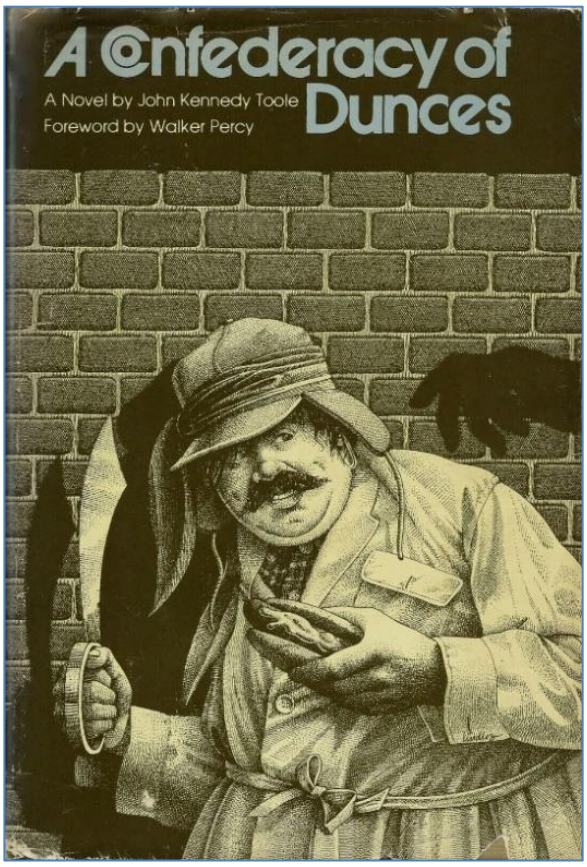


Figure 6. Confederacy of Dunces, first edition, 1980

General History

7632 Hampson Street is a contributing-rated structure in the Carrollton Local and National Register Historic District; it is located on Lots 15, 16, and 17 of Square 75 in Municipal District 7. The building faces Hampson Street is backed by St. Charles Avenue and is bound by Hilary Street and Adams Street. As per *New Orleans Architecture Volume IX: Carrollton* by Robert J. Cangelosi:

> This late-nineteenth-century Italianate center-hall cottage… was built in 1889, for grocer John Paul Hecker Jr., who is first listed as residing here in the 1890 city directory. A tax assessment increase that year confirms the construction date.
> In 1895, Hecker obtained Building Permit No. 5903 for the addition of two rooms with a slate roof to cost of $400. In 1909, his widow Julia Rugers and their eleven children inherited this house in a succession that included a great deal of property. In 1944, two of their daughters, Mrs. L.G. Dahlstrom and J.H. Cook, purchased their mother's interest in the house for $7,053. In 1952, the sisters bought their siblings' interest for $9,600 and retained ownership until 1995.[1]

In 1987, the Orleans Parish Landmarks Commission declared the building a local landmark because of its association with the Pulitzer Prize winning author of *A Confederacy of Dunces,* John Kennedy Toole.

[1] (Cangelosi 2020)

Background Information

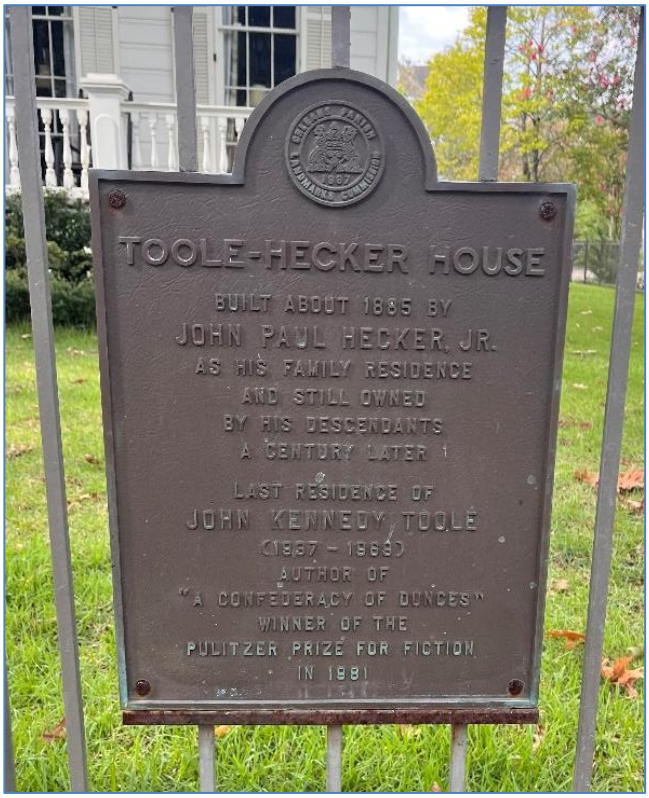


Figure 7. Plaque placed by the Orleans Parish Landmarks Commission in 1987

7632 Hampson Street was the last residence of John Kennedy Toole. He wrote *A Confederacy of Dunces* while stationed in Puerto Rico, after being drafted into the army in 1961; he submitted the manuscript to Simon and Schuster in 1964.[2] While editor Robert Gottlieb was initially interested and suggested revisions, the publisher ultimately rejected the novel.[3] Toole wrote to his friend Joel L. Fletcher:

> I must say that eight air mail letters and one hour-long long distance call from Simon and Schuster later, I am still faced with revisions. Although I am "wildly funny often, funnier than almost anyone else around," the book is too 'intelligent to be only a farce.' It must have 'purpose and meaning.'[4]

After the rejection, Toole moved in with his parents at 7632 Hampson Street, and taught English at Dominican College.[5] After Toole took his own life in 1969, his mother, Thelma Ducoing Toole worked tirelessly to get the book published, finally finding success after showing the manuscript to Walker Percy in 1976.[6] *A Confederacy of Dunces* was published by Louisiana State University Press in 1980 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981.

Building Description


Figure 8. 7632 Hampson Street, 2023

7632 Hampson Street is a five bay Center Hall Cottage with a rectangular footprint and single dormer at the front facing portion of the hip roof. The full height windows at the front (Hampson Street) facing elevation are 6/9 wood windows; the windows at side elevations are wood 6/6 double hung. The 6/6 window at the dormer appears fixed. Wood louvered shutters are present at all openings. There is a wood pane over panel door topped with a transom at the front (Hampson Street) facing elevation. There is wood drop lap siding on the front elevation

[2] (Fletcher 2005), (Richards 2011)
[3] (Fletcher 2005), (Nevils and Hardy 2001)
[4] (Fletcher 2005)
[5] Ibid.
[6] (Fletcher 2005), (Nevils and Hardy 2001)

and wood weatherboards at side elevations. The porch at the front elevation is wood tongue and groove. Wooden brackets support the overhang at the front elevation. The building is surrounded by an iron picket fence. Two multi-lite doors are present at the side (Adams street facing) elevation.

Statement of Significance and Staff Recommendation

> *Landmark* or *landmark site* means an unimproved parcel of ground (landmark site) or such parcel with improvements or such improvements without grounds (landmark), wheresoever located in the city, subject to the jurisdiction of the historic district landmarks commission, of particular historic, architectural, or cultural significance, which parcel plus its improvements, if any:
>
> (1) Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community;
>
> (2) Are identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state, or local history;
>
> (3) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or
>
> (4) Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual ability has been recognized.

The Historic District Landmarks Commission evaluates the significance of a structure based on the four criteria as established by Section 84.22 of the City Code, any one of which can make a building eligible for nomination. As Kenneth Holditch noted in *Another Kind of Confederacy*, Toole was "as irrevocably tied to New Orleans as Faulkner was to Oxford, Mississippi. No other writer, native or other otherwise, seems to have known the city as well nor to have been able to evoke its sights and sounds and smells as powerfully as he."[7] *A Confederacy of Dunces* and its protagonist, Ignatius J. Reilly, are inextricably linked to New Orleans; as such the staff recommends that the building that was John Kennedy Toole's final home be nominated for study as a landmark.



Figure 9. Ignatius J. Reilly statue at 811 Canal Street (the former DH Holmes Department Store), dedicated in 1996

Works Cited

Cangelosi, Robert J. 2020. *New Orleans Architecture Carrollton.* Edited by Friends of the Cabildo. Vol. IX. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press.

Fletcher, Joel L. 2005. *Ken & Thelma; The Story of A Confederacy of Dunces.* Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company.

Holditch, Kenneth W. 1998. "Another Kind of Confederacy: John Kennedy Toole." Edited by Richard S. Kennedy. *Literary New Orleans in the Modern World* (Louisiana State University Press) 102-22.

Nevils, Rene Pol, and Deborah George Hardy. 2001. *Ignatius Rising.* Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press.

Richards, Gary. 2011. "John Kennedy Toole." *64 Parishes.* https://64parishes.org/entry/john-kennedy-toole-2.

Figure Attribution

Cover Image**:** Author's Own, 2023

Figure 1. Robinson Atlas, 1883; Plate 27: [Riverbend and Carrollton] Lowerline to Jefferson Parish line, Mississippi River to Cohn

[7] (Holditch 1998)

Figure 2. Sandborn Fire Insurance Map, New Orleans 1895-1896 vol. 4, 1896, Sheet 393
Figure 3. City of New Orleans Property Viewer, 2023
Figure 4. Google Maps Image, 2023
Figure 5. Toole's five subject notebook containing notes on English phonetics and literature, 1968. John Kennedy Toole Papers, Manuscripts Collection 740, Box 3, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University
Figure 6. Confederacy of Dunces, first edition, 1980
Figure 7. *Author's Own, 2023*
Figure 8. Author's Own, 2023
Figure 9. Ignatius J. Reilly statue at 811 Canal Street, Atlas Obscura, https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/ignatius-j-reilly-statue March 25, 2015