

Nomination Report

Meeting Date: August 15, 2013

Property Address: Camellia Grill
626 N. Carrollton
Avenue

Owner: Rano, LLC
104 Metairie Heights
Metairie, LA 7001

Applicant: Erika Gates
1117 Third Street
New Orleans, LA 70130



Significance: Architectural, Cultural

The Camellia Grill is a well-known, much beloved diner located near the intersection of St. Charles and Carrollton Avenues. A must see on any tourist to-do list, the Camellia Grill attracts a devoted and loyal clientele from all walks of life—businessmen to electricians, tourists to the Queen of Carnival.

The Schwartz family opened the Camellia Grill on December 21, 1946, providing a typical diner experience with counter service and reasonable prices. The Camellia Grill offers something special through its congenial staff made up of charismatic servers wearing white coats and black bow ties. These gentlemen immediately invite the customers, both new and old, into the Camellia Grill experience. Service includes jokes, expert and courteous straw delivery, lots of smiles, and delicious diner food in a warm, fun, inviting, relaxed atmosphere. The Camellia Grill often has a long wait period at peak dining times, prompting an amorphous crowd outside of the building searching for shade most days of the week.



The restaurant was shuttered in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Although the building was not damaged, it remained closed for some time. During that period, a small makeshift shrine began to take

form on the front of the building. Visitors began posting love notes and pleadings for the restaurant to be reopened. Eventually, the property and restaurant were purchased by Hicham Kodr who reopened the restaurant to much fanfare in 2007. Very little has changed at the Camellia Grill since its reopening following Katrina.

Unfortunately, trademark disputes have plagued the new proprietor of the Camellia Grill, resulting in a court decision that may result in Hicham Khodr being required to change the name of the diner and possibly alter the façade in order to comply with licensing agreements.

The building that houses the Camellia Grill was constructed during the first half of the 20th century. The one-story, Greek Revival style building includes a large gable roof supported by four round Doric columns. The central bay is dominated by a wood and glass entry vestibule. To either side of the vestibule, 6/6 windows above panels are flanked by louvered shutters. The gable is punctuated by a circular window, and the brick and stone terrace is enclosed with a low, wood picket fence.



The design of the restaurant may have taken its inspiration from the former Jefferson Parish Courthouse across the street, which was designed by renowned architect Henry Howard in 1855.

The Camellia Grill is significant in that its Greek Revival style marks a departure from typical diner design. Based on diner cars of trains, diners were typically long narrow buildings that emphasized streamline, art deco and moderne motifs. The Camellia Grill's monumentality and classicism contribute to its iconic stature as a cultural institution.



The Camellia Grill has flourished for almost seventy years, serving several generations of New Orleanians. It has entered the pantheon of historic and significant New Orleans eateries such as Antoin's, Galetoires, Café du Monde, Dookey Chase, Commander's Palace, Casamentos and the now shuttered Uglesich's. In a city celebrated for its gastronomy, the preservation of these restaurants and their buildings is paramount to preserving the culture of the city.

The staff recommends the Camellia Grill be nominated for study as a landmark in that it may meet criteria item 1 for consideration as a landmark site in that it "exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community."

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(2) www.stoppingpoints.com

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(3) http://old-new-orleans.com/NO_Old_Carrollton_Courthouse.html

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