

LE PRETRE MANSION
716 Dauphine Street
at Orleans Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

HABS No. La, 53

HABS
LA
36-NEWOR
18-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Louisiana

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Richard Koch, District Officer
Queen and Crescent building, New Orleans, Louisiana

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LE PRETRE MANSION

HABS No. La. 53

Louisiana, Orleans Parish (County), New Orleans
716 Dauphine St. at Orleans St., South-west Corner

PART I

HISTORICAL DATA

Present owner: Joseph Saba, 2836 Gentilly Boulevard, New Orleans
Original and subsequent owners: From Conveyance Office Books.

June 8, 1903, Joseph Saba acquired at public auction, from the Succession of Emile B. Anguard, for \$2,250.

May 9, 1887, Emile B. Anguard acquired from Mrs. Stella Lacoste, widow of Edouard S. Lehmann, for \$3,000.

March 15, 1883, Edouard S. Lehmann acquired at public sale from the Succession of Valsin Oemichen, for \$2,720.

May 11, 1882, the Succession of Valsin Oemichen acquired from Citizens' Bank of Louisiana, for \$3,400.

March 13, 1878, Citizens' Bank of Louisiana acquired at sheriff's sale in suit brought by it against J.B. Lepretre and Mrs. J. Aldige and her husband, for \$1,000.

April 10, 1839, Jean Baptiste Lepretre acquired from Joseph Coulon Gardette for \$20,000. This Act of Sale states that the house was built by Joseph Coulon Gardette upon his acquisition of the lot of ground July 25, 1836, from Celestin Jung, for 4,000 piastres. (The rate of exchange for piastres at that time is not available; it is also to be considered that the term may have been used loosely for dollars.)

The name of the architect is unknown.

The builder was Frederic Roy, as shown in the Building Contract, given later. So far as is known, this was the first house in New Orleans to be built with a basement.

In the book Legends of Louisiana, by Helen Pitkin Schertz, published by the New Orleans Journal, New Orleans, La., U.S.A., 1922, there is given under the title The Brother of the Sultan, an amusing, but incredible, story to the effect that a brother of the Sultan of Turkey, with the connivance of the Captain of an ocean going vessel, absconded with an assortment of crown jewels and beauties from the Sultan's harem. Upon arriving in New Orleans, according to Mrs. Schertz, in the year "Seventeen Ninety-Two", he found a congenial atmosphere and met with a hospitable reception by the Spanish authorities. He was assigned residence in "the boast-place of the town - the house of Monsieur Jean Baptiste Le Prete (sic), influential citizen half the year, banker and social leader, and for the other half planter of rice, corn and tobacco of fertile Plaquemine Parish" (p.50) Here the grateful Turk celebrated by giving an elaborate entertainment in honor of his friends, the Captain and crew who had made possible his advantageous adventure. As a climax to the gala evening, the Captain and crew murdered the host and his retinue, and in their turn, absconded with the jewels and the beauties to engage in a career of piracy. No references given.

As a result of the publication of this story, this house, which was unmistakably described, became known as Le Prete Mansion, and also as the House of the Turk.

The name is spelled in the original French documents as well as in the city directories of 1837 and 1842 Lepretre. (Accents were seldom used in these documents.) Because the separation of the name into two words has become customary, we have accepted it while correcting the spelling.

Something of the true story of the house may be deduced from the chain of title. Several of the owners of the house have been unfortunate financially. It was designed as a residence only, in contrast to the majority of the larger houses in the Vieux Carré, in which the ground floor was designed for commercial use, and the upper floors for living quarters. It would have required considerable wealth to furnish and maintain the house as a residence, as Jean Baptiste Lepretre probably did. The only way in which it could have provided revenue would have been as an apartment house, and this has certainly been its fate since the 1903 purchase. For this reason, it has remained much as it was built, except for the deterioration caused by neglect and the passage of time, the alterations and additions all, with one exception, having been minor ones to suit the convenience of the apartment dwellers. The ceiling rosettes mentioned in the building contract are still in place.

The one exception is the addition of the very handsome cast iron balconies on the second and third floors. These were not specifically mentioned in the building contract, it is generally accepted that they were of later date.

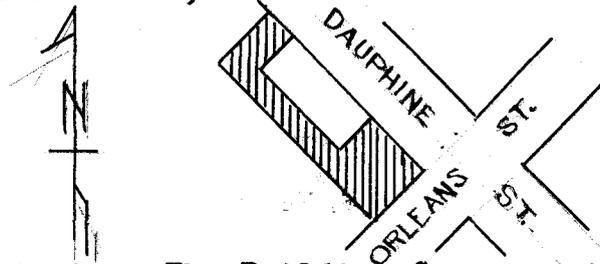
Likely sources not yet investigated: The cast iron of the balconies, if carefully examined, would probably yield a plaque bearing the name of the foundry, then the archives of that foundry or its successor might give the date the iron was cast.

LE PRETRE MANSION

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Louisiana, Orleans Parish (County), New Orleans
716 Dauphine St. at Orleans St., South-west cornerPART II
DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Number of stories: Three with basement.
 Wall construction: Brick stuccoed with blue-gray wash, cast iron balconies on second and third floors.
 Size: 79.93' front on Dauphine street by 33.04' depth and front on Orleans street: Abstract Office.
 Condition of fabric: Fair.
 Orientation: The lot forms the south-west corner of the intersection, and the house faces north-east.



Detailed description: The Building Contract in French together the English translation, which follow herewith, is to be found in the volume of Notarial Acts Felix de Armas 1836 which is to be found in the Notarial Records, Civil District Courthouse, New Orleans. It is to be noted that, as the Notary's name is Spanish, the e is not elided before the A. It is also to be noted that in the original document, there are no accents. This is customary in these old French documents.

Contrat de Batisse et Oblig. Hypoth're entre Mm. J.C. Gardette, Frederic Roy et la Banque des Ameliorations, Sept. 1, 1836 et de l'Independence la 6leme.

Etats Unis d'Amerique, Etat de la Louisiane, Paroisse d'Orleans et ville de la Nouvelle Orleans.

Aujourd'hui ce premier Septembre de l'annee mil huit cent trente-six et de l'Independence, la 6leme.

Par devant Felix de Armas dument commissione Notaire Public pour la dit paroisse, resident en la ville, et en presence de temoines ci-apres nomme et soussignes: -

Ont personnellement compare Mr. Frederic Roy, enterpreneur de cette ville d'une parti: -

Et Mr. Joseph Coulon Gardette proprietaire, demourant aussi en cette ville d'autre parti: -

Lesquels sont convenu de ce qui suit: - savoir: - Le dit Sr. Frederic Roy s'oblige a batir a ses frais et depens, pour le dit Sr. Gardette, une maison avec dependences, sur l'emplacement qui se trouve situe en cette ville a l'encoignure des rues Dauphine et Orleans et mesure, en pied francais, trente-et-un pieds ou environs de face a la rue Orleans sur soixante - douze pieds ou environs de face a la rue Dauphine; cette maison sera de la description ci-apres, savoir: -

Les murs exterieurs seront de dix-sept pouces d'epaisseurs

a partir de l'araselement du rez-de-chaussee en suite de douze
pouces, les murs interieurs auront un pier d'epaisseur et
huit pouces.

Les soliveaux auront trois pouces sur douze et seront
places a dix-huit pouces de distance, la charpente du comble
sera faite a trois egouts a parure.

Les plinthes du rez-de-chaussee et du premier etage seront
a panneaux, les chambranles a pilastres, les portes a panneaux
et a jalousies mouvantes, les planchers seront fait avec les
planches de six a sept pouces de large et en pouce et quart
d'epaisseur, l'escalier avec la main courante et les barreaux
en acajou.

Les enduits seront fait a trois couches et bien dressees,
tous les appartements du rez-de-chaussee et du premier etage
seront decorees de corniches, il sera place deux rosastres,
l'une dans la salle et l'autre dans la salon: - les enduits
du dernier etage seront simples, Tous les bois a peindre ser-
ont couverts de trois couches de peintures en couleur soit en
vert, soit en blanc, soit en gris.

La menuiserie de la cuisine et des chambres a domestique
sera simples; les portes a barre, les enduits ordinaires a
deux couches et las peintures a trois.

La remise et ecurie auront deux cintres et trois couver-
tures a l'etage; le tout blanchi a la choux - Il y aura des
latrines du rez-de-chaussee et au premir etage -

Les dalles de la maison seront en cuivre, celles des
cuisines et remires en fer blanc. Les caves et la cour seront
pavees en pierre plates.

Il y aura escalier pour descendre dans les caves de la
maison et autre descendre dans la cour - La tout devra etre
de main de maitre, point aussi bien que cela doit entretous
les bois seront de premiere qualite.

Il y aura partout ou cela sera necessaire des ferrures
de premiere qualite, et le tout devra etre fait conformement
au plan aux presentes, apres avoir paraphe "Ne Varietur" par
les partis, les temoins et le Notaire soussignes.

Et maintenant les obligations que vient de prendre l'en-
trepreneur et qu'il promet d'executer, le dit Sr. Gardette
s'oblige a lui payer pour la dite maison et ses dependences
la somme de quatorze mille cinq pieatres, payable comme
suit, savoir: -

Lorsque la rez-de-chaussee sera termine	2,500.00
Lorsque le premier etage sera achieve, pareille somme	2,500.00
Lorsque le dernier etage sera termine autre pareille somme	2,500.00
Lorsque les couvertures seront achievees aussi pareille	
	somme 2,500.00

En fin lorsque de la livrais ou qui devra s'affectuer la
vingt-cinq mars prochain

4,500.00
14,500.00

(Then follow the usual legal formalities with signatures.)

TRANSLATION: -

Building and Mortgage Contract between Messers. J. C. Gardette, Frederic Roy and the Bank of Improvements, Sept. 1, 1836, and of Independence the 61st.

United States of America, State of Louisiana, Parish of Orleans and City of New Orleans.

To-day, the first of September of the year one thousand eight hundred thirty-six and of Independence the 61st,

Before Felix de Armas duly commissioned Notary Public for the said Parish, resident of the city, and in the presence of witnesses hereinafter named and undersigned: -

Personally appeared Mr. Frederic Roy, contractor for one part: -

And Mr. Joseph Coulon Gardette, property owner, living also in this city, for the other part: -

These are in agreement as to that which follows: -
to-wit: -

The said Mr. Frederic Roy obligates himself to build at their costs and expenses, for the said Mr. Gardette, a house with dependencies on the lot which is situated in this city at the corner of Dauphine and Orleans streets and measures in French feet thirty-one feet or thereabouts of front on Orleans street by seventy-two feet or thereabouts of front on Dauphine street; this house shall be of the description which follows, to-wit: -

The outside walls are to be of seventeen inches thickness from the level of the ground floor and the rest twelve inches, the inside walls to be one foot in thickness and eight inches.

The small joists shall be three inches by twelve and placed eighteen inches apart, the framework of the roof shall have three ornamental drains.

The plinths of the ground floor and of the first story shall be panelled, the door and window casings pilastered, the doors with panels and movable blinds, the floors shall be made with planks six to seven inches wide and one and one-quarter inch in thickness, the stairs shall have a mahogany handrail and mahogany balusters.

The plastering shall be made in three coats and well arranged, all the rooms on the ground floor and the first story shall be decorated with cornices and there shall be placed two rosettes, one in the hall and the other in the drawing-room; the last story plastering shall be plain, All wood that is to be painted shall be given three coats of paint, either imitation mahogany, or green or white or gray.

The woodwork of the kitchen and service rooms shall be plain, the doors to have bolts, the plastering ordinary with two coats and the painting three coats; carriage house and stables to have two arches and three openings to the story, all to be whitewashed. There are to be latrines on the ground floor and the first story.

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Part II - 4

HABS No.La.53

(Page 6)

HABS
LA
36-NEWOR
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The gutters of the house are to be of copper, those of the kitchen and carriage house of tin. The basement and the courtyard to be paved with flagstones. (N.B. The floor of the basement and the pavement of the courtyard are on a level, there being no excavation.)

There shall be for enclosure a wall in which there shall be built a porte-cochere.

There shall be stairs to descend to the basement of the house and another to descend to the courtyard. The whole must be workmanlike, care shall be taken that all wood shall be of first quality.

There shall be everywhere, wherever it is necessary, iron-work of first quality and the whole shall be made to conform to the plan annexed to these presents, after having been signed "Ne Varietur" by the parties, the witnesses and the Notary undersigned: -

And meanwhile the contractor assumes these obligations and promises to execute them, the said Mr. Gardette obligates himself for the said building and its dependences to pay the sum of fourteen thousand five hundred piastres, payable as follows, to-wit: -

As soon as the ground floor shall be completed	2,500.00
" " " " first story " " " a like sum	2,500.00
" " " " last story " " " " " "	2,500.00
" " " " roofs " " " " " "	2,500.00
And finally, as soon as the stable and that which must be done the twenty-fifth of the coming March	<u>4,500.00</u>
	14,500.00

(There follow the stereotyped legal phrases and the signatures.)

Prepared by Georgia Bertha Drennan
New Orleans, Louisiana August, 1958