

The Dorr House  
311 South Adams Street  
Pensacola  
Escambia County  
Florida

HABS No. FLA-209  
HABS  
FLA  
17-PENSA  
21-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## THE DORR HOUSE

HABS  
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Location: 311 South Adams Street, Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida. The house is located at the northwest corner of South Adams Street and Church Street on Lot 20 and faces east toward Seville Square.

Present Owner and Occupant: The Pensacola Heritage Foundation, Inc.

Present Use: The Dorr House Museum

Statement of Significance: This structure is an excellent example of post Civil War architecture. The exterior trim, the most important feature of the house, reflects a classical revival style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: On December 24, 1813, it was recorded in the Spanish Records that Lorenzo Vitrean, as Syndic Attorney of the City Council of Pensacola, granted Lot 20 to Ignacio Presas who had purchased it for \$200 when the English "Royal Lots" were auctioned on December 10. In 1819 Manuel del Barco, who had purchased Lot 20 from the estate of Presas a month before, sold it to Josephine Bonifay Rioboo for \$500. Josephine Rioboo, "with consent of her husband" according to the Deed Books, sold the lot to Edmond Lane and David White in 1821 for \$1200. The U. S. Land commissioners confirmed the Lane-White title which passed through several tax sales for non payment of city and county taxes. Lot 20 was part of the Robert J. Ware estate by May 1870 when it was sold for \$400 to Rachel J. O'Neal, who with her husband, George H., sold it for \$800 to Clara Barkley Dorr, March 4, 1871. Mrs. Dorr built the existing house and, with her daughters, lived there until 1895-96.

A. C. Blount, Clara Dorr, then Mrs. A. C. Blount, J. W. Dorr, and C. H. Dorr, sold the property described as "Dorr place" December 10, 1900 for \$1600 to David S. Salisbury. He and his wife, Louisa W., sold the property to A. Wade in 1901 for \$3100. Wade lost the property through a lein from the Lewis Bear Company. The company's attorneys, Blount & Blount, sold the property to David Mulberry

Paxson in 1903, who sold it to Edward J. Miller in 1904. In May 1928, Miller cleared the title to the property with Edmond Lane and David White heirs. Miller's 1941 will left the property to his sister, Mary J. Miller, who resided in the house until her death in 1952. Her estate was sold at auction. Lot 20 was purchased by Anna Karlson who sold it two years later, in 1954, to Winston E. and Helen W. Wheat. The Wheats sold the lot a few days later to William Leonard and Ruby Marvelle Jones, who sold the property on 25 January 1965, to the Pensacola Heritage Foundation, Inc.

HABS  
FLA  
17-PENSA  
21-

2. Date of erection: It appears from the tax rolls in 1873 and 1874 that the house, as its architecture suggests, was probably built soon after the lot was purchased by Clara Dorr in 1871.
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans and construction information: None known
5. Alterations and additions: None known
6. Important old views: An 1898 photo shows Miss Valdes School which was housed in the building that year.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The house was probably built for Clara Barkley Dorr, who was prominent in Pensacola Society. Mrs. Dorr was the widow of Eben Walker Dorr, a local lumber entrepreneur, and daughter of George Barkley, a Pensacola merchant. The Dorr family moved out of the house on Seville Square sometime between 1894 and 1896. After the Pensacola Heritage Foundation acquired the house in 1965, they used volunteer labor to restore it. It is furnished with mid-Victorian antiques. The house is open to the public and is also used as a meeting place by several cultural and historical organizations.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed Books, Clerk of Courts Office, Escambia County Court House, Pensacola, Florida; Tax Records, Escambia County Court House, Pensacola, Florida.
2. Secondary and published sources: Pensacola City Directories, 1885, 1893-94, 1896, 1898, 1903.

Prepared by Rodd L. Wheaton  
Architect, HABS  
with abstract research  
by Linda V. Ellsworth  
1972

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Description: This two-story frame house, with its two-story west wing and three-bay gabled facade, which parallels the street, has first floor porches and second floor galleries at the east and north elevations, while a single story porch with gallery rail at roof opens from the dining room on the south side. The classical revival trim is enriched with various motifs.
- B. Description of Exterior:
1. Overall dimensions: Including the west wing, the house is 31'-4" x 69'-3".
  2. Foundations: The original brick piers are infilled with modern concrete block.
  3. Wall construction, finish and color: The wood frame structure is covered with horizontal beveled drop siding except at the east side under the double porch where horizontal boards are butted tight (not overlapped). The siding is painted "pumpkin yellow" and is nailed, where undisturbed, with square-head cut nails. West corner pilasters, two stories high, match the order of the east columns and pilasters. All the trim is painted white, except the louvered blinds which are painted green.
  4. Structural system: Not accessible
  5. Porches: The east porch and gallery have square wood, pedestaled columns and corner pilasters with chamfered edges and Tuscan-type capitals with "dentiled" echini. The outside faces of each column and pilaster are enriched with applied wood strips which form an hour glass fret pattern. The similar faces of the pedestals have an applied diamond pattern. Over each column and pilaster the fascia board is arched to form a stilted or flattened arch. The railing of the gallery, a continuation of the pedestal cap/column base profile, is supported on a heavy cross-lozenge balustrade with a plain bottom rail.

The south one-story porch is supported on thin, square, chamfered columns and has a plain balustrade at the gallery level with square section rails and balusters. There are low concrete steps with podia.

The north porch and gallery of the wing have thin, square, chamfered columns with a balustrade, similar to the south porch, at the gallery. The columns are infilled with diagonal lattice work which screens an open riser stairway between the floors. The tongue and groove flooring on all the porches is painted gray.

6. Chimneys: The stuccoed brick chimneys spaced near the ridge on the north slope of the main roof have beveled washes, paneled stacks, and corbelled caps. On the wing the chimney is similar, though it has a stuccoed brick cowl.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The east entrance doorway has crosetted trim with a central stepped motif at the head and simplified ailerons at the sill. A narrow four light transom is set over the in-swinging double doors. Each leaf has a glazed semi-circular arched top panel with two lights and a single bottom panel.

The south entrances into the dining room have two light transoms and glazed double doors with two lights and a bottom square panel in each leaf. The doors have plain trim which forms crosettes and a raked blocking over each head and simplified ailerons at the sills. The openings are hung with three sectioned pairs of outswinging adjustable louvered blinds. The north porch entrances have four panel and six panel doors hung within simple trim.

b. Windows and shutters: The windows of the east elevation have six-over-six light sash hung over double inswinging panels of "jib" doors. (Similar windows were installed in 1874 in the former Commandant's House [Quarters 1] at the Pensacola Naval Air Station.) Pairs of outswinging, three section, adjustable louvered blinds are hung at each opening. The flat board trim, which forms raked blocking at the head of first floor windows and segmental blocking at the head of the second floor windows, has crosettes and simple ailerons at the sills. The bay window of the south elevation has one-over-one light sash

in the one-story, equal sided semi-hexagonal projection. The raked blocking window trim is received on a continuous sill set above a panel under each opening. The second floor south windows, with segmental trimmed heads, have two-over-two light sash.

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The windows of the wing and the west and north elevations of the main structure have six-over-six light sash which are hung in simply trimmed openings, though the north windows of the main structure are trimmed similarly to the east and south windows.

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8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: The gable roofs of the main structure and the wing have composition roofing.
- b. Cornice and eaves: The boxed eave extends around the half hipped roof of the east porch and forms returns at the west gable. The returns retain a cyma recta crown moulding. The cornice is completed with a bed moulding under the widely projecting soffit. Within the frieze space of the entablature is a jig-saw cut dentil motif, which also extends up the rakes of the east and west gables of the main structure. The eaves and rakes of the wing are simply boxed and have a wide wall fascia board. At the bay window, with its low pitched roof, the plain boxed eave projects over a large "Wall of Troy" dentil motif set onto a fascia board.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The entrance from the east porch opens into the side, north stair hall which opens into the south parlor and dining room. An elliptically arched opening separates the parlor and dining room, which has access to the south porch. The stair hall also opens onto the north porch of the wing. The kitchen in the wing, which also opens into the dining room, has two small rooms in the rear.
- b. Second floor: There are two large rooms south of the stair hall which is enclosed forming a northeast room. The stair hall provides access to the north porch and the wing rooms which are several steps lower.

2. Stairway: The straight run stairway has a beaded, open string. There are two simply turned balusters per tread which support the moulded handrail that extends around the second floor stairwell and is received at the partition which forms the northeast room. At the first floor the rail is received on a large, turned newel. The soffit of the stair is partially enclosed with a knee wall at the first floor. HABS FLA 17-PENSA 21-
3. Flooring: The floors of the house are random width yellow pine which is refinished and heavily varnished. Throughout the first floor tack marks resulting from the installation of narrow carpeting and matting strips are visible.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls and ceilings are plastered and painted white, as is all the woodwork.
5. Doorways and doors: A pair of six-panel, three long panels over three short panels, sliding doors are hung within the parlor and dining room archway with its floor track. Generally throughout the house, though, there are four-panel doors with two long panels over two short panels. Typical panel moulding enriches the plain, unraised panels. The doorways with wood thresholds are trimmed with a full classical architrave having a cyma backband and beaded inner edge.
6. Decorative features: A small cyma moulding forms a cornice in the parlor and the dining room. Typically, the baseboarding has a torus-cavetto cap. The elliptical archway opening into the bay window projection is untrimmed.

Plain Vermont slate chimney pieces with arched surrounds are at the parlor and dining room fireplaces. The use of mottled purple and gray-green Vermont slate suggest that the chimney pieces were probably originally grained to simulate marble. The fireplaces of the second floor have pilaster surrounds with details which are similar to the exterior trim. The frieze boards are paneled. Cast iron fillers and grates are within the fireboxes which have cement hearths.

7. Notable hardware: Most of the doors retain their cast iron carpenter's locks with porcelain knobs and keyhole escutcheons. Exterior doors and early twentieth century cupboards in the kitchen retain cast and wrought iron bolts.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Lighting: There are no original fixtures, though early gas chandeliers from other Pensacola houses have been converted to electricity and installed in the parlor and the dining room.
- b. Heating: The fireplaces, with iron coal grates, provided the original heating system. A new heating and air conditioning unit was installed in 1968.

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FLA  
17-PENSA  
21-

- D. Site and Surroundings: This structure, set back from the property line and the public sidewalk (made of one foot square paving blocks laid in a diamond pattern), faces east on South Adams Street and Seville Square. Old Christ Church is to the south across Church Street. There are no outbuildings. The yard on the north side of the house has been partially bricked and enclosed with a fence reproduced from the original as shown in old photographs.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A.  
HABS--Pensacola  
August 30, 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project, sponsored by the Pensacola Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, now known as the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board of Trustees, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, was recorded during the summer of 1968 in Pensacola under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS; Professor F. Blair Reeves, AIA (University of Florida), Project Supervisor; and Student Assistant Architects John O. Crosby (University of Florida), David L. Van de Ven, Jr. (Texas Technological College), and Edward Bondi, Jr. (University of Florida). The historical information was prepared by Professor Samuel Proctor (University of Florida), by Assistant Historian Linda V. Ellsworth (Historic Pensacola Preservation Board), and by Rodd L. Wheaton (Architect, HABS) who edited all the data in 1972.

Addendum to

The Dorr House  
Seville Square Historic District  
305 South Adams Street  
Pensacola  
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as recorded in 1968 and 1972

HABS No. FL-209

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PHOTOGRAPH

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243