

David Olivier House
4111 Chartres Street, between Mazant
and France Streets
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-70

HABS
LA
36-NEWOR

49-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DAVID OLIVIER HOUSE

HABS
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36-NEWOR
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Address: 4111 Chartres Street, between Mazant and France Streets, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana.

Present Owner: Demolished.

Statement of Significance: The Olivier House, probably built in 1820, was typical of the large early 19th century plantation houses that were located within a short distance of New Orleans. With the great prosperity that the city experienced in mid-century, and the resultant rapid increase in population, these country plantations and residences were sold and often the houses were converted for other uses or demolished, and the lands divided into city lots.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: The following notes are from the research files of Mr. Samuel Wilson, Jr., FAIA, of the New Orleans architectural firm of Richard Koch & Samuel Wilson, Jr. The original records from which these notes were made can be found in the:

Notarial Archives
Civic Center
Loyola Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

-12 April 1833

David Olivier sold property to Etienne Carraby
land and buildings \$70,000

-Succession of Antoine David Olivier
Will Book 7 folio 516

"Antoine David Olivier born at Lyon the twenty second of February 1759 and naturalized citizen of the United States of America in the year 1804, now in Paris, married in Fredrichsburg [sic], Virginia to Fen Elizabeth Mishell - Left of this marriage only a daughter, Eliza Mishell Olivier, widow Peychand, who lives presently with me."

-Notes of titles of Mr. Olivier

The land is of two arpents of facade and 40 arpents of depth.

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Dec. 11, 1819 at Lafitte
Jan. 5, 1820 before Lafitte

Sale of one arpent by
Carrere to Olivier
sale of one arpent by
Baron to Olivier

-O. de Armas No. 333
12 June 1833

Sale of the lots by L. B. Macarty, M. Duralde,
Etienne Carraby and Philippe Guesnon to A. L. Boimare.

"The properties, objects of the presents, are a part of the once habitation of Mr. David Olivier, bought by Mr. E. Carraby, following act of the last 12th of April, statement of Theodore Seghers, notary in this town, and by another act and statement of the same notary in the date of the last 20th of May, the said Mr. E. Carraby has declared the said Messrs. L. B. Macarty, Martin Duralds, and Philippe Guesnon, co-owners with him of the said habitation for a fourth each \$23,260. That since, to wit, on May 25 and 27 they offered at a public sale the said lots, with Mr. Ontillet and Domingon, auctioneers of this town . . ." etc.

-O. de Armas No. 332
18 June 1833

"Deposit of plan by S. D. Macarty, M. Duralds, Philippe Guesnon and Etienne Carraby.

"On 11 April 1833 by act of statement of the undersigned notary the said Philippe Guesnon, acting secretly in his name and in the name of the said three other 'appearers' acquired from Mr. Joseph Lombard, Jr. some land or habitation located in this parish on the left bank of the river, one mile below the town, measuring one arpent and one half facing the river, and forty arpents in depth, with all the buildings that were on it.

"That by another act of the last 12th of April, the said Etienne Carraby acting in his name and in the name of the said three other 'appearers' though not ostensibly, acquired of Mr. David Olivier some land adjoining the one described above, Measuring two acres facing the river and forty in depth, with all the improvements on it.

"That their intention in making this acquisition was to divide these two lands in lots to dispose of them in a public sale or amicably; and in consequence they asked Mr. Benjamin Buisson, land Surveyor, to draw a plan of a part of the said

two lands assembled, divided into lots."

According to the New Orleans City Guide¹ the plantation house was owned by Albert Piernas at the beginning of the Civil War. He was forced to sell, and the property was purchased by the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Cross for use as a boys' orphan asylum. HABS records made by Miss Georgia B. Drennan in 1938,² indicate that it was still used as an orphanage at that time. The structure was demolished c. 1949.³

- B. Date of Erection: Probably built in 1820, according to all the sources available.

¹Works Progress Administration. New Orleans City Guide. American Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952. pp. 273-74.

²G. B. Drennan, "HABS index card for the David Olivier Plantation, 4111 Chartres Street." (Index card with sketches of the front elevation, floor plans, and outbuilding elevation and floor plan, made May 27, 1938 as part of the HABS program in Louisiana. Some of the incomplete records were never incorporated in the Survey's archives at the Library of Congress. This card, and other similar incomplete documentation for structures recorded in New Orleans in the 1930's, are now available in the files of the Louisiana State Museum Library, New Orleans).

³Interview with Mr. Samuel Wilson, Jr., FAIA, June 1964.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural interest: The Olivier House was one of the finer examples of early 19th century plantation houses in the New Orleans area of Louisiana, that developed out of the earlier French plantation homes of the raised basement type.
2. Condition of fabric: Demolished c. 1949.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories, bays, layout: One story on raised basement; house, three-bay front, veranda, seven-bay front and five-bay sides; rectangular (almost square); over-all dimensions: 74'-5" (front) x 70'-11 1/4".
2. Foundations: Not noted
3. Wall construction: Brick with stucco and wooden frame.
4. Structural system, framing: Wooden framing.
5. Porches, stoops: Originally the two-tiered veranda extended around all four sides of the structure (seven-bay front and rear; five-bay sides). The rear and left side second-level verandas were enclosed at an unknown date. The columns on the first level were simple stuccoed brick columns on low square brick bases, with square wooden abaci and simple neck moldings. The wooden columns of the second level rested on high, square wooden plinths that served as posts for the simple wooden railing with square balusters. These columns also have simple neck moldings; however, the wooden abaci were much higher and attenuated than those on the first level. There was a single wooden exterior stairway located at the extreme right of the front elevation.
6. Chimneys: At the time of demolition there was a single brick rectangular chimney. Formerly there were at least two more, since most of the rooms had fireplaces.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Each room in both the basement and the main story had either one or two exits to the veranda. These apparently had double wooden doors with glazed or louvered transoms. The front center door of the main story had five-light side lights with wooden paneling beneath and an elliptical transom with a sixteen-light fanlight.

- b. Windows and shutters: Original windows not noted. Photographs of the structure in the 1930's indicate that all windows had louvered shutters.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flared, hipped roof. Each of the four sides had two distinct slopes.
- b. Cornice: Simple molded wooden cornice. The precise nature of the moldings not noted on drawings or visible in photographs.
- c. Dormers: Three simple pedimented dormers with louvered shutters on the front elevation; single pedimented dormer on each side elevation.

C. Description of Interior

1. Basement plan: Three long rectangular rooms that extended the entire width of the house.
2. First-floor plan: Three large almost square rooms across both the front and rear. The side rooms were separated with small rectangular rooms (one of which housed an interior stairway).
3. Stairways, flooring, wall and ceiling finish, doorways and doors, decorative features and trim, notable hardware, lighting, and heating: Not noted. See drawings and photographs for all available information.

- D. Site, outbuildings: Originally the Olivier House formed the center of a fairly extensive plantation complex that included kitchen, stables, and "pigeonniers." After its adaptation for use as an orphanage these outbuildings were either demolished or extensively modified, and the main structure was connected to an extensive dormitory wing.

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