917 RACE STREET (HOUSE)
917 Race Street
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HABS LA-1403
LA-1403

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HABS No. LA-1403

After the establishment of HABS in 1933, and its continuance under a tripartite agreement between the National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress, the AIA nominated a member of their local chapters to lead the documentation effort in the thirty-nine districts under the HABS program umbrella. These district officers had already devoted years to recording examples of early American architecture, were active in local preservation initiatives, and typically had architectural practices dependent on a design and restoration business. Richard Koch of New Orleans, Louisiana, was one of these men.

Koch was an established restoration architect and was active in New Orleans's emerging preservation community. He was a member of the Vieux Carre Commission, an entity charged with design review of the nascent historic district beginning in 1925. His architectural firm, Armstrong and Koch, was responsible for the renovations at the River Road plantation, Oak Alley (HABS No. LA-71), and at Shadows-on-the-Teche (HABS No. LA-75) as well as the new construction of Le Petit Theater in New Orleans's French Quarter. The theater project was heralded as one of the first new buildings designed, sensitively, with an eye to the historic character of the neighborhood. He also collaborated with William Wiedorn and Enrique Alferez on the design for the city's botanical garden. Coinciding with his work for HABS, Koch guided the restoration of the Gauche-Gray House on Esplanade; afterwards, he worked on the rehabilitation of the mansion house at Evergreen Plantation (HABS No. LA-1236).

As the district officer for Louisiana, Koch took photographs of various sites and encouraged research into local land records. The primary source material discovered in the archives was subsequently folded into the HABS record. Some of his photographs were included in a 1938 *Pencil Points* presentation of HABS work in the state; the *Pencil Points* publication came out in time for the AIA's annual meeting in New Orleans.[1] Not all of Richard Koch's photographs made it into the formal HABS collection at the Library of Congress, however. The HABS office in Washington has file copies of several of Koch's photographs dating from around 1936 to about 1941. Each print is mounted on a card and identified, but the negatives (and original pictures) remain elusive. Scans were made of the surviving photo mount cards and, for each site catalogued by Koch, appended hereafter.

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[1] For more on the HABS program, see Lisa Pfueller Davidson and Martin J. Perschler, "The Historic American Buildings Survey During the New Deal Era," *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 49-73; Catherine C. Lavoie, "Architectural Plans and Visions: The Early HABS Program and Its Documentation of Vernacular Architecture," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 2 (2006/2007): 15-35; and Jessie Poesch and Barbara SoRelle Bacot, editors, *Louisiana Buildings, 1720-1940: The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997).

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House at 917 Race St.,
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Richard Koch, Photographer

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