

John Bremond House
West 7th and Guadalupe Streets
Austin, Travis County
Texas

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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John Bremond House
Austin, Travis County, Texas

ADDRESS: Corner of W. 7TH and Guadalupe Streets

OWNER: Young Men's Christian Association

OCCUPANT: Y M C A

USE: Offices and recreational space for Y M C A

ARCHITECT AND BUILDER: George Fiegel, a local Austin contractor, designed and constructed the building.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The John Bremond House is one of six residences located on the same city block and built either by a Bremond or Robinson, prominent Austin businessmen of the last century. This block was a neighborhood in itself with a common area in the center reserved for a playground for the children of the related families. Of these six residences, all but one were designed and built by the Austin Contractor, George Fiegel. The tract is still known as "The Bremond Block".

The house is significant architecturally because it is an excellent example of the elaborate late Victorian style with its adaptation of classic and European forms and details. Reputed to have the first inside bathrooms in Austin.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Bremond and Robinson families arrived in Texas at an early date. John Bremond, Sr. wife Elizabeth and twelve children came to Austin from Philadelphia in 1846. In 1851, the John Robinson family arrived from Little Rock, Arkansas.

Both families prospered in Austin and were known as successful businessmen. Eventually three Bremonds married three Robinsons, Madelaine Bremond married John H. Robinson, Pauline Bremond married Al Robinson, and Eugene Bremond married Mary Robinson.

Eugene Bremond became a successful banker while his brother, John, Jr., established a profitable wholesale merchandise business. Both brothers prospered in the years following the Civil War.

Eugene built the first Bremond House on the "Bremond Block" at the southwest corner. John Bremond followed some twenty four years later with the house at the southeast corner. The other three family residences followed shortly thereafter to complete the block.

George Fiegel came to Austin from New Orleans in 1873 at the age of twenty one. He quickly learned the building trade and became a dependable friend of certain prominent Austin families, the Hirshfelds, Hancocks, Robinsons and Bremonds among others. He was commissioned for many building jobs within those family groups. He was self educated, and depended upon architectural books for his designs. There was never more than a verbal contract with his clients for his services which often included the total job from design concept to working drawings to construction and even maintenance.

Fiegel built the Bremond house for John Bremond, Jr. Work began in 1886 and the house was completed in 1887. Total cost was \$44,000.

Although the house and property have changed hands several times since the death of John Bremond, they remain today largely unaltered. Fred W. Adams and wife Mattie G. sold the property December 28, 1953, to the Austin Y M C A. Since that time several interior changes have been made.

The basement has been substantially altered to accommodate showers and health facilities for the Y's Health Club. Some original trim and doors remain. The original heating has been replaced.

In the upper floors little of significance except the stair hall skylight has been altered. A large octagonal skylight was removed from the second story floor and the opening covered. The skylight was several feet high and was a metal frame with colored glass panels.

Several room partitions in the attic have been removed or relocated.

SOURCES

- 1) Siedo, Mary F. "George Fiegel, Contractor", Junior Historian, September 1961, page 4.
- 2) Austin County Deed Records, 1953, Vol. 1418, page 299.
- 3) Austin City Directory, 1877-78, page 78
- 4) Miss Virginia Nagle, "Personal Interview by Mrs. Douglas Cooper" manuscript in the Austin Collection, Austin Public Library, Austin, Travis County, Texas.
- 5) Personal Interview September 29, 1965, Miss Dorothy Fiegel, 3100 Wheeler, Austin, Texas.
- 6) Personal Interview, September 29, 1965, Miss Mary F. Siedo, 602 Henderson, Austin, Texas.

- 7) Old Photographs, Austin, Travis County Collection. Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas
- 8) Old Photographs, Miss Dorothy Fiegel!

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural Information: 2½ story brick and stone; concave mansard roof in flat deck on top. Two story gallery on outside corner. Profuse decoration in the form of cut stone plaques, carved bands, fluted pilasters with carved caps and moulded bases, window arches and window and door enframement. Also elaborate cast iron fanlights, porch railing and roof cresting.

Condition: Excellent.

EXTERIOR:

Overall Dimensions: Approximately 60' - 0" x 67' - 0".

Foundations: Stone

Wall Construction: Brick masonry with cut stone quoins, pilasters, arches and decorative details.

Structural System, Framing: Mass masonry; timber joists, sills and rafters.

Porches: 2 Story outside corner gallery. Column supports are cast iron of circular section with typical Victorian cast detail. Porch ceilings paneled in wood. Rear service porch on back side adjacent to kitchen.

Chimneys: Two exterior brick chimneys.

Openings: Double front doors with double panel design, the upper panel of decorative etched glass; fixed transom above of single light etched glass. Enframement of pilasters and architrave of cut stone.

Windows & Shutters: 1 x 1 Light double hung wood sash.

Roof: Concave mansard with flat deck on top; covered with scale-shaped slate tiles.

Cornice and Eaves: Metal console brackets under projecting eaves. Moulded wooden cornice.

Dormers: Attic dormers of wood.

Bay Windows: On south front projecting wing; octagonal.

Tower: On east front, projecting octagonal section.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan: Spaces organized around large open central stair hall. On the first floor a large hall leads into the stair hall from the 7th St. entrance, the Parlor is to the right of this hall and Dining Room to left. A secondary

hall at right angles to entrance hall and on axis with the larger stair hall leads in from the Guadalupe St. entrance and has the parlor to the left and Study to right. A hall connects the Study with the Kitchen and Pantry located at the rear corner of the House. A rear stair connecting attic to basement is reached from the kitchen. Ceiling height, 12' - 7 7/8".

The upper floor was divided into several rooms, as was the basement.

Stairways: Main stair open of mahogany, leads to second floor. Turned balusters and massive carved newels; paneled outer stringer and wall dado.

Secondary stair open, wooden, connects basement, first, and second floors and attic space.

Flooring: First floor 1 x 13/4" oak with mahogany strips near wall to produce border.

Second Floor: 1 x 2 1/4" T&G oak.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Walls throughout are plaster applied over masonry. Ceiling also plaster.

Doorways & Doors: Mahogany paneled reveals; doors variously paneled. Movable transom above with fixed glass.

Decorative Features & Trim: Main halls of first floor have dado of paneled mahogany; door and window trim match with fluted and paneled pilasters and scroll work architrave. Double tier of mahogany adjustable shutters in window reveals. Wide moulded base.

Elaborate plaster cornice in Dining Room- Classic details, supported by modillions. Other first floor rooms have classic cornice of moulded plaster with dentils.

Circulation halls have plaster arch at juncture with stair hall, supported by plaster console impost blocks; continuous moulding around voussoir face and extrados; paneled intrados.

Hardware: Mortise locks with cast pattern face plates and knobs.

Lighting: Fluorescent fixtures hung from the ceiling. Original fixtures removed.

Heating: Originally by a central duct system of hot air supplemented by coke Burning fireplace. Heating system now modern.

ORIENTATION AND GENERAL SETTING:

The house faces approximately south and is located on the south-east corner of Guadalupe St. and W. 7th, just a few blocks from present business district. The setback from Guadalupe St. is 35.5' and from W. 7th is 61.4'.

Out-Buildings: There are no traces of original outbuildings. The site of the cistern which served as the residence water supply is at the northwest corner of the house. It has been filled in and a gravel parking area made over it.

Landscaping, Etc.: The original stone walls surrounding the house are intact as well as the walk from the east side entrance to Guadalupe St. and the south -- main entrance to W 7th St. The side and front stone steps are also unchanged the latter with two massive turned stone newels and moulded coping.

Original cast iron fence fronting Guadalupe and W. 7th remains intact.

Prepared by,

John C. Garner, Jr.

John C. Garner, Jr.

October, 1965

APPROVED:

Charles S. Pope

Charles S. Pope
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Western Office, Design and Construction
National Park Service

DATE:

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