

Don Juan Parédes House  
54 St. George Street  
St. Augustine  
St. Johns County  
Florida

HABS No. FLA-136  
HABS  
FLA

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

## DON JUAN PARÉDES HOUSE

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Address: 54 St. George Street, St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida.

Present Owner: St. Augustine Historical Society, 22 St. Francis Street, St. Augustine, Florida.

Present Occupant: Tenant.

Present Use: Antique shop.

Statement of Significance: The Parédes House is not of great historical significance nor has it been associated with any noteworthy historical figures, but it is of importance because it is a fine example of a typical Second Spanish Period house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The following historical account is transcribed in toto from the St. Augustine Historical Society's April, 1963 (No. 47) issue of their newsletter, El Escribano (pp. 4-9):

The Don Juan Parédes House

Located at 54 St. George Street, St. Augustine, Florida

Property of the Saint Augustine Historical Society

This is one of a series of historic site histories prepared for the Historical American Buildings Survey; a branch of the National Park Service. The house is currently occupied as a gift shop. For many years it has been locally known as the "Old Curiosity Shop". It is a one-and-a-half story coquina block structure, having a gable roof, almost square in design, and the floor plan is one of several types common to early St. Augustine.

In the key to his map of January 22, 1764, Juan José Elixio de la Puente described this location as the site of "a tabby house, in Block D, Lot 69, belonging to Antonio Jose Rodriguez." In 1768, Jesse Fish sold the lot only to a Joseph Dyason, a British subject. Notice that when this sale took place, the Rodriguez house was no longer standing, as only the lot was being sold.

The Jesse Fish Account Book shows the following entry: (Translation)

Antonio Jose Rodriguez

No. 99

Debit  
1768 - Dec. 20  
For the deed and measuring his lot  
2 ps 4 rs

Credit  
1768 - Dec 20  
For his lot  
sold to Joseph  
Dyason 37 ps 7 rs

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This sale was made by Jesse Fish on the same day and to the same buyer who purchased Lot 68 in Block D shown on the Puente map. (See El Escribano, January, 1963, page 9, Fish Account Book No. 42, Don Joachin Blanco, reciting the sale of the house of Fernando el Gallego to Dyason).

From the time of these two sales by Jesse Fish until April 15, 1788 when the Mariano de la Rocque map was made of the city, we have no record of transfers of either of these properties. The Rocque map shows these two lots (Puente 68 and 69) as one, and places them in Block 7 - Lot 42, described as follows: (Translation)

"Masonry house and flat roof, in fair condition, with the lot that runs East-West; in the custody of Don Antonio Fernandez!"

It is to be assumed that the house here mentioned was on the northern portion of the lot. (See El Escribano, January, 1963, page 10)

In 1791, Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, Governor of Florida, sold at public auction those houses that were then the property of the Crown. In the Quesada List, No. 104 (Rocque 42; Puente 68 and 69) description is as follows: (Translation)

" No. 104 - a small masonry house and lot of the King with a useless wooden kitchen, bounded on the front by the Calle Real /St. George St./ West by Calle Espanola /Spanish St./ North, house and lot of the heirs of Don Remundo /Arrivas/ and South by a lot of Santiago Prados; measures in the front N-S twenty-three varas, and in depth E-W seventy-one varas that at the rate of half real per square vara amounts to eight hundred sixteen and a half reales.

Eighteen varas of masonry of some walls of the house by four varas high, at the rate of one and a half real per sq. vara amounts to one hundred and eight reales. Carpentry all useless."

When the public auction was held in 1791, Juan Sanchez, Chief Master Calker of the Royal Works, bought the property described above. Sanchez died intestate on April 18, 1802, and his properties were appraised for distribution to his widow and daughters. (East Florida Papers - Testamentary Proceedings: Inventory, Assessment and Distribution of the Estate of Don Juan Sánchez, deceased. Box 22-25, Reel No. 6, Document No. 4)

On February 18, 1803, title was confirmed to Sánchez' heirs by Governor White. On December 30, 1803, Maria Castañeda, widow of Don Juan Sánchez, sold to Juan Parédes the south half of this property (Quesada 104), then a vacant lot. A portion of the deed reads as follows: (Translation)

Let it be known that I, Maria Castañeda, widow of Juan Sánchez, a resident of this city, do hereby sell to Juan Paradez a lot situated in the Royal Street /St. George/ which leads to the Land Gate, and which is half of the lot that my already

mentioned deceased husband bid on and bought at the public auction which was held by order of the Government of those lots and houses which went back to the Royal Patrimony at the time of the return of this province to the Spanish Crown; and for the same reason one of the properties which His Majesty donated to the buyers of them by his royal permit of June 17, 1801. Title was issued to the said property by virtue of the mentioned royal grant to the heirs of my above mentioned deceased husband on February 18 of this year. All this property was adjudicated to me . . . as a result of the judicial proceedings which we have undertaken for this purpose and which are now recorded in the office of the Escribano. Half of the lot which in the front runs North-South, measures eleven and a half varas; its full depth, front to rear, which runs from said Royal Street with which it borders on the East to Spanish Street with which it borders on the West; on the North with the house and lot which I still own; on the South with adjoining properties belonging to Francisco Arnau; the heirs of Sebastian Coll; of Juan Gero, of Francisco Olmedo and of Pedro Llull; and which I sell to him /Paredes/ with all its entrances, exits, uses, customs, rights and duties, and also the arrimo /wall sharing rights/ against the wall of the house that, with the lot, remains my property and free of all obligations. . . (East Florida Papers, Escrituras. Photostat in library of St. Augustine Historical Society.)

On March 4, 1813, Francisco Marin, acting for Juana Paredes, the daughter of the above mentioned purchaser, then absent, sold the property here being considered (the south half of Quesada 104) to Pedro Fucha. A portion of this deed reads as follows: (Translation).

Be it known that I, Don Francisco Marin, a resident of this city, proxy for Juana Paredes, widowed, absent in the city of Havana, pursuant to power of attorney granted to me in this office of record in the presence of Don Jose de Zubizarreta on December 30, 1811, which power has not been revoked, being ample for the purpose, do hereby sell to Pedro Fucha, also of this city, a shingle-roofed masonry house with its corresponding lot, the property of my constituent, located on the Royal Street which leads to the land gate, bordering with said street on the East; to Spanish Street /in depth/ with which it borders on the West; on the North with the house and lot inhabited by Gaspar Arnau; and on the South with lots belonging to Francisco Arnau, to the heirs of the deceased Sebastian Coll, to Juan Gero, to Francisco Olmedo, and to Pedro Llull; which house was built at the expense of Don Juan Paredes, father of my said constituent, the lot being obtained and purchased from Dona Maria Castaneda by deed executed in this office on December 30, 1803; /Dona Juana/ having acquired all this /property/ as sole heir by death of her said father and of her mother, Isabel Ridaveto, on whose death /the property/ was

adjudicated as shown on the inventories made on the matter and which are filed in this office; and I sell to him Fucha with previous approval from this Government conferred this date, said house and lot, as the result of a suit instituted by Agueda Segui against my constituent Dona Juana Parades for the collection of certain monies that the said Don Juan Paredes offered her in arras\* when they were married; in accordance with the boundaries and measurements already cited, with all entrances, exits, uses, customs, rights and easements pertaining to it, free from any liens, for the amount of 1,300 pesos which the buyer has paid me in cash . . .

"arras: coins the bridegroom gives to the bride.

(East Florida Papers, Escrituras, Photostat in library of St. Augustine Historical Society)

Note: The above mentioned inventories filed at the death of Isabel Ridaveto have not been located. Neither has the original will of Juan Parédes come to light; although there is a codicil filed on February 13, 1811, making new dispositions of his property because of his second marriage, no real estate is mentioned. The documents pertaining to the suit by Agueda Segui against Juana Parédez have not been examined, not being considered pertinent to the chain of title to the property under consideration.

On March 26, 1813, Sanchez' widow, Maria Castaneda, sold to the same Pedro Fucha the north half of the property (Quesada 104). (See El Escribano, January, 1963, No. 46, pp. 13-14)

On an undetermined date between 1813 and 1834, Fucha sold the house built by Paredes to Estéban Arnau. No deed of the transaction has been found. However, the Clements Survey of 1834 lists Stephen Arnau as the contemporary owner.

Meanwhile, on June 8, 1819, Pedro Fucha had given Estéban Arnau a comprehensive Power of Attorney authorizing him to act as his agent in all matters pertaining to his properties. (East Florida Papers - Escrituras: Photostat in library St. Augustine Historical Society).

In 1851, Margaret D. Arnau, widow of Estéban, elected to take a child's portion of the estate of her deceased husband, and was given the house under consideration here as well as the north portion of the property. In an agreement made on March 26, 1851, between Margaret D. Arnau and Paul Arnau, the administrator of the estate of Estéban Arnau, and other heirs, statement is made that Estéban died seized and possessed of the following real estate:

- . . . the dwelling house and lot in which said Estéban Arnau died, of the value of \$700.00 . . .
- . . . also another house and lot situated on the north of the dwelling house and premises of the said Estéban Arnau, above mentioned, of the value of \$425.00 . . .

and further, that the property under consideration here was

- . . . the southern lot of the two lots purchased by Estéban Arnau of Peter Fouche (sic) and being the dwelling house and premises in which said Arnau died . . .

This agreement is recorded as "Exhibit A" in a Bill in Chancery filed July 9, 1890 in the Circuit Court of St. Johns County for a partition of property among the Arnau heirs. "Exhibit A" is described as their only proof of ownership because the original of the 1851 agreement had been destroyed by fire.

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This property was subsequently mortgaged by the Arnau heirs to George L. Eastman which mortgage was foreclosed and a deed given on September 4, 1895 by W. W. Dewhurst, Special Master in the Chancery to George L. Eastman. (Deed Book YY, pp. 111-113, St. Johns County Records.)

Subsequent Owners:

April 11, 1900  
December 8, 1934

George L. Eastman, et. ux. to James P. Dodge  
(Deed Book 2, p. 177, St. Johns County Records.)  
Emma J. Dodge to St. Augustine Historical  
Society and Institute of Science. (Deed Book  
106, p. 711 St. Johns County Records.)

Notes on Preservation and Stabilization.

In May, 1948, the Saint Augustine Historical Society undertook stabilization and preservation of the building. The openings on the east or St. George Street elevation were reinforced with "I" beams and a 32 foot 3/8" x 12" steel plate was fastened in the east wall and anchored to the ceiling joists to reinforce the coquina wall.

On the first floor, the southeast and southwest rooms were re-plastered.

On the second floor, new flooring was laid over the original in order to level it, and a bathroom and kitchen installed in the south end of the building. Dormer windows were placed in the west roof slope on the second floor level, for ventilation. The stairway from the first to second floor was rebuilt. The entire roof was re-shingled with Johns-Manville asbestos shingles. This work was done at an approximate cost of \$2,500.00

The following is the text of a bronze marker placed on this house in 1959:

A Spanish Home

When Spanish rule returned to St. Augustine in 1783, this property, like many others left by the English, reverted to the Spanish Crown, and was sold at public auction. It was purchased by Juan Sanchez and inherited by his widow, Maria Castaneda. Later owners included the Arnau family. The present coquina house was built about 1803 by Juan Paredes. An original building preserved by the St. Augustine Historical Society since 1934.

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Note: All of the above changes of title and documentary research on this property have been made by Mrs. Eugenia B. Arana and Mrs. Doris C. Wiles, from the files of the Saint Augustine Historical Society, the St. Johns County Records and Spanish documents cited.

Date of erection of building: Second Spanish Period, between 1803 and 1813

Builder: Don Juan Paredes.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Parédes House is a typical Second Spanish Period house.
2. Condition of fabric: Restored; well-maintained.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories and bays; over-all dimensions; layout; One-and-one-half stories; three-bay front; dimensions approximately 33' (front) x 26', rectangular layout.
2. Foundations: Coquina (local shellstone) blocks.
3. Wall construction: Coquina blocks laid in roughly horizontal courses plastered inside and out. (Note: The north wall is a party wall with Rodriguez House, 52 St. George Street; see HABS FLA-126).
4. Porches: None, partly open loggia in rear (west elevation).
5. Chimneys: One coquina masonry chimney at the north end of gable ridge.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doors: One practical exterior door (two leaves, each four-paneled; restoration).
  - b. Windows and shutters: Two sizes of casement-type windows (mostly single), twelve light. No shutters.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape and covering: Gable with lean-to on rear; asbestos shingles.
  - b. Eaves: Open eaves, little projection.
  - c. Dormers: Three single shed-roofed dormers on front (east elevation); large four-sash dormer on rear (west elevation).

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans; first floor: Three rooms; partly open rear loggia with stair.  
Second (1/2) floor: Apartment with two rooms and bath.

2. Stairways: One stairway of wooden construction in partly open loggia in rear lean-to. 55-5AUG  
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3. Flooring: Concrete on first floor; wooden board flooring on second floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Interior walls are plaster on masonry and on wooden stud partitions. (One vertical plank partition on second floor). Ceilings: First floor, exposed joists; second floor, plaster.
5. Doors: No interior doors except bath and storage room.
6. Trim: Simple wooden trim.
7. Hardware: Common, functional.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Space heater.

D. Site

1. Orientation: Faces east on St. George Street (immediately on street).
2. Enclosures: Enclosed patio garden in rear (west) with small outbuildings and old well.
3. Landscaping: Informal, semi-tropical.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards, Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1961.