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BURNED COLUMNS OF BELLE GROVE

The cover scene was taken by the late Elemore Morgan. It is one of a large number of hostoric Louisiana homes photo graphed by this noted artist.

Historical Preservation

A feature Issue

Volume V • Number 15 December, 1966



EDITORIAL • (by George M. Leake)

The 1966 session of the State Legislature rejected passage of a bill which would have established a State Historical Preservation Commission. The rejection came in a Senate Committee by the margin of one vote — after overwhelming support in the house.

The rejection can be attributed in large measure to a lack of understanding as well as a lack of clear definition of purpose.

The Louisiana Architects Association should and must take the lead in defining and explaining the cultural and economic values to be gained on a statewide basis from a sound preservation law and restoration policy.

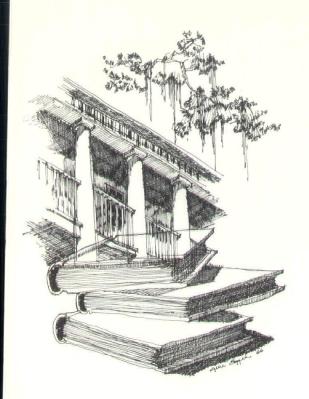
The Vieux Carré is perhaps the only clearly defined historic area in the state with the possible exception of the Natchitoches Cane Riverfront. One can review the years of dedicated crusading by a handful of people to ensure preservation of the Vieux Carré. This is one of the nation's finest examples of the economic benefits to be gained from strong preservation and restoration regulations.

Still there are many who have reaped considerable benefits from such laws who speak out stridently against them. The conflict of public interference with the private right of an individual is very real and must be carefully considered in the text of any law.

The first step in selling a preservation law is the cataloging of the many valuable landmarks in the State. This can be done on a Parish by Parish basis.

The designation of a building or site as a place of significant historic or architectural value will tend to save it from wanton destruction — though not necessarily. One recalls with sorrow the savage act of corporate vandalism in the almost clandestine destruction of Three Oaks Plantation House at Chalmette and the slow demolition by neglect of the magnificent Seven Oaks at Westwego.

It is time for us to gather our forces and sell to the public, and their legislative and administrative representatives the enormous historic, cultural and economic gains which can accrue to the State and the individual by sound preservation policies.



Legal Vehicles for Historical Preservation

In Louisiana

By Ben Miller, Jr. LAA Legal Counsel

"Shocking" is the word to describe the absence of historical preservation efforts in Louisiana when viewed from the vantage point of the 1960's. Louisiana was discovered in 1682, was colonized and became a state in 1812. But it was not until the 1960's that any state-wide effort was made to preserve the architectural and historic heritage of our citizens. Louisiana architects, as qualified professionals and as concerned historical-minded citizens, have an important role to play in the preservation of this heritage. The material to work with is at hand in many of our cities, but the pressures of an expanding population and industrialization offer a challenge.

If it may be said that we are now in a wave of historic preservation movements, the first ripples began many years ago, perhaps with the acquisition by the State of New York in 1850 of General Washington's headquarters, the purchase of Mt. Vernon in 1859 by the Mt. Vernon's Ladies Association and the federal government's purchase in the 1890's of the first national military parks at Gettysburg and Shiloh. Louisiana distinguished itself by creating the Vieux Carre Commission in 1936 which will be discussed subsequently in this article.

The legal vehicles for historic preservation employed by the various states and

federal government are varied. But they can be categorized as zoning and building permits, tax exemptions and acquisitions. Virginia communities are authorized to enact zoning ordinances for the specific object of protecting against destruction or encroachment upon historic areas. The zoning commission of the City of Santa Fe may even regulate the size of windows in its historic district as part of the preservation of the "Old Santa Fe Style" of architecture. Offering economic incentives for historic preservation has been successful in some states. Thus structures owned by non-profit organizations whether of historical importance or not are generally exempt from property taxes. However, this relief does not extend to similar properties of architectural and historical significance owned by private individuals. Taxation and exemptions from taxation must be uniform, and classifications must have a reasonable and have a rational basis. Few attempts have been made in the granting of this private tax relief, but apparently they have been successful. Puerto Rico allows relief to private citizens and similar tax relief is available in the Vieux Carre Section of New Orleans.

The last vehicle for historic preservation is the acquisitive powers of the state to

obtain historic properties by purchase, expropriation gift or expropriation for historic purposes has generally been recognized everywhere the question has been raised commencing with the acquisition of the Gettysburg Battlefield. Normally perfect ownership of the entire property is acquired. An alternative could be the acquisition of a servitude over the exterior of the structure prohibiting its alteration or destruction without permission of a named agency. Acquisitions of this type would be far less expensive than the traditional type of expropriation. would still permit private ownership and would not burden the state with ownership and management problems. This same concept has been used in Virginia to protect the scenic view of the Potomac River palisades. Tax incentives for preservation are offered here also. The federal government has ruled that the dedications of Potomac River servitudes preventing some types of vertical construction and maintaining natural beauty were eligible for treatment as charitable donations.

Louisiana has employed several of these vehicles for historical and architectural preservation, the preservation agency most well known throughout the state as well as throughout the United States being the Vieux Carre Commission created in 1936 by Article 14, Section 22A of the Louisiana Constitution. The Commission consists of nine members, appointed by the Mayor, three of whom are qualified architects recommended by the New Orleans Chapter of the American Institute

(Continued on Page 11)

¹ Rev. Rul. 205, 1964-2 Cum. Bull. 62.

David Weeks, wealthy Louisiana planter, whose holdings included Grand Cote, Cypremort, Parc Perdu and Vermillion Bridge plantations, planned a town house for his growing family. In 1825 he chose a location central to his scattered estates, on the right bank of the Bayou Teche in the parish of St. Martin. He acquired 4½ arpents of the highest land in the town then still known variously by its Indian name Attakapas, its Spanish name Nova Iberia, or simply "New Town."

Here, in 1831, he started burning bricks to build his mansion. Although each detail of the building program was under his constant direction—from ordering timbers to selecting paint colors and carpets—David Weeks entrusted the erection of the mansion to James Bedell, master builder. The house was created by this owner-builder collaboration, a common practice in an era of few professional architects. It was built in the prevailing classical taste, with columns and architectural features of the Tuscan order. It is also a brilliant example of foreign influ-

ences that culminated in the distinctive house style of the Louisiana country.

It is a story that can be told by the mute testimony of mementoes left behind by five generations of the family that always thought of the house on the Teche as the "home place." The main stream of national history touched it in 1863-65 when the house served as headquarters for the occupying Union armies. The great grandson of its builder, Weeks Hall, returned to his native Louisiana after his service in World War I and art studies abroad to find the building and outbuildings drifting to ruin under the great oaks, in a tangle of neglected gardens. He devoted the remaining years of his life to preserving the house, and recreating around it another great garden.

Now, in accordance with his bequest, restored to its original character, its furnishings and paintings refurbished, its gardens in order, it offers to the visitor what Weeks Hall intended: the picture of the life lived by a planter family of the antebellum period, and "placid seclusion from a changing world."

A National Trust Property New Iberia, Louisiana

"Shadows-on-the-Teche"



Evaluating Historic Sites and Buildings

A Report by The Committee on Standards and Surveys National Trust for Historic Preservation

Historic preservation, as defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is a well-rounded program of scientific research and study, protection, restoration, maintenance and the interpretation of sites, buildings and objects significant in American history and culture.

To be of historical and cultural significance, a structure or area should have outstanding historical and cultural significance in the nation or in the state, region, or community in which it exists. Such significance is found in:

- 1) Historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state or community is best exemplified, and from which the visitor may grasp in three-dimensional form one of the larger patterns of the American heritage.
- 2) Structures or areas that are identified with the lives of historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, state or local history.
- 3) Structures or areas that embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type- specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period-style or method of construction; or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age. Mere antiquity is not sufficient basis for selection of

a structure for permanent preservation, but can be a factor if other more significant examples have disappeared or if the building forms part of an especially characteristic section of a given community. Smaller structures, such as the first squared-log cablins or the sod houses of the pioneers, may be as important relatively as the mansions of the past.

4) Structures or sites of archaeological interest that contribute to the understanding of aboriginal man in America.

Suitability

Preference should be given to those structures or sites where there is a preponderance of original material or other physical remains which have retained their integrity. (Integrity is a composite quality derived from original workmanship, original location, and intangible elements of feeling and association.) Repair or restoration of original elements or reconstruction of a building long destroyed demand high professional standards of historical and scientific techniques. Generally speaking, it is better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, better to restore than reconstruct

Property boundaries adequate to protect the essential historical or cultural values of the project should be obtained at the outset if possible.

Other important practical considerations are accessibility to the public; encroachments by business, industry, housing, and traffic; availability of fire and police protection and of essential utilities.

The cost of restoration or reconstruction and of subsequent adequate maintenance and interpretation should not be beyond the means of the sponsors. A well-considered plan should contemplate that the project be fully endowed or potentially self-sustaining.

Since all historic structures significant enough to warrant preservation cannot support themselves as historic museums regularly open to the public, adaptation to other possible uses should be considered. It is essential, however, no matter what the proposed use, that every effort should be made to preserve those elements which account for the significance of a particular structure.

The primary purpose in preserving a structure as a historic museum is public use and enjoyment. Each project should have a place in the national, state or local programs for the preservation of historic sites or buildings and should be coordinated with all similar projects in its area to increase its usefulness as an educational force.

Vieux Carre, New Orleans

718 St. Peter Street (Pat O'Brien's) -

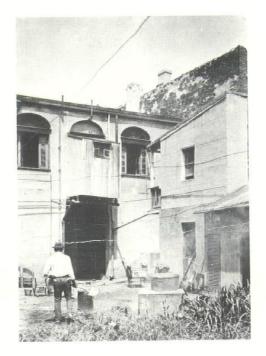
An Account of the Life of a Building

by Richard Koch, FAIA

The remodeling of 718 St. Peter Street, now known better as Pat O'Briens, shows the interesting development of land use in the Vieux Carre during the last thirty years.

During the 1930's this was the address of a negro tenement in a neighborhood of low rent, slum apartments, small stores and a few restaurants. It was about this time that we see the beginning of the transformation of the Quarter from a run-down portion of the city into an area of national importance. The country was becoming conscious of its heritage and New Orleans, began to think of the Vieux Carre; not that this was new, for there were many writers as far back as Lafcadio Hearn, who, in his guide book, gave many fascinating names to some of the old buildings.

Today's revival of interest in the Quarter, we may say, started from funds given by William Ratcliff Irby to restore the St. Louis Cathedral, and was followed by his remodeling of 520 Royal Street (now WDSU) for his own home and also the restoration of the Patio Royal through the interest of Mrs. Jeanne Castellanos and Mr. Irby's architect, Charles Favrot. This was also the date of the Drawing Room Players, who moved to the Pontalba Building where their plays led to the building of the Little Theatre at the corner of Chartres and St. Peter Streets in 1921 (Armstrong and Koch, Architects). By then it had become fashionable to



think about the Vieux Carre, and many organizations made their home there.

Another interested in the Quarter was Natalie Scott. She had hoped to restore 718 St. Peter Street, which was then a negro tenement, but with a glamorous history, through false, of having been the site of the first theatre in New Orleans; an open air theatre as had been common in Spain and Mexico. Neal Leach then purchased the property, and remodeled it into apartments.

718 St. Peter Street court yard and garden, before (left) and after (below)



718 St. Peter Street at about the time this property was sold to Pat O'Brien



The property shortly afterwards was sold to Owen Burgess of Anna, Illinois, a retired telephone company executive, who was responsible for further extensive alterations and the addition of the high brick walls, which enclose the rear garden. Mr. Burgess lived there intermittently, rarely renting the apartments and every winter, when he would return, further alterations were made.

The problems of this project were

to restore the porch of the rear wing that was in a deplorable condition, to enclose the first floor in glass, to add a front door to the carriage way, and to re-stucco the front, as also to bring many other details to their former state.

A toilet for the tenement that was cantilevered over the entrance to the courtyard on iron beams was removed. The front was re-stuccoed and new plaster caps were made from fragments of the orig-

inal caps that were found under a heavy coat of cement. The old details were very fine in scale, but were run in white plaster that could not take the weather. The present mouldings were taken from small pieces of the existing plaster. The staircase was badly mutilated and the newel post gone. A new one was made from photographs of existing ones in the Quarter. In 1820 there were several cabinet

(Continued on Page 14)



Profile of A Fellow

Fredrick D. Parham, FAIA

Fellowship awarded in 1959 for Public Service

It is most appropriate to recognize Fredrick Duncan Parham, FAIA, in this historic preservation issue of the magazine, for here is a man who not only served on the first Vieux Carre commission, but who was founder and first president of the Vieux Carre Property Owners Association.

Mr. Parham has given much to the profession through service to his beloved New Orleans. For 14 years he served as member and chairman of this city's Planning Commission.

He is a graduate of Tulane University, School of Architecture with post graduate work and atelier, Columbia University.

As an architect he helped to preserve and create many of the finest buildings in New Orleans. Among the long list is: the successful effort to save the Old French Market; the New Orleans International Airport; New Orleans Civic Center; City Hall; State Office Building, State Supreme Court Building, campus and buildings for Dillard University and numerous well known bank buildings.

Concerning the AIA and the profession of architecture, Mr. Parham says, "My interest in the Institute dates back to my college days when I saw the possibilities in striving for professional instead of competitive standards among architects. An outstanding accomplishment of the Institute has been the practical guidance in office procedure and forms it has given to younger members. I believe it has contributed on a national level to the improved public image of the architect.

"The profession of architecture is particularly rewarding in its combination of the esthetic and the practical, and in the opportunities it offers for contributing to the lives of individuals and to the improvement of one's community."

LEGAL VEHICLES-

(Continued from Page 5)

of Architects. The purpose of the commission is to preserve buildings in the Vieux Carre section of the City of New Orleans that have architectural and historical value. The Constitution empowers the City of New Orleans to afford economic incentive for historical preservation in the form of tax exemptions to buildings having historical and architectural value provided the owners agree by formal contract that the buildings shall never be altered or demolished without the approval of the Commission. The Constitution further declares that the preservation of buildings in the Vieux Carre which have historical and architectural value is a public purpose entitling the City to expropriate the properties. However, the heart of the powers of the Vieux Carre Commission is found in the requirement that all requests for building permits be submitted to the Vieux Carre Commission for its recommendation as to whether the appearance, color, texture of materials and architectural design of the exterior are compatible with the Vieux Carre. The New Orleans Council is authorized to act on the recommendation of the Vieux Carre Commission.

After the excellent start in 1936 with the Vieux Carre Commission, the State of Louisiana is again moving in the area of restoration and more intensive maintenance of its historical monuments, witness the repairs to the Cabildo, the Old Arsenal Museum and renovations to the Pentagon Dormitories in Baton Rouge. Efforts at historical preservation have been managed mainly by the Louisiana State Museum. Thus, under the provisions of Louisiana Revised Statutes 25:343, The Louisiana State Museum is charged with the operation of the Cabildo, The Presbytere, the Lower Pontalba buildings, the Creole House, the Jackson House, Madame John's Legacy and the late Senator Huey P. Long's residence in New Orleans.

Other state agencies are involved as well. Title 25, Section 306 of the Revised Statutes declares that the scope of the work of the Louisiana Art Commission consists of assistance in "preservation, maintenance, and restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and monuments, in Louisiana . . ." This commission is charged with publishing bulletins, circulars and other informative material to stimulate interest in an appreciation of Louisiana art and architecture.

Undoubtedly it was because the Louisiana Art Commission did not have the primary duty of historic preservation that the Louisiana Commission on Cultural Resources was created. Its functions are chiefly advisory, with little power to take direct action. Ironically, the remaining agency on the state level involved in the historic field is the Department of Commerce and Industry which is charged with marking historical sites. The lack of success of this program has been noted by the newspapers of the state on several occasions.

On the local level, the political subdivision of the state most active in historical preservation work is naturally the City of New Orleans. Louisiana Revised Statutes 25:381 creates The Orleans Parish Landmark Commission, with the duty to mark with suitable plaques those buildings which are landmarks and sites of historical importance in the Parish of Orleans. The Commission is empowered to have research done on the historical and architectural background of areas worthy of preservation, but its active functions are limited to marking sites rather than active preservation work.

The latest state-wide effort to coordinate historical preservation was the proposed Louisiana Committee for the Preservation of Antiquities of the Louisiana Tourist Development Commission. House Bill number 630 introduced in the 1966 session of the Legislature proposed to create that Committee. The bill passed the House but died in the Senate. It proposed a committee of twenty individuals, only one of which was to be an architect selected by the Louisiana Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Antiquities included sites associated with noted individuals, sites associated with historic events, buildings of architectural significance, sites of botanical, zoological

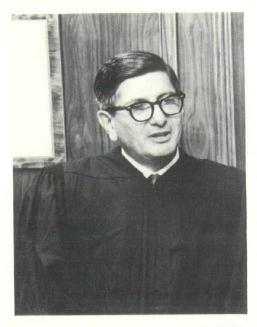
or scenic interest, places of recreation, sites of archaeological interest, sites of paleontological interest, sites of significant scientific value, artifacts, documents, and books, etc. The committee was charged with preparation of a master plan for state antiquities and the coordination of its efforts with local commissions and other state agencies. Exclusive jurisdiction over the historical markers of the state was also conferred.

Since the area of historical preservation is one of the few virgin territories that the federal government has not exploited, it would be well for the State of Louisiana and its citizens to consider seriously the avenues available for this effort in a coming session of the Legislature. The citizens of the state desire that its antiquities be preserved for future generations, but also demand that the cherished private ownership system be maintained. An acceptable balance was successfully achieved in the Vieux Carre Commission with the excellent results that thousands of visitors and citizens of the state observe annually. With effort, a similar balance can be achieved state-wide.



LAA Legal Counsel

A Tradition of Good Service Continues



Alvin B. Rubin

Alvin B. Rubin, our LAA Attorney for the past seven years, has said good bye to us, but he's not going away. He is the new judge of the U. S. District Court, Eastern Division of Louisiana, by appointment of President Lyndon Johnson.

By his wise counsel and devotion to the best interest of the profession and those it serves, Alvin Rubin has guided the LAA along paths which have improved the quality of justice, the standards of practice and the image of the architect.

He wrote many of the laws which protect architects and the public. He also helped to defeat efforts to injure the profession.

... Alvin Rubin, in 1942, obtained his B.S. Degree in Law at LSU, where he was valedictorian of his class and editor of the Law Review. He has served as a visiting lecturer of law at LSU.

In 1962, Alvin Rubin received Baton Rouge's Golden Deeds Award for his work in community improvement with the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, as an officer of the United Givers Fund, as a founder of the Legal Aid Center and a leader in the Baton Rouge and Louisiana Bar associations.

Surely the high integrity, qualities of leadership and command of the law he has shown in his work with the LAA, in his practice and in the community will assure the Federal Judiciary that Alvin Rubin is more than an ordinary man.

The LAA will continue receiving legal counsel from Mr. Rubin's former firm. The counselors will be Mr. Ben R. Miller, Jr., and Mr. R. Gordon Kean, Jr.

Mr. Miller is the author of the article on page 5. He is 29 years old, a junior member of his firm since July 1, 1965 and a former Captain with the U. S. Army's Judge Advocate General Corp.

He received a B.S. Degree from L.S.U. in January, 1961, Cum Laude; and his LL.B. Degree in June of that same year, and ranked first in his law class. He was Lt. Colonel of the Army R.O.T.C. Unit his senior year.

His honors at the University include: Recipient of the President's Medal, 1959; Recipient of the Certificate of Merit by the L.S.U. Alumni Federation, 1961; Recipient of the Certificate as the Most Outstanding Member of the Louisiana Law Review, 1961; Editor-in-Chief of the Louisiana Law Review; President of the L.S.U. Chapter of O.D.K., the national leadership fraternity; Order of the Coif (national honorary legal fraternity); Alpha Kappa Psi (national honorary commerce college fraternity).

In addition, he was chosen among those to be listed in "Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities" for 1961-1962; and received the Balfour Award for being selected as the outstanding member of his social fraternity, Sigma Chi. He is a member of the East Baton Rouge, Louisiana and American Bar associations. He is presently Treasurer of the Junior Bar Association of Baton Rouge.

Mr. Kean's primary area of service to the LAA will be with Legislative matters. He is a senior partner in his firm.

He received his B.A. Degree from L.S.U. in 1940, majoring in Government and Journalism. He served as administrative assistant to Congressman J. Y. Sanders, Jr., Sixth Congressional District of Louisiana, until he entered the U. S. Army in July, 1941.

From April 1943 to 1946, he saw overseas duty in Pacific Theatre, serving in battles of Leyte and Okinawa and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service against the enemy during Battle of Leyte. He was discharged with the rank of Major from Armed Forces in January, 1946.

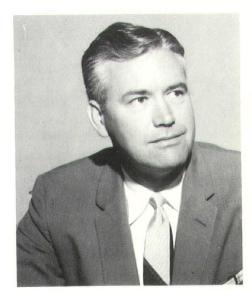
Mr. Kean entered L.S.U. Law School after discharge from the Army and received LL.B. degree in February 1948. He was appointed Assistant Parish Attorney in 1949, and Acting Parish Attorney in 1950. From 1953 to the present he has served as Parish Attorney.

He is past president of Louisiana City Attorney's Association and presently general counsel to the Louisiana Municipal Association.

Ben R. Miller, Jr.









Beauty and the budget get together in this all-concrete school

The Avocado Elementary School in Homestead, Florida, demonstrates again the advantages of concrete in even a small size plant.*

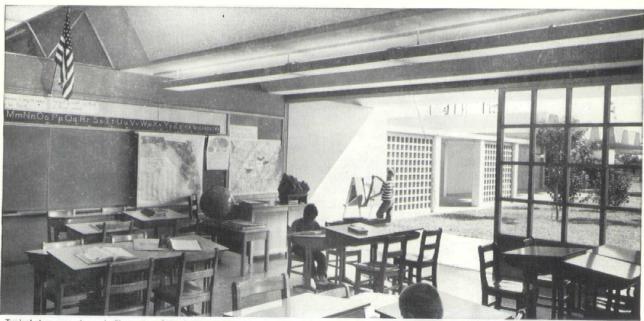
The structure is striking, yet tastefully modern . . . with 22 classrooms, cafetorium, library and administrative spaces. For 35,210 square feet, the bid price was \$398,390, or \$11.32 per square foot.

The precast concrete folded plate roof, supported on prestressed columns of concrete, provided not only an outstanding design feature, but brought important economy. Walls are concrete masonry, stuccoed on the exterior, plastered inside for decorative effect. And included in the modest cost is the elegance of terrazzo floors in the cafetorium.

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Typical classroom, Avocado Elementary School with adjacent "patio" class space. Architect: Robert B. Browne, Miami; George F. Reed, Associate, Miami. Structural Engineer; Walter C. Harry & Associates, Fort Lauderdale. Contractor: Stobbs Brothers Construction Company, Miami. Owner; Dade County Board of Public Instruction.

News Notes



Warden's House

Historic Warden's House at the corner of Laurel and North 7th Streets in Baton Rouge, has been purchased by the architectural firm of Desmond-Miremont & Associates and will be preserved and restored.

The brick Georgian style building, constructed about 1840, is the only one remaining from the Louisiana penitentiary complex which was first located in downtown Baton Rouge. It has been described as one of the five most important historic buildings in the city.

Originally the lower floor served as the prison store, the upper as quarters for the prison warden with a service wing located to the east surrounded by galleries and a court.

Plan now to be at "Grass Roots Central," January 20 and 21 in St. Louis. You'll profit by sharing ideas and discussing the problems which concern your profession. Don't forget to send in your AIA reservation card and reserve a room at the Bel Air East Motor Hotel. There'll be a good delegation from Louisiana.

Be sure to tell your attorney about a new publication recently issued by the AIA: "Citations of Judicial Decisions Construing or Relating to The AIA Standard Document Forms." A copy can be obtained from the AIA, 1735 New York Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C., 20006 for the price of \$15.00 per copy. A copy can be borrowed from the attorneys for the LAA. Write Sanders, Miller, Downing & Kean, Attorneys at Law, P. O. Box 1588, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The newly published "Restoration Manual" by Orin M. Bullock, Jr., is available for \$8.50 from Silvermine Publishers, Inc., Cornstock Hill, Silvermine, Norwalk, Conn. 06850.

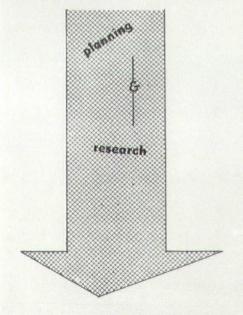
VIEUX CARRE—(Con't. from Page 9)

shops that turned out beautiful staircases and mantels that may still occasionally be found.

With the ending of prohibition the neighborhood became an area of night clubs, the noise of which was too much for Mr. Burgess, who moved to Florida and sold the property to Pat O'Brien.

718 St. Peter Street had been given a date of early 1800, as then a house on the property which belonged to De Flechier was destroyed in a fire. In 1817 the property was sold to John Garnier, who was no doubt responsible for the present building.

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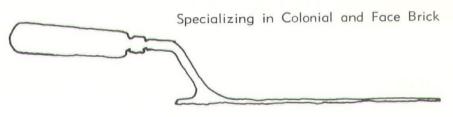


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