
6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concretewalls stucco over concrete block

roof asphaltother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Andrew Romero House (1937) is a two story plaster-over-concrete block residence in the Moderne style. Located on a narrow but deep parcel which borders Bayou Teche in New Iberia, the home stands well back from the street amid lush vegetation. It is reached via a small bridge which spans a ditch running through the property. Although the home has received two additions since construction, the newer construction blends well with the original fabric and does not detract from the structure's architectural integrity nor diminish its National Register eligibility.

The building's asymmetrical and split level floorplan focuses upon a central stair hall standing directly behind a separate entry foyer. The foyer provides access to the front-projecting master suite on one side of the building and a dining room with curved wall on the other. Behind the dining room stands a kitchen and breakfast area. A small home office (formerly a bedroom) is located behind the master bedroom and bath. The building's major staircase connects the first floor to two bedrooms and a greenhouse/play area above. A second, plainer stair rises from the rear of the hall to a raised den which does not connect to the second level bedroom area. A third stair, also situated at the rear of the hall, descends to a workroom and garage.

The pink color and gray trim of the exterior's stucco finish duplicate the original appearance of the home. In addition to the projecting master suite with jerkinhead roof, the streamlined and curved outside wall of the dining room is also a noteworthy feature. The two sides of the front elevation stand in sharp contrast to each other, for the bedroom wing contains a bowed wall of windows while the dining room side displays noticeably fewer openings. Only one curved corner glass block window on the first level and two small windows centered almost at roof level above pierce the exterior on this area of the facade. The rear elevation is distinguished by a small rounded entrance pavilion (now enclosed but with its massing still evident); the original second floor greenhouse (still intact beneath a covering roof); and by a recently added deck which mimics the International Style.

The interior abounds with Moderne architectural details. For example, the master bedroom focuses upon a rounded yet geometric fireplace mantel and surround which is surmounted by a mirror with decorative plaster frame. Many of the home's interior doors display plaster panels featuring bas relief sculptures of birds and flowers. The stairway is especially noteworthy, for in place of balusters it features unusual verdigris and chrome stalks of leaves in the Art

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Nouveau style to support a wrought iron and aluminum curved railing. Also of note is a geometric stained glass window in tones of yellow and green. It is located in the upper reaches of the stairwell. Much of the home's original brass hardware is intact. Also characteristic of the Moderne style is a curved storage wall located in one of the second floor bedrooms.

Assessment of Integrity

The Romero home has undergone several alterations since its construction in 1937. These may be classified under two categories: additions which occurred before the current owners purchased the property and changes made in conjunction with the 1987 restoration of the home. The earlier changes included:

1. the addition of a raised den at the rear during the 1950s and the installation of a two car garage beneath, and
2. the enclosure of an original deck on the second level beside the greenhouse to create a bedroom whose wall blocks the stairwell stained glass window behind it. The greenhouse also appears to have been roofed over at this time.

Changes made during restoration included:

1. the replacement of the original curved corner casement window in the dining room with curved glass block,
2. the enclosure of the rear rounded screened entrance pavilion (mentioned above) to create a breakfast area with bench seating,
3. redesign and enlargement of the master bath, which resulted in a reduction in size of the room behind it,
4. conversion of half of the garage into a workroom,
5. enclosure of an outside door on the dining room side wall, and
6. the addition of a second level deck with spiral staircase descending to a patio behind the 1950s den addition.

Because all of these alterations were done in a style compatible with the original structure, the changes do not significantly detract from the building's appearance or integrity. In addition, many of the Romero home's most outstanding features remain intact. These include the Art Nouveau staircase and Moderne stained glass window (blocked on one side but still visible on the interior of

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the home), the second floor greenhouse, the decorative plaster door panels, three curved walls, and the geometric fireplace surround. As the only example of a Moderne style residential structure in New Iberia, the Romero home retains its National Register eligibility.

Contributing Element

The small contemporaneous bridge which spans the ditch crossing the Romero property is being counted a contributing element for the purposes of this nomination. This bridge is unusual because it features bas relief painted brass sculptures of alligators and birds on the caps of the large piers which support the bridge railing.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
architecture

Period of Significance
1937

Significant Dates
1937

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Architect - Owen Southwell

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Romero House is significant in the area of architecture within the context of New Iberia because it is one of only a handful of buildings which reflect the characteristics of the Modern Movement and is the only dwelling to display such motifs and massing. An example of the Moderne arm of the Modern Movement, the home also contains a rare Art Nouveau staircase which is probably the only one in the area.

The Modern Movement in architecture was a sophisticated development primarily associated with urban centers, and to find a sophisticated example of the movement in one of Louisiana's smaller communities is somewhat remarkable. For the most part, New Iberia's assemblage of twentieth century buildings consists of holdover Queen Anne cottages, Colonial Revival residences, plain bungalows, and square or rectangular two-story commercial structures. A few of these box-like buildings display Modernistic architectural details. However, most of these details consist of Moderne shopfronts which owners applied to their buildings during remodelings designed to update out-of-style structures. Even the city's highly Modernistic Evangeline Theater is a remodeled structure. Thus, only the Romero House stands out as an originally and specifically designed expression of the Modern Movement.

The home is also noteworthy because its Moderne characteristics go far beyond the application of surface detail. The building has a curved exterior wall similar to those found in the most streamlined and sophisticated examples of the style. This geometry is repeated within the internal spaces of the home, where one curving wall culminates the stairwell, a second shapes the dining room, and a third defines a storage wall in a second floor bedroom. Geometry is also expressed in the round and perpendicular angles of the fireplace mantel and surround, the sharply pointed star-like motif of the home's stained glass window, the original round arched door leading from the greenhouse/playroom to the bedroom added during an early remodeling, and the gracefully curving balustrade and steps of the Art Nouveau staircase. The home also has its share of Moderne surface ornament, the most outstanding of which are the plaster bas relief panels of birds and flowers attached to many interior doors.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Historic Structures Survey for Iberia Parish, Louisiana.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	5
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6	1	4	4	0
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3	3	1	9	7	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description Boundary lines follow property lines, per the attached property plat map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification Boundary lines follow property lines.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date August 1989

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