

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Wiener, Samuel House, Shreveport, Caddo Parish, LA

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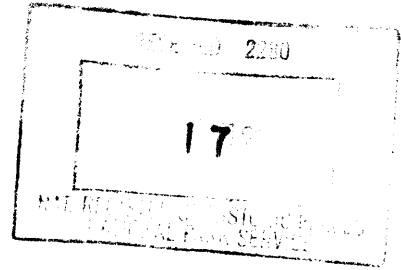
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Wiener, Samuel, House

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 615 Longleaf Road

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Shreveport

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Caddo Code: 017

Zip Code: 71106

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: ___ Statewide: X Locally: ___

Jonathan Fricker
Signature of Certifying Official/Title
Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

August 11, 2004
Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Edson Beall
Signature of Keeper

9/30/04
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public-Local:
- Public-State:
- Public-Federal:

Category of Property

- Building(s):
- District:
- Site:
- Structure:
- Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

- 1
- 1
- 2

Non contributing

- buildings
- sites
- structures
- objects
- 0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic Sub: single dwelling
Current: domestic Sub: single dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: International Style

Materials:

Foundation: concrete
Walls: stucco (over concrete and steel); brick
Roof: other: tar and gravel
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The home architect Samuel Wiener designed for his family in 1937 stands on a generous, moderately sloping lot on the south side of Longleaf Road, a meandering residential lane laid out in the 1930s. Longleaf Road was envisioned as a pedestrian promenade with minimal automobile access. Deliberately lacking in curbs and sidewalks, it was designed to convey a park-like feeling. The setting is now even lusher, with numerous mature trees. The house's design combines revolutionary elements of the International Style with southern amenities such as a generous front porch and a rear summer sleeping porch. It is also a study in counterpoint. The machined neutral white stuccoed walls are a counterpoint to the natural setting and to the red brick walls found on parts of the ground level. The design also plays planar surfaces and rectangular forms against pronounced curving walls and other rounded forms. The structure consists of reinforced concrete and steel faced with stucco and brick -- a most unconventional building system for a private residence of the period. Fortunately, the principal views of the house (as well as most of the interior) look much as they did when the Wieners moved in.

The Wiener House has a signature International Style flat roof, this one made very thick as if to make a statement about protecting the house from the subtropical sun. It extends west of the main mass of the house to provide a deep two-story corner entrance porch (the house is entered from the side). In a traditional southern house the entrance porch might feature columns, but here the porch is marked by a single steel pole of industrial pipe set near the outward facing corner. The pipe was originally painted bright red (and will soon be repainted this color). The stair to the second story is set near the entrance and registers as a full height two-story window on the side entrance elevation. Here the house design follows International Style convention by articulating the two-story entrance/stair hall's function on the exterior. At the base of this huge window is the entrance door, which is set off by translucent glass blocks. The thick flat roof also extends south (to the rear) to provide an eight-foot overhang to shade the windows. The overhang culminates at the east end of the rear elevation with what was originally a two-story screened porch recessed into the body of the house. At ground level was a garden room; above, a sleeping porch. (These areas are now glazed in.) (Please refer to attached floorplan.)

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The lower story is partly sheathed in brick. A curving brick wall sweeps across much of the front elevation and continues down the side to end at the screened (now glazed) garden room. Accenting the top of the brick wall is a fairly wide band of glazed tiles. To the west of the entrance is a low two-car brick garage with a sideward jutting flat roof to cover the entrance. It has a side exit door which opens onto a terrace near the entrance porch. Here there is a small garden marked by a system of straight and curved landscape brick retaining walls.

Just inside the entrance door is a run of several steps leading to the foyer/stair hall. From here the staircase ascends to the second floor with a total of three runs and three landings. It is a subtle sculptural element set against the previously mentioned two-story window. The balustrade takes the form of a low wall with an industrial sheet metal cap forming the banister. The turn from foyer to the ascent is done with a marked, energetic curve which contrasts with the planar surfaces around it. Tucked beneath the stair is an original guest half bath.

Beyond the foyer, the living room takes up the bulk of the ground floor on the north side. A system of partition walls prevents a direct view of the living room from the foyer -- one turns the corner to get the full view. The west end of the generous living room features a great curving wall capped with a translucent glass box slit. The east end has a ribbon casement window system that turns the corner. The glazing turns the corner without interruption by any corner structural support. Actual support is provided by an industrial pipe (echoing the one on the porch) recessed behind the corner glazing (see interior detail photo). This window is particularly prominent on the exterior. It juts out from the main plane and is capped by an overhang.

Additional visual interest in the living room is provided by lowering portions of the ceiling near certain walls. This creates a second ceiling plane that follows the curving and planar contours of the living room in a dynamic way. Near the center of the living room is a lowered ceiling panel that originally provided for recessed indirect lighting. The rear range of ground floor rooms provides for a kitchen, dining room and a game room. (The latter originally contained a billiard table.) Both the game room and the living room connect with the previously discussed screened (now glazed) porch.

The second story has an entrance hall, two sizable bedrooms, a full bath, a study, and a master suite consisting of a dressing room, another full bath with separate shower and the master bedroom. The study and the master suite are articulated as a continuous block on the north elevation. This rectilinear stuccoed mass protrudes slightly from the brick-faced living room wall below -- seeming weightless. It is marked by a continuous ribbon window system, surmounted by a minimal ledge, that turns the corner. As with the living room, the glazing turns the corner without interruption by any corner structural support. Like the other operable windows in the house, these are crank casement windows that open outward. An interesting feature of the second floor windows is their upper recesses set near the glass. These permit blinds to be pulled up fully out of sight during the daytime. This feature helps carry the eye outside to enhance the garden view. The rear of the master bedroom connects with the previously mentioned summer sleeping porch.

In the southeast corner of the house (the rear garden) there is a final twist -- a single story brick counter-clockwise curving wall springing from the lower garden. This provides some privacy as well as contrast with the planar surfaces of the largely flat rear elevation. There is also an extended rear patio that curves away from the house in a wider arc.

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Alterations:

The house remained virtually unaltered until Mrs. Samuel Wiener's death in 1987. In the early 1990s, a subsequent owner painted all of the exterior brickwork white -- a change which, though superficial, had a major effect upon the visual quality of the design. It created a false streamlined effect and violated Wiener's guiding principle of truth to materials. Fortunately, new owners (August 2003) have chemically removed the paint to the extent that its remnants are virtually invisible.

Alterations include the partial removal of the wall separating the kitchen and the dining room (to create a raised counter) and the glazing in of both stories of rear screened porch. The latter also included the installation of a small working fireplace unit downstairs with an exposed pipe chimney on the east elevation. The glazing follows the exact configuration of the screening, and the distinctive horizontal bands that originally marked the porch are still in place. The area still very much reads as a spatially defined porch open to the garden. The partial removal of the kitchen/dining room wall, though regrettable, should be considered minor in scope when contrasted with the house's overall architectural presence. In sum, none of these alterations make the Wiener House any less an example of the International Style.

Contributing element:

The curving wall at the rear corner described above is being counted as a contributing structure because it contributes to the architectural character of the house. It was part of the architect's original design scheme. (The low retaining walls at the front entrance are not being counted because they are not substantial in size and scale. Their contribution is minimal in comparison to the tall and boldly articulated curving wall at the rear corner.)

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A__ B__ C X D__

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__

Areas of Significance: architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1937

Significant Dates: 1937

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Wiener, Samuel

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Samuel Wiener House is of statewide architectural significance as a rare and compelling example of the International Style. Its owner and architect Sam Wiener, along with brother William, were easily Louisiana's most consummate and advanced practitioners of this European style of machined minimalist art. In fact, the Wieners brothers were among the very first in America to design in the new idiom.

The International Style came into being in Europe in the 1920s, principally in Germany, France and Holland. Its leading practitioners were Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and J. J. P. Oud. Their purpose was to create a new architecture appropriate to the modern world – one appropriate to the age of the machine. Their designs were functional, stark and unadorned, with essentially the same architectural treatment applied to a factory, school or residence. Two of the most famous examples of the new style are Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye in France (1929) and Gropius' 1925-26 design for the Bauhaus School in Dessau, Germany. The International Style is (and was) considered quite avant-garde; it was never very popular in America. Le Corbusier's definition of a house as a "machine for living in" did not fit the American ideal of a cozy home.

The very earliest examples of the International Style in America were in the late 1920s and early '30s. The Lovell House in Los Angeles, designed by immigrant architect Richard Neutra in 1928, is generally regarded as America's first piece of International Style architecture. A second well-known early example is the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Building, a skyscraper designed by the firm of George Howe and William E. Lescaze and completed in 1932. Sam Wiener's earliest design dates to 1931-32 and William Wiener's to 1933 (see below).

When Sam Wiener began work on his first design, the style was so new that it had no name. It was christened "International Style" in a 1932 book of the same name by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson published in connection with the New York Museum of Modern Art's exhibition on modern architecture held the same year. The exhibition included photographs and drawings by various architects practicing the new architecture in a number of countries.

The style was so novel and examples so limited in the United States that Samuel Wiener and fellow Shreveport architect Theodore Flaxman went to Europe in 1931 with the specific purpose of seeing the new architecture and meeting its creators. As Mrs Samuel Wiener related to Tulane University architectural historian Karen Kingsley: "We had to go. We couldn't see modern architecture here in America and they weren't teaching it in the architecture schools. There was no other way we could find out." In Europe they visited numerous buildings in the new idiom, attended the 1931 Building Exposition in Berlin, and met various architects, including Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn, and Alvar Aalto.

In the next few years Samuel Wiener and his younger brother William (independently and together) produced a number of major works in the International Style for Shreveport clients. Their work was wide-ranging, including institutional, commercial and residential construction. Sadly, their most exciting, most important work has been demolished or seriously altered.

Samuel Wiener's first work in the new idiom was the El Karubah Club House overlooking Cross Lake near Shreveport, designed in 1931, presumably right after he returned from Europe. The building has been extensively remodeled, although it is still recognizably in the International Style.

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Next came the Weekend House, also on Cross Lake, designed by William Wiener in April 1933, probably in collaboration with his brother. This extraordinary house was influenced by Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, regarded as one of the seminal works of modern architecture. Like its inspiration, the Weekend House was lifted off the ground on supports called pilotis. The space underneath was used for parking. As was common in modern designs, the architect(s) designed much of the furnishings and fittings. Tragically, the Weekend House was demolished in the 1980s. Just last year (2003), a fire destroyed another major Wiener design, the Big Chain Store (1940), with its sweeping curves reminiscent of Erich Mendelsohn.

The Wieners' work often was highlighted in various national and international architectural publications. The building receiving probably the most acclaim was Samuel Wiener's 1935 design for the Shreveport Municipal Incinerator. The *Architectural Forum*, in a feature story of seven pages in November 1935, hailed it as a "strikingly clean piece of design." The building was featured at the Paris International Exposition of 1937, in a traveling exhibit by the Museum of Modern Art, and at the Architectural League in New York. The City of Shreveport, in 1974, razed the off-white brick building with its signature ribbon windows.

Despite their pioneering and exceptional work in the International Style, Samuel and William Wiener are not much known outside scholarly circles in Louisiana. East Coast and Los Angeles practitioners are the ones who make all the standard books. Particular credit for bringing attention to the Wieners goes to Tulane architectural historian Karen Kingsley, who featured them in a 1984 exhibition and catalog titled *Modernism in Louisiana: A Decade of Progress, 1930-40*. Professor Kingsley undertook the first scholarly study of the Wieners and is responsible for bringing the full range of their contributions to the attention of the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation as well as countless others.

Roughly a half dozen International Style buildings designed by the Wieners survive in largely unaltered form (houses and schools and one commercial building). As noted earlier, their most important, indeed revolutionary, designs are gone or notably altered (more of the former). The only other city in Louisiana with International Style buildings is New Orleans, where there are a few examples, none as pure and avant-garde as the Wieners' work, and all about a decade later. In short, the revolutionary European architects who invented the style would have taken few American practitioners seriously. The Wieners are among this select group.

Wiener's home occupies a niche of its own. Here Wiener was serving as both architect and client; hence it arguably is particularly reflective of his aesthetic sensibilities and discernment. It is a very distinctive work in the genre, notable for its pronounced sheltering roof, deeply cut two-story entrance porch supported by a single red steel column, and an unusually active interplay of rounded and planar surfaces and shapes. Undertaken after he had designed other modern houses in Shreveport, Wiener's own house, to quote Kingsley, "both epitomized the new style and showed his particular handling of it." In her opinion, it is here that Wiener "most successfully resolved" his experiments with new materials and construction methods, spatial organization, and climatic concerns in "relation to the aesthetics of modernism."

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Possible national significance:

In consultation with the National Park Service, the National Register staff is nominating the Samuel Wiener House at the present time for state level significance with the intention of amending the nomination at a future date if national significance can be documented to National Register standards. While Samuel and William Wiener clearly seem to be nationally significant for their early and pure work in the International Style, they do not have general scholarly recognition outside Louisiana, which makes documenting national significance to Register requirements more challenging. It is hoped that additional research and analysis will enable the staff to add national significance under Criteria B and C.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kingsley, Karen. *Modernism in Louisiana: A Decade of Progress, 1930-1940*. School of Architecture, Tulane University, 1984. This catalog accompanied an exhibit of the same year.

Kingsley, Karen. *Buildings of Louisiana*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Primary source documentation on Samuel Wiener (including drawings for his house) at Noel Memorial Library, Dept. of Archives, Louisiana State University at Shreveport.

Poesch, Jesse and Bacot, Barbara. *Louisiana Buildings, 1714-1940*. LSU Press, 1997.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University (Noel Memorial Library, LSU, Shreveport)
- Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: approx. 1 acre

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 430220 3592300

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 53 and 54, and the west 10 feet of Lot 55, and the west 10 feet of the north 20 feet of Lot 56, Pine Park Addition, a replat, Shreveport, Louisiana, as recorded in Book 300, page 310 of the Records of Caddo Parish, Louisiana, together with all buildings and improvements located thereon, said property having a municipal address of 615 Longleaf Road, Shreveport, Louisiana 71106.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow property lines of the parcel of land associated with the candidate since construction.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register Staff, LA Division of Historic Preservation

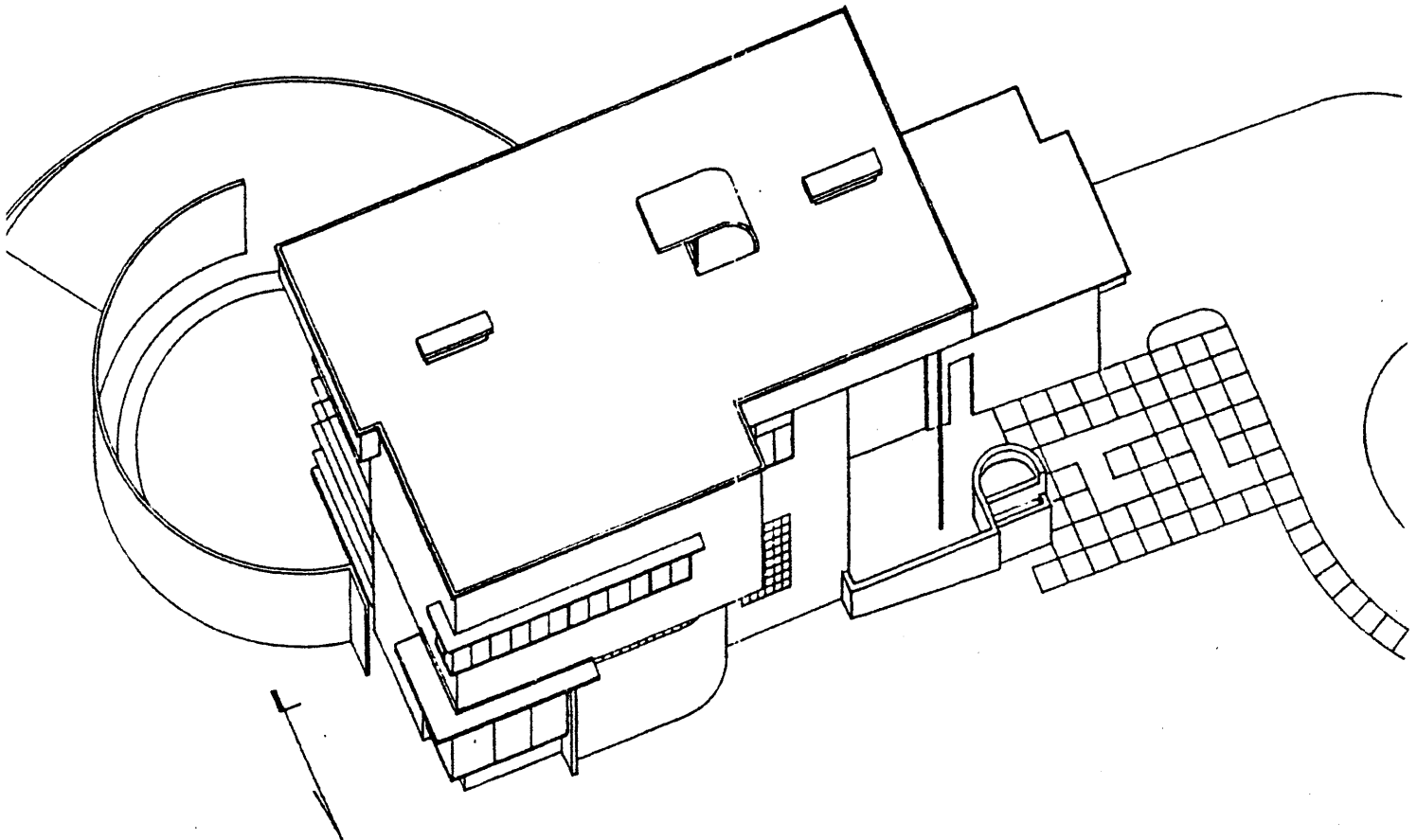
Address: P. O. Box 44247
 Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: 225-342-8160

Date: May 2004

PROPERTY OWNERS

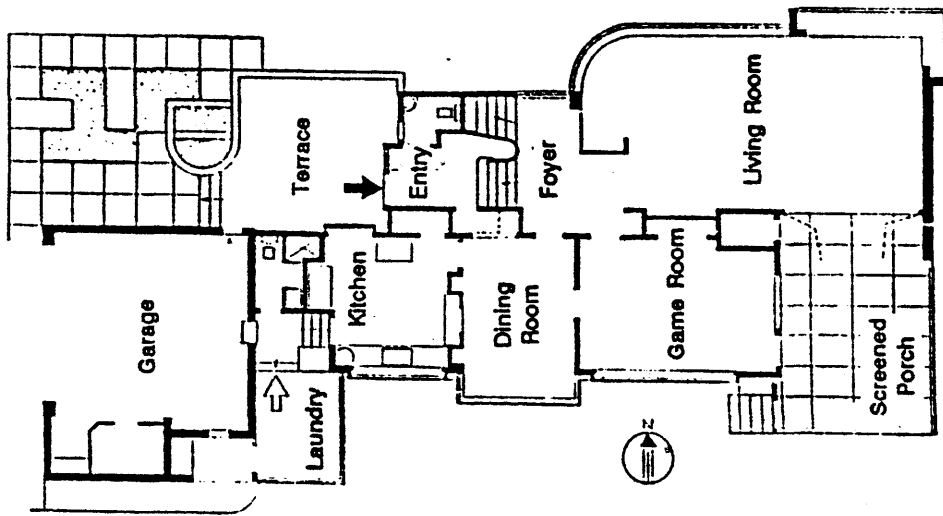
Dr. and Mrs. Warren R. Maley
615 Longleaf Road
Shreveport, LA 71106



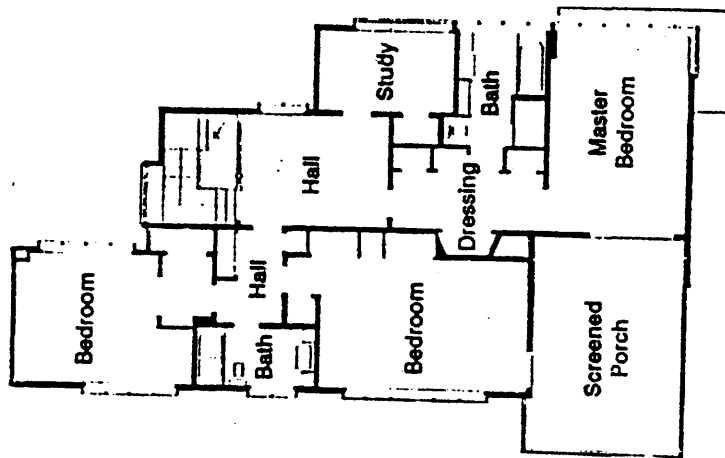
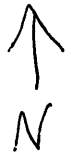
Wiener, Samuel House

Caddo Parish

Louisiana



1st
floor



2nd
floor

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Louisiana