

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Mason House, Shreveport, Caddo Parish, LA

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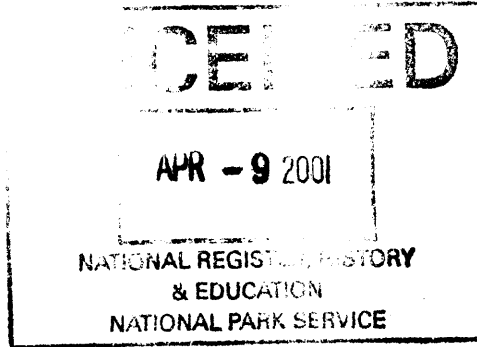
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Mason House

Other Name/Site Number:



Sub Rev  
Rec'd 6/6  
512

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 103 Ardmore

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Shreveport

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Caddo Code: 017 Zip Code: 71105

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: \_\_\_ Locally: X

*Gerri Hobdy*

April 2, 2001

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Gerri Hobdy, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

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):

Signature of Keeper: Sarah D. Bope

Date of Action: 5/22/01

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
1

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, brick

Roof: other: tar and gravel

Other:

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### Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Mason House (1937) is a modest middle class house in the International Style. It is located in extreme southern Shreveport in a mid-twentieth century neighborhood. Despite alterations, the house conveys enough of its original design to contribute to Shreveport's important legacy of International Style architecture.

The house features a side garage, an entrance to the side of the façade, and a boldly curving front that encompasses the living room and a bedroom. The floorplan consists of a hall, living room and bedroom across the front and a rear range of three rooms.

The Mason House's design was primarily influenced by the International Style. As originally built, the house had the following character-defining features of the style:

- 1) It is a unified, minimalist, asymmetrical composition that produces a harmonious whole. The garage is clearly set off from the entrance (which is recessed), which in turn is set off from the curving volume of the two front rooms. The living room fireplace chimney is cleanly set off as a strong vertical element dividing the façade. Additional visual interest is derived from a more or less centrally placed rooftop ventilator set in its own articulated volume and from a pair of closets set off from the southern side of the house and raised above the level of the roof like a tower.
- 2) The design relies heavily upon the articulation of ribbon windows on the façade (in this case steel casement windows).
- 3) The roofing is flat throughout.
- 4) The surface is a neutral white, thus suggesting volume enclosed rather than a heavy building mass. White was also an International Style "signature" because it contributed to the desired stark, unadorned look. At the Mason House the curving front was white-washed brick and the remainder painted wood.
- 5) The composition has an overall horizontal and rectilinear quality but derives additional visual interest from the use of curving walls (the two front rooms). (International style buildings typically have a strongly angular character but they sometimes employ contrasting forms such as curving walls or cylinders.)

Interestingly, the roof is sharply delineated and protrudes somewhat from the wall plane. This perhaps reflects the stylizing influence of the Art Deco style. Typically, International Style buildings do not emphasize the roof plane in this manner.

On the interior, the living room's curving front wall incorporates at one end a corner fireplace with a crisp, severe, curving mantel with inset shelving and a mirror on the beveled upper wall. Other than this and the curving wall, the interiors at the Mason House are very conventional for an American suburban house of the period. They do not partake of the kind of dynamic open planning one would have found on high style European examples.

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### Alterations:

Historic photos reveal that early in the house's history the original casement windows were removed and replaced with a single casement window flanked by glass blocks. Subsequently the wood sided portions of the house were sheathed in asbestos shingles. Finally, the brick portions of the exterior have been sandblasted clean to reveal the reddish-brown color of the brick, and the central casement window has been replaced with a modern aluminum window with horizontal panes.

### Assessment of Integrity

There is no question that the changes to the front window and altering the house's all-white articulation have had a notable impact. However, the remaining character-defining features delineated above (#s 1, 3 and 5) survive intact. The boldly curving front section, echoed by the protruding roofline fascia and pierced by a strongly vertical chimney, remains a dynamic "modern" composition. Fortunately, the removal of the paint from the brickwork (perhaps the change with the most dramatic impact) is easily reversible. Even with notable alterations, the house contributes to Shreveport's important legacy of "Modern" buildings.

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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: Julian Sokoloski

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

The Mason House is of local architectural significance because it contributes to Shreveport's important legacy of International Style architecture.

When the history of Louisiana architecture in the twentieth century is written, surely it will give a special place to the early and somewhat surprising flowering of high-style Modernism in Shreveport beginning in the early 1930s. In contrast to the rest of Louisiana, where by and large the practice of architecture was conservative and conventional, usually ultraconservative Shreveport was a hotbed of cutting edge, European influenced architecture.

This remarkable flowering came about because of a tiny but advanced cadre of architects who were either European trained and/or who had studied the new architecture in Europe firsthand. The "leaders" so-to-speak were two brothers, Sam and William Wiener. In 1931, Sam Wiener and fellow Shreveport architect Ted Flaxman made an extensive European study tour, concentrating on Holland and Germany. (Sam and William had made a trip to Europe in 1927.) Wiener and Flaxman visited major works such as the Bauhaus, attended the Building Exposition in Berlin, and met with such luminaries as Walter Gropius, Eric Mendelson, and Alvar Alto. Using this experience and their own architectural genius, the Wiener brothers produced some of the nation's earliest (1931) and finest examples of the International Style. In their day, the Wieners' designs received national and international attention, although today they are largely unknown to scholars outside Louisiana. Flaxman's major commission was the sweeping Masonic Temple, whose design he says, was a working out of his obsession with Eric Mendelson.

The other "Modern" Shreveport architect was Julian Sokoloski, who designed the candidate for A. A. Mason. Sokoloski had fled Hitler's Germany to join relatives in Shreveport. In the 1920s he had been the architect for the City of Berlin. Apparently his Shreveport practice was mainly of the conventional commercial variety. (It is speculated that the Wieners already had a corner on the market. They were responsible for the vast majority of "Modern" buildings in Shreveport, and their designs were unsurpassed.)

The body of work from this advanced school (mainly the Wiener brothers) embraced a wide variety of buildings – from institutional, to commercial, to residential. Tragically, some of the best of the Wieners' revolutionary buildings have been destroyed – most notably, the extraordinary Weekend House on Cross Lake (1933), which was modeled after LeCorbusier's Villa Savoye, and the Shreveport Municipal Incinerator, which received considerable national and international attention. Many buildings that managed to escape the wrecking ball have been severely altered. International Style residences particularly seem to be a fragile commodity and obvious targets for remodeling. After all, LeCorbusier's definition of a house as "a machine for living in" does not fit the American ideal of a traditional home.

Although a complete inventory of surviving International Style buildings in Shreveport has not been conducted, the staff of the Division of Historic Preservation has conducted extensive fieldwork in the city over the last twenty-five years and can provide good estimates. All of the commercial and institutional examples are gone except for the 1948 Fairfield Building, the 1940s Palais Royale Department Store, and the extensively remodeled El Karubah Club House (1931). (Also surviving is the very avant-garde Big Chain Store, although its design is too one-of-a-kind to be "pushed" into the International Style.) There are three major residences, all with a fairly high degree of integrity (the Wile House, the Flesch House, and Sam

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Wiener's own house, which he designed), and perhaps a dozen or so small middle class residences. Some of the latter have had alterations more notable than the Mason House. For example, Sokoloski's own house/office at 626 McCormick has been vinyl sided and fitted with new tinted windows.

Within this context, the Mason House is a viable Register candidate. Even with the alterations, it retains enough of its original character to contribute to Shreveport's status as the center of the Modern Movement in Louisiana. Character-defining features of the style can be seen in its articulated enclosed volumes, its distinctive asymmetrical composition with multiple volumes and the striking chimney artfully arranged, its fenestration pattern, and its smooth rounded walls.



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### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Two historic photos of the Mason House, copies in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Sokoloski, Julian. Undated written specifications and blueprints for the Mason House. Copies in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Caddo Parish Conveyance Records.

Personal communication with Shreveport historian Eric Brock concerning Julian Sokoloski.

Kingsley, Karen. *Modernism in Louisiana: A Decade of Progress, 1930-1940*. School of Architecture, Tulane University, 1984. (This is a catalog accompanying an exhibit held at the Tulane University School of Architecture.)

Shreveport City Directories, 1936, 1937.

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

Other (Specify Repository):

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## **10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreeage of Property:           less than an acre

UTM References:     **Zone Easting Northing**  
                          15    432540  3593340

Verbal Boundary Description:

The legal property description is as follows: The southerly 27 feet of Lot 2 and the northerly 48 feet of Lot 3, Resubdivision of Plot 53, Broadmoor Subdivision, Unit #1, City of Shreveport.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow the current property lines. (The parcel of land upon which the candidate was built was subsequently subdivided.)

## **11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title:   National Register staff

Address:       Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone:   (225) 342-8160

Date:          January 2001

## **PROPERTY OWNERS**

Michael S. and Judy C. Dean  
146 Albany Avenue  
Shreveport, LA 71105