

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Louisiana
COUNTY: Orleans
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Pontalba Buildings

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
St. Ann and St. Peter Streets facing Jackson Square

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Orleans

STATE:  
Louisiana

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
2

COUNTY:  
Orleans

CODE:  
22

CODE:  
071

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

**PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
see continuation sheet

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Conveyance Office, Civil Courts Building, Orleans Parish

STREET AND NUMBER:  
421 Loyola Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Orleans

STATE:  
Louisiana

CODE:  
22

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  Federal  State  County  Local

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

These identical residential blocks with shops on the ground floor face each other across Jackson Square and are contemporary with the rebuilding of St. Louis Cathedral on the Chartres Street side of the square. Of red Philadelphia pressed brick, three-and-one-half stories high, their facades have pedimented central and end pavilions. At the ground level is a continuous colonnade of square stone piers; the openings are filled with glazed doors painted green, some leading into shops and others into passages to the households occupying the upper floors. When first constructed, each building was divided by brick party walls into 16 houses. Each house had a flagged passageway from the street to the principal stairway, a courtyard and service area at the rear of the ground floor; the principal floor had a salon at the front, a connecting dining room, and kitchen and service rooms in the rear; bedrooms occupied the next floor; and the commodious attic provided servants' rooms and storage space. The cast-iron galleries and ornament are reputed to be the first of a New Orleans tradition. Cylindrical cast-iron columns support the gallery in utilitarian contrast to the lacy railings with their pattern of tendrils and AP monogram. A continuous balcony at the bedroom level uses the same railing design; the construction is somewhat awkward by not combining the gallery roof and the balcony floor. Matching cast-iron grills fill the rectangular windows at the attic level and the octagons in the pediments.

When the Baroness de Pontalba proposed this construction project in 1846, it was her announced intention to create an architectural composition giving the Place d'Armes, (now Jackson Square), the character of the Place des Vosges in Paris. There the arcaded walk is recessed in the building mass as at the Cabildo and Presbytère flanking St. Louis Cathedral. As completed, the Pontalba buildings have projecting cast-iron galleries which shelter the walk. The difference was a pretext for the city to rescind a 20-year city tax exemption agreed to in recognition of her civic improvements.

Micaëla Almonester-Pontalba was a client whose difficulties with architects and builders arose from a low opinion of their economic worth to her. As a result the Pontalba Buildings are based on drawings and specifications of James Gallier, with whom she failed to enter a contract, and drawings of Henry Howard, to whom she would pay only a \$120 drafting fee for developing her own designs. The builder, Samuel Stewart, ran into immediate difficulties when Gallier's specifications, Howard's drawings, the Baroness' opinions and actual site conditions were incompatible. Under the circumstances it is surprising that the result was so successful. Construction began in 1849, the Upper Pontalba Building, on St. Peter Street, was completed in the fall of 1850 and the Lower Pontalba Building, on St. Ann Street, was finished in 1851. In 1851 the city improved the Place d'Armes with the iron fence and flagstone walks still in use.

Continued

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1849-51

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A pacesetting example of urban amenity, the Pontalba Buildings combined fine residences and quality shops in buildings designed to unify the architectural composition of Jackson Square . From their influence, ornamental cast-iron galleries became an identifying characteristic of New Orleans architecture. Built in 1849-51 they were the fruition of a project proposed as early as 1836 by Madame de Pontalba for the sites acquired by her father, Don Andrés Almonester y Roxas, between 1777 and 1781. Elements of the design may be attributed to architects James Gallier and Henry Howard as well as the builder, Samuel Stewart, but they were assembled to suit the baroness, herself. She selected every detail, checked every expenditure, supervised construction, and designed the ornamental cast-iron scroll work.

Because Jackson Square was the historic administrative center of New Orleans and Louisiana, it is appropriate that the Upper Pontalba Building is now owned by the city and the Lower Pontalba Building is owned by the State.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Huber, Leonard V. and Samuel Wilson, Jr. Baroness Pontalba's Buildings. Their Site and the Remarkable Woman Who Built Them. The New Orleans Chapter of the Louisiana Landmarks Society and the Friends of the Cabildo, New Orleans, 1964.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **2 acres (1 acre each building)**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Paul Goeldner, Architect, Historic Sites Survey**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of Historic and Architectural Surveys, National Park Service**      DATE: **1/11/74**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1100 L Street NW.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **District of Columbia**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/>      State <input type="checkbox"/>      Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____  <i>Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____  <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

7. Description (page 1)

Pontalba Buildings

In the immediate post-Civil War years, desirable tenants moved out leaving most of the houses vacant; by 1900 poor tenants were crowded in slum squalor. While restoration has removed evidences of tenement conditions, most of the houses remain divided into apartments. One, known as the 1850 house, is a part of the Louisiana State Museum and is complete and furnished as it might have been when new.

4. Owner's Name:

The Upper Pontalba Building (St. Peter Street between Chartres and Decatur Streets) belongs to:

The City of New Orleans  
City Hall, 1300 Perdido Street  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

The Lower Pontalba Building (St. Ann Street between Chartres and Decatur Streets) belongs to:

The State of Louisiana  
Department of Art, Historical and Cultural Preservation  
P. O. Box 2458  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

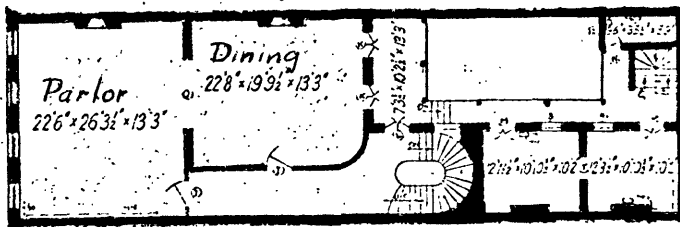
STATE Louisiana	
COUNTY Orleans	
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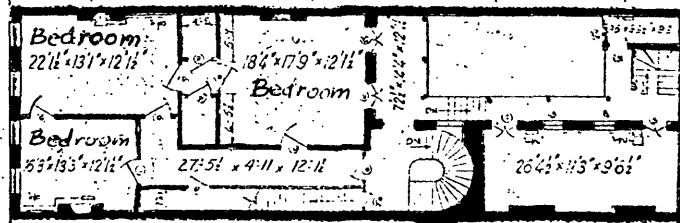
7. Description

Pontalba Buildings  
New Orleans, Louisiana

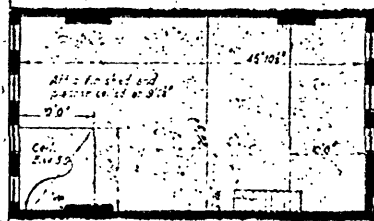
Lower Pontalba Building



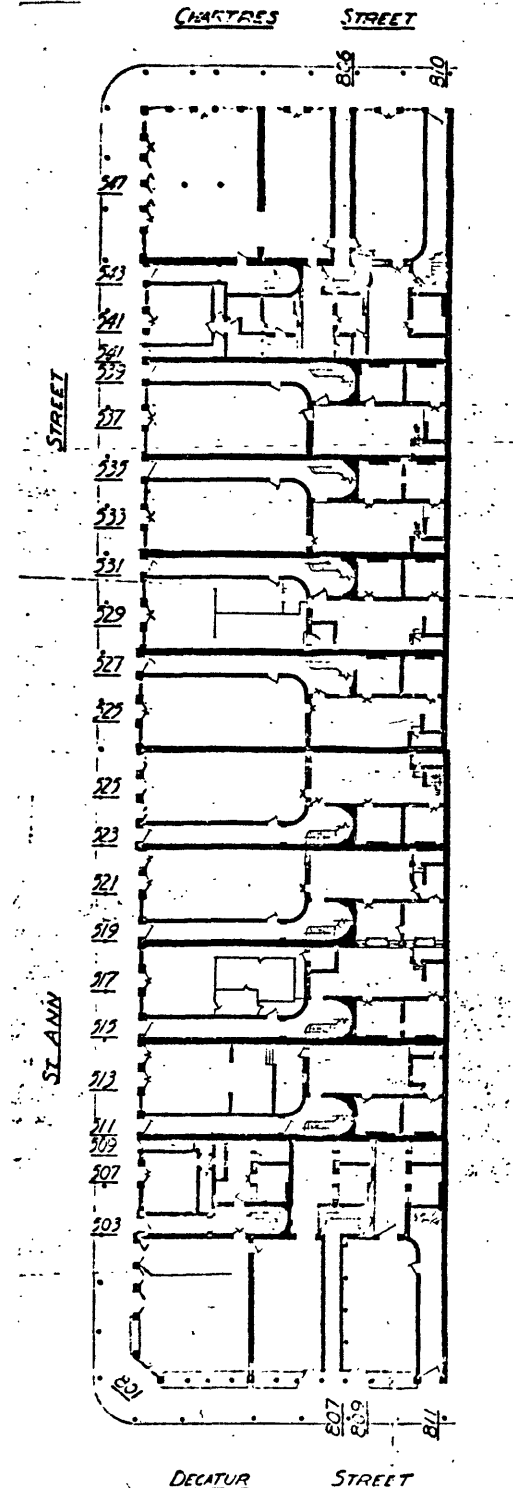
523 ST. ANN ST. 2ND FLOOR



523 ST ANN ST. 3RD FLOOR



523 ST ANN ST. ATTIC



Ground Floor Plan