

Program Summary:

A circa 1841 New Orleans cottage restoration. The project removed unsympathetic additions, restored historic features, modernized interiors, and revealed the residence's unique details and craftsmanship.

Program Statement:

In New Orleans' Bywater Historic District, a notable restoration was undertaken on a circa 1841 Norman post-and-beam, center hall cottage and its outbuilding, known as a "dependency," both at risk of near ruin. Led by an architect acting as owner/developer, the project aimed to leverage state and federal tax credits to restore the structures thoughtfully and authentically. The developer thoroughly researched the property's ownership history, uncovering fascinating details about its origins and early inhabitants. After consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office, unsympathetic additions were carefully removed to restore its original integrity, including the classic center hall layout. The entire first floor was revitalized with modern amenities such as renovated bathrooms and a state-of-the-art kitchen. The dependency, historically a kitchen and servants' quarters, was transformed into a charming one-bedroom apartment. Despite extensive repairs to the cypress frame, the building retained its historic allure, with new exterior siding restoring its visual appeal and the neglected attic thoughtfully renovated into a spacious second-story primary bedroom. An intriguing discovery revealed the house was originally prefabricated, assembled offsite using traditional joinery marked with Roman numerals—a testament to its enduring durability and craftsmanship.

RR195.01

Building Area: (sf)
3,450 sf

Cost per Square Foot:
WND

Construction Cost
WND

Date of Completion:
March 9, 2024



RR195.02

The restored original front porch and side courtyard. The original Greek Key trim or its outline remained, and the trim lines were restored, and the trim where missing was replicated.



BEFORE:

The center hall cottage was teetering on the edge of ruin. The enclosed porch added in the 1950's was removed, and the entire porch was rebuilt.

The final site plan located on the corner of Royal and Desire Streets shows the relationship between the main circa 1841 center hall cottage and the original dependency. There were several later noncontributing additions that were removed for restoration purposes. This area was repurposed to accommodate a pool.



RR195.04

The architect and developer coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office to establish the parameters in restoration of the center hall cottage's floor plan. The collaboration embraced and respected the original residence layout yet provided modern living amenities to meet the needs of modern day living.

The unfinished Norman framed attic was repurposed into a primary suite. The attic structure of heavy cypress was a feature, and consideration was given to expose the structure for viewing. Additional dormers were added on the non-street side to meet natural light code requirements.



MAIN HOUSE – 1st Floor Plan



MAIN HOUSE – Attic Plan

RR195.05

In historic New Orleans architecture, the term “dependency” refers to a secondary structure associated with a main house, and it originates from the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly during the French and Spanish colonial periods. The term comes from the French word “dépendance”, meaning a building that is dependent on or subordinate to another. In the context of architecture, a dependency was a separate but related building used to support the main household operations. These structures were common in Creole residences. They are a key feature in understanding Creole domestic life, social hierarchies, and how domestic labor was spatially organized.

The dependency was originally a kitchen and servant’s quarters. It was repurposed as a one-bedroom apartment. The upstairs attic was transformed into a bedroom. The downstairs was organized into living spaces.

Substandard Additions



DEPENDENCY – 1st Floor Plan



DEPENDENCY – Attic Plan

RR195.06

After consultation with the New Orleans Historic Landmarks Commission (HDLC) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the original porch was recaptured. The windows on the sides and doors at the front were rebuilt in their original locations and configurations. The gate and fences shown in the foreground were built after the façade addition shown below, a vestige of another later noncontributing building was removed.



BEFORE: This depicts the condition of the front façade before restoration.

RR195.07

Research into maps from the 18th Century indicated that the original back porch was in the configuration shown. The porch was rebuilt and followed the intended lines of the found research. After consultation with the New Orleans Historic Landmarks Commission (HDLC) and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the columns were rebuilt to follow what was considered standard from the era.



BEFORE: The existing rear porch added later was removed and rebuilt to match the original configuration.



RR195.08

The dependency was the original kitchen and servant's quarters for this cottage. Note the chimney which serves a double fireplace, one for the kitchen to the left and the other for the living area. While there was no documentation available to confirm, nor was there any indication on site of what was originally there, the architects coordinated with the Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to provide the three sets of doors as a representation of what was likely the original configuration. Research of old maps indicated that there was an additional bay to the left of the remaining structure. However, since there was no record, the addition shown was set back and lowered as instructed by HDLC and SHPO to indicate that this was a new addition to the dependency.



BEFORE: The existing condition of the dependency required major alterations to return it to its original form.



RR195.09

The building's interior was heavily deteriorated, and many exterior walls needed rebuilding. An interesting discovery was that the Norman framing system prevented total collapse; parts of the 4" x 4" stud framing, joined by mortise and tenon to the top plate, had failed due to termites and rot. However, a 58-foot-long continuous 4" x 8" top plate maintained the structure by transferring loads despite the damage. This kept the frame stable and intact, preventing further collapse.



BEFORE: Existing condition of the interior.

RR195.10

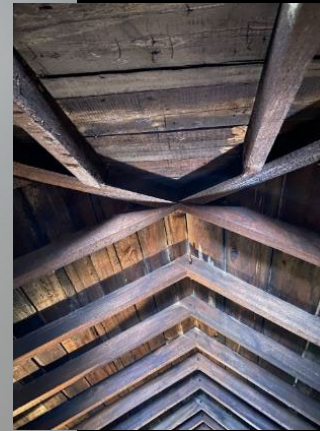
Research indicated that the cottage never had an original kitchen installed within the scope of its footprint. It is assumed that the rear dependency even as late as the 1950's served as the kitchen. To bring the residence up to date and after consultation with the HDLC and SHPO, a kitchen was constructed in what was a former living space. The window over the sink is original and was rebuilt. The other window shown is new and was allowed to be installed with the requirement that divided lights not be provided to indicate that they were not original. The recaptured 1" x 10" pine boards from the attic were used in this space for flooring.



RR195.11

Early on and in consultation with HDLC and SHPO, the attic was converted to a primary 735 square foot primary suite. During this coordination, it was realized that the best means to improve this space was to expose the structure so that all could enjoy and appreciate the size and configuration of the structure, including the joinery. The walls do not run to the roof deck and were meant to contrast the new against the old construction.

The house was framed with old-growth cypress. The roof used 3" x 6" cypress members at 30" centers, while the first floor and attic framing used 4" x 8" cypress at the same spacing. The original frame employed Norman-style post-and-beam connections, a Creole adaptation of French Colonial methods using mortise and tenon joints secured with wooden pegs, known as chevilles. It also featured large dovetails and insert connections without nails, providing flexibility and strength—making it an early form of fortified construction, ideal for storm-prone areas.



RR195.12

The exposed structure carried through to the bath as part of the primary suite in the repurposed attic. High density R-22 ridged thermal insulation was used to insulate between the cypress structural rafters. Modern plumbing was installed to meet current standards. The intersection of rafters to ridge beams are joined using mortise and tenon connections.

The original Dormer to the right was rebuilt, including the repair of the original window frame. New sashes were provided that matched the original. A new walk-in shower was installed.



RR195.13

In reconstructing this 1841 New Orleans residence, we honor not just the craftsmanship of the past, but the soul of a city known for its effortless elegance and enduring charm. Rooted in Creole tradition and shaped by centuries of cultural layering, this home becomes more than a restoration—it's a revival of the easy rhythm, warm hospitality, and relaxed grandeur that define life in The Big Easy. Here, history isn't just preserved; it lives, breathes, and welcomes you in with open shutters and open arms.

