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# Carriage house incorporated into apartment building is a reminder of Julia Street's past

BY SUE STRACHAN | STAFF WRITER AUG 8, 2019 - 7:42 AM

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The Campbell mansion in 1951, facing St. Charles Avenue. Note the carriage house (730 Julia St.) in the middle right of the photo. The Humming Bird Grill was located in front before moving across the street. The mansion was torn down in 1965. Photograph by Alexander Allison.

Photo courtesy Louisiana Division/City Archives New Orleans Public Library

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The apartment building under construction on the corner of Julia Street and St. Charles Avenue in downtown New Orleans has a feature that sets it apart from other similar projects: A 19<sup>th</sup>-century carriage house that's being blended into the new building's design.

The carriage house was part of the Campbell Mansion, which was torn down in 1965 to make room for a parking lot. Today, the carriage house is being used as a leasing office for The Julia at St. Charles, the five-story mixed-use building, that will be finished in August.

This plot of land has a long history. In 1817, Julien Poydras donated a West Indies-style plantation home and the land it was on in Faubourg Ste. Marie to the Female Orphan Society for use as an orphanage for girls. ("The Properties that led to the Prosperity of Poydras Home: Through 200 Years," by Jennifer Brammell, in *Preservation in Print*, May 2017.)

Upon his death in 1824, Poydras, a planter and merchant, bequeathed the society several other area properties. In honor of his generosity, the society's board of managers changed the name to the Poydras Asylum, and later, Poydras Home.

By 1852, the orphanage had outgrown the space. A new building was completed in 1857 on the corner of Magazine Street and Peters Avenue (now Jefferson Avenue). The Poydras Home remains at this site, although its mission changed in 1957 from taking care of female orphans to caring for elderly women, and then adding men many years later.

The society's board of managers hired architect Lewis Reynolds to design the new building. Reynolds was also enlisted to design the home of Dr. George Campbell, who leased the land at St. Charles and Julia for 50 years from the Poydras Home board of managers. His grand Italianate-style residence was completed in 1859.

“A magnificent mansion was erected, surrounded by beautiful gardens. It was famous for its fabulous circular staircase, marble

mantels and elegant chandeliers,” according to “The History of Poydras Home” by Lillian Fortier Zeringer.

An 1876 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, located at Tulane University Southeastern Architectural Archive, shows that three buildings were on the property: the house, the carriage house and another structure.

During the Civil War occupation of New Orleans, Union Gen. Benjamin F. Butler kicked out the Campbell family and appropriated the home for himself until he was recalled in December 1862.

The house passed into the possession of Judge Henry Spofford, and in 1906, at its 50-year mark, the house reverted to the orphanage. Based on how the lease was set up, the Poydras board of managers had to purchase the building. They spent \$9,000, but had to take out loans to restore the house to create apartments within it, operating it as the Mansion Apartments.

“Unfortunately, finding good tenants was complicated by the fact that in the neighborhood were houses of ill repute. The

ladies on the board appealed to Mayor Martin Behrman asking that he have them closed, but the Mayor paid no heed to their request,” stated Zeringer’s “The History of Poydras Home.”

Storefronts were added to the house, and businesses such as Champion Piston Ring and the Humming Bird Grill were located there.

By 1963, the city had condemned the house, according to a Louisiana Landmarks Society memo in Tulane's archives. The society opposed the demolition of the building, but it was torn down in 1965 to make way for a parking lot.

In 1989, the carriage house was restored and became Marguerite Oestreicher Fine Arts, until 2005, when it closed.

The land is still owned by Poydras Home.

“Poydras Home deeply values our rich history and is proud to take great care to honor and preserve the original carriage house structure as it is integrated into the new use of our original property at Julia and St. Charles Avenue,” said Poydras Home CEO Erin Kolb.

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