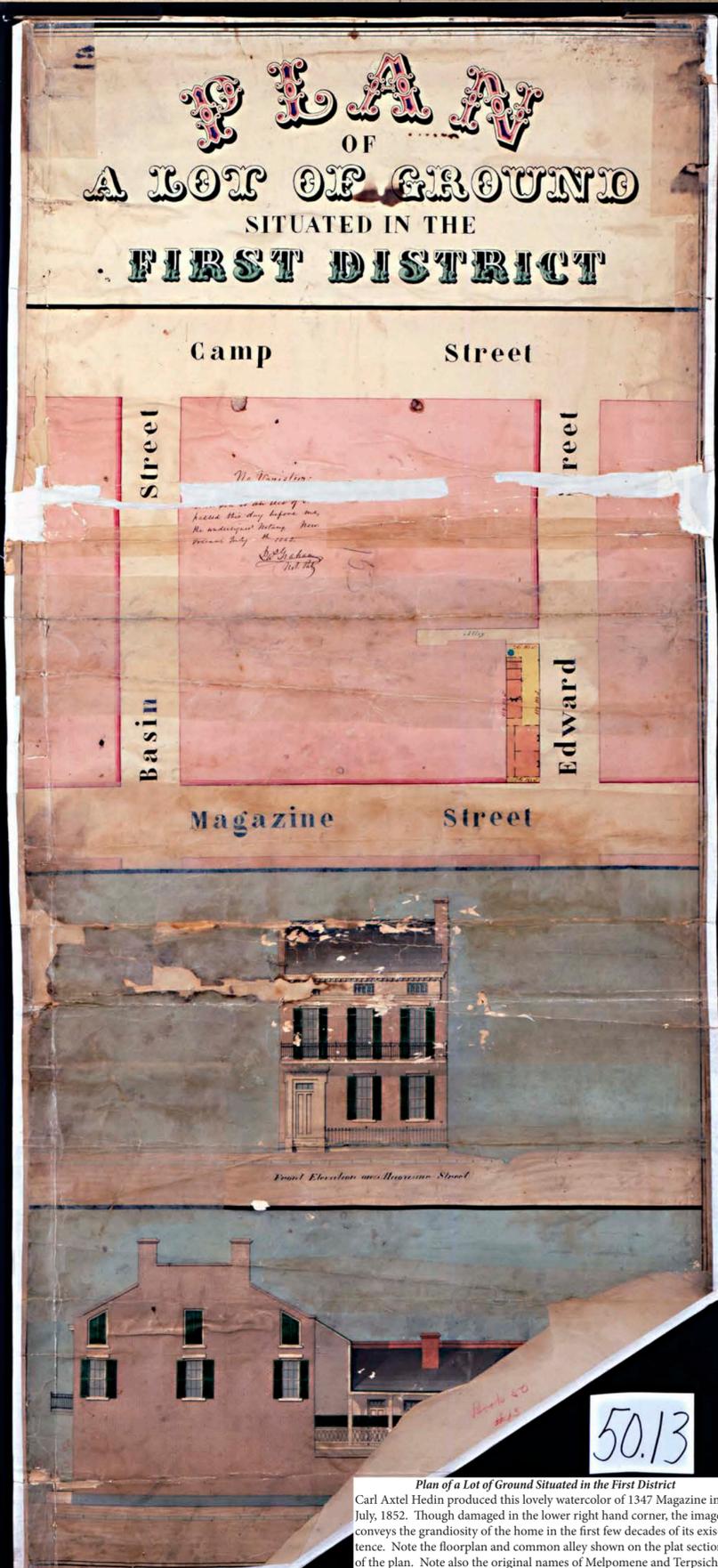


1347 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA

A brief history of the building and its owners.

The restored brick residence at 1347 Magazine Street harkens back to the days of New Orleans' greatest antebellum commercial prosperity. Its form memorializes the unprecedented wealth and growth of New Orleans in the first half of the nineteenth century while its function signifies our emergence into the 21st century. All evidence points to a date of construction for this corner residence sometime in 1837-1840. Typically, historians establish date of construction of a building in New Orleans based on a combination of land records and tax assessment records. Unfortunately, the tax assessment records of the Second Municipality of New Orleans present an incomplete picture of the past, forcing overreliance on land records, such as conveyance books, acts of notaries, and the miscellaneous attachments to each type of record. Though today the property forms part of the First Municipal District, for 16 years in the 19th century (1836-1852), New Orleans split into three separate municipal entities, each with its own civic government. The three municipalities did, however, share a single mayor empowered to make decisions upon common issues. The Second Municipality, in which 1347 Magazine stood at the time of its construction, lay from Canal Street in an upriver direction towards its upper limit at Felicite Street. The lot of ground formed part of the original Faubourg Lacourse, developed in 1807. Jacques Francois Enoul Livaudais sold half of his ten-arpent plantation to Robin Delogny on May 12, 1807. Each man subdivided their half to form two new faubourgs, "Lacourse" and "Annunciation." By the 1830s, investors began carving their original lots into still smaller portions with an eye toward maximizing profits. William Mackey, a Kentuckian, bought one lot and half of another one from Francois Toulouse on Monday, March 14, 1836. The next Tuesday, Mackey reunited the half lot with its other original half. On that Saturday, March 26, Mackey sold both full lots to a trio of Simon Antwerp van Sickles, William H. Field, and James H. Field. Sickles and the Field brothers paid a combined \$4000 for the property. Sickles bought out the two shares from William and James Field on January 28, 1837. In February 1837, he sold a large portion of the lot to John Gregory Gaines but retained the exact lot on which 1347 stands today. It was probably sometime shortly thereafter that Sickles constructed 1347 Magazine. Sickles operated an apothecary in partnership with Michael Fitzpatrick until 1846. At the same time that Sickles and Fitzpatrick dissolved their business partnership, Sickles sold 1347 Magazine to Fitzpatrick for \$8000. The \$8000 in 1846 undoubtedly implies the transfer of a substantial home, not just a vacant lot. The \$4000 sale in 1837, however, does not. The value of paper money experienced a dramatic inflation in the first half of the 1830s, culminating with a global financial panic beginning in 1837. In those years, as a result of the importance of American cotton and sugar to the global markets, New Orleans was one of the centers of worldwide commerce and finance, along with New York City, Amsterdam, and London. "The Many Panics of 1837," as the situation has been styled by one historian, sent prices skyrocketing as confidence in the supply of gold dwindled. It is perhaps unlikely that Sickles built a home in such a precarious economic environment but he may have already had the plans in place before the panic struck. Traditional historical accounts date the beginning of the panic to May 10, 1837, though more recent scholarship shows that many "in the know" in both New Orleans and London were well aware that the scarcity of gold in American coffers posed a significant risk to world markets. Sickles' decision to build in early 1837 would likely have been made without knowledge of the imminent catastrophe. Nonetheless, he would have been aware that the general economic situation was worsening. Sickles survived whatever potential calamity awaited him to die a wealthy man in 1856. He left a bequest in his will to the amount of \$16,884.93 to administer medicines to the poor of the city. The Sickles heirs made headlines in 1893 when they sued the City of New Orleans, alleging mismanagement of the Sickles Trust funds and demanding the return of the money. Upon Fitzpatrick's death, the Abraham Beer Company owned the property. Beer's purchase marked the beginning of nearly forty years during which the property remained in New Orleans' Jewish community. Putting the property in the company's name was simply a tactic of Abraham Beer to deflect risk. Beer and his family made their residence at what was then old 391 Magazine Street up until at least the Civil War. Beer's nonpayment of debt resulted in the sale of certain furniture from the house, in May 1856. At the same time, the sheriff seized the property, along with a number of slaves, and sold it to Salomon Weinschenck for a total of \$9410 Weinschenck, through a private arrangement, allowed the Beer family to continue living in the residence. Indeed, Weinschenck resold the house to Beer's wife, Adele Blum, on November 9, 1860. The family remained until the conclusion of the Civil War, though the home remained in the Jewish community until the sale by Emmanuel and Mayer Lehmann to Charles Janvier on October 19, 1885.



Plan of a Lot of Ground Situated in the First District
 Carl Axtel Hedin produced this lovely watercolor of 1347 Magazine in July, 1852. Though damaged in the lower right hand corner, the image conveys the grandiosity of the home in the first few decades of its existence. Note the floorplan and common alley shown on the plat section of the plan. Note also the original names of Melpomene and Terpsichore Streets, Edward and Basin, respectively [New Orleans Notarial Archives].

After the Civil War, the decline of New Orleans was apparent in many ways. One significant way is that many of the well-to-do businessmen of the city were forced to sell property and live in rented homes. An auction advertisement of March 10, 1883 reveals that both 1347 and 1351 (then old 391 and old 395, respectively) were rented to tenants instead of owner-occupied. The ad reads, "The comfortable two-story brick dwelling, No. 395 Magazine Street... is a pleasant home in a genteel neighborhood, within easy access of business, and is rented until 1st October, at \$40 per month." Later in 1962, one of the tenants at 1347 Magazine found himself connected, albeit dubiously, to one of the landmark First Amendment cases in Supreme Court history. The case, *Garrison v. Louisiana* (1964), reframed the libel laws to permit offensive speech against public officials. District Attorney Jim Garrison and the judges of the New Orleans Criminal District Court had a very public disagreement over expenditures in the D.A.'s office. Garrison had carried out a series of raids on Bourbon Street night spots but the money he spent conducting the investigations posed a conflict with the police department and the judges. Superintendent of Police Joseph I. Giarrusso complained that the D.A.'s office had no investigative power and that Garrison's tactics usurped the rightful duty of the police department. The judges of the Criminal Court took the opportunity to interpret Louisiana law as giving them ultimate oversight of the expenditures of the D.A.'s office, while Garrison, of course, interpreted the law to give him control over the funds' disbursement. Sheriff Louis A. Heyd, Sr. waded into the fray with a letter to the judges, asking for increased funding to find more beds for the over-capacity Parish Prison. When the feud turned nasty in the press, the judges prosecuted Garrison for libel. Garrison turned his conviction into a First Amendment crusade for his right to criticize public officials, an effort to which the high court stamped its approval in November 1964. The tenant of 1347 Magazine, Joseph N. Sims, was a small time crook who got a taste of freedom as a result of the dispute between D.A. Garrison and the Criminal Court judges. Two years before the court's decision, Sims appeared in court, charged with armed robbery. When Sims' case came up, none of the witnesses against him could be found. The judge, Bernard J. Bagert, one of Garrison's fierce critics, made a point of chiding Assistant D.A. Rudolph F. Becker III to "remind Garrison of the case." The Picayune doesn't point out exactly what Bagert said to Becker but suggests its connection to Garrison's "row with the judges" and the question of who deserved "the major blame... for the overcrowded parish prison." Becker would go on to become a Garrison-friendly member of the Criminal District Court after the victory at the Supreme Court. Joseph N. Sims, no doubt, looked on the proceedings with a sense of relief, being released from custody for lack of witnesses while the powers that be argued over apparently more important issues. "A fire of undetermined origin caused heavy damage to a second-floor apartment at 1347 Magazine Street," read the October 29, 1966 Times-Picayune. The building and the contents of Apartment 2B experienced about \$2000 worth of damage, saved from further loss only by the quick response of eight fire trucks from the Second District. The apartment was occupied by Mrs. Frances Hudson, who saw smoke in her room from the outside. The fire, of unknown cause, does not appear to have affected other apartments in the building. The damage caused by the fire likely lingered until the end of 1967, when a citywide push to improve housing conditions resulted in a renovation to the building. At the end of 1967, the city charged the owners of the property, Best Enterprises, Inc., with housing code violations at no fewer than ten of its properties, including 1347 Magazine. The partners in Best Enterprises, Bert Parker and Harry Silverman, were named as "large owners in slum property" by the city's director of housing improvement, Chris Bellone. Bellone's comments came as part of a broader push by his office to bring housing units in the city up to code. The efforts of Bellone and his successor's can be viewed as part of the awakening of preservationist sentiment in New Orleans in the second-half of the twentieth century. The Lower Garden District, especially, would be targeted by the preservation movement, resulting ultimately in the urbane, prosperous neighborhood it is today. The degradation of the property continued into the early years of the 21st century during the ownership of Claudia Speicher. Speicher, a well-known and successful Hollywood talent agent, earned recognition for her casting of such hit films as *12 Years' a Slave*, *Benjamin Button*, and *Dallas Buyer's Club*. Despite her success, Speicher allowed her home to persist in a state of decay to the point that the city intervened. Sadly, Speicher passed away in a local hotel in early 2014. After an extensive and lovingly detailed restoration of the home to its original glory, 1347 Magazine stands poised to for another 150 years of greatness.



Splendid Brick Residence,
 No. 1347 Magazine Street,
 CORNER MELPOMENE,
 SQUARE TERPSICHORE AND CAMP.
BY AUCTION
 —AT THE—
 EXCHANGE, 311 BARONNE STREET,
Tuesday, Sept. 2, at 12 M.
 DETAILS AT SALE AND ON APPLICATION.
 Terms—One-third or more cash, balance in 1 and 2 years, at 8 per cent, and all security clauses; purchaser will assume 1902 taxes, pay for set of sale before W. L. Hughes, Esq., N. P., and deposit 10 per cent. of purchase price at moment of adjudication with J. L. ONORATO, Real Estate and Investments.

THE SUBSTANTIAL TWO-STORY BRICK RESIDENCE,
 No. 391 Magazine, Corner Melpomene Street.
 BY HAUMGARDEN & FRIEDRICH—Geo. O. Friedrichs, Auctioneer—Office No. 117 Common Street—WEDNESDAY, June 14, 1900, at 12 o'clock p.m., at the St. Charles Hotel Auction Exchange, will be sold at public auction—THE COMMODIOUS TWO-STORY BRICK RESIDENCE No. 391 Magazine, corner Melpomene street, containing halls above and below, balconies in front and rear galleries, double parlors, dining-room, kitchen, laundry, etc., below, and 4 neat bedrooms, bath and gallery rooms above; large attic, eastern, paved yard, etc. Lot 27x110, more or less. Centrally located, substantial, and convenient to churches, car lines and schools.
 Terms—One-third or more cash, balance in 1 and 2 years, with 8 per cent per annum and all usual security clauses; purchaser to assume 1903 taxes and make 10 per cent cash deposit.
 Act of sale before Jas. McConnell, Jr., Esq., notary public, at purchaser's expense.
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WOMAN GIVEN TICKET
 Accident investigation division Ptn. John Schwall said Mrs. Gonzales was given a ticket for reckless driving and causing injury and damage. She apparently went through a stop sign about 11:15 a. m. and struck the tractor on the left side. The tractor with its loaded trailer then struck the rear of a car parked on the lake side of Magazine. The vehicle then continued moving and ran across the steps of a structure at 1347 Magazine, owned by Theodore Mitchell. The vehicle stopped after striking some granite pillars in front of the building. The tractor was demolished, police said.

Blaze Damages Apartment Unit
 A fire of undetermined origin caused heavy damage to a second-floor apartment at 1347 Magazine about 6 p. m. Friday. Second District Fire Chief Nolan J. Delatte said the blaze, which was confined to apartment 2B, caused damage of about \$1,500 to the building and \$500 to the apartment's contents. Eight pieces of fire fighting equipment were called to the scene. Chief Delatte said the origin of the fire will be placed under investigation. Mrs. Frances Hudson, Negro, resident of the apartment, said she was outside when she first noticed smoke coming from her room. She said she did not know what started the fire.

Above: 1347 Magazine in 2016 [Curbed New Orleans] Clockwise from Top Left:
 New Orleans Daily Picayune, August 17, 1902
 New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 28, 1893
 New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 5, 1958
 New Orleans Times-Picayune, October 29, 1966

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