



Investigation Summary Report

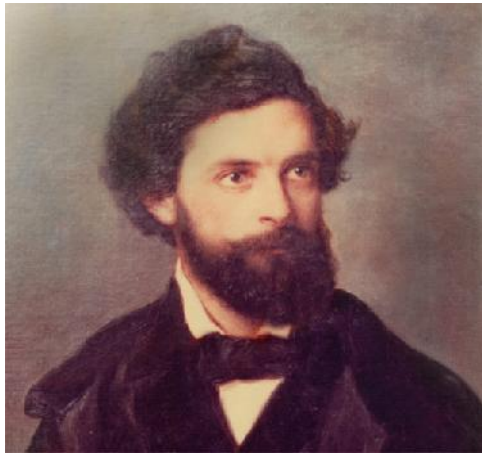
San Francisco Plantation Destrehan, LA



HISTORY



San Francisco Plantation was built in 1856 by Edmond Bozonier Marmillon. It is the most distinctive and only authentically restored plantation on the River Road. It features five artistically hand painted ceilings, faux marbling, and faux wood graining throughout and antique furniture by master craftsman John Henry Belter.



Although the house, in St. John-the-Baptist Parish, Louisiana, is antebellum in a chronological sense, it is certainly not typical of the period. Its style and coloration are totally distinctive.

The house is so distinctive, in fact, that it inspired novelist Frances Parkinson Keyes to write "Steamboat Gothic", a story about a family she imagined lived there. Viewed from some angles, the house closely resembles the ornate and yet graceful superstructure of a Mississippi riverboat.

There seems to be no link with California; the Marmillions were undoubtedly Louisiana French and their travels would traditionally have taken them to Europe, on the Grand Tour, rather than westward.

The most important period in the history of the mansion was the time of prosperity in the late Eighteen Fifties, when the intricate decorating and remodeling were undertaken. Little was done after that, until the Bougère period. The Bougères, who had a larger family, added two bedrooms on the first floor and removed some of the large doors in the main entrance. The stairways were partitioned and gas lights were installed. Some redecorating was done.

The Ory family purchased the property in 1904, and added a kitchen and bathrooms but fortunately undertook few other alterations.

As a result of the Great Flood of 1927 the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the present standard levee and completed it by 1932. Local residents were among persons who lobbied the Louisiana legislature to pass a measure that would save as many plantations along the River Road as possible. Fortunately, the Corps was able to curve the levee around San Francisco at the time it was owned by the Ory family. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 when the San Francisco Plantation Foundation began restoration.

In 1954, the Ory family leased the house to Mr. and Mrs. Clark Thompson who maintained the premises and opened the mansion to the public.

In 1974 Mrs. Thompson, by then widowed, moved out so that structural restoration could begin after ECOL and later Marathon Oil Company had purchased the property.

As scientific analysis of materials and structure, along with archival research, wound back the clock, it was decided to focus on the golden years just before the War Between the States.

The San Francisco Plantation House and its memories are now locked in time just prior to the War Between the States, when the house was at the height of its splendor.

INVESTIGATION

Due to time constraints, this investigation had to be considered a preliminary, since we were not equipped as well as we would have liked to, nor did we have the time to dedicate a full night at the beautiful home. We have been to many plantations in Louisiana, but the San Francisco Plantation had to be one of the most ornately decorated plantations we have seen! We were kindly greeted by our gracious guides, who gave us a very detailed tour of the place.



Based on records, the original owners, Edmond and Louise, had 5 daughters. One died at child birth and another died a tragic death under the age of two, by falling down one of the stair cases. Instances of shadows being seen, voices being heard, and objects moving are the most commonly reported activity. As stated earlier, we only had three hours to investigate on this given night, so we ran only one DVR setup through some of the more "active" areas. At one point in the night, several investigators thought they heard scratching sounds coming from one of the closets. After closer examination, we found it to be an automatic air freshener, that sprayed a fragrance every few minutes. No other events took place that evening, however we are taking in account the fact that we only were there for three hours and there was a loud wedding reception taking place 100 yds from the home. This was simply a preliminary visit, to get a "feel" for the place for our full investigation which will be taking place at the beginning of 2008.

We would again like to thank our gracious guides who made our night so entertaining! We are looking forward to our return visit.

THE ABOVE HISTORY WAS OBTAINED FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO PLANTATION WEBSITE.