



## Architecture of Madame John's Legacy

**Madame John's Legacy** is one of the oldest buildings in the French Quarter. Its fascinating story blends fact and fiction. Residents and owners included a Spanish military officer, the son of a Louisiana governor, immigrants, and local artists—but no one named Madame John. The building is named after a character in a short story by George Washington Cable. Learn more about the architectural features of this legendary building!

### Architecture

Madame John's Legacy is one of the few remaining examples of French colonial architecture in New Orleans. It was built during the Spanish colonial era, after the great fire of 1788 destroyed the previous building on the site. Unlike the other buildings constructed after the fire, this building followed the architectural style that predominated before the fire. Its architecture is well-suited to the city's hot, damp climate.

The ground level was used primarily for storage and protected the main living area from flooding and dampness. This level was built with brick and covered in stucco. The second level was constructed of brick-between-posts and covered in wood siding. A covered gallery provided shaded outdoor living space and a passageway between rooms. It also allowed windows and doors to be opened for breezes, while protecting interiors from rain and direct sunlight. The glass-paneled casement windows, French doors, and transoms at the front and back of the house let ample light into the building. These openings were protected by batten shutters with sturdy strap hinges. High ceilings and a high hipped roof allowed hot air to rise. Attic windows called dormers provided ventilation. Roof eaves projecting from the sides of the building provided further protection from the rain. Nearly all these features can be found by examining the front of the building, known as a façade.

**Architectural terms** – Use this list of terms to label the drawing of Madame John's Legacy on the next page.

- **batten shutters** – a hinged movable cover for windows or doors, made of vertical boards fastened with horizontal boards at inside face
- **balustrade** – a rail supported by a row of vertical supporting elements
- **casement windows** – a window frame that is hinged on a vertical side and swings open, often in pairs
- **colonette** – a slender, round, vertical support pillar
- **dormer** – a perpendicular window in a structure projecting from a sloping roof
- **eave** – the projecting edge of a roof that overhangs an exterior wall to protect it from rain
- **French doors** - two adjacent doors that share the same door frame without a separating vertical piece
- **gallery** – a covered, exterior passage
- **hipped roof** – a roof with four sloped sides that meet at a center ridge
- **raised basement** – a floor built at ground level used primarily for storage and to protect main living area from flooding and dampness
- **stucco** – a plaster often used as a coating for walls
- **transoms** – a narrow window positioned over a doorway or larger window
- **wood siding** – boards covering a building's exterior to protect the structures from the elements

#### Definitions from:

"Guidelines for Windows and Doors," *Historic District Landmarks Commission*, accessed April 23, 2020,

[https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/HDLC/Guideline%20Update/20190111/2019-01-11\\_08-Windows-Doors.pdf](https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/HDLC/Guideline%20Update/20190111/2019-01-11_08-Windows-Doors.pdf)

*Merriam-Webster*, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

*Trust for Architectural Easements*, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://architecturaltrust.org/outreach/education/glossary-of-architectural-terms/>



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# Madame John's Legacy: Find the Features!

WORD BANK	
batten shutters	gallery
balustrade	hipped roof
casement windows	raised basement
colonettes	stucco
dormers	transom
eave	wood siding
French doors	

