

PRESERVATION resource center

at the

SHOTGUN HOUSE



Early one morning in 1999, a small house was under siege. The bulldozer was at its front door and workmen were beginning to dismantle it by hand. With intervention from community members, strengthened by the authority of the City of Santa Monica, the house was saved from demolition more than a century after it was built. Over sixteen-plus years, the house became the property of the City, was moved three times, a permanent location was found, an adaptive reuse plan was developed, a lease was negotiated, funds were raised and the house was sensitively

rehabilitated and transformed into a Preservation Resource Center all under the guardianship of the Santa Monica Conservancy. We have proudly created a model for adaptive reuse while saving an important piece of our city's history.

The Preservation Resource Center will provide practical, user-friendly information about historic resources in Santa Monica and the methods and benefits of preserving older buildings. Our docents are ready for you!

Regular hours will be: Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11 am to 2 pm.

Thank You to Our In-Kind Donors!

Many community businesses and individuals have generously provided goods and services for the rehabilitation of the Shotgun House. A partial list is below. Our full list of donors and community partners will be recognized at the Grand Opening.

3-Day Blinds
Alan Jeffries Framing
Anderson, Knox and Clark, Inc.
Anvil Steel
Bourget Brothers
Brummitt Energy Associates, Inc.
Carlee Construction
Scott Christiansen
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Song Electric
Spectra Company
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Weather Master
Hilda Weiss and Wayne Lindberg
Zinner Consultants

Grand Opening

of the Preservation Resource Center
at the Shotgun House – 2520 2nd St, Santa Monica
Saturday, January 23 at 11 am

Ribbon cutting, tours, music, refreshments, and more

Celebrate with us - your support made it all possible!



Shotgun houses were traditionally of frame construction, but hundreds, if not thousands, were made of brick like these in Louisville, Kentucky.



Double Shotgun House - a duplex with two houses sharing a center wall - in New Orleans.



This New Orleans shotgun home features a vent on the front gable, a full front porch with turned wood posts, gingerbread brackets and other ornamentation.

Searching for Shotgun Houses

By Hilda Weiss

While working on the year-long effort to rehabilitate and furnish our shotgun house, I was inspired to research the history of shotgun houses throughout the US.

A shotgun house is one room wide and several rooms deep with each room opening into the next and no interior hallway. Its gable faces the street and provides room for a porch. In fact, shotgun houses gave us the front porch which was lacking in earlier European-style houses in America. The name shotgun may have come from the African word, to-gun, which means a “place of assembly” or “shogun.” The name has also been related to the design: if all the doors were open, a gun could

be fired from the front door through the back without hitting anything on the way.

The earliest record of a shotgun house dates to 1833 on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. But the design probably arrived earlier as part of the African-American immigration from Haiti following the 1791 revolution there. The influx of immigrants caused a housing boom in New Orleans and began the spread of the vernacular shotgun style throughout the South in both rural and urban areas. Today, the shotgun house is still the most common housing style throughout New Orleans where many ornate Victorian-style shotguns can be found.

Many other older cities throughout the South, including Jacksonville, Atlanta, Louisville, Charlotte, and Houston, still contain neighborhoods where shotgun houses are being preserved.

Shotgun houses were often built as rental properties near manufacturing and railroad centers to provide housing for workers. In

Arkansas, most of the black neighborhoods in sawmill towns had shotgun houses. In Atlanta, a sign posted outside a row of double shotgun homes explains, “These duplexes are typical of the houses where Atlanta’s blue-collar laborers lived in the early 1900’s. The Empire Textile Co. built them for its white mill workers, but they moved out after the 1906 race riot, and blacks began renting them.” In Silverton, Colorado, a shotgun house built for miners is now listed as a vacation rental.

Even Los Angeles has a few surviving shotgun houses other than those built, like ours, along the coast. These include one near the Watts Towers and a couple in Koreatown.



Moving a Shotgun House in Mountain Home, Arkansas. Source: baxterbulletinonline.com



Shotgun houses also existed in the North. These were probably built in the early 1900s in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Bloomington, Indiana, has at least one shotgun house.

Photo by Jonathon Denson



Some famous people grew up in shotgun houses including Elvis Presley, the Neville Brothers and Martin Luther King. This one in Tupelo, Mississippi, is where Elvis Presley was born.

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