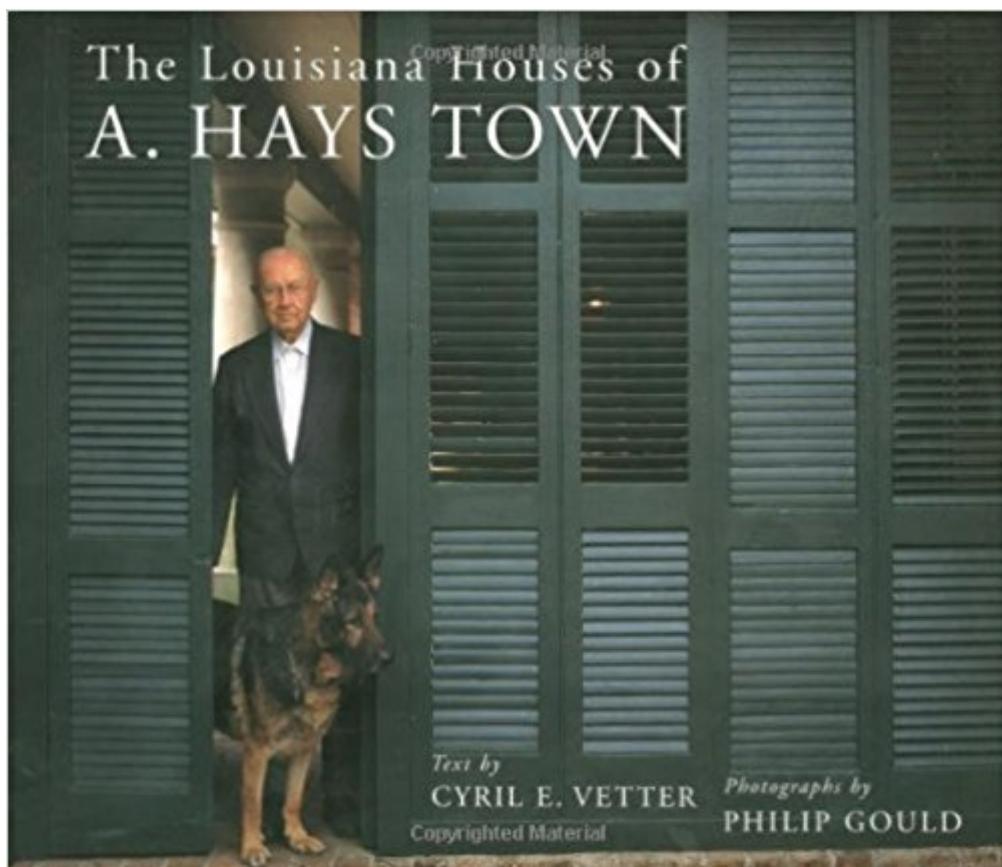


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# The Louisiana Houses Of A. Hays Town



## Synopsis

A. Hays Town changed the face of the Louisiana house. In a career that includes designing more than five hundred homes, he led architects, builders, and homeowners to embrace the finest elements of Louisiana's architectural past. Almost every home built in Louisiana during the last twenty years is in some way inspired by Town's work. The Louisiana Houses of A. Hays Town honors his legacy as Louisiana's premier residential architect. Color photographs of numerous homes -- including Town's own -- by Philip Gould combined with an illuminating text by Cyril E. Vetter produce a volume that captures the appeal and beauty of the state's finest architectural tradition. Born and raised in rural southwest Louisiana, Hays Town graduated from Tulane University with a degree in architecture in 1926 and worked for a firm in Jackson, Mississippi, for many years. He established his own successful commercial practice in Baton Rouge in 1939, but in the 1960s, Town turned to his abiding passion -- residential architecture. Throughout this chapter of his career, he perfected his inimitable style and emerged as one of the most prominent architects in the South. Town's residential designs are perceptibly influenced by the diverse culture of south Louisiana. His synthesis of the classic Acadian cottage, Spanish courtyards, and exterior French doors with Creole-influenced full-length shutters achieves an original confluence of seemingly disparate yet elegantly balanced themes and forms. Other Town trademarks include pigeonniers, tree alleys, thirteen-foot ceilings, heavy use of such woods as cypress and heart of pine, plantation-style separate structures, and brick floors with a special beeswax finish. The Louisiana Houses of A. Hays Town illuminates the momentous effect Town has had on the look of Louisiana. Crafted from the perspective of two people, Vetter and Gould, who are not architects but admirers of one man's exceptional talent, this delightful book demonstrates that each Town house is a work of art that fits both person and terrain. At the door of each home, proud owners hang a bronze plaque that says it all: A. Hays Town, Architect.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 162 pages

Publisher: Louisiana State University Press (August 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807123714

ISBN-13: 978-0807123713

Product Dimensions: 1 x 12.5 x 10.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.8 pounds ([View shipping rates and policies](#))

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars  See all reviews  (41 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #75,599 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)  #17 in Books > Arts & Photography  
> Architecture > Regional  #23 in Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Individual Architects & Firms  #39 in Books > Travel > United States > South > General

## Customer Reviews

Town, a South Louisiana native and student of the South, offers a subtle salute to the region's heritage in the 25 homes featured in "The Louisiana Houses of A. Hays Town." Photographs by Philip Gould capture the subtle design and recurring patterns in Hays' design. The text by Cyril E. Vetter and a tribute by Andres Duany is reverential...It is tempting to pause over Gould's photographs of Town's work, treat them like Ken Burns treats Civil War photographs and follow the lines. An alley of crepe myrtles frames the brick archway entrance to a richly detailed courtyard...A weathered fence serves as foreground detail for a shot of a deep, brick-floored porch...These are elements of Town's style. His residences wear it well.

"The Louisiana Houses of A. Hays Town," published by Louisiana State University Press, documents 25 of the hundreds of houses designed by Town in a career that spanned the major part of the century ...Up until now Town's residential work has not been assembled into one accessible publication, making "The Louisiana Houses" a long-awaited addition to books about Southern architecture...Gould's photographs, polished, honest and generous, give the book its rare and artistic importance...Malcolm Heard, an architecture professor at Tulane, says Town figured out how to combine the familiarity of the past and the flexibility of the present, striking out on his own path at a time when most architects were following more modernist pursuits.

This book's beautiful photography takes me back to the 1980s, when I visited A. Hays Town in Baton Rouge for a Southern Living article...The large format makes it easy to pore over photographs and absorb details. The book also provides a valuable source of ideas for landscaping, garden ornaments, and interior design. Whether you're planning your dream home or just enjoy regional architecture, you'll savor this book.

The magnificent use of recycled materials and varied textures has had a profound effect on residential architecture in Louisiana and Mississippi. I know as a local resident that any home that he has had a personal touch in building is a true showcase. Many younger architects are now trying to

copy or learn from his style. Unfortunately, there are as yet no equals to his expertise. This book is a lovely treatise of some of his best work. It is, however, incomplete. How sad. We will miss him.

Gould's photography is flawless, the saturation and clarity of the color perfect. Printed on expensive slick paper, the 159 pages of photographs collectively paint a clear picture of Town's philosophy of design including his insistence on using recycled materials and merging of landscape and building features...Fans of architecture will want to own this book. Devotees of Louisiana architecture will have to own it.

"The Louisiana Houses of A. Hays Town" combines text by Cyril E. Vetter with photographs by Philip Gould. Together, they celebrate the classic houses designed by Town. The book is full of superb photos of both interiors and exteriors. The book ends with a short essay by Andres Duany, in which he declares, "The long, long career of A. Hays Town is like a bridge that brings forth the traditional architecture of Louisiana to the present generation of builders." Many picturesque elements recur throughout the book: classical statuary, brick floors, exteriors with a look of natural weathering, 2-level exterior galleries, etc. Some particularly memorable images include the following: Hamilton House's interior courtyard overlooked by a second floor balcony; Westerman House's charming lily pond, made from an old sugar kettle; the rustic wood posts on the porch of the Bonnecaze House; the elegant white pillars of the Godchaux House; and more. My only disappointment is that floor plans for the homes are not included; they would have, in my opinion, given readers a better sense of these houses. Still, if you love great American architecture, I recommend this book.

This book is a sampler of the classic Louisiana architecture designed by the late A. Hays Town. Anyone lucky enough to live in a house designed by Mr. Town is a lucky person indeed. His houses encapsulate all the divergent vernacular styles that coalesce into the gumbo of Creole style buildings. My only disappointment with this lovely book is the fact that the emphasis is truly on the architecture of the buildings and not the furnishings and appointments. The rooms looked a little cold and spare, but otherwise this book should be a resource for anyone contemplating building a French-style residence.

A. Hays Town practiced in the Louisiana rural vernacular, and his designs are known for their attention to detail and authenticity. He designed in the French and Spanish Creole styles, both of

which are featured in this portfolio of houses. My problem isn't so much with Town's work as it is with how it's presented here. There is absolutely no text whatsoever (there is a brief introduction), and there are no floor plans or elevations. This book is, literally, a portfolio of color photographs. The photographs are limited in scope, being mostly shots of rooms and furniture. There are some nice shots of architectural details but, really, the photography is nothing to get excited about. Good? Yes. Great? No. The 25 sites are all houses, and they cover the range of Louisiana styles from small Creole cottage to grand Greek Revival manor. The locations of the houses are not disclosed, so this book is not useful as a tour guide. I would recommend this book only to people who have an intense interest in the work of this architect.

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