

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lafayette Museum consists of three buildings - a two-story house with a full size attic and a cupola, an Acadian house which is connected to the main house by a covered wooden porch, and an adjacent brick smoke house.

The main house as well as the Acadian house are of briquete entre poteaux construction with cypress siding on the exterior. The roofs are pitched with split cypress shingles under the present corrugated iron roof. The front exterior wall of the main house is plaster as are the interior walls. The main house has wooden porches across the front at the first and second floors with box columns extending to the attic floor level. There are two chimneys, one at either side of the house, providing fireplaces for the front rooms on both first and second floors.

The first floor of the main house has a central hall which runs the length of the house with two rooms opening into it from either side. There is a most interesting angular stairway leading from the hall to a similar floor plan on the second floor. A small wooden staircase leads from the second floor hall to the attic. The wood cupola is supported by heavy wood columns from the attic floor and is reached by a small spiral stairway in the attic.

At the first floor level the east side of the house has an additional room which is of one story only with a flat roof. This room was part of an earlier house which was incorporated into the present structure. It is possible that the two other first floor rooms on the east side of the hall were also part of this earlier building.

Directly behind the central hall is a wood porch which connects the main house with the original Acadian house. The briquete entre poteaux construction can be seen on the interior walls of the Acadian house. The cypress is hand hewn and fastened with wooden pegs. There is a porch across the front with four small wood columns. There is one large room with several small storage rooms behind. The main room displays a hand hewn cypress loom, warped and in working condition as well as kitchen utensil and farm implements of the period. The steeply pitched roof provides space for a large attic room which is floored in the middle with cypress boards. There is at present no stairway to this room.

The brick smoke house is located at the rear of the main house and has solid brick walls with a pitched roof.

On the east side of the main house there is a small office for the curator. This is a completely separate wood building joined only by a door to the main building. It is of no historic interest other than it was used by Dr. Percy Girard for his doctor's office in the early twentieth century.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Lafayette Museum was the home of Alexandre Mouton, ninth Governor and first Democratic Governor of Louisiana. He was born in 1804 in Attakapas on Bayou Carencro, about ten miles from the present town of Lafayette, the son of Jean Mouton and Marie Mar the Bordat. He served in the State Legislature for three consecutive terms, beginning in 1826. In 1828, 1832 and 1836 Alexandre Mouton was also on the ballot as an elector during the Presidential campaigns of 1828 1832, and 1836. In 1837, he was elected by the State Legislature to fill the unexpired term of Judge Porter in the United States Senate and was then elected to serve a full six-year term. In 1843 he was elected

Governor of Louisiana. In 1856 and again in 1860 Governor Mouton served as a delegate to the National Convention for the selection of a Presidential Candidate. In 1861 he was President of the Secession Convention in Baton Rouge which may be said to have terminated his public career, although he was a candidate for the Senate of the Confederate Congress afterwards.

Governor Mouton was married in 1826 to Miss Zelia Rousseau, the granddaughter of Governor Jacques Dupre, the richest stockraiser in the County of Attakapas. Their children were Jean Jacques, Alexandre Alfred, Mathilde, Henrietta, Odeide, Cecilia and Arcadie. After the death of his first wife, the Governor married (while he was a Senator) Miss Emma Kitchell Gardiner, in January, 1842. She was the daughter of Colonel Charles K. Gardiner, an officer of the United States Army. The children of his second marriage were Anna Eliza, Charles Alexandre, Paul Joseph Julian, Marie, George Clinton, William Rufus King.

In addition to Alexandre Mouton, the Museum is historically significant because of the many other notable families who lived in the home, families who played important roles in the history and development of Vermilionville (in 1884 the name was changed to Lafayette).

The Lafayette Museum was built about 1800 by Jean Mouton, father of Alexandre Mouton, as a home for his family. It consisted of one large room and a kitchen. Jean Mouton was one of the earliest settlers of the Attakapas country and he soon acquired vast lands in what later became the Parish and City of Lafayette. He laid out the original plan for Vermilionville and gave to the village land for the Court House and the Catholic Church.

In 1820 Alexandre Mouton added three rooms to the building and continued to occupy the home with his wife, Zelia Rousseau, and children, until 1836. Meanwhile, on the 5th of March 1834, in an exchange of property with his brothers, Alexandre Mouton became the sole owner of the house and lots 142, 143, 144 and 145 on which it stood, as shown on the original plan of Vermilionville. The present house, the Lafayette Museum, is located on portions of Lots 142 and 143.

In 1836 Alexandre Mouton sold the property to Cornelius Voorhies, who was married to Cidalise Mouton, sister of Alexandre. Cornelius Voorhies became a Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court in 1854, serving until his death in 1859. His son, Albert, succeeded his father on the Bench, the youngest Judge to ever sit on that tribunal. Later, Albert became Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana.

After a brief residence in the house, Cornelius Voorhies sold it on 27 November 1836 to Samuel M. and Benjamin P. Paxton, both prominent in the development of Vermilionville.

On 5 July 1849, the Paxtons sold the property to Dr. W. G. Mills, Dr. Mills added the second and third floors and the lookout tower or cupola.

Ten years later, at the Succession sale of Dr. Mills, the house was acquired by Mr. William B. Erwin, who in turn left it to his four daughters. On December 16, 1896, in the final settlement of the Erwin estate, the heirs sold the property to Dr. Percy M. Girard for the sum of \$3000.00 plus the assumption of a note for \$850.00. It was from the heirs of Dr. Percy Girard that the Lafayette Museum Association acquired the property. As it was built in three separate stages, the evolution of the Alexandre Mouton House mirrors the growth and development of the Attakapas region and Lafayette in particular. It shows the increasing role American influence had in the community although the area's Acadian heritage is emphatically reasserting itself today. The original portion of the house is one of the oldest structures in the city.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Lafayette Parish Clerk of Court's office.

"The Attakapas Country" - by Dr. Harry Lewis Griffin, a history of Lafayette Parish, Louisiana.

"A History of the Lafayette Museum" by Bennett J. Voorhies.