BAYOU FOLK MUSEUM

Cloutierville, Louisiana 71416

RESTORATION OF THE
KATE CHOPIN HOME

Dedicated to the preservation
of the history of the
CANE RIVER COUNTRY
History of Cloutierville

Cloutierville, the site of Bayou Folk Museum, was founded very soon after Natchitoches but it came into being as a village in 1822, when Alexis Cloutier gave his name to the community. In the late 1700's he acquired the property on which this Museum stands from a Spanish Land Grant bearing the No. 1701. It is believed that the building which now houses the Museum was the home built by Mr. Cloutier in the early 1800's, as a map placed on record with the State Land Office in 1813 clearly designates a home on this particular tract of land.

Shortly after giving his name to Cloutierville, Mr. Cloutier led a movement to divide Natchitoches Parish and to make Cloutierville the parish seat of the new parish. This dream of Mr. Cloutier's was never realized and Cloutierville settled down to remain a small village and to serve the lower end of Natchitoches Parish as a trading center and site of nearest medical aid.

Other than church records from St. John the Baptist Church, which date back to 1817, the wonderful history and folklore of this community would have been lost to posterity had it not been for the arrival in 1880 of Katherine O'Reharty Chopin.

Because of business reverses suffered in the city of New Orleans, Oscar Chopin brought his wife Kate and their six children to live in the Cloutier home so that he could assume management of the Chopin Plantation lying on both sides of Cane River. After his sudden death in the Swamp Fever Epidemic, Kate was forced to liquidate her holdings and return to the city of her birth, St. Louis, Missouri.

While she had displayed no literary talents up to that time, she absorbed the atmosphere of the Cane River Country and later used it for most of the short stories she wrote. One collection of these short stories, "Bayou Folk," published in book form in 1894, serves as the focal point of this Museum. It is to the gifted pen of Kate Chopin, renowned short story writer of Creole Stories pertaining to the people that inhabited the Cane River Country, that the preservation of Cane River History is indebted.
In restoring this famous home, the owner has attempted to retain the physical appearance and atmosphere as it appeared in its original state. Constructed of heart cypress, heart pine, and slave-made brick, this building is of "early-Louisiana-type construction" consisting of the first floor which served as an "above the ground basement," the second floor used for living accommodations, and the third floor serving as an attic. There are four fireplaces sharing a common chimney extending from the center rooftop.

The entire first floor is filled with museum-type displays depicting the history of the Cane River Country. The second floor is furnished in period furniture similar to that found in the poorer homes along the Cane, typical of those mentioned in "Bayou Folk." The third floor or attic is highlighted to show the details of construction, collection of building supplies of that period, and other museum contents. All contents of this Museum were acquired locally and were restored and refinished on the premises.

Eugene Metoyer, a native of Cloutierville, has done all the work in restoring furniture housed in Bayou Folk Museum. Although deaf and dumb, his artistic hands have brought back the luster of beautiful woods in the furniture, and he has repaired or put back into use other pieces. He serves as caretaker for the Museum.

Adjacent to the house is another structure which served the community for many years as a Doctor's Office and now contains the furnishings and equipment which belonged to several plantation doctors who served the Cane River Country during their lifetimes.

Behind the Museum is a Blacksmith's Shop containing farm tools and equipment dating from the 1800's.

Bayou Folk Museum is easily accessible as it is a short distance off Highway 1, located on a paved street which runs the length of the village of Cloutierville. In addition to local history Cloutierville serves as an axis for surrounding attractions among which are: "Little Eva Plantation," reputed by local folklore to be site of Uncle Tom's Cabin; "Sang-Pour-Sang," site of annihilation of Natchez Indians; "Longleaf Trail Vista" in the Red Dirt Preserve; "Magnolia" and "Melrose" plantations; and "Monette's Ferry," site of skirmishes in Civil War.

Plan to spend an afternoon at Bayou Folk Museum in Cloutierville and you will say as did a character in "The Return of Alcibiade" from Kate Chopin's "Bayou Folk," "Dat town, hit's old, ole; mos' a hund'ed year ole dey say!"
BAYOU FOLK MUSEUM
Located in Cloutierville, Louisiana, just off Highway 1.
20 Miles S. of Natchitoches - turn left and drive across bridge.
35 Miles N. of Alexandria - turn right and drive across bridge.

MUSEUM HOURS
Open Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 2 to 6 p.m.
Open other days by appointment.
Closed during December, January and February.
Bus tours accommodated on two weeks notice.

ADMISSION
Adults ........... $1.00
Children .......... .50
Special rates to supervised school groups and other organized groups.

For additional information contact:
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