A garden for "Ghana on the Gold Coast," created by a blind man who wanted others to enjoy the beauties of the 18th century Louisiana, blossoms this summer for the first time.

It is as lush as Louisiana, as formal as a diplomatic tea, as native as the Nathichotosh Indians of that area.

For Ghana, the pagoda-roofed log cabin built in 1780, the gardens with their rich colors of vegetables and flowers in spectacular display are a perfect mate. Cabin and gardens meld together.

For Francois Mignon, who created the garden, they are another achievement in his continuing efforts to create and encourage beauty, to preserve and promote the enjoyment of Louisiana's rich fund of historical legacies.

For others, the gardens are both stimulating and awesome, for this lovely setting was created by a man who cannot see the beauty he has contrived.

Ghana began as a slave cabin at Melrose Plantation near Natchitoches. Hardy typical, the tiny single room of chinked handmade logs is topped by a unique pagoda roof made of terracotta tiles. A small round window in the front and a door in back, the cabin's walls are covered with petrified wood. Inside, the hearth is tiled in reds and gold banners in place to tell off the hours.

On two sides of the Ghana garden stretch cotton rows in the horizon. On the third, guards and sunflowers supply a barrier, while the fourth divides the Melrose garden itself.

Giant sunflowers and stalks of scarlet chile peppers used to top up the heavy vegetables in the time Spain planted its red and gold banners in place of the French flag de la France.

French paths lead to Ghana and the four corners of the gardens, where broad, jade-green benches invite the garden to limit. Ghana garden: Orderly as a Gokh fugu, colorful as a Peacock, utilized as a contemporary food factory.

"Every century," Dr. Mignon says, "hands down to those coming after a vast variety of virtues and vices, some of which we accept, some of which we reject and, remarkable enough, some of which we forget.

One of those things which was handed down to us and which, apparently, we have forgotten. I think we should strive to preserve the virtues and let the vices go, but since the vegetable garden has virtues, we must certainly shouldn't forget it. It supplies both delight to the eye, and food for the stomach.

In this Francis Mignon who has done so much to preserve the legacy of Melrose, not only for the heirs of the J. H. Henrys, but for the hundreds of tourists who visit there each year.

A native Parisian, he was educated at the Sorbonne and at New York's Columbia University. As one of Europe's young landscape artists, he restored the famous gardens of Marie Antoinette in Versailles.

He visited Melrose in 1919, and at the invitation of Mrs. John H. Henry returned later to stay. He is almost totally blind.

Through the years he has worked to create an orderly beauty about him, to research and preserve the historical background of Louisiana, and to encourage others in these fields. A regular contributor to several regional magazines, he writes a weekly column for the Natchitoches Enterprise, called "Cane River Memo."

Several years ago he decided someone ought to do a pictorial history of the Cane River country. So he designed and created a series of eight historical plates, "pages in prose," covering 200 years of Natchitoches County history.

To round out a dozen plates, he added three ofNash and another on plantations in the Feliciana and the St. Francisville area.

He couldn't see well enough to work out the design on standard-sized dinner plates. So he made the sketches on paper 10 feet square, and these were reduced later by the proper size.

Four years ago, he co-authored a book, "Melrose Plantation Cookbook," with Clementine Hunter, the former plantation cook. While Mignon could not see what he wrote, he could neither read nor write. Yet together they managed, he composing, she supplying the recipes.

Mignon is also credited with inspiring businesses of the area to sponsor restoration of Fort Jean Batiste, Louisiana's oldest fort, founded more than 200 years ago on the banks of what was then the Red River by Cavalier Jean Juchereau de St. Denis.

In addition, Dr. Mignon keeps a daily diary of plantation and Cane River life, which is available through two university libraries as a source material for historical writers.

Work such as this, logged now by the new gardens at Ghana, is a labor of love, gifts to a man who cannot see others who can, for their enjoyment.

Blind Man Creates Garden at Ghana House

By PAT BALDRIDGE

The grand, gilded big house, with its native gardens which Mignon has helped preserve, is of course the most important.

Yucca House, built in 1738, is reputed to be the place in which more books have been written than any other house in Louisiana. Such writers as Alexander Washington, Woolcest, and Lyle Sonn wrote Yucca House as well as in the formal vegetable gardens. Is

It

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Africa House, called one of South's most distinctive buildings

by what he has contrived.

Ghana began as a slave cabin at Melrose Plantation near Natchitoches. Hardy typical, the tiny single room of chinked handmade logs is topped by a unique pagoda roof made of terracotta tiles. Such a roof is found only in India-China, in the Norway of the year 1500, and in the Natchitoches area of the Cane River country, Mignon says.

At one side of Ghana stands the chimney, built expressly for limonade and petrified wood. Inside, the hearth is tiled with unusual square tiles.

Ghana is small, but even so is more luxurious than most slave cabins were. It boasts both floor and windows.

For more than a century, the house was used as a plantation cabin. Then the Library of Congress lists these as "The only buildings of African origin to be found on the North American continent." They were built by Maria Theresa Metoyer, a native African and former slave, who was given the land and her freedom by her master.

Under the direction of Dr. Mignon, Africa House has been transformed from a colonial provision house to place to restrain recalcitrant slaves into a gallery and former slave, who was given the land and her freedom by her master.

The gardens, rows of vegetables follow the triangular beeches of each section. Leaf lettuce forms the outer triangle; inside, radishes, cabbage, mustard, tomatoes, bell peppers and hot peppers, touches of verbena and celosia pick up the center motif and carry it throughout the radiating sections.

In the five pie-shaped sections of the roof of the gardens, rows of vegetables follow the triangular beeches of each section. Leaf lettuce forms the outer triangle; inside, radishes, cabbage, mustard, tomatoes, bell peppers and hot peppers, touches of verbena and celosia pick up the center motif and carry it throughout the radiating sections.

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Melrose Plantation House near Natchitoches

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