The Thibodeaux cottage in Acadian Village off Ridge Rd. is genuine, although the construction was made during restoration. The Thibodeaux cottage in foreground is well documented. Note the bouillage plaster on the front wall. The original dwellers were more affluent than most and the house is larger and has somewhat more elaborate features, such as two front doors.

The Thibodeaux cottage In aDdiOn to the simple needs of frugal, pious, and unpretentious farming people of meaner means, the Cajun home builder could depend only upon the materials at hand: cypress trees, clay, moss, pliable banyan, cane reeds and willow switches, lime from oyster shells and loam, Robinson said. The cottage was rectangular in shape, usually of two rooms, and was a crude adaptation of the French medieval half-timbered house with which the Cajuns were familiar, having come from France.

Cottage Was Raised

The frame was set on cypress tunk drums or, at a later time, brick pillars. The cottage was raised two, three feet off the ground to escape the dampness, insect infestations and soil of south Louisiana. The raised cottage was considered an advance of the rains. The height was cut to a few inches wide, and were mostly made from "wild" cypress trees that had sunk in the swamp or bayou water during logging operations. These were best for shingles because the wood was curved. The height was cut into drums of the proper length and shaped somewhat as a binder.

Shingles Were Extended

Shingles or roof tiles were used to cover the apex as a substitute for metal capping. Robinson said the roof was effective and gave good protection from the rains.

Making the shingles from cypress logs as the Cajuns were required to do is almost lost art, but there are a few craftsmen who occasionally exhibit their skills in far-off states. Paul Reveser, superintendent of the Longfellow-Evangeline State Park near St. Martinville, acquired the know-how to make the shingles and also showed those which were sometimes used on the cottage walls, he said.

There is some possibility that the look of the Cajun cottage may be retained to a degree as a result of the success of two houses plans marketed by Sears, Roebuck and Co. Two of 55 house plans designed by Cecile D. Trahan, Lafayette builder and developer, for retailing by Sears, are proving popular throughout the United States and some foreign countries. Although the Trahan house somewhat resembles the Cajun cottage, it was not designed as a replica.

Cottage Is Simple

The original Cajun cottage planned was a very functional structure with no trim, decorations or luxury features. It served mostly as a dormitory for an exiled people who were constantly on the move, and the Cajuns made the best use possible of what nature provided.

The workman would slice off portions of the drum, taking advantage of the straight grain of the cypress. He would then insert his fro, hammer it down, add several inches, rock it "to and fro" to deepen the split. When he got sufficiently deep into the drum, the water was inserted to allow the worker to hammer his fro until finally the shingle would be sliced off.

With this ingenious mixture the industrious Cajun plastered some walls, especially the front wall which got protection from the porch. The other walls were usually covered with cypress weatherboards. The inside walls were finished like plaster, and in some cases this material was whitewashed with a mixture of ground oyster shells and water. The mud mixture was applied as thick as the width of the studs, making excellent insulation.

Dr. R. Warren Robison, retired head of the department of art and architecture at the University of Southern Louisiana, says the cottage is structurally unique French in origin and is closely related to "socal architecture of the humble peasants of medieval France."

During the latter part of the 18th century, these cottages lined the bayou banks and became an architectural solution to the simple needs of frugal, pious, and unpretentious farming people of meaner means. The Cajun home builder could depend only upon the simple materials at hand: cypress trees, clay, moss, pliable banyan, cane reeds and willow switches, lime from oyster shells and loam, Robinson said. The cottage was rectangular in shape, usually of two rooms, and was a crude adaptation of the French medieval half-timbered house with which the Cajuns were familiar, having come from France.

Shingles at the peak of the roof extended upward over the apex as a substitute for metal capping. Robinson said the roof was effective and gave good protection from the rains.

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Shingles at the peak of the roof extended upward over the apex as a substitute for metal capping. Robinson said the roof was effective and gave good protection from the rains. The shingles were extended by inserting his fro, hammering it down, adding several inches, rocking it "to and fro" to deepen the split. When he got sufficiently deep into the drum, the water was inserted to allow the worker to hammer his fro until finally the shingle would be sliced off.

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