Oakley’s stairways lead to history

Calcasieu DAR tours plantation homes

By GEORGIA DUPUIS

The day’s activities for several feet away from the main establishment.

The DAR members were served lunch in the dining room. The table was laid with fine linen cloth over 100 years old. It was centered with a jelly kettle burnished with age and filled with red, white and blue carnations.

Oakley Plantation

In contrast to the vibrant Lane home, with its combination of family, Oakley Plantation house has the immoveable stillness of history suspended in time.

Much of the sound filtering through the trees and shaded walks surrounding the house comes sweetly, fluently from many birds. The sound is fitting, for it was at Oakley that the great naturalist painter, John James Audubon, painted 32 of his birds.

During his four-month stay at Oakley, Audubon lived and worked as a tutor to Eliza Pirrie. Eliza’s mother, Mrs. James Pirrie allowed the artist half of his time free to roam the woods working on his paintings.
during a visit to the Lane Plantation enjoyed recently by members and guests of Calcasieu Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

As with most large houses of that era, the kitchen and store-rooms were separate buildings of the porch is a time-worn water cistern, soon to be transformed into a doll house for the many small family visitors.

Red, white and blue is the color scheme of the home. The beamed living room has an imposing mantel in Wedgewood blue. A large settle upholstered in rich blue velvet stands at the edge of the red braided rug. The planked “farm doors” are also in Wedgewood.

The carpeted staircase feature white balusters topped by a wide blue rail. Lolly walnut four-posters dominate the bedrooms.

Simple but intrinsically priceless family treasures are to be found in a closet in the den—a handsewn gentleman’s nightshirt, an exquisitely hand-worked baby gown, an intricate ruffle iron used on the ladies’ gowns of an earlier era.

Harking back to the War Between the States, there is a brass bullet—maker and a polished wooden half-leg worn by James Tyson Lane when he returned home wounded.

The starly simple room which was given Audubon is furnished with a narrow iron-rail bed. The window looks out over the ornate garden with its bricked paths and tailored shrubbery.

The large cool dining room has been furnished by the Louisiana State DAR. The host and hostess chairs were donated by the Calcasieu Chapter.

The room features one of the eight Adam mantels in the house, this one in a unusual twig design.

Over the mantel is Audubon’s painting of a wild turkey cock, considered by some as his finest work. Over the dining table is suspended a punkah, a wooden fan given a gentle swaying motion when servants pulled on attached ropes from either end.

The punkah reflects some of the West Indies influence in the house. This influence is also seen in the jalousied galleries with their curved ceilings.

One bedroom features a child’s spool bed and a Sheraton three-quarter field bed. The Oakley parlor is re-furnished with pieces of the Federal Period in America 1790-1830.

LANE PLANTATION—An old water cistern is part of the charm of the Lane Plantation near Clinton, below, family home of Mrs. S. W. Plauche Sr. of Lake Charles. (American Press photos by Georgia Dupuis).