Chretien Point finds kinship in France

By Dixie Simon
Staff Writer

SUNSET — Fraternal twins are the ones that don’t look alike, but are of the same origin — like the newly twined historic houses, Chretien Point Plantation, located outside Sunset and the Chateau de Breteuil in France.

On first sight, any physical kinship between the two is hard to imagine. The Chateau is a sprawling presence of European opulence whose origins predate the 1600s. Its grounds boast a 175-acre park featuring formal French gardens, an orangery, stables and a medieval dovecote.

Chretien Point, though elegant in its own right, was built as a 6,000 square foot prairie house in 1831. Plantation owner Louis Cornay says the appropriateness of the relationship is revealed in the floor plans of the two houses.

Chretien Point is an example of Greek Revival French plantation architecture, the only one of its kind, according to Cornay. He says all other plantation homes are based on English plantation architecture which features rooms coming off a central hallway.

Like the chateaux in France, Chretien Point has no hallway. Instead, all the rooms of the house open directly from the entrance.

According to Cornay, the house twinning idea originated with Jacques Royale, former mayor of St. Aubin, France, Scott’s twin city. After some 18 months in the development stages, the “jumelage” culminated with plaques being exchanged two weeks ago.

“This twinning gives Chretien Point a hold on its French roots and provides the Chateau de Breteuil with a hold in the New World,” Cornay says, his plantation will be “To be perfectly authentic, we would have to do a small four-foot tree on a round table. Instead we do a big one, 12-feet tall.”

Cornay says, his plantation will be decked in holiday dress of the 1830s period.

"All the decorations will be natural — picked from the yard, except for the tree," he explains.

As part of Cajun Christmas, Cornay and wife Jeanne no longer live in the house, finding it too large and a little remote since their four children have grown and left home. It is now offered as a bed and breakfast facility.

With that in mind, he admits he has considered selling it lately, but quips, “it would be more like putting up a child for adoption.”

Those involved feel the affinity created by the ceremonial bonding will lead to further cultural and economic alliances, especially in the area of tourism.

Like its French twin, Chretien Point is open for daily tours and is also commercially available for decked in holiday dress of the 1830s period.

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