Early Acadian Dwelling Reproduced for Museum at Crowley Rice Festival

(Crowley, La. — A replica of an early Acadian dwelling, reproduced from a photograph, has been constructed on Parkerson avenue to house a museum of Acadian relics and handicraft, a feature of this year’s International Rice Festival November 6 and 7.

Miss Louise Olivier, field representative of the Louisiana State University’s Acadian crafts project, is assisting the rice festival committee in assembling a collection of such articles as looms, spinning wheels, warping boards, hand-power rice mills, hand-hewn cowhide-bottom chairs, wooden butter churns, homemade candies, candle molds, wooden laundry paddles or “battoirs,” homemade sunbonnets, and other Acadiana typical of the early civilization of the rice-growing section around Crowley. Acadia parish residents have loaned some 150 articles.

OUTSIDE STEPS

The house is constructed of rough cypress lumber, stained to achieve the appearance of weathered age. It is put together with conventional wire nails rather than the old wooden pegs or square, hand-furnished iron nails still found in some of the older structures in Crowley. The roof is covered with hand-furnished cypress shingles or “merains,” collected by Dan H. Fruge, who supervised the construction, assisted by Mrs. L. O. Broussard, chairman. The foundation blocks are wooden cylinders, sawed from large logs.

The high-peaked roof of the house rises directly over the front porch, providing a spacious attic to which access is gained through outdoor steps built on the porch. The windows are fitted with swinging wooden shutters, and outside the kitchen window is the outdoor shelf or tablette, which usually holds the water bucket and washpan.

The chimney is the inevitable mud type, constructed of mud “puddled” with Spanish moss and supported at the corners by four upright saplings and numerous crossbars.

UNCUT SHINGLES

Following the style of many Acadian dwellings, the kitchen is a separate structure, just to the rear of the house and connected by a narrow walk. The separate or “trailer” kitchen was the Acadian answer to the need for air-conditioning. The separate kitchen or cookhouse kept cooking odors and fumes out of the house and did not heat it up.

The builders of the Acadian house have even left the top row of shingles on the north side of the roof untrimmed, a holdover from early Acadian building methods. Although the Acadian house will remain on Parkerson avenue for only a few weeks, the mud chimney bears the traditional twig inserted in the still-soft mud by the builders. In the old days it was traditional that the owner of the house gave a gumbo supper for his neighbors on the day that the twig dried up and snapped off in the fall breezes.

The replica will have been dismantled and sold long before the leaves have fallen from the trees.

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