Looking for Furnishings

Kent House Board Visits Historic Sites in Tensas Parish

By Ethel Holleman
Women's Editor

Now that the restoration of Kent Plantation House on Bayou Rapides Road is well under way, members of its board of directors are looking about the countryside for furnishings.

Large pillars support the overhanging roof of Winter Quarters which affords protection from the rain and sun. The roof was designed by Dr. Hailer Nutt who enlarged the house to 17 rooms.

Winter Quarters

The next stop on the tour was Winter Quarters on Lake St. Joseph. The house was purchased by Mr. McDonald, who restored it and opened it to the public on Nov. 4, 1966. It was somewhat difficult to restore the old house for it had been built in three stages during three generations prior to the Civil War. The first part of it was built in 1813 and was a three-room cabin situated on 80 acres, the last land grant by the Post of Concordia.

The owner was Job Routh, who built the cabin as quarters for the winter hunting season, hence the name "Winter Quarters". He purchased the land from Joseph Vidal, Spanish commander at Natchez, a few days before the Louisiana Purchase.

More than 25 years later, the cabin took on a homelike atmosphere under the hands of Ann Ogden, Routh's daughter, who added six more rooms. When Dr. Hailer Nutt purchased the house from Ann Ogden in 1850, he soon enlarged it to the present-day size of 17 rooms. He designed the roof to overhang the gallery for protection from the sun and rain.

Dr. Nutt's Winter Quarters planting amounted to 1950 acres. Like his father, Rush Nutt, he crossed Egyptian cotton with American varieties and was noted for his cotton crops.

Spared by Gen. Grant

Winter Quarters was the only house on the lake that was not destroyed by the Union soldiers. However, the cotton gin, barn and saw mill were burned.

The house itself was spared because Dr. Nutt's wife, Julia, who was a granddaughter of Routh, pleaded with Gen Grant. She and her husband had watched the Yankees move down the river, leaving smoke-blackened chimneys in their wake. She hitched up a buggy and rode toward the north. When she saw the troops she asked to talk to Gen Grant. In his tent she begged him to spare her home. He granted this request with some condition. On April 28, he set up headquarters in the Nutt plantation and the grounds were dotted with tents. Later the soldiers attacked Vicksburg.

The house is furnished with many pieces which reflect the influence of Julia Nutt, including several oil portraits. One room contains a table used by Grant's officers.

The Kent House board members concluded their tour at the home of Mr. and Mrs. David M. Lide of Lake St. Joseph, which is furnished with one of the largest collections of early Louisiana furniture.

Pictured in the dining room of the Lide home are Mrs. Richard L. Crewell and Mrs. Noel T. Simmonds (from left). The mantelpiece is from Mantua, which formerly stood in Natchez, Miss. The Lides bought Mantua with the intention of rebuilding it in Dallas, Tex. Delft ware is used on the mantel.

Mrs. Buckner Thomas (at left) and Mrs. Coates Simony look at a collection of early American pewter in the David M. Lide home. It is placed in a cypress Welsh dresser which is in original condition.

Mrs. Harold McSween, president of Kent Plantation House, examines the ornately carved tester-bed of Santo Domingo mahogany with Mrs. Hamilton M. Robertson, chairman of the committee for refurbishing Kent House, and Mrs. Gordon D. Riley, (from left) a board member.

(Town Talk Staff Photos)