La Maison Acadienne-Francaise
by
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Yuletide
The hostess house for the Yuletide Tour of Homes, annual charitable project of the Woman’s Club of Lafayette, to be held this year on December 12, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., will be La Maison Acadienne-Francaise on the USL campus.

Situated at 1511 Johnston Street on the corner of St. Mary and Johnston Streets, the home was built in the 1920’s as the honeymoon nursery of Mr. and Mrs. Myrtil Meyer, on the site of Lafayette’s first nursery, the Lacey Nursery. Upon the death of Mrs. Meyer, the last surviving spouse, in 1949, the colonial style home was inherited by her brother, Isaac Bendel, who had made his home with her for many years. Isaac died in 1952, and the cultural center with about an acre of land was purchased by the University from his estate during the administration of President Joel Lafayette Fletcher.

The purchase was the result of a grant by the 1954 Louisiana Legislature. The bill, which made it possible, was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representatives J. Alfred Begnaud and Arthur Webb of Lafayette. A member of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Begnaud helped to clear it, and then to steer it on the floor of the House. Senators M. Eloi Girard of Lafayette and Elmore E. Bonin of St. Martinville handled the bill on the Senate floor. Act 471, authorizing the purchase, was signed by Governor Robert F. Kennon on July 7, 1954, and the legal papers completing the transaction for USL (then known as SLI) by President Fletcher.

The announced primary goal of the cultural center was "the edification of the French language and Acadian culture." The first floor was altered
to allow for meeting and assembly rooms and a raised section for

dramatic presentations by members of the USL Foreign Languages Department,
as well as students of area public schools. Quarters for a library were
set aside on the second floor. The French government has on several occasions
added to the collection. The house is furnished with authentic French and
early Louisiana antiques, including the Louis XV and Louis XVI periods, settee
and chairs with original Aubusson tapestry, Sévres porcelain vases, a Prudent
Mallard bed in the chatelaine's living quarters, John Belter chairs created
in the French style.

Appointed on the initial faculty-patron commission of La Maison
Acadienne-Française were Dean Thomas J. Arceneaux, Dean of the USL College
of Agriculture, as chairman; Mrs. C. E. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, Dean
Joseph A. Riehl, of the USL College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Graves B. Roberts,
head of the USL Department of Foreign Languages; Dr. Elmer D. Johnson,
Director of the USL Library; Dr. Hosea Phillips, Professor of Foreign
Languages; Mrs. Laurence Montegut Ziegler, Professor of French; Mrs. Del
Norte Theiort Hains (Mrs. J. G. Hains), Associate Professor of French;
Miss Florence Ann Landry, Assistant Professor of French; Miss Anna Belle
Hoffman (now Mrs. Roy Krewitz) of Breaux Bridge, President of France-
Amérique; Mrs. Nita Fourgeaud of Breaux Bridge, Secretary of France-Amérique;
and Dr. Harry Lewis Griffin, now deceased, Dean Emeritus. Dr. Fletcher
was ex-officio chairman.

The acquisition of the Maison Acadienne-Française was largely due to
the efforts of France-Amérique de la Louisianna-Acadienne, a society which
fosters good will between France and the United States and the preservation
of the French language and customs in Louisiana.

The center was formally dedicated on Saturday, October 29, 1955,
during the Acadian Bicentennial Celebration. Its first chatelaine was Miss
Alice Broussard of Breaux Bridge. Her successor, the present chatelaine, is Mrs. Clara Fuselier Cooper, of Jennings.

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