La Maison du Docteur Opens At Acadian Village

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Life in the bustling bayou towns of the 1900s was hard. Residents had to depend upon their own ingenuity and upon each other. Survival was not always easy, but despite the hardships, the towns flourished and with the growth of each came the need for a village doctor. It was he in whom young and old turned in time of need. It was he who traveled in the dead of winter to deliver babies or soothe the dying.

His office was usually a spare room in his home and served not only as an examining room but a crude hospital. Here he administered potions and performed surgery.

For the past three years the auxiliary to the Lafayette Parish Medical Society has worked to provide a doctor's office at the Acadian Village, a reconstructed bayou town which captures the simple life style of the French Acadians of the 18th century. Located off Ridge Road just south of Lafayette, the village is a major tourist attraction in Acadiana and also serves as a source of employment for the handicapped.

This week, "La Maison du Docteur" was officially opened at the village's Castille house. It is a treasure trove of unique and interesting instruments once used by doctors in Acadiana.

Dr. Antoine Bordelot, ex-officio of the French army, was responsible for the collection.

settle in this area, but it is not known if he practiced because he was quite elderly when he moved here.

Early in the 19th century, Dr. Mathieu Creighton, a "kindly and gentle man," settled on the Grand Prairie, the name given the country around Vermilionville Lafayette. His home, Myrtie Plantation, was built in 1815 and a portion of the original plot is owned by his descendants, the Hugh Wills family.

Dr. Creighton was followed by Dr. V. Gauthier, Dr. E.E. Mulloy and a Dr. Franklin. Other doctors of the era were Dr. T.B. Hopkins, Dr. J.D. Lanigan, Dr. G.W. Scudder, Dr. Percy Grist, Dr. William Ware Lesley, Dr. Horace Frances and Dr. J. Franklin Mouton. Descendants of Dr. Mouton and Dr. Lesley have contributed many of the original instruments to the Acadian Village's La Maison du Docteur.

Two large glass cases contain a variety of instruments, ranging from small scissors and anirius iridescence to an in- sertion or other medical device. Most were bequeathed by descendants of Dr. Mouton. Of special interest is an ear trumpet, which was owned by Robert Smith.

A scaling hook which once belonged to Dr. Lesley looks much like the familiar "black bag" of the modern-day physician. As it is a traveling case for medicines, forceps, sponge boxers and other instruments, all are in such excellent condition, they could be used today.

Many of the medical potions administered by the early doctors were derived from native plants, such as golden rod, mint and laurel. Sprigs of these and other healing foliage are hung on the walls and in native Indian baskets.

A Victorian secretary, circa 1850, contains a number of medical books. On the walls are diplomas awarded Dr. Mouton, prints of 18th century woodcuts depicting surgeons performing primitive surgery and an invoice for $82.50, which covered one semester's expenses at Georgetown College.

The diplomas show that Dr. Mouton graduated from medical school in Baltimore in 1898 and then did his residency at the Chicago Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat College, graduating in 1902.

The auxiliary committee is proud of the collection and is planning a fund-raising event to purchase a Baccus, William Cloud, Al Breaux, Douglas Chaisson, Ernest Younge and Edgar Breaux.

Persons with items which might be worth adding to the La Maison du Docteur may contact Miss. Chaisson, Younge or Breaux.
HERBS AND INSTRUMENTS — Many of the medicines administered by doctors in the 19th century were derived from native herbs. La Maison du Docteur, which was opened at the Acadian Village this week, includes examples of the medicinal herbs and a variety of instruments once used by doctors in Acadians.

WAITING FOR THE DOCTOR — An antique buggy sits behind the Castille House at the Acadian Village, apparently waiting for the doctor to make his rounds. La Maison du Docteur was prepared by the Auxiliary to the Lafayette Medical Society and opened this week in the Castille House at the Acadian Village.