‘Little Houses’ to debut at Rice Theatre

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While growing up in Acadia Parish, Zach and Jeremy Broussard didn’t think much of the little houses in the Mermentau Cove cemetery.

Back then, up to 12 of the small wooden houses stood among the graves. The interiors were decorated, and the houses themselves protected the tombs of those who had died.

But once in college, the brothers realized that, aside from cemeteries in parts of Acadia, Evangeline and northern Vermilion parishes, these houses weren’t anywhere else in Acadiana. Many that had existed had been destroyed by weather, accidental fires or just simply collapsed.

By 2005, only three of the houses were left in Mermentau Cove, but the Broussards decided that their stories needed to be told. With backgrounds in journalism and film production, the brothers, along with dozens of volunteers, began work a documentary film, *Little Houses*, they hoped would shed new light on the houses.

“The idea of the film is to show the community what they have,” Zach Broussard said.

“Every community has these unique things that are just fading away.”

During the filming, the brothers learned little about why the houses were built, especially since none were constructed since the 1930s. According to their grandfather, who was interviewed for the film in 2005 before passing away in 2007, stories abounded that the houses were designed so the dead could play cards or dance inside of them when it rained.

Jeremy Broussard said the tradition has been seen in other cultures, such as parts of Russia and Japan, but no definitive explanation has emerged as to how or why the structures were built.

“My hunch is it’s just a way to honor and respect the dead, but in a completely unique way,” Zach Broussard said.

The film premieres Friday

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Photo courtesy Gwen Aucoin Photography

Little Houses once dotted the Mermentau Cove cemetery.

Want to go?

*Little Houses* will premiere at 7 p.m. Friday at the Rice Theater in Crowley. For more information or tickets, go to thelittlehouses.com.
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night at the Rice Theater in Crowley and will also be available via DVD. The brothers are also bringing it to several film festivals and are in talks with public channels about broadcasting it.

But their work has gone beyond the movie. They were successful in getting the houses listed on the National Historic Register, and already people are talking more about the houses and how they may be restored.

“We’ve done this through our nonprofit (Benefilms) so that the community really owns the film,” Jeremy Broussard said. “We think we have, in some way, preserved them for future generations.”