While legislators are concentrating on the restoration of Kent House, Alexandria's oldest home, there are others who are thinking in terms of furnishing the historic dwelling in typical early Louisiana French.

Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Gildersleeve have given a Pleyel piano for placement in the house. It is the type of instrument being imported from Paris about 100 years ago at the cost of $1000 each, and was one of 1000 of them, being brought to New Orleans in sailing vessels between the 1820s and the 1860s. Each piano was shipped in a sealed metal container, the edges soldered so that dampness could not reach the instrument while at sea. Most of them were made of rosewood and have strings of silver and copper.

Gift Announced

Announcement of the Gildersleeves' gift of the piano was made by Mrs. Max J. Heinberg, president of the Matinee Musical club, an affiliate of the National Federation of Music clubs.

The piano is a small upright of rosewood, heavy and ornately constructed with brass inlays and handles at each end. It has 50 white keys, 35 black keys and two pedals. The music rack may be folded inside, and when the keyboard is open there are two pedestals, equally spaced from the center line of the music rack. These are about six inches in diameter and were probably used for candles or lamps.

The piano was built by Pleyel, Wolff and Co., a distinguished firm of pianoforte makers, founded in 1807 by Ignaz Pleyel, the composer. The company has always been directed by musicians, such as Camille Pleyel, who became his father's partner in 1821 and Koldbrenner, who joined them three years later.

The influence of Chopin, who made his debut in Paris at the Pleyel's rooms in 1831, has remained a tradition. In fact, Chopin would play on no other make, for he liked the easy touch of the Pleyel and the peculiar singing tone of the instrument.

Camille Pleyel was succeeded in the control of the business by his son-in-law, August Wolff, who greatly improved the Pleyel of grand pianoforte in the direction of power, having made them adequate to meet the modern requirements of the concert hall, without loss of its characteristic refined qualities. Among his inventions are the harpe colinee, adaptable to concert pianoforites; and the pedale harmonique, allowing a struck chord to vibrate at will, and various devices for controlling the tone.

Founder

The founder, Ignaz Pleyel, was born in Rupperstal, Austria, near Vienna, June 1, 1757. He died in Paris Nov. 14, 1831. The twenty-fourth child of a village schoolmaster, he showed musical ability at an early age and at 17 began studying composition with his friend, Joseph Haydn.

Settling in Strasbourg, France, he became choirmaster there and intermittently conducted the concert season in London. In 1795, he returned to Paris to open a music publishing business before establishing in 1807 the celebrated pianoforte factory which still bears his name.

Until Kent House is restored the piano will be kept in storage by Mrs. Harris. Mrs. Thompson is the daughter of Mrs. J. T. Compton Sr., the former Miss Mary Ringgold Sr., who was born and reared in Kent House.

Mrs. T. D. Gildersleeve, at left, demonstrates how the music rack folds in the Pleyel piano to Mrs. John Golden Thompson, standing, and Mrs. Homer H. Harris. The piano was given by Mr. and Mrs. Gildersleeve for placement in Kent House following its restoration and will be kept in storage by Mrs. Harris. Mrs. Thompson is the daughter of Mrs. J. T. Compton Sr., the former Miss Mary Ringgold Sr., who was born and reared in Kent House.