Plantation life marvelous?
Sometimes, but then . . .

By TIM BLEIERAD
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Plantation life wasn't all crystal chandeliers and Persian rugs.
Worn pine floors and thin window panes probably kept things well chilled
during winters at Magnolia Mound plantation, while unscreened windows let
love bugs and mosquitoes come and go in summer.

Luxurious by the standards of its day, Magnolia Mound is now nearly rustic,
except for its fine furniture imported from the east. Main house for a 900-acre
plantation, its owners lived both exquisitely and ordinarily.

A look at what life was like on 18th
century Magnolia Mound will be offered
during Magnolia Mound Plantation Day
Sunday, Sept. 25, 12 noon - 5 p.m. at the
house on Nicholson Drive.
The house was built on a natural
mound that once overlooked the
Mississippi River and is covered with live
oak trees, some 200 years old. Grounds
behind the house will be dotted with
craftsmen, food booths and entertainers
for the special day this Sunday.

Timothy Muffie, director of the
plantation house, said this fourth annual
Plantation Day will feature
demonstrations on making goods from
the plantation period that include
candlemaking, weaving, pottery,
woodworking, chair caning, quilting,
loom weaving and spinning. Most of the
skilled craftsmen will be selling their items.

Property first owned by Irishman

An Irishman was the first to own the
land now known as Magnolia Mound.
The property was granted to him by the
Spanish but he only kept it for five years
before selling it to a Scot. This
second owner held the property for seven years until he died in a riverboat
accident. The house was built in the
1790s by the land's third owner, John
Joyce, who used the land to raise cotton
and indigo.

When Joyce died in 1798, his widow
inherited the property and married
Armand Allard Duplantier, a prominent
Baton Rouge citizen. They moved into
the home and made extensive alterations
and additions.

The main living area is noted
for its curved ceiling which was added by
Duplantier. Made of wood, instead of plaster, the curved ceiling is one of only
two of its type in America. Analysis of
paint scrapings from beneath many coats

of white paint in the salon revealed the
original colors of the ceiling. Wallpaper
scrap was used to reproduce newspaper
which now covers the salon walls.

Cypress
primary wood of structure

Other rooms of the plantation include
bedrooms and the main dining room
along the back of the house. The kitchen
is built behind the house on a site
occupied by at least two previous
kitchens. It is believed the other kitchens
burned down. Archaeological
excavations around the house uncovered
brick floors from the kitchens on the site.

Pottery rims, utensils and other items
found in the area lead researchers to believe most trash was tossed out the
kitchen door. Pits filled with other
garbage, such as bones, have also been
uncovered and reveal that inhabitants ate
a lot of lamb and pork.

The main timbers of the house are
cypress while walls are built with a
plaster-like substance made of a mixture
of moss and mud. The grounds also
include a carriage house, gazebo and
overseer's house.

Magnolia Mound was saved from
destruction in the late 1960s by efforts of
concerned citizens, the Foundation for
Historical Louisiana and the City-Parish
government.

Magnolia Mound, 2161 Nicholson
Drive, is normally open 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Tues. - Sat. and 1 - 4 p.m. Sun. Cooking
demonsenations in the kitchen are held
October through April. For more
information call 343-4955.
The kitchen (left) is located behind the main house near the garden. One wall in a bedroom (below left) has been stripped to reveal the moss/clay mixture used in construction of Magnolia Mound. The kitchen hearth (below) will be used for cooking demonstrations on Plantation Day.

Timothy Mullin (above) is director of Magnolia Mound. The kitchen pantry (right) is filled with pottery and glassware used in the 18th century, while the living room (far right) includes a game table with an antique checkboard and deck of cards.

Magnolia Mound’s Plantation Day
Sunday, Sept. 25