The Oaks is a family home

Highland Road home has hosted eight generations of celebrations

BY CAROL ANNE BLITZER

When Jeanne-Olive “Sister” Daigre announced last year that she was married, there was no question her wedding reception would be held at The Oaks, the family home on Highland Road. Eight generations of her family have celebrated at The Oaks, a traditional Louisiana raised cottage built by her great-great-great-grandfather, Dennis Daigre, before the Civil War.

The house has never been out of the family, "The house has been in the family since 1840," said Denis Curtin Kelley, known by family members as Curt. He is Dennis Daigre’s great-great-grandson.

The entrance to the home originally was at the center of the large front gallery. The long windows across the front of the house at the right of the living room, where family sat.

“Mama could remember when Highland Road was the country. "That was all they could get on the mail route," Curt Kelley said. "They had cars, but when the weather was bad, they couldn’t drive on Highland Road," Curt Kelley said.

“Mama could remember when Highland Road was the country. "That was all they could get on the mail route," Curt Kelley said. "They had cars, but when the weather was bad, they couldn’t drive on Highland Road," Curt Kelley said.

“Mama could remember when Highland Road was the country. "That was all they could get on the mail route," Curt Kelley said. "They had cars, but when the weather was bad, they couldn’t drive on Highland Road," Curt Kelley said.

“Mama could remember when Highland Road was the country. "That was all they could get on the mail route," Curt Kelley said. "They had cars, but when the weather was bad, they couldn’t drive on Highland Road," Curt Kelley said.

“Mama could remember when Highland Road was the country. "That was all they could get on the mail route," Curt Kelley said. "They had cars, but when the weather was bad, they couldn’t drive on Highland Road," Curt Kelley said.
In a 1965 modernization, the dining room was moved to make way for the staircase to the new bedrooms added in the attic.

The old wood floors were covered with wall-to-wall carpeting. "Mama said she didn't want wood floors," Curt Kelley said. "She said she had been raised on those cold, damp things.

Curt Kelley believes people have a romanticized view of antebehllum living.

When the home was modernized in 1965, two bedrooms were built in the old attic. The architect designed one bedroom around the old brick fireplace.

"Those people lived so damn hard in those days," he said. Farmers had to fight nature to succeed. They had to haul water and grow the food they ate in their gardens. It was not an easy life.

"You didn't have too many fat people in those days," he said. "Only the wealthy were fat."

Over the years, Highland Road has become a major thoroughfare, and the area immediately south of LSU has been subdivided. Newer neighborhoods have come up where the Highland Road plantations once were located. Yet The Oaks, set back on its seven or so rolling acres, remains a link to the area's past.

Last fall, ESPN sportscaster Adrian Karsten happened to drive by the home just as Erin DuPont was working in the yard. He couldn't believe his good fortune.

"He said that he had been coming here for 20 years and that he fell in love with this place and that he finally found someone in the yard," Erin DuPont said.

He asked the family if he could do the ESPN LSU-Georgia pregame show from the house.

To the family, this was just another of the many celebrations on the old front gallery. Karsten sat in one of the rocking chairs to do the show.

"We planted purple and gold pansies for the occasion," Erin DuPont said.