Variance of La. Designs Viewed

The variance of Louisiana architectural styles can be attributed to cultural and environmental influences, two LSU professors said last night in the LSU Union.

Dr. Milton Newton and Dr. Robert Hicks traced the history of architecture in Louisiana and supplemented their lecture with a slide presentation featuring historic as well as stylistically unusual homes.

Newton traced the evolutionary process of the Creole style through a series of slides depicting various traits native to their construction. Built in porches, boards used as weight supporting members, full-length galleries and inside chimneys are symbolic of Creole architecture. He emphasized, however, that there is nothing in Louisiana that he could recognize as an essentially Creole construction.

Creole architecture is a Caribbean compound, Newton said. French, Spanish, African and Latin American influences all added to its unique architectural construction but only the ones best suited to the land survived, he added.

Hicks stressed the importance of personal identification with an architectural style. At the folk level, he said, architecture was based on the way the neighbors or your grandfather did it. Today most people take a logical approach to it but there are exceptions, he said. One of those exceptions Hicks cited was the tendency of people to rebuild hurricane damaged homes on the ground instead of stilts despite high water perils.

Colonial architecture was a blend of French and Spanish techniques. Historic landmarks such as the Ursaline Convent, Madame John's Legacy and the Cabildo, all located in New Orleans, are examples of the Colonial construction, he said.

The Federalist style, flourishing from about 1790 to 1820, is characterized by its important treatment of Roman architecture, Hicks said.

Federalist involvement in ante bellum architecture was not substantial, he said. Hicks said he prefers to call ante bellum architecture a classical revival because it embraces both Greek and Roman styles.

He cited the Old State Capitol as one of the true great Gothic imitations even though writer Mark Twain ridiculed it as an "old castle."

The lecture was the last of a series sponsored by the Louisiana Heritage Association.