**Vermilionville to open Sunday**

Lorraine Cormier and Evelyne Pitre-Goilier, French interpreters, walk through Vermilionville, which opens Sunday.

**To showcase Cajun and Creole life**

By CALVIN LEAR

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**LAFAYETTE — Vermilionville, the $6.3 million publicly-funded living history museum, bids bon voyage to its first visitors Sunday and begins showcasing Cajun and Creole life as it was in past years and generations.**

And what might a visitor find at Vermilionville?

"The concept of Vermilionville is simple," says David Floyd, founder and curator for the facility. "It's a cultural facility which interprets every facet of Acadian and Creole life, past and present."

In other words, Vermilionville is more than just Acadian-style buildings, according to Floyd.

"For instance, French-speaking southern Louisianians love food, so food is served daily in La Cuisin de Maman's cooking Restaurant."

"We're going back to the way Acadian restaurants were 50 years ago, when you'd get what amounted to a home-cooked meal," Floyd said. "You chose from two main courses and seven or eight types of vegetables."

"It's what you'd expect to have at your mama's house for Sunday dinner," Floyd said. "If you were to look at a seeded platter or Macaroni salad at 9 a.m., you'd have a canoe at Vermilionville."

"We're going to Le Quadrat, sponsored by such area companies as Brown Foods and McClenny, of Tabasco fame, will offer samples from the main courses that Acadiana food, said Floyd."

"What do Acadian and Creoles do for fun? They dance," he said, as he'd have a Cajun band or a French band daily," Floyd said.

"A visitor might one day find a Cajun playing the square, and the next might witness a symphony orchestra on a chapel stage."

"The idea of an Acadian-Creole museum is only the tip of the iceberg," Floyd said.

"We're going to tell the whole story," he said, pointing out that Vermilionville is the grand opening day, although there are a few activities and demonstrations for the opening day.

"We're going to showcase Cajun and Creole food, said Floyd. "You'd get what amounted to a home-cooked meal. You chose from two main entrées and eight or so types of vegetables."

— David Floyd

While out-of-state visitors may enjoy stirring soup, Vermilionville will teach "co-educate" as Floyd puts it — the local populace about things Acadian and Creole.

"That's why we'll have Min Leclerc from Er Eugene giving cooking demonstrations," he said, picking a Cajun name and a Cajun loves as an example of what's in store.

"The spinners and weavers and blacksmiths employed at Vermilionville are either the real thing or have been taught by the real spinners and weavers and blacksmiths.

And more than 81 percent of Vermilionville's 194 employees are bilingual, according to Floyd. A good number are more than 60, and there are plenty of Broussards, Viators, Roussells and Boudreaux in the breach.

"We're trying to do four things," Floyd said. "We want to communicate why we are as we are (Floyd's mother was born a Broussard) yesterday and today. We want to re-educate ourselves as well as the visitors. We want to preserve our heritage — the master craftsmen and in so forth. And we want to mirror what we are as a people today and what we'll be as people tomorrow.

"That's a tall order," he said, adding that there is no intention to overcook anything, including slavery and "free people of color," blacks who were free during slavery.

"We're going to tell the whole story," he said.

Floyd estimates it will take four hours for visitors to see the 22-acre Vermilionville, which stretches along Bayou Vermilion between Surrey Street and U.S. 90 near the Lafayette Airport.

The time estimate takes into account stopping and talking to craftsmen and whoolravens, as well as eating and dancing.

While the French-speaking people of southern Louisiana are the focus of Vermilionville, the site includes several original Acadian homes, some of which are 100 years old.

The Amand Broussard Home has an exposed inside wall showing the beam structure filling used to insulate walls. Each of the buildings represents architecture over the 1750-1890 time frame. A Creole-style plantation home is the visitor center. The performance center is a barn.

Included on the site are ping pong rides on Petite Bayou and a rope-drawn ferry ride.

Floyd said his crews are ready for opening day, although there are a few bugs to be worked out. Sandbags are

about the ferry because it rides too high in the water. Grass has been planted and seeded, but there are still plenty of bare spots.

"It's going to take a few months to work everything out," Floyd said. "He stresses, however, that none of the problems should affect visitors Sunday and throughout the week.

"The idea of an Acadian-Creole museum is not new. It's been around for 50 years," said Floyd, who said plans actually were being developed for sites at Lake Martin in St. Martin Parish and at the Longfellow park in St. Martinville.

"I commend Lafayette for finally getting it done," he said. ""Lafayette put its money where its mouth is. I have no reason to brag about Lafayette. I'm from Baton Rouge."

Floyd said he hopes he is faced with two major problems Sunday.

"Parking, and complaints about people standing in line to get into the museum," he said.

Sunday's opening day schedule:

- 10 a.m. — Latin Mass in La Compagnie Louisianaise.
- 11:30 a.m. — A-Trinity Gospel Choir in the Longfellow Center.
- Noon — Chef Pat Moulin with Bruce Foods Cooking School.
- 1 p.m. — Grand opening ceremonies, featuring Lt. Gov. Paul Hardy.
- 2 p.m. — Cajun music by Pino.
- 3:30 p.m. — Music, song and dance by La Compagnie Louisianaise.
- 5 p.m. — Vermilionville closes.

Ticket prices are $6 for adults, $3 for seniors 65 and older, $3 for 4- to 18-year-olds and free for 4- to 18-year-olds and younger.

Vermilionville is on Surrey Street, across from the Lafayette Airport.