Vieux Carre style fills Town house

By MAURY LANDRY

When Julia Hamilton first discussed with architect A. Hays Town the type of house she wanted him to design for her 17 years ago, she showed him pictures of houses she had collected over the years. "My husband and I had planned to build for years and years," Hamilton recalls. "Hays looked at the photographs and said he could do better.

"I think he achieved it," says Hamilton of her home on Windrush Way in Bocage. "I still enjoy it every day. He did what I really wanted, but it was his architecture that made it great. It looks better than I thought it would.

Hamilton's home is one of five residences designed by Town in Jefferson Place and Bocage that will be on tour Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. Others include the homes of Mary Frey Eaton, Dr. and Mrs. Dan Butler, Dr. and Mrs. Chester Coles and Mr. and Mrs. James H. Boyce. Proceeds from the second annual tour will benefit the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, which is co-sponsoring the tour with Dixon Smith Interiors. Tickets, which sell for $10 in advance and $12 on the day of the tour, are available at the foundation office, 909 North Blvd., 367-2464, or Dixon Smith Interiors, 1655 Lobdell Ave., 927-4261.

"What he does," Hamilton says of Town, "is what he finds out what type of thing you like, he shows you other things he's built." Hamilton now enjoys occasionally showing her home to Town's new clients when he brings them by.

Hamilton's home is in the Vieux Carre style, a large central patio surrounded on three sides by house and in the front by a wall. A wide brick walkway leading to an arched gateway in the succo wall recalls the carriage ways of earlier days. The patio is filled with plants and centered with a fountain.

The front door of the home, virtually indistinguishable from the others opening onto the patio, opens to a foyer floored in flagstone and separated only by columns from the living room. Instead of formal and informal living rooms, Hamilton chose to have one large living room. In the center of the home, it's a room made livable with comfortable upholstered furniture and open with lots of windows.

There are windows along the side overlooking the central patio and French doors on either side of the fireplace on the opposite wall. The fireplace features round brick columns, and the floor is made from unusually wide pine planks salvaged from an old warehouse in New Orleans. The walls are painted off-yellow and the ceiling, a pale, pale lavender. Tones of rust and navy predominate in the antique Oriental rug on the floor and in the upholstered furniture. Double doors lead from the living room to the library, which features a fireplace and a ceramic tile-decorated wet bar concealed in a closet.

A landing from which a New Orleans style stairway leads to the second-floor bedrooms separates the living room and library from the master bedroom wing of the house. Flagstone is used for flooring here, both inside, where it's polished, and out, beyond the French doors that lead again to the central patio.

"When I told (Town) what I wanted," says Hamilton, "he educated me to things I didn't know about, such as flagstone over Mexican tile."

The flagstone used in Hamilton's home came from New Orleans Vieux Carre.

"When Waldorph's (antique shop) dug up an old courtyard, they gave the flagstone to Mr. Stern (a neighboring antique store) and he in turn gave it to me."

The master wing consists of a bedroom, bathroom and sitting room. There are more French doors opening to the courtyard, another fireplace and book-lined shelves. In noting the salmon-colored paint on the walls, Hamilton points out that Town's involvement with the project didn't stop with the design, but carried out through the detailing, even down to paint colors.

"He comes for the painting and everything," says Hamilton. "He knows so much about color."

Upstairs in the bedroom wing are two bedrooms and a bath. In the cottage, which was a later addition to the house, there are two more bedrooms, two baths and a small kitchen.

"Hays always calls the guest house a cottage," explains Hamilton, adding, "we did the cottage very casually."

A small courtyard with a goldfish pond separates the cottage from the back door of the main house, which opens to the back of the foyer and the dining room, notable for its beamed cypress ceiling and bay window overlooking the back courtyard.

A swinging cypress door leads from the dining room to the kitchen, where Hamilton finally got the Mexican tile she wanted — on the countertops, where it compliments the cypress woodwork and old brick laid in a herringbone pattern on the floors. The kitchen is large enough to accommodate a table and chairs in its center and there's also a breakfast area with another dining setup adjoining it.

Also on this side of the courtyard but separate from the rest of the house is a game and barbecue room with a pool table.

Though the house was begun in 1975, in some ways, it's still being completed. A recent addition was a backyard gazebo. Hamilton, who has filled the home with antiques collected over the years, says she still has "two or three things I want to get for the house." Making constant refinements to a home is a habit she shares with its designer.

"Hays says he's always adding things onto his house," Hamilton says. "He asked him, 'You're still building?' and he said, 'When I finish that I'll be dead.'"