A Cajun/Creole Heritage & Folklife Park
Created in 1990 by the
Lafayette Parish Bayou Vermilion District

300 Fisher Road, Lafayette, LA 70508
www.vermilionville.org - 337-233-4077
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**FESTIVE AREA**

The Festive Area is the beginning of your walk through Vermilionville.

Enter the Visitors’ Center modeled after a Creole plantation house.

Though typically, they were smaller. Housed in these buildings are the Watershed Exhibit and the Cooking School (L’École de Cuisine).

Vermilionville was created by the Bayou Vermilion District (BVD) to provide recreational opportunities along the Bayou Vermilion. The BVD strives to preserve our natural and cultural resources. Vermilionville is a clear testament to preserving our cultural resources, while the BVD Bayou Operations department works to preserve our environmental resources.

The BVD’s Watershed Exhibit at Vermilionville is an eight-room, interactive exhibit demonstrating the role water plays in our lives. Topics range from the solar system-wide perspective of water on Earth to the Bayou Vermilion and the flora and fauna found along its banks, as well as what each individual can do to be a better steward of our waterways.

The Bayou Vermilion played a large role in shaping the lives of the early Acadian settlers in Lafayette and continues to influence the culture of Acadiana. To this day, the bayou is an important part of local ecology and our way of life.

To the left, our restaurant, La Cuisine de Maman, takes its style from a plantation overseer’s house. The two buildings to your right are reminiscent of slave quarters.
In the 18th and 19th centuries, houses of the settlers were some distance apart. In the 1800s, a growing population of craftsmen, businessmen, and professionals gave birth to Vermilionville, (now known as Lafayette) incorporated in 1836.

Le gens de couleur libre, free men and women of color, whose descendants are known as Creoles today, made up 36% of the free community. They, like the Acadians, were farmers and artisans.

LA MAISON DES CULTURES

To the left of the PC, is La Maison des Cultures, an Acadian style home built in the 1940s of colombage (a half-timber wall framing system) and bousillage (a mixture of mud and Spanish moss.) The wall of the porch is plastered to protect the bousillage from the elements. The exterior staircase leads to the garçonnière where the older boys in the family slept.

Inside the home are exhibits comparing and contrasting the three major cultural components that contributed to the culture of South Louisiana as it exists today, Acadian (or Cajun), Creole, and Native American.

La Maison des Cultures serves as a gateway from the Festive Area into the historic Folklife Area.

PLANT LIFE

Along the fence, to your right is a Fava Bean Plant1 [Vineca faba], an edible bean brought to Louisiana by the Italians. Participating at the St. Joseph Altars are given a dried bean as a good luck piece.

Near the bayou stands a Water Oak2 [Quercus nigra]. French name: chêne gris (grey oak), for its ashy-grey bark. The Water Oak is the most abundant oak in Acadiana.
LE CABANAGE DE LATANIER

Le Cabanage de Latanier (the Palmetto Hut) is a replica of a Native American dwelling, circa 1840s, hand built onsite at Vermilionville by an elder of the Houma Nation. This single family dwelling is constructed of cane, palmetto, and bousillage. It is complete with various tools of the period and features outdoor cooking with a bousillage oven. It reflects the culture and heritage of the Houma Nation and other south Louisiana Native American tribes.

PLANT LIFE

Looking from the Le Cabanage de Latanier, across the sidewalk, there are small trees, Yaupon, Ilex vomitoria, French name: cassinier ou houx. To the left toward le Cabanage de Piéger [the trapper's hut] are several Shumard Oaks, Quercus shumardi.

LE CABANAGE DE PIÉGER

A replica of an Acadian trapper's hut featuring crucial early survival skills: boat building, net and trap making, and decoy carving. Early Acadians lived near water and used the bayous for transportation, hunting, fishing and communication. Even the prairie Acadians chose home sites near bayous, as the tree line at the bayou's edge gave them firewood, lumber, and shade.

PLANT LIFE

Before you enter Le Cabanage de Piéger, to the right toward the water are several Bald Cypress trees, Taxodium distichum, French name: cipre. Not a true cypress, they are more closely allied with the giant sequoia and redwood. A legendary resistance to insect damage and decay has earned them the nickname The Wood Eternal by Louisiana colonists. Most of the early structures were built from this lumber. Hanging from the branches of the cypress trees is Spanish Moss, Tillandsia usneoides, French name: barbe ou mousse espagnole. Not a true moss, and contrary to assumption, not a parasite, but a member of the bromeliad [pineapple] family. The moss was soaked for long periods and dried, the gray
covering was separated from the springy, black fibers and was used as stuffing in mattresses and upholstery. Mixed with clay or mud, the mixture became bousillage for use in building chimneys and walls. After exiting Le Cabanage de Piégeur look straight ahead to see Bitternul Hickory Trees\textsuperscript{1} [Carya cordiformis]. French name:noyer - walnut tree. As a group, hickories were prized by Cajun/Creole settlers even more for firewood than for the meat of their nuts. In general, hickory wood is the hottest and longest burning of all wood. Hickory wood is also exceedingly tough, and was commonly used in tool handles and wheel spokes. On the rise to the left is a Sassafras Tree\textsuperscript{4} (Sassafras albidum). French name: filè or gumbo filè. The roots are used for a root beer type drink and a “blood purifying” tea, consumed most often in early spring. The leaves, when dried and ground, are used to thicken and flavor soups, especially gumbo.

**LE HANGAR À BATEAU**

*Le Hangar à Bateau* (the boat shed) features several styles of boats built during the time of the early Acadian settlement in Louisiana.

**BEAU BASSIN**

Circa 1840, *Beau Bassin* was built of colombage and bousillage with a blend of Creole and American Greek Revival styles. Spinning, weaving, quilting, and textile crafts are demonstrated in *Beau Bassin*, and on display is a 150 year old Acadian loom. In Canada, Acadian women wove wool and flax, and in this new land they learned to weave cotton.

**PLANT LIFE**

On entering the gate at Beau Bassin, you will see a Red Cedar Tree\textsuperscript{1} (*Juniperus virginiana*). French name: cypres or cedre. It was used for armoires, clothes chests, and as fence posts. The scent of juniper is said to be able to repel many insects.
fence posts, porch supports, and rough shutters. It is an important wildlife plant in Acadiana. In front of the house is a Red Bay Tree (Persea borbonia). French name: 'tit laurier - little laurel maker or the laurier - laurel tea plant. It was often planted near the kitchen because its dried leaves were used in flavoring soups and sauces. Additionally, its leaves were often made into a very palatable tea, said to treat digestion, colds, and sinus problems, and was used to mask the bitter flavors of other medicinal teas. At the base of the handicap ramp is an American Beauty Berry (Callicarpa americana). French name: chasse pareille. Known colloquially as French Mulberry due to the appearance of its bunched, purple fruit clusters in the fall; its leaves were occasionally brushed on the body to repel insects, and a sort of liqueur was made from the berries. It is also an important wildlife plant in Acadiana.

L’ÉCOLE

L’ÉCOLE is a reproduction typical of 1890s schoolhouse architecture. In L’ÉCOLE, you may see the lines “I will not speak French in school,” on the blackboard recalling the time in the early 20th century when Louisiana law forbade the speaking of Southwest Louisiana’s principal language - even on the school playground!

PLANT LIFE

Approaching L’ÉCOLE, there is a Mexican Plum (Prunus mexicana). French name: prunneau. It is native and common in this area on woodland edges. It has fragrant pale pink flowers in early spring, followed by edible fruit in late summer. Across the sidewalk from the Schoolhouse is a small tree, the Smooth Shining Sumac (Rhus copallinum). It is widespread in drier prairie soils, with brilliant red leaves in the fall. On the other side of the sidewalk is a Tung Oil Tree (Vernicia fordii - Aleurites fordii), an exotic species which was imported into the U.S. due to its commercial/industrial potential, which subsequently did not “pan out.” It escaped from cultivation and has naturalized throughout the state.
LA MAISON MOUTON

La Maison Mouton is a reconstruction of an 1810 house: a basic Acadian house with a detached kitchen. There were no glass windows; only shutters locked securely against weather and possible intruders. La galerie (the porch) served as an extra room in good weather and was a marvelous place for social activities.

The cabinet making and other woodworking skills demonstrated here were essential tasks for the Acadian man. Cypress, oak and walnut woods were available. The Acadians arrived from Canada with no tools; the Spanish government provided tools and new ones were fashioned as needed by the blacksmith.

PLANT LIFE

In the front yard of Mouton is a Pecan Tree¹ (Carya illinoiensis). French name: pecanier (pecan producer). Actually, a hickory; and for culinary purposes, probably the most valuable nut-producing tree in the New World. Across the sidewalk is a large Chinese Tallow Tree² (Sapium sebiferum). French name: arbre à poule (chicken tree), because it was commonly planted in chicken yards to furnish evening roosting places and edible seeds for the chickens. Since its importation into the U.S. in the 19th century, it has escaped from cultivation, infested most native habitats within Louisiana, and has become a threat to native vegetation. Behind the Mouton kitchen is a Southern Catalpa Tree¹ (Catalpa bignoniodes). French name: bois puant - stink wood. It was used to cultivate a species of sphinx moth larva known as catalpa worm, which was, and still is, used for fish bait. Near the kitchen, you can also see a seasonal vegetable garden. Vermilionville artisans plant and tend this garden by hand.

Dans le quartier un grand
jardin à la française,
les maisons de Vermilionville planent et
s'occupent de leurs légumes.

Mais pourquoi faut-il un jardin
pour l'amour de nos restaurants, les maisons de
famille et les cuisines intimes,
vestiges de conditions de
vie de milieu des années 1800,
sous le nom de
l'aire de mise des plats communs
sur le zinc de
la maison.

Dans le coin, Monseigneur est un
bois Puant.

Juste plein de truffes (piques de
eau), et de poule (ou à la
poule).
LA FORGE

Behind La Maison Mouton is La Forge. In the isolation of les vacheries (ranches), every household needed someone skilled in smithing. The smith fashioned agricultural and construction tools, wagon wheels, hinges and nails. The blacksmith shop was generally near the center of each community, sometimes near the church.

PLANT LIFE

Past La Forge is an alley of Live Oaks¹ (Quercus virginiana). French name: chêne vert – green oak. It was historically and presently planted for shade. The Live Oak is the definitive plant of Acadiana and all of southern Louisiana. The famous Evangeline Oak of Longfellow’s poem was a Live Oak.

LA MAISON BULLER

Located behind La Forge is beautiful La Maison Buller, c. 1803. Its crowning glory, the steeply pitched, hipped roof, is typical of Creole construction. The roof trussing was originally designed for heavy snow loads in France or Canada. All of the major structural members are secured with wooden pegs. Opening from the parents’ bedroom is a small bedroom for the daughters. Opening to the porch with no entry to the interior of the house was a “strangers” room which was available for travelers in the days before commercial lodging.

PLANT LIFE

Leaving Maison Buller, you pass a Cow or Basket Oak¹ (Quercus michauxii). French name: chêne blanc or chêne vache. Cow and basket were used due to the fact that the acorns of this species were large and palatable enough for use as cattle forage, and woven wooden baskets were, and still are, locally produced using this species. Continuing is a Southern Magnolia Tree² (Magnolia grandiflora). French name: magnolia; the nickname rameau (branch) has been occasionally associated with this species as well. Rameau was used in place of palm fronds at Palm Sunday services. Due to its ornamental qualities, the southern magnolia was probably among the first native plants to be transplanted into historical landscapes.
LA CHAPELLE DES ATTAKAPAS

Vermilionville's chapel is a reproduction; the style is based on the Catholic churches at Pointe Coupée (1760) and St. Martinville (1773). Catholicism was the only legally allowed religion in Louisiana before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Since the Roman Catholic Acadians loved their religion and the priests visited infrequently, the Acadians celebrated la messe blanche (a prayer service conducted by laymen). Slaves practiced the religion of their masters. Free men of color enjoyed social prestige, were economically independent, engaged in many trades, and worshipped in the same churches used by whites. Slaves sat in small pews on the side aisles. Rosary making is sometimes demonstrated here. The rosaries are made of seeds of the Job's Tear plant (Coix lacryma-jobi). You can see a Job's Tear plant outside the chapel in Le Parterre garden.

Next to the chapel is a simple cemetery. Grave markers were generally made by the local blacksmith of recycled materials. A wreath of flowers - made from paper dipped in wax and dyes - often hung from the top of the cross.

LE PRESBYTÈRE

The tiny cottage attached to the chapel is an example of early Acadian architecture. The rafters in the attic are tree trunks left rough and rounded. The rear room was originally a porch. The (rebuilt) fireplace is rough and simple. In a primitive house such as this, one more likely would have found a mud or clay chimney.

PLANT LIFE

In front of the Chapel by the Petit Bayou are palm-like plants, Dwarf Palmettos [Sabal minor]. French name: latanier - an adaptation of a Native American name. It's tough, evergreen leaves were used by both Indians and settlers as thatching material for huts, camps, sheds, etc. It is an important native wildlife plant [winter fruits].

Le Parterre, the chapel garden, is fashioned after the formal gardens of France. Herbs and vegetables would have been planted among the flowers by the ever-practical Acadians.
La Maison Acadienne: cette structure de bousillage de 500 pieds carrés, circa 1830, a été à l'origine située sur la plantation de Mouton à Carencro, Louisiane. Elle a été employée comme école de plantation pour les enfants de François et d'Antoine Emile Mouton, fils de Jean Mouton, fondateur de Vermilionville (aujourd'hui Lafayette). La Maison Mouton est un étolage domestique pour des traditions curatives. Les techniques curatives explorées dans et autour de la maison incluent la guérison de foie, les méts médicaux et les remèdes de fines herbes. Dans la pratique, ces méthodes souvent ont fonctionné de pair. Les éléments religieux dans la maison se concentrent principalement sur le catholicisme, bien que des systèmes curatifs locaux aient été également influencés par des idées de Natif américain, et ceux de Caraïbe et d'Afrique.

A côté de La Maison Acadienne, près du trottoir, sont deux Figuiers. Les figues sont un fruit favori historique et actuel pour des conserves. L'introduction en Louisiane remonte à 1734, quand un certain nombre de figuiers ont été plantés autour du couvent d'Ursuline dans le quartier français à la Nouvelle-Orléans. De l'autre côté de la maison est un Jardin d'Herbe Médicinal. Et tout près il y a un Manglier. Un arbre qui se développe généralement le long des bords de la route et dans les endroits de rebut enseléillés. Ses fleurs prodigues, mat-blanches, frangées rendent des plantes entières comme un nuage pendant des saisons de floraison de chute. Elles ont été employées comme thé médical pour des froids, la grippe, et des fièvres. Derrière l'handicap rampe est un Maumou. Également connu en tant que "coral bean" oriental, ses graines rouges lumineuses contiennent un alcaloïde toxique qui agit en tant que dépressant nerveux central. Néanmoins, les grains souvent ont été soigneusement formulées dans un sirop de toux pour les Cajuns. Intéressant, la racine à bulbe et boisée de ces mêmes espèces a été également employée par les Cajuns comme expectorant de toux pour apporter vers le haut le flegme! Cette dernière utilisation est apparemment tout à fait efficace, et est toujours pratiquée dans une faible mesure aujourd'hui.
Across the sidewalk are Persimmon Trees⁴ [Diospyros virginiana; family Ebenaceae], French name: *plaqueminier*: a plaguemine maker, an adaptation of an Indian name for persimmon. Fruits were used either raw or cooked in breads; the ground-up seeds were used as a coffee substitute. Among other trees is a large Hackberry Tree⁵ [Celtis laevigata]. French name: *bois cannu*: known wood; but also, a possible corruption of *bois cannell*: horn wood, due to the wart-like woody protuberances which adorn this species' otherwise smooth trunk. It is a very important wildlife plant in Acadia.

Across from Maison Acadienne is a Prickly Ash Tree⁶ [Zanthoxylum clava-herculis]. It is often called the toothache tree because it was used by Native Americans and early settlers to relieve toothache pain.

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**PLANT LIFE**

In front of La Maison Boucvalt is an alley of Crepe Myrtle Trees⁷ [Lagerstroemia indica], a native of China brought into the U.S. in 1803. Several French names for this plant: *myrte rose*: rose myrtle; *gastronome*: a corruption of the genus name; *laurier rose*: rose laurel tree. Just past the house is a Wax Myrtle⁸ [Myrica cerifera]. French name: *cirier*: wax producer.

Historically they were used in southern Louisiana as a source of wax for candles. Wax was extracted by boiling the fruit in water. Due to the volatile oil content in stems and foliage, wax myrtle was also used as a "green kindling" in starting fires, particularly under damp conditions.

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**LA MAISON BOUCVALT**

La Maison Boucvalt (c. 1860) is a classic 19th century Acadian/Creole house. Glass transoms let light in and hot air out. The louvered shutters are adjustable. The kitchen and bathroom were added around the turn of the 20th century. Treadle machine sewing is a craft that is demonstrated in this house.
À travers le trottoir il y a une 
Copaï. La gomme douce a été 
appelée la première fois copal par 
un autre que l'explorateur 
LaSalle. L'Indien et les enfants 
Cajun/Créoles ont mâché 
la résine douce produite dans 
l'écorce intérieure de la gomme 
douce de la même manière que les enfants 
emploient le chewing-gum aujourd'hui. Et après 
un grand Liard, du nom Canadien Français 
pour espèce d'arbre de peuplier dans cette 
région. Elles prospèrent dans les secteurs 
marécageux d'Acadiana, tels que le bassin 
Achafalaya. Des allumettes sont faites à partir 
de l'arbre mou, bois droit-granuleux.

LA MAISON BROUSSARD

La Maison Broussard était au passé la maison 
d'Amand Broussard. Amand arriva en Louisiane, 
du Canada, à l'âge d'onze ans. Son père, Joseph 
dit Beausoleil Broussard mourut seulement 
quatre ans après avoir amené 250 Acadiens en 
Louisiane, suite du Grand Dérangement. 
Amand vivait avec un de ses frères jusqu'à l'âge 
de seize ans. La même année, il enregistra sa 
propre marque de commerce pour les détails. 
L'année suivante, sa femme mourut en donnant 
naisance à un fils. On lui accorda des terres à 
l'âge de dix-huit ans. Quatre ans plus tard, 
Amand se remaria. Il eut avec sa nouvelle femme, 
Anne Benoit, treize enfants. Il fut patriote lors de 
la Révolution américaine. Il prit part à la Bataille 
de la Nouvelle-Orléans lors de la Guerre de 1812, 
l'âge de 58 ans. Il mourut six ans plus tard. A sa 
mort, ses biens furent estimés à plus de 65,000$.
Il s'agit d'une des plus vieilles (1970) et une des 
plus grandes maisons qu'on retrouve à 
Vermilionville. A une certaine époque, la maison 
se trouvait sur une vacherie au bord du Bayou 
Teche. Elle a été construite selon les normes 
créoles françaises de l'époque (bousillage et 
colombage).
Cependant, il est à noter que la maison emprunte 
bienveillance à l'architecture anglo-américaine. Le 
pignon du toit est anglo-américain adapté à 
l'architecture d'un grenier acadien. 
Le toit est fait de galets découpés à la main.
the roof top. These generally faced the windward side as protection against rot and leakage from rainy weather. Notice the hand-wrought rams-horn hinges. The chandeliers are French. The Louisiana armoire are made of cypress (bald cypress - which is not a true cypress, but a taxodium.) Cypress was always painted to look like another wood to conceal what Acadians considered to be an inferior wood. The kitchen is separate and set back from the house - this reduced the risk of fire to the main house and kept the heat and smoke away. Open hearth cooking is frequently demonstrated in this kitchen.

**PLANT LIFE**

As you approach La Maison Broussard, notice giant Bamboo¹ (Phyllostachys aurea) growing near the sidewalk. It was imported from the Far East. A bit further down, on the right of the sidewalk, are a pair of Swamp Red Maples² (Acer rubrum var. drummondii), widespread in both wet and dry areas. The leaves give our best fall color and the flowers provide our earliest red spring color against bare grey wood. Behind the kitchen you will find Pomegranate Trees³ (Punica granatum). French name: grenade - grenade producer referring to the fruit arrangement within the rind. The Pomegranate is native to Eurasia and was imported as early as 1731 to the city of New Orleans.

**LE MAGASIN-L’ÉCURIE**

Le Magasin-L’Écurie (the barn) is filled with a variety of farm implements labeled in both French and English. There is a 500 lb. bale of cotton and one of Spanish moss which has been cured by soaking and drying.
Through the fence to Le Magasin, École, on your left, is a Chinaberry (Pilacija azedarach), French name: 'Fais de poros'.

Planted around farmhouses, it is a tree commonly found in the south. The berries are used for making jam and cooking over the fire. The boys would use the berries in their pop guns which were made from Elderberry stems. The berries may also have been used for rosaries.

Ask about upcoming events on Bayou Vermilion and the grounds of the Performance Center at Vermilionville.

Don't forget to visit La Cuisine de Maman for a taste of our culture or our Gift Shop for unique souvenirs.

Memberships are available individually and for families.