

Chapter Two: Inside the Lenses, Cajun People and Material Culture

Section One of Chapter Two:

THE LOOK OF POST WAR ACADIANA AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC VISION

Because of approximately twenty photographic plates needing to appear in sufficient size and quality this chapter has the length and the cost to make it in many measures the bulk of the book itself. The photographs are worth it I believe. However, this can distort the reality that more of the text is about Louisiana Story than about the SONJ project. In this chapter there is a good bit of Arnold Eagle in evidence and he operated in both worlds. But before dealing with the operations and goings on based in the Nettles I wish to take the reader a few hundred yards down the street that runs alongside St. Mary Magdalene Church and in front of the Nettles. On the grounds of that fairly impressive church is fairly impressive statue which at a smaller church would truly stand out and draw views but as it is it remains only moderately impressive compared to the lofty tower of a church situated on a high pediment..

In 1939 on the Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, Dudley Leblanc donated a marble statue, granite pedestal and concrete base of a state of the Frenchwoman who had been canonized in 1925. Had St. Therese, or Therese Martin, lived a long lifespan we would have been seventy six years old in 1939 and only 52 when she was canonized. Today she is a recognized Doctor of the Church. This honor was bestowed by Pope John Paul II. That honor is difficult for non-Catholics whom I would love to have understand this text to grasp. The Catholic Church considers itself to be about 2000 years old and has always honored the exceptional among the faithful from the Death of St. Stephen. Churches and monuments in the thousands have been dedicated to this vast industry of veneration. How many canonized Saints there are is something that serious people have killed and argued over. Being a canonized Saint is a big deal, really big deal and there are lots of them. There are thirty-three Doctors of the Church. These are a very diverse group each of whom represents in some way a great segment of the vast and complex Catholic heritage.

One of those thirty-three very exceptional names has been added since 1939. One would have to say that in terms of Catholic iconography, doctrine and other measures Dudley Leblanc knew how to pick a winner. One could argue he was only caught up in a popular religious movement but that really is not a sufficient explanation. The Cajuns like Dudley Leblanc had a talent for picking the biggest winner imaginable in the Catholic world although for others who choose not to examine religious history in a serious way this all may seem very irrelevant to American history. Nor was this an obvious bet, she was in her twenties when she died. This may seem irreverent to many but to a certain kind of person her face is very beautiful, She had a kind of wit and verve in her writing which was in stark contrast to some other spiritual writers of importance. Dudley Leblanc saw in her a symbol and a stream of thought worth supporting.

Dudley Leblanc is not known for his speeches or writing or writing on her behalf although he was a very well known speaker and writer. He is known for his donation of an image. Cajun beauty pageants, the HADACOL medicine shows and various other visual expressions were

very important parts of his legacy. The blessing of the fleets, the *Couires de Mardi Gras*, the *fais do-do*, the *tintamarre* and many (but not an unlimited list) of other expressions form part the Cajun visual language and system of expression which form a vital part of the culture the Standard Oil Documentaries came to express for and interpret to America. They liked to think and there is quite a bit of evidence that they were pretty good at this sort of thing.

In addition there were and still are many communal activities that defined the community and shaped Cajun life The SONJ photographers did capture some of these events such as the *boucherie*, the pirogue races and some from the more deliberately exhibition related categories such as the blessing of the fleet. Flaherty, as mentioned earlier in this text, keeps the focus tighter than anything that will allow much of this visual language to seep into his film. This text in many ways attempts to find an understanding of what happens when various visual languages come together and especially when these specific languages did come together in this particular instance in mid twentieth century America. It is also a story about and a treatment of how these languages and their audiences did not communicate or converge. It is about what can be learned from the way different communities and segments of society competed for ears and eyeballs in an earlier period in the information age.

This chapter leaves out a,most entirely two forces which shaped the production of film and still photographs in this study. More or less the McIlhenny family and the Standard Oil organization are left out of the discussion except for being addressed indirectly when the Cajuns or Flaherty and Stryker's documentarians are dealing or being informed by one or more of these other two factors.the major exception is right in this paragraph, just here: Standard oil defined the total concept of the film from the start with a commission for a particular thing. Going through the primary sources on all this is not so simple and even the Calder-Marshall and Rotha biographies fail to make the point clearly in a few words. But the rather excellent essay "Step by Step" by Eva Orbanz that appears in *Filming Robert Flaherty's Louisiana Story* has a very succinct summary of what needs to be gotten at here.

On april 3, 1944, Roy Stryker, manager of Public Relations for Standard Oil of New Jersey, invited Robert Flaherty to New York. He had something to discuss with him over a bottle of Jameson's. Would Flaherty be interested in making a film about the difficulties and dangers of oil production? An industrial film that would be interesting enough to show in commercial theaters? Flaherty was interested.

The commission was not to make a film about the Cajuns or about Louisiana but about the challenges that Standard Oil faced in its pursuit of its basic industrial position. The challenges faced by the oil industry were to be rendered entertaining and meaningful by Flaherty's artistry. In terms of knowing where the money came from the Cajuns were just along for the ride. But both the fact that Roy Stryker did the asking and the fact that Flaherty was the one asked do frame that business meeting in rather definite and telling ways. These were not just any two men. They were not strangers and it was not the first time they had been involved in large projects connected to one another.

This is not a book about Pare Lorentz, the FSA, the collaboration of Helen Van Dongen and Flaherty on *The Land* or Roy Stryker's direction of much of the vast photographic project of the FSA. It does not have to be a book about the 1930s to recognize that this was in many ways a rebirth with private funding of a massive publicly funded project from before the World War. But anyone who knows anything about the reputation of reborn or resurrected entities knows that the new is usually quite different from the old. The FSA and New Deal projects did not just simply pause and then start up. A great deal distinguishes the two project and historians of documentary film have tended to love the FSA -- Pare Lorentz era and nearly ignore this era with the limited exception of *Louisiana Story* studied and written about with some apology. However just before the work on this book began in the 1990s there were a few scholars who had begun to build on the tiny beachhead of learned discussion of these images. Some of that work was literally going on and coming out around me as I was starting to put this together.

The photographs and the film studied here have a history of their own. The work of Arthur Calder-Marshall on Flaherty's film and the by contemporary scholars such as James Curtis and Frank de Caro have shown that these same images can be valued as their own historical entities. I have benefited from the careful and creative analysis which such scholars have provided. In these pages I seek to understand the photographs as they relate to a social history of cultural group as it is recorded on film. Perhaps, this comparative and mutually referential method allows more knowledge of all the evidence. The weaknesses of the method may be exacerbated by the relative brevity of this work. However, effort to push the frontiers between detailed photographic analysis and a more traditional approach to social history comes from a conscious conviction that this effort will bear fruit in a better historical understanding.

For the purposes of social and cultural history the photograph offers advantages and disadvantages. Scholars often write and speak of the majority of past persons as "the inarticulate." Ironically, these folks spoke, created, built, planted and did numerous other things which expressed their personality in articles of reality. Their communication, however, becomes either ephemeral, obscure or unintelligible unless someone records it in a clearer more permanent way. Because this may not happen and because if it does the sources are often ignored, the folk cultures, the masses, the plain folk and the poor of history emerge through the writings of the elite and through statistical evidence. Both of those sources depersonalize the subject of study and tend to make social history seem less detailed and accurate than diplomatic or political history. The photograph reminds the historian that his subjects were living beings, existing in the complex and meaning world of personal experience. The Cajun raconteur Emanuel Mores died as these photographic projects were completed. His version of the folktale "The Two Ships" captures the situation of all historians. Yet it especially applies to this study. Mores's comic tale has been recorded as follows:

*A cold wave froze the sea and a captain
shouted to another that a cold wave had
frozen the ships. But he did not answer.*

*The other shouted the same thing and did
not get any answer either.*

*It made them angry. They began quarreling.
The next day the sun came out, the ice melted,
they were freed, they sailed and the frozen
voices began to melt. The ships had left
the place, but other ships passes there and
heard the quarrel, saw no one, heard lots of
noise, but no one in sight. The frozen words
were melting.*

Leaving aside the comedy of the metaphor and the humor of the poem, this metaphor seems apt for trying to create a sense of a largely visual dialog now in the twenty-first century based on pieces of communication revived from a sleep in various forms of preservation over the years. The historian must take the frozen words and images which he discovers and try to reconstruct the experience of ships which passed. In the previous chapter the history of the region and people to which the photographers had come was introduced. However, there was no detailed description of the kinds of realities a photographer or motion picture cameraman can easily capture in their lense. This chapter has three parts. The first part is what you are reading now. The second part is a description of the Cajun hose and a discussion of how the Cajun house relates to the rest of Cajun culture and the Acadian heritage as it is manifest in Acadian material culture. The third and final part of this book works through the SONJ images selected and demonstrates an approach to using these photographs and photography of this sort as an historical source and document. That third part of this chapter is the part of this study which singularly fulfills or should fulfill the promise made repeatedly to take the images seriously as works of history in their own right.

Looking for the unique images of Acadiana, photographers reached out, like one of the captains in Moras's story', to the Cajuns who were living and active to them but are now frozen in their frames as far our text is concerned. They were trained, skilled and experienced observers often succeeded captured persisting material manifestations of Cajun cultural that had become rare in the 1940s. In some cases they preserved the information that had some use in the restoration of traditional skills, in other cases they preserved what may have been the only serious portrayals of a given reality on film. They tended toward the distinct, quaint and old fashioned in their choices of subject. That means they tended to photograph places or people who tended in one way or another to be examples of material cultural persistence. The questions a student of Louisiana's Cajuns will have about material cultural persistence cannot resolve themselves here. But it is possible this chapter will provide a better basis for asking the right questions.

The other interesting set of questions related to analyzing these images is about what may be learned about how the Cajuns photographed related to their subjects. Merely by existing the photographs demonstrate that the Cajuns and the photographers had substantial interactions.

These are not satellite photographs. The photographs were taken on the ground by people who collected other information not contained on the negative. One must also ask how the Cajuns allowed themselves to be frozen in their encounters with photographers. Finally, how did each party see their encounter with history -- the ships to come.

One factor to be considered in understanding the look of Acadiana as the photographers encountered it is to understand the way peoples and cultures interacted with each other and the built or fabricated landscape. Acadiana had an identity as part of the United States as well as many other sources of its cultural identity. So besides Cajun culture in all its rich complexity and American culture in all its richness and complexity there were many other possible adjectives designating a culture which might be applied to the people, buildings and physical objects which the photographers tried to capture on film.

Besides Confederate, Francophone and American connections and empathies there are other ways of looking at patterns of people and cultures that in some way typified the region. The region has a long tradition of harboring those whom some still call *Emigres*. Literally, this only means emigrants or people moving out of a country. However, in both Britain and the French colonies it acquired a special meaning as referring to the Bourbon nobility who fled from the guillotines that killed the majority of their population during France's reign of terror which was in many ways brought on by the American Revolution and the French role in it. The pattern begun in those early days had continued in the centuries before the SONJ projects and has gone on since those projects ended. These left visual cues that the photographers were poorly prepared to discern but would have shaped some of the lives and communities that they filmed or shot. Before Simone Delery's book *Napoleon's Soldiers in America* was published long after the years in question there was little available to alert people to the presence and contribution of the Napoleonic Officer Corps to Acadiana. The boy in Louisiana Story is named not only Alexander and Ulysses but Napoleon and that name also is an apt name for a Cajun boy in its own way.

In certain circles accessible only to the folklorist in Louisiana *Emigres* is a designation that has come to mean highly elite populations of Francophone background who fled to Louisiana in organized groups to save their lives and settle. The waves of such refugees are: 1. The Bourbon Nobles fleeing the reign of terror, 2. the planter and merchant elite both creole of color and white race fleeing Haiti after the slave revolt, 3. the Napoleonic Nobility and officer corps fleeing here after his first and second falls, 4. the small but significant group of French speaking Austrian Jews who came here after the fall of the Hapsburg Empire and 5. the Vietnamese specifically who either were themselves or were attached to the Nguyens who are the Royal Clan of Nguyen of the city of Hue and its family of the Kings and Queens of *Indochine*. Acadiana politics has also always had a somewhat distinctive quality and these layers of people laid on by migration to the basic population groups that existed before has contributed to a politics with a kind of heritage of relatively right wing politics has been one stream in the complexity of region that produced four term Democrat Governor Edwin Edwards and the first female to hold the office in Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of New Iberia. Both were elected during a time when the Democrats were clearly to the left of the Republicans in what is basically a two party country. At the time of the SONJ photographs however, there had not been a governor from

Acadiana since Governor Alexander Mouton the very Acadian Governor of Louisiana and father of the martyred Hero of Mansfield, General Alfred Mouton. The more recent years had seen a great decline in the prestige of the Cajuns and of the French language and although men like Jimmy Domengeaux and Dudley Leblanc were leading a movement to restore French and the Cajun heritage it was more noted for struggle than memorable victories in those years. This ascendancy of English had a strong set of visual elements and manifestations. But most of all, to the degree that advertised products were most often Anglo-American or advertised in English, these pictures, unable to capture spoken French, actually Anglicize the realities of their subjects' lives by showing English words. The photographers struggled to comprehend persistence and change in Acadiana just as scholars struggle today. Todd Webb, one of the two Stryker photographers whose work most often appears in these pages, wrote to Roy Stryker the following contrast between Harnett Kane's book and the realities surveyed. "I was disappointed in La Fourche, where I went last Saturday and Sunday." Webb wrote from his hotel room in Baton Rouge, "I had read Harnett Kane's "The Bayous of Louisiana" (sic) and he neglected to say that a highway ran along the Bayou and that houses were really quite some distance away. The people have turned almost completely away from the Bayou and the highway has taken its place." Webb would later discover that La Fourche had become famous as "the world's longest street" and that in other communities the waterway still held ascendancy over graded right of way. Kane, eager to see distinctiveness survive, had made La Fourche appear as riverine and unique in structure as it had been years ago. according to Webb. Not every scholar would agree about what Webb found. But we see this more clearly if we remember how he may have hoped for many easily obtained photographs of Cajuns in the town using the Bayous and instead found cars, trucks, bicycles and wagons on the road did most of the work and achieved most of the connections between the Cajuns in this old Bayou Cajun settlement.

Acadiana during the 1940s offered much appeal to the photographers working there. "Some day this week we are going to Abbeville to see Flaherty." Wrote Webb of the man producing Louisiana Story. Robert Flaherty, recognized as the father of the documentary film, had received critical attention and some financial wealth for previous portrayals of remote cultures and places. The man who had directed Nanook of the North, Man of Aran and Moana now brought his gifts to a Cajun subject. His vision of a pristine culture would influence many. The excitement of working with Flaherty in later days and Webb's declaration that "Gross Tete and the Teche are both much better...(because they showed more cultural persistence than Bayou La Fourche)" all show that Webb and his boss never saw themselves as dispassionate scientists. Yet, all parties to this project had ambivalent feelings about the ways this region differed from others in America. The distinctive appealed to them and made them feel successful. But that is not the same thing as them feeling that it should be preserved. However, from what can be remembered from nearly a quarter of a century ago there were more likely to be hostile statements from these generally Yankee aligned photographers when dealing with signs of the Confederacy and the antebellum South than when dealing with the distinctively Acadian. Todd Webb expressed weariness shooting Natchez which was "a crinoline crypt". Nothing that strongly negative was associated with his perceptions of Acadiana. But one must

remember that a photographer can have all kinds of biases and a very defined agenda and still a shooter of the quality of any of these people will usually be longing most of all for the great picture most of all.

The fact that there is no story titled *Courir de Mardi Gras* in the Roy Stryker SONJ collections is one of the most telling facts in the entire survey of what is and is not included in these photographs. The running on Fat Tuesday is certainly a very photogenic ritual of collection of chickens and other ingredients from members of a Cajun Community, beating the bounds around the physical limits of a community and a mixture of charity and intimidation. The whole rather elaborate ritual is traditionally run by a *ridelle* under a captain. Men in masks and colorful costumes collect ingredients for a communal feast centered on chicken gumbo. This is done on the day before Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Why this is not a major feature of the SONJ projects is open to question. But it is significant that it was absent.

The photograph has as complex a set of biases and insights as any other type of evidence. Both art and science manifest themselves in the activity of photographers. This paper has benefited from exposure to the correspondence between Roy Stryker and his photographers. Stryker, while no photographer himself, loved the vision of the camera. Stryker wrote the artistic and opinionated Webb encouraging words. "Dear Todd, You are certainly going after Louisiana...." Wrote the office bound Stryker, wistfully, "Looks like the old Farm Security days: storefronts, gravestones, interesting faces, etc., etc. It was a nice set of pictures and I congratulate you. Keep it up." The reader should recognize the living eyes which directed the mechanical ones. These men are deeply bound to their New Deal experience and the thing one often senses is that Standard Oil is subsidizing men and a few women whose hearts are invested in the old New Deal concepts. Neither Standard Oil nor the documentarians had a vision that came primarily from Acadiana or the Cajuns. A photograph like any article of historical evidence is provided by a "witness" and comes through the filter made up of the witness's interests, prejudices and medium of record. Photographs provide access to subjects of various types within the context of a single document. Careful analysis allows a unique view of gender, environment, popular culture and commerce to speak from the complex and holistic mesh of relationships which existed.

This study assumes that photographs have as significant and verifiable a message to convey to professional historians as any other medium. Text has been the dominant source type and should remain so but photographs matter as well. It is difficult to determine how technical analysis of camera angles, lighting and other aspects of photography clouds the work. Among the benefits of photographic sources, the greatest asset consists in their ability to speak to the reader's imagination and intellect without too much introduction from their scholarly chaperone, the researcher. However, the reader has no guarantee of any ultimate neutral objectivity on the part of the historian who must select the photographs and arrange them in order. Within the photographs, dress, vernacular architecture, transportation, ritual, and occupation serve as points of departure for scholarly inquiry. The attempt has not been to support an essay on Acadian heritage and Cajun by looking at the breadth of visual imagery within the context

provided by texts and also try especially hard to seek out signs of persistence and assimilation with the photographs providing key insights into the postwar period. The writer hopes to reveal in these picture and the study as a whole, the history of a people and region by investigating the information in a limited set of photographic documents as they relate to a limited set of questions of an historical rather than an artistic nature. This study cares as much or more about the backgrounds of Todd Webb and Arnold Eagle, as a New Englander and an Eastern European immigrant respectively, as about their artistic style and is almost ignorant of the many technical questions about cameras, film and lighting which each of them had to answer every day. A real effort has been made to understand these photographers and their perceptions and biases as well as all the cultural substance of the Cajuns, of Acadiana and of whatever else they filmed. The human communication and perceptions and not the techniques of photography form the subject of this study.

The reason for mentioning that there was no folder called Courir de Mardi Gras is because many photographs in this were taken as part of sets and kept as parts of "stories", a term with a technical specific meaning here related to the ordinary English meaning. These sets were centered around "stories" such as "The Pirogue Maker," "River Story," or "Scenes along a Bayou." This study seeks to recreate some of the feel of those stories even where the photographs have gravitated into very disparate sections of the SONJ files. Perhaps, the final elements of structure to which this study aspires is a movement from environmental mandates on a human nature shared by all persons in all cultures toward those cultural and individual expressions which might never have happened except for unique Cajun experience. Sometimes, the economy itself is distinctive and nowhere does culture cease to shape and impact the relationship between Cajuns and their environment. The section on architecture and the House in chapter one functions as a bridge between discussion of the functional and the sublime. and also between history and material culture studies. But America is a place where many things are hidden that would be obvious in a country where more people understood hidden hidden cultural realities.

This study is an attempt to integrate sources and methods which are emerging as increasingly important in the study of history and to apply them to a unique set of historical questions. The most arrogant part of this work, and all good writing has an element of arrogance, is the effort to set a high standard of how historians can use photographic evidence. These questions are largely those on the interdisciplinary edge of history, community-studies, anthropology and cultural geography. The desire by scholars today to recreate a lived experience of the majority of people in a historical period has inspired a wide range of scholarship of history and related subjects in France and America particularly.

The study of photographs and sets of photographs allows the historian to determine the type of housing, farming and transportation which untied a recent society in a way not available from the descriptions in wills, building contracts standing structure surveys and the documents generated by agribusiness. Vernacular architecture alone constitutes a part of cultural experience and articulation unknown to those reading social history until fairly recently. Clearly

photographs facilitate the development of a more ready apprehension of a region's architectural style and landscape function than prose does. The editors of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* were somewhat inspiring to this writer in the early days of this project. I understand in researching the next section of this chapter that it brought out the potential of this quality of photographs and that the *Perspectives* journal at the time was nearly as photographic in quality as it is textual. Photographs also allow the historian to make strong prose arguments about the uniqueness of a style or the economic diversity of a farming community while allowing the reader access to evidence which functions as a counterbalance to the narrow focus of the writer. Clearly, the historian has an obligation to describe individual photographs within the context of the photographer's career and other factors not related to the function of the image as a historical document or even as historical datum. The wisdom of this approach and the value of the result are very much open to the question, all that is asked is that the study be evaluated on the basis of what it has set out to do.

Section Two of Chapter Two:

ACADIANA'S MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE CAJUN HOUSE

The Stryker photographers' entire collection did not include much of the relatively few obvious very fine and upscale examples of Cajun architecture which are found near the places they photographed. They certainly did not seek out those which may have lost their distinct visual identity through renovation. Louisiana is a place which has several types of houses within the Creole and Cajun cultural milieu which have a basic modularity. The idea of a modular house in the extreme way in which these houses were modular is that one can start a house with a very modest amount of money and expenditure and live in it have a highly functioning cabin. One can then continue through many stages all the way up to something which can be called a mansion and at all phases have a highly functioning house except for the annoyance directly related to construction of new portions of the building. The system allows for many traits or ideals of the local culture to manifest themselves. There is self sufficiency which does not require a large mortgage, there is attachment to the land as one need not move in order to progress up the scale of financial progress and home value without leaving the same spot. It allowed the family, farm workers (slave or free when both existed) and contract labor to be divided with the home improvements the owners needed in a way which benefitted the builders who had to maintain less permanent labor and the farmer or business owner who might be glad to have work of value to him (or in some cases her) which his employees and dependents could engage in readily when the principal occupation of the establishment was interrupted. This sort of thing happens quite a bit in rural life. Often such an interruption might also involve weather that makes home improvement impossible but there would also be many times when it would be possible to work on the house but not on the normal profit center of the establishment. Thus in the mindset distinctive of the region value could be added even when immediate profits could not be achieved.

After the relative decline of much of the region following both the Civil War and World War One The modular technology common to architecture in the region also had the effect of allowing the

owner to disguise the distinct cultural identity of the home by adding what amounted to nondescript or confusing elements to later modules. Thus in time entire groups of houses with a basic Creole or Acadian identity were instead sort of odd mainstream American or regional Southern houses.

As stated above, the Stryker photographers' entire collection of architectural or architecturally framed images did not include much of the relatively few obvious very fine and upscale examples of Cajun architecture which are found near the places they photographed. The same selective interest also goes for more upscale typically Southern and Creole architecture from the nineteenth century which dots the countryside and clusters in the towns and villages of Acadiana. How such distinctions are made and how various housing types relate to the people living in the towns is a question beyond the scope of this study. But in general the types of houses described above do exist and are not much found in the SONJ photographs. The interests they followed were not laser focused and narrowly singular either. was in evidence which depicted the economically disadvantaged, the working class, the Acadian, the industrial and the natural -- a house had the best chance of making it on to film if it was a poor or low cost home with a moderate Acadian identity and working class occupants in an industrial or very natural set of environs. Few houses had all those qualities but the trends and tendencies are clearly there. In studying what is on the film there is always a need to remember what is not making it into the lenses. Like all works of human understanding these photographs telescoped reality into a coherent set of themes, concepts and relationships. To a large degree, the metaphorical ships have left and the words have little context if we do not have someone to tell us they were there. The pictures come from a place and time. With the benefit of a broader cultural history that shows that place and time the photographs have the opportunity to become coherent conversations once again. The historical background provides a kind of map and description such as a good Crime Scene Investigation Unit might compile after a crime has occurred. This at least is a simile and not another metaphor.

During the research for this study a significant survey of Acadian heritage and pure Cajun houses was undertaken directly by this writer under the direction of Jay Edwards of Louisiana State University, an anthropologist who also directed the Fred Kniffen Laboratory. This project was undertaken in conjunction with his Vernacular Architecture Seminar. The underlying purpose was to get some idea of the prevalence or at least availability of the Cajun House to the photographers in a small area that virtually all of them would have visited more than once. In that project a research was conducted of traditional communities, collections of traditional houses such as exists in Acadian Village in Lafayette. A review of the Vermilionville living history component of the Jean Lafitte National Park and finally to review folkloristic and historical textual sources and photographs. Unfortunately, the research produced by that last part was lost and the reader will have to rely on the general sense of the sources from which it was drawn as manifest in the bibliography of this text.

After, that research was done a formulaic concept was put forward which allowed for some points in more scientific system as well as an informed judgement in a more humanist system

Using both systems it was arranged for evaluations to be made and credited for the deviations from the standard to be well understood. This second phase of the project culminated with positing that a classic Cajun house developed which had all or most of a set of easily charted features, including the following:

1. A sharply inclined gabled roof.
2. Construction of cypress walls lined on the inside with a mix of Spanish moss and mud.
3. The floor is elevated on piers from the ground.
4. Has galleries in the front and back of the house.
5. The front and back of the house are on the longer sides of The rectangular structure.
6. The front gallery runs the full length, or very nearly the full length of the house.
7. The space above the ceiling is habitable.
8. The windows have non-louvered shutters
10. The galleries are beneath the solid wedge of the roof and not beneath an extension of the roof.
11. There are windows on every side of the house.
12. The roof is covered with cypress shakes.
13. The profile includes an acute, an obtuse, and two right angles in its elevation
14. The walls consist of center-matched or quarter-matched horizontal planks

The third stage of the project was to survey all houses on the road which becomes State St. in Abbeville and record a positive or negative for each characteristic, this survey will extend from the Woodlawn bridge to Henry Louisiana, The other route surveyed will be Hwy. 14-Concorde St.-Charity St. from Kaplan to Erath. A drive by photographic survey was made first. then an external sampling of measures and more photographs was made of homes scoring at each level range of high medium and low However there were entire segments that were not sampled in each category. These samples at all three levels will provided a little scientific basis for asking how many houses embody enough of these qualities to be a visibly Cajun House.. At least one photograph and the physical location of each house with a score of eight or more positives will be retrieved in this portion of the project. Then a good number of the high scoring sample houses and a few houses in the four to six points range were entered and thoroughly examined for construction techniques and the effects of renovation. The results of all these investigations was preserved and the were recorded and contrasts between high scoring exteriors and inauthentic construction techniques were noted .

Fourthly, the age, variation, appearance and general feel of the houses with the scores will be contrasted with the model house. it was then evident that the tradition was more varied and vibrant and complex than the model but that the model was nonetheless a very good rubric for having a good investigation and good conversations with owners. Flaws in the set of characteristics and the method as it unfolded were discussed with Doctor Edwards, with owners of the houses and residents and before he dropped out to pursue a related project I discussed these things with the architecture graduate student who was my research partner. Files were developed for Houses which scored high without seeming Cajun and those scoring low while appearing Cajun will be photographed and discussed.Finally, an effort was made to determine

whether certain sets of characteristics appeared together most often and to set up a formula whereby one can analyze the basic frequency of certain characteristics.

I ended this project with a great deal of confidence that the Cajun House was an important part of the landscape and that it was fair to note that the SONJ photographers had not come to understand the Cajun House very well. It seemed that the limits and structural qualities of their project had a great deal to do with why they did see well and missed many opportunities. It was a fair modern American response to ask the question: who decides what a Cajun house is, and what its features distinguish it?

But I was left feeling equally sure that the question could be answered fairly well and that the shallow quality of the architectural awareness I detected in almost every photographer was a real thing to be criticized. That question underlies other questions about Acadiana's vernacular architecture. The region is a diverse and complex landscape where the natural, built and near-built environment interact in very close and somewhat subtle ways. No single simple structural analysis can make sense of all the buildings and builders which have appeared on the scene in this new Acadia. This chapter discusses a sort of "classic" house. This typical Cajun house represents a significant number of homes built during those periods of history in which Cajuns developed greatest autonomy and community identity in Louisiana. This discussion also takes note of the new archaeological evidence for a distinct Acadian architecture prior to the expulsion from Canada's original Acadia. The house type defined as Cajun here is readily recognized locally and has inspired very numerous works of folk art, including paintings, drawings and photographs as well as three dimensional models and toys in a variety of forms. Furthermore, the house type has commonly served as a symbol for those seeking to promote local "cultural tourism" by outsiders and finally it is a house-form continuously adapted and imitated by Cajuns for their own homes until the time of this writing.

The exact situation in the 1940s was not possible to determine in the time I had but it was possible to see that these photographers and their wealthy patron could have learned a great deal more than they appeared to have actually bothered to learn. The sense this gave me was not that they missed the whole of Acadian architecture but that what they did miss mattered and could be evaluated.

In the environs of Lafayette, Louisiana (the largest city in the prairie region of Acadiana) two collections of historic Acadian or Cajun houses have been established and made open to the public. The oldest of the two collections is the Acadian Village, operated by the Lafayette Association for Retarded Citizens which was developed in the 1970s. The six houses appearing in figure "insert info." vary significantly in age. The Aurelie Bernard house, formerly of St. Martinville consists of two portions the original built around 1800 and a symmetrical extension sideways added in 1840. The Thibodeaux house from Breaux Bridge and the Le Blanc house from near Youngsville both date from near the end of the antebellum period.

The fairly broad sampling of prairie Cajun houses at Acadian village constitutes a reasonable representation of what local people see as classic Cajun vernacular architecture. Many feature

predominate in these Acadian Village houses as a group but there is also a degree of variety in the features of each house. Significantly, all the Cajun houses at Acadian Village share the following features:

First, all have gabled roofs.

Second, all have an eaveside front.

Third, all have a basic frontal symmetry with regard to doors and windows.

Fourth, all have a gallery under the eaveside.

Fifth, all are elevated from the ground on piers.

Many other features including the use of cypress in construction appear in all these Acadian Village houses. These houses were not conveniently collected in the 1940s but they were around and people were talking about them.

Those details await further discussion below. The second collection of houses also serves as a useful reference point from which to evaluate the SONJ photographs and their record of Cajun life. Vermilionville is a project of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the humanities.

The two Cajun or Acadian homes actually collected from the surrounding area share the five features listed above as common to the Acadian Village homes. They also share cypress construction and other features not listed above with the Acadian Village homes.

One of the homes brought to Vermilionville belonged to Armand Broussard a wealthy Cajun who belonged to the slaveholding planter class. the house appears distinctly Cajun despite some ornamentation which may have been Anglo-American and Creole in inspiration. In my view of the visual language of the area it seemed to me that the owner was asserting both ethnic identity and a sense wishing to be part of his region and country in which Cajuns were not the dominant ethnic group. This Broussard home was built in 1790 and its large area and elegant appearance show that the Cajun style was apt for building homes which were as comfortable as most if not all in the surrounding area. Another home of comparable elegance at Vermilionville is a hipped roof Creole home brought from the Mississippi River Valley and not to be confused with the local architecture.

The above description of these buildings serve merely to demonstrate in verifiable terms a fact which is difficult to support from written sources but which is readily apparent to a perceptive observer. That fact is that people in Acadiana share a perception of the Cajun or Acadian house. In fact Cajun people and their neighbors who wish to be more like them have continued to model their homes on this image throughout this century -- before and after the SONJ projects.

Important questions arise concerning the interplay between the geographical and historical reality of Cajun houses, the perception of local people that certain features typified a Cajun house and the attitudes of outside researchers and artists towards the local vernacular architecture. Over the entire history of Cajun houses to the present a complex system of

feedback has occurred in which a tradition developed and was understood. Artists, builders and consumers reacted to the tradition. The newer homes within a still definable tradition expressed reaction to previous buildings and the impression those buildings had made on the community. The cycle would continue as these buildings in turn shaped perceptions and were used as models for further building. Thus in short the process of change after establishment in Louisiana might be described as follows:

A= Acadian building tradition as far as an important symbol of their home in what is now Nova Scotia..

e = The effect of environmentally driven adaptations derived from the Caribbean, Louisiana elsewhere. Dating techniques seem to show that the first homes appear to have largely reflected A but quickly became Ae in reaction to the differences in climate and available building materials. and Visual Rhetoric

Section Three of Chapter Two:

(Note to 2016 review group at LSU the images are not currently available to be seen, Reading the text is not entirely pointless in my opinion or I would not be sending this in to be read)

IMAGES OF CAJUN LIFE, WORK AND ENVIRONMENT

The last section of this chapter is a careful examination of some of the images themselves. it is the heart of this study in which after all the background has been established and before a higher criticism has been applied to the methodologies the photographs are allowed to inform those interested in history. That is they both guide a focus of external evidence and allow for purely visual information not otherwise readily available.

Plate one, photographed by Todd Webb in May 1947, displays the complex rural pattern of cultural and technological development in an assimilating Acadiana. The levees show both persistence and change in farming and in relations between various cultures and the people who lived those cultures. Acadiana in Nova Scotia made levees to protect their crops from encroaching swamp and sea water. The later immigrants from Scotland hired Acadians to design and maintain their hydraulic systems. In plate one, levees remain a daily part of life, but the water management of rice, not corn or other grains, emerge as the problem. Here flooded and prepared fields await the airplanes which will plant seed in a broadcast method -- strangely combining new technology with the oldest form of sowing grain.

The farmhouse is of a Southern "shotgun" architecture, which in itself may be a primal expression of Louisiana's vernacular architecture. The home is a set of rooms, two rooms wide, going back to the kitchen. A separate roof covers the porch. A more traditional Cajun home in contrast would have two storeys, the first alone having a ceiling, and the upper floor would extend over the porch. The Cajun home traditionally had a steeper roof and rested on cypress blocks at 15 points. While even the home appearing in plate two, differs from the most typical homes, the Acadian home went through an eighteenth century and possibly two nineteenth century shifts in design and could also expand sideways from its original 15 block base. Cajun architecture remained significantly adaptable throughout the nineteenth century and has enjoyed a miniscule revival in the last two decades.

The following chapter goes into a more careful and detailed study of Cajun vernacular architecture than is possible in this chapter. There seems to have been a continuous adaptation to outside forces but there is also a sort of geometrical rhetoric of Cajun houses which is evident during the thirties, forties and even at the time of this writing. This rhetorical system could preserve forms despite changes in materials and technologies. The photographers seem to have had a fairly good eye for the "traditional Cajun house" in all its permutations. The silhouette with its gallery cut away into the eaveside of a gabled house and the eaveside gallery fronting an artery of the village (bayou or street) is the strongest feature of Cajun vernacular architecture. This silhouette functions as a sculpted shape against the sky which makes a political statement about community and identity. A statistical sample taken and analyzed by this writer indicates that many such houses exist even among newly constructed houses today. The survival of Cajun vernacular architecture indicates the kind of complexity which exists in the collection of photographs and is confirmed by other evidence. An important hypothesis for this study is that Cajuns adopted their neighbors' artifacts and values but also propagated their own values and artifacts to their neighbors. The evidence gathered for this study indicates that a unique cultural region has endured and does not appear to be in danger of disappearing soon and even communicates more of its music, foodways and ideas than ever before to the larger society. On the other hand the differences between the larger culture and Acadiana as a society are somewhat less dramatic than in the past.

Why the Acadian home has more often vanished than it has been modified becomes a complex problem. Architects today admit that, in terms of comfort in the elements and function, the Acadian home outperformed most structures available during its decline. Apparently, the conformity of farmers who wished to have an American home conspired with the diminishing number of builders who possessed the knowledge to construct an Acadian home. Carl A. Brasseaux's discussion of housing in *The Founding of the New Acadia* and Lauren Post's discussion in *Cajun Sketches* offer more highly accessible treatments of these issues. Apparently the house varied in construction and yet remained within distinct parameters of cultural development. The photographers did not know a great deal about housing or about the different influences which might be displayed. Todd Webb, who despised ante-bellum mansions, the French quarter and Southern pride also detected a pride by the Cajuns in their old cypress homes.

Webb's impression of the people and their relationship to these houses seems richer in prejudice than perception.

"W.B. has lined up an old house for me which I am staring on tomorrow." He wrote to Stryker, The way they cherish these old houses gives me a pain in the ass but I think it will be pretty interesting to photograph. The Live Oaks (sic), festooned with moss are fascinating and somehow seem to be in line with the decadence that I feel in the South. The cypress tree is a wonder, not only in growth but in use. The wood itself is beautiful and almost everlasting and it is almost extinct (sic).

Another American tragedy of which there are many in the South."

The family in the shotgun home pictured here in plate one in 1947, lived near Abbeville. These farm people likely spoke French and English, canned foods themselves and bought them canned. Their furnishings may have included Cajun spindle and calfskin chairs purchased nearby, as well as various store-bought and mass produced products.

Plate one is a composite picture of gradual transformation which reflects the relative independence of the Cajun farmer. Unlike the urban ethnic working for a non-ethnic, the Cajun farmer could adapt gradually to a changing world. His family would embrace a new product or folkway because they preferred it, or because it more efficient or at least because the old ways had perished for lack of expertise and supply. The Acadiana region retained a sufficient base of independent producers to account for their relative autonomy as a culture for 200 years.

Harnett Kane called Acadiana a land of "primarily small men and small affairs," James H. Dorman has written of the prevalence of "ribbon farms," and few have failed to mention this diffusion of capital. The "ribbon farm" serves to highlight the importance of community to a society of small land-holders. "Ribbon farms" is the term which rural sociologists use to describe farms where farmers live near one another, have some centralized services and work small holdings. Even today many rural Cajuns work for themselves. Slavery, sharecropping, salaried work, and accumulated wealth have all changes the region. The industry paying for this project also was already having and would continue to have an effect. The income from oil leases and royalties allowed extended families and nuclear families villages and other units of Cajun culture to make better adjustments to the demands of the era and the problems with the limits of the region than if those oil checks had not come in. In folkloristic terms many oil people from outside the region have commented on how the Cajuns were notable for marrying oil money. Because of legal situation that amount to a great deal on wonders if this book will ever be published if one writes that the oil industry also imposed many costs on the Cajuns that were never mitigated or even recognized. This cost however was very real and still goes on and the legacy lawsuits that have recently been the subject of much controversy are only a small part of that picture. But it is also true that oil provided a much appreciated and unique support to the economic struggles and plans of the small landholders of the region. The oil industry came at just the right time to prevent other crises and to bolster and support a life of hard work and the productive capital that the typical small farmer or (more rarely) landowning trapper already had and continued to maintain. Oil was in itself a kind of economic system recreating the main business climate in the region, in it there were many benefits and opportunities and also some very destructive and unpleasant forces. In that way it was not so different than many other economic systems which had existed at various times in the region. None of those economic systems ever eroded the base of Cajun autonomous small producers so radically that the tradition of independence withered entirely away. Cajun racism in the past to the degree that it was distinctive in any way from other racism tended to focus more on two factors. Those factors were the relatively weak honors an African-American genealogy would bring to a family and therefore a desire to limit mutual filiation. The second factor was keyed to the fact that Blacks, even free people before and after the war, tended to be employed by wealthier people. Thus free black planters had a very important role. Cajuns had always shared employment within

classes or segments and employed some fellow cajuns continually, But working one's own capital and means of production and doing this as much as possible within a community with a few elite leaders of significant wealth and with communal facilities remained a persistent ideal over the centuries and regions. Very little racial conflict or violence ever occurred between Cajuns and Black farmers and ranchers who lived in more or less autonomous communities when the Cajuns were relatively stable and at peace. Men who had beliefs and used language no history department at a major university in the United States would be likely to support would beat and intimidate white men who were or were not Cajuns and engaged in race baiting of the local colored farming communities. However, in crises there was always a sense among everyone in the region that virtually anything might happen. Some of Longfellow's idea of a people who love peace above all else is true. That is partly because Cajuns fear more than most people what they may become when pressed too hard. Whether true or not the idea of limitless rage as an ethnic quality is very old and widespread.

Farming and Cattle ranching, war and the learned professions are the most amenable ways to advance in Cajun culture across many times in history. In recent years, trapping continues but has not enjoyed expansion or been able to offer much steady employment, commercial hunting is banned, and barnyard and cottage industries have declined in recent years. Only the aquaculture and fisheries enable large numbers of small producers to earn a good living without dependence on the employer. Those same industries employ many people in the processing and marketing end of the industry, proportionately more Blacks, Anglos and Vietnamese than Cajuns. Where French language and Cajun customs persist most intensely, where the community is less closely tied to the mainstream labor market, more people enjoy the autonomy traditional to Cajun life.

If the farm in **plate one** also included stock operations the herd would likely have found its way a few miles up the road to the corrals directly behind the men pictured in **plate three**. This stockyard sat on the nearby Richard family property on North Henry Road just outside Abbeville. The local stock traders watch an auction in progress. Like much of the local economy, stock auctions were managed by a cooperative. The auctions in this building occurred in a sort of amphitheater where the cattle could be viewed in small lots when driven in from behind the wall against which the boy is seated. These men look like other stockmen and farmers in other places. The lack of accouterments of "cowboy" culture (boots, Stetsons, wide belts, etc.) distinguishes them from groups to the West of Acadiana. However, this serves as an example of visual images with little evidence of cultural autonomy. Assimilation seems nearly total.

This picture required the photographer to do very little in terms of composition. The mix of people, all male and all serious captures enough of the mood sought by the photographer conspicuous to his subjects and yet he does not greatly alter their behavior.

One of the traps a scholar can leap into in this type of study concerns the distinction between Southwestern Louisiana's economic adaptation and Cajun culture, with the grassy prairies here any European group would have raised cattle. Nonetheless, stock-raising has formed a vital part of the Cajun economy since first settlement. In the early days, this mobile property was brought and sold in the bordering lands of Mexico, English West Florida and

among the Anglo-Americans settling above Acadiana. This provided some of the needed money for transportation, resettlement and the development of the lands in the area. Another form of trade which competed with the cattle drive was the water traffic in furs and foodstuffs which once tied together all of Southwestern Louisiana. To exclude the physical environment from any model of how behaviors developed would miss a great deal. Yet the interaction between human culture and the environment becomes highly complex in practice.

The farm near Abbeville and the stockmen both exemplify change and assimilation on the prairie. The life of Cajuns on the prairies of Southwest Louisiana can not easily distinguish its ways of sustaining prosperity from countless other plains and prairie cultures. To the degree that the prairie economy was distinctive, such distinctions (flooding fields for rice, crawfish and catfish) drew upon a wetlands tradition.

The photographer took the picture in **plate four** not because it was typical but because it fulfilled Stryker's mission of recording that which soon might pass away. Without human figures, the photo records the garden and the home as a slice of history. Empty of children and the other active signs of life the picture speaks, appropriately enough, of a past in which such homes as this had dominated their surroundings. The intensity of economic production which left little room for such luxuries as a front yard reminds one that Acadiana has never experienced the depopulation of the countryside, by migration to the city, which characterized the rest of the nation since the 1880s. The land grows ever more populous creating pressures for high profit, labor intensive rural industries. Journalists, scholars, politicians, economists and sociologists tend toward the urbane. Fewer intellectuals and writers who become well-known write from the perspective of a resident in a small rural community. Perhaps this has something to do with those who see poverty whenever they see farms. If a family owns herds, buildings, boats, and tools and a small spread of land but the immediate descendants of that family become debt-encumbered, college-educated condominium dwellers does that constitute upward social mobility? In most economic and psychic terms it certainly constitutes a fall in fortunes. Consumerism and prosperity must be distinguished by a historian seeking to study those who cherish an economy based on subsistence and cooperation.

This small home has more Cajun features than the shotgun home on the Abbeville rice farm in plate one. The economic conservative living in the home pictured in plate four practiced a mix of commercial cucumber planting and shrimping. Such a mixed economy had already declined in Grand Isle, most of this shrimper's neighbors had abandoned cucumbers to invest themselves completely in the increasingly lucrative seafood industry. This raises certain ecological questions. The earlier wetlands economy involved such a variety of small scale operations that the region's natural balance continued to produce sufficiently for the population. Once refrigeration and better transportation made more distant markets accessible, certain aspects of the Cajun economy would benefit unequally. This change did not obliterate distinctive cultural traditions, it could accelerate assimilation and damage the environment.

One also wonders if the shrimper's wife lost economic status as production moved into the male dominated offshore world. Did barnyard animals and subsistence gardening diminish as life and work became more specialized? The answer seems to be that Cajun women experienced role strain and had to adjust in a much shorter period of time to the transition from a world of family economics, to male providence of nearly all wealth and again to a two career or cooperative economy. It is unlikely that a significant number of most rural wetlands Cajun women ever divorced themselves from income producing activities or lost power and interest in the world outside the home.

The role of women in the economy of Acadiana is tied partly to the role of the family in the economy. Acadiana in the twentieth century has increasingly moved towards the separation of family life and economic production which typifies the modern, industrial and post-industrial global economy. Like countless traditional societies, the Cajuns have been forced to adapt to an increasingly market driven economy in which the accumulation of capital and the development of the new technologies has increasingly led to a specialization and concentration on the production of a few goods and services by members of units other than families.

The success of the local culture in maintaining a large economic base tied to its traditional folk activities is remarkable despite the relative decline of such activities. The home garden and the small barnyard establishment of chickens, and milk cows have fared less well than traditional male activities discussed in detail below. However, research would need to be done to ascertain how many families remained vital economic units. There are still farm families where both spouses cooperate on producing a few staples, women who run small businesses with their relatives from their homes and other signs of persisting involvement by some Cajun women in preserving their families' economic independence from marketing their labor and developing the capital of others.

The role of women in the culture of Acadiana has yet to become the sole focus of a single monograph. The economic and social development of the region must include women. Cajun society was still in the early Postwar period patriarchal to the degree which nearly all Western cultures and many others have recognized men's authority over their family. Women certainly expected that during their peak childbearing years wives focused much of their energy on childbearing and child rearing and that men did not

The old woman in **plate five** had over 100 living descendants and appears in the Stryker collection posed in the same porch and chair beside one of her youngest great grandchildren. Rural and aged as she was, the photographers must have been as alien to her as she was to them and perhaps they captured this in the way her expression fails to engage the viewer directly.

In the photographs of Acadiana as opposed to other regions, the Stryker photographers have a high incidence of men smiling and relatively expressive of physical affection to their children. On that basis alone one could not make much of an argument about relationships between

family members. However, it appears that many photographs show men in the region holding their children and smiling among other photographs taken in Acadiana in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Many also show the serious paternal poses which were typical of the time. Perhaps Cajun men felt more comfortable expressing physical affection for their children than did some other ethnic groups.

The following picture, **plate six** simply depicts the pride of a father in his healthy young child. Cajun culture in prairie and wetlands centered around family life. Religion, commerce and politics were all shaped by the family. In politics for example a title of great power before a name was "Cousin," and in doing business the negotiations between strangers are often preceded by an effort to discover and recognize any familial ties between the parties. In the pejorative terminology of American mainstream society, nepotism functioned as a central mechanism of Cajun life. This lifeway allowed the Cajuns to survive. The keen scientific observer and Spanish governor Antonio de Uloa (much maligned for a passive administration) said of the "Acadianos" in 1766, that they were a "people who live as if they were a single family...; they give each other assistance...as if they were all brothers and sisters, thus making them more desirable as settlers than any other kind of people."

Despite the remarkable lack of credit and attention given to the people about whom Ulloa wrote it would be difficult to comprehend the draining, dredging, flooding and clearing which the Cajuns had to achieve in order to subsist in what remained a wetlands environment. Their contribution to the state and the Gulf Coast overshadows that of many better understood groups.

Even in 1992, the folkways of beginning a relationship by seeking to find a kinship tie endures. Kinship exists in two ways, first there is genetic kinship. The second type, ritual kinship has been studied in somewhat different forms in the Caribbean, the Philippines and Latin America and will be discussed later in this study. Third cousins once removed even today may feel significant bonds as "family" which they do not find with non-relatives. The degree to which they do not find with non-relatives. The degree to which such values can survive in a society and world which literally worships the individual as the creative source of all that is valuable in life perhaps amazes an observer of twentieth century Cajuns more than anything else. Families may often be classes by outside "scientists" as codependent, dysfunctional or repressive. Sometimes they seem appropriately warm and supportive. However, close extended family ties form a basic element of Cajun culture.

The spirit of extended family loyalties is captured in B.A. Botkin's *A Treasury of Southern Folklore*. The details might well represent the perceptions of an entirely candid if effusive observer in a very ordinary situation in Vermilion Parish. The slightly patronizing tones of the author should not detract from the forceful distinction he made between his and the Cajun's concept of family.

*"One pitchy black night" writes Irvin S. Cobb
in the hunting season, five years ago (circa*

*1920), we were feeling our way along the bayou
below Abbeville on our way to the ducking
grounds. In a sharp turn our launch went
hard aground. The prospect seemed to be that
we would stay right where we were until morning
or even later than that....
There were four of us in the party--three
outlanders and one native - and inevitably
the native was a Broussard. He went aft
and leaned over the rail and speaking in
French, he sent his voice out across those
empty spaces....Promptly out of the void
came first one answering voice and then
another and yet a third (The three men freed
the boat from the mud and refused the narrator's
offer to pay)....When navigation had been
resumed I put a question to the resident:
"How did you know those chaps were living
out here in this wilderness?"
"I didn't ... I took a chance. I yelled out
that there was a Broussard in trouble here
on the mudbank and that if he had any cousins
around here he'd like them to rally around.
So they rallied around and rescued us."*

Another form of kinship consists of ritual kinship. The concept may seem alien to Anglo-Americans, yet it is the nature of relationships between in-laws. The difference being that, in America another ritual can also bind people in ties of kinship. Baptism produces a Parrain and a Nanan for the Cajun child. This relationship has declined in status during the last several decades, yet continues to enjoy significant prestige. Parrain may translate into "Godfather" but the roles assigned to such figures in Acadiana are far more prestigious and complex than among Anglo-Catholics while less important than in Spanish culture.

Extended family and nuclear family exist within traditional Western European concepts of family. To this day, a high degree of endogamy (marriage within the overall Cajun culture) and of geographical proximity to one's relatives combines within a goodly number of family reunions, a high interest in genealogies and a resurgence of regional pride to keep extended family ties alive. Nonetheless, the educational, economic and legal structures of the United States effectively discourage the intricate mesh of socio-economic collaboration which supported the Cajun extended family for so long. By the time these photographs were taken, some degree of erosion of extended familial ties was visible. In the study of kinship, the historian confronts evidence of American forces of assimilation which may in time annihilate Cajun distinctiveness.

Marriage remains the central relationship in Cajun culture. In the 1940s divorce was nearly unknown and the Alleman's who appear in plate seven certainly would have defined themselves as life-partners. Nonetheless, compared to the warm and affectionate pictures of fathers with their children, this image does not reveal great warmth of intimacy.

Arnold Eagle has clearly posed these people and both are looking directly at the camera. Nonetheless, no evidence exists to suggest that he modified their habitual seating or living arrangement. In the 1930s collection by Stryker's F.S.A. Photographers, trappers' camps appear as ruinous, but those did not constitute year-round dwellings. The Cajun homes if clean, and practical often lack much beauty. The guns, fireplace, the lamp and the crucifix all serve a practical function (religion would have seemed practical). The Acadian people's experience of a demanding environment and unsympathetic government and corporate neighbors as well as limited church activity in the area may have contributed to the strong pragmatic bent of the culture. A "Down to earth" level of prosperity, safety first farming dwelling and a close relationship with the wilderness characterized the type of lifestyle perceived as sensible. This did not preclude wage earning, commerce or expensive celebrations but it did preclude spending too much on consumer goods and *objets d'art*.

Taking a picture of this family and those things which their most casual visitors could see, Eagle uses the bright interior lighting to emphasize the stark simplicity of these people's lives. Edbon Alleman's more central position, in front of the fireplace, and his stern look, crossed legs and hands gripping his rocker as a throne contrast with Mrs. Alleman's demure gaze, her hands in her lap. Cajun women have often been seen by outsiders to have forceful and talkative personalities, yet by recent feminist standards it is clear that Mr. Alleman "headed" his home when intrusive outsiders were around.

Cajun families have always possessed guns for hunting and during the French and Indian War, War of 1812 and Civil War they bore their own arms into battle. The guns may disturb the urban eye of the late twentieth century (they remain ubiquitous among Cajuns). Most Americans movies and songs made about outsiders in Acadiana such as Southern Comfort, Gator Bait and "The Highway Goes on Forever" portray the Cajuns as extremely violent, no doubt some basis exists for this. Cajuns have long endured hostility and persecution from powerful outsiders, sometimes these territorial people have added to such conflicts. Acadians fought the British in Acadia in the late 1750s. Their descendants opposed outsiders with force between 1850 and 1870. In more recent times, Cajuns supported and assisted Vietnamese Catholics in their resettlement in Acadiana, but violence punctuated competition over fishing rights. Vietnamese fisherman were not aware of the orally agreed upon territories of Cajun fishermen. Overwhelmingly, however, a Cajun home has received les autres with hospitality and coffee, like extended family.

From the marital unit, Cajuns established social, religious and commercial ties to other families. According to Lauren C. Post, and most other authorities, women controlled many of the chattels which produced cash, especially chicken and milch cows. They also maintained gardens and

spinning wheels well into the first decade of this century. Men traditionally controlled the land, herds of cattle and hogs which the family brought to market less often but for greater sums. Adolescent males hunted, fished, did chores and raised their own funds through countless small youth dominated industries (bountying, frogging, etc.). Cajun youth often provided a significant portion of the meat and fish eaten by the family. Cajun families swapped woolens and game, cooperated with neighbors in *halerie*, *boucherie*, *couverage*, the planning of the village *fais do do*, and the normal affairs of business and politics. Of all the various means for such connections, coffee seems to have been the most common excuse for prolonged interaction.

Here in **plate eight**, the Allemans entertain in the way one might entertain men who had come to discuss politics or business but whom one knew well. Notice the relative ease that which these people feel on the porch. Two men still manifest an awareness of the intrusive camera but one perceives the breezy comfort which the porch both symbolizes and provides. Eagle has angled this picture in such a way as to capture all three open sides of the porch, the open windows and the open door, the attic vent and the space below the raised house. by the 1960s, the air conditioner and the television would do much to erode the role of the porch (as throughout the Anglo and African regions of the South), yet, as late as this writing, Cajun culture is an out-of-doors way of life. Street dances, festivals, water-sports, hunting, fishing, new technologies in aquaculture and petroleum mining and the other mixes of old and new activities express the connection of the people to the wide and flat openness broken by giant oaks beneath a vast blue or clouded sky. People did not feel less welcome on the porch. They only felt cooler in the long, hot and humid months of the summer.

Coffee, in 1945, was not the weak adjunct to hospitality which is found in a jar of freeze-dried granules. It was a gift. Acadian coffee remained a source of pride for the people of the region. Made strong enough that it seemed pure black in a demi-tasse (a very small cup). Cajuns worked for some time on their coffee, "Ca c'est bon le cafe! " being a prized compliment. Most families considered themselves past masters at this art. The technique of making coffee shows how interaction for centuries with Anglo-American culture (beginning in Nova Scotia) allowed the Cajuns to believe that all Cajuns did certain things better than other peoples. The Cajuns typically also stereotyped various groups of outsiders based on certain properties. It is very hard to say with certainty how welcome the outsiders with cameras felt in Acadiana. But that will be discussed at some length in another chapter.

Emanuel Moras, the *raconteur* whose tale appears earlier in this chapter, told the following tale:

*"There was a fruit peddler who got on
a steamer to cross the ocean. The captain
objected to having him on board because
he thought the fish would capsize his
steamer in order to get the fruits, but
he was assured it would not happen, so
the peddler was allowed to remain on*

board. While at sea, the fish got on. The captain grabbed the box of oranges and threw it overboard when he saw a big fish getting on. The fish swallowed the box and a little later came back for some more. This time the captain threw the basket of bananas overboard. The fish swallowed it, and returned later. This time they threw the Dago (Italian-American) over- The ship reached land safely. A year later, the fisherman caught the fish, cut him open without knowing the history of the fish. They found the Dago. He was sitting on a box of oranges, selling bananas at the same old price, two for a nickel. He had not changed his price."

Food and drink and economics distinguished the Italian-Americans in Cajun folk imagination and homemade, laboriously prepared and generously shared coffee distinguished the Cajuns in their own minds.

The coffee beans were patiently roasted to "between" medium and dark in a stove-top roaster. French drip coffee has all but vanished since the sixties, in the 1940s it was made with the kind of concentration evinced by Joseph Mouton, a cattle rancher and small-scale meat packer entertained the photographer with a steak dinner and Webb took pictures of most of his daily routine. The Moutons exemplify a common case in the area, this family held substantial assets in head of cattle, land, equipment and businesses. Unlike wealthy or substantial persons elsewhere, the Moutons employed little non-family labor. Their home and dress remain as stark and austere as their neighbors'. Their manner and porch lack even the simple refinements of the Allemans.

Traditionally, husbands made a family's very early first pot of coffee. Wives made the subsequent ones. Mrs. Mouton in **plate ten**, serves a late morning pot to her husband and one other man in a much more casual way than Mrs. Alleman. Joseph Mouton would seldom do business at home while Alleman may have been entertaining customers of his pirogue making shop. Mr. Alleman is pictured in **plate eleven** with the tools of his trade and one of his products. Edbon Alleman's craft served a vital function in the complex of skills and techniques which allowed the Cajuns to thrive in the wetlands.

Plates twelve through eighteen trace a single material Cajun response to the local environment and the universal human need for transportation. Arnold Eagle who took these photographs also made a film entitled *The Pirogue Maker*. This film shows the grace and skill of the artisan in a way which the stills do not fully capture. In these images, Arnold Eagle has

captured Edbon Alleman's creation of a pirogue. The countless shallow channels and lakes which nature has placed in Southwest Louisiana require a flat bottom boat to be conveniently negotiated. In 1992 many flat-bottom vessels of various sizes are produced and sold in Acadiana. These modern vessels, fashioned primarily from aluminum, boast speeds and carrying capacity which the traditional pirogue does not.

The Cajun experience included a full history of exposure to and participation in French maritime culture, numerous voyages during Le Grand Derangement, exposure to and imitation of Micmac birch bark canoes in Nova Scotia and Attakapas dugouts in Louisiana. Into this rich mix of cultural knowledge came the internal combustion engine and other modernizing technologies. Cajuns fished, trapped, gathered and farmed in swamps, bayous, marshes, bays and in the open Gulf waters. The diversity of their needs led to a great deal of variety and creativity in boat design.

Among the other vessels photographed by Stryker's photographers was the small skiff made to be rowed from a standing position, various v-hulled vessels, the sea going fishing boat known as the Lafitte skiff and the Cajun *bateau*, which functions as a barge. Cajun vessels which do not appear in the collection include the compartmentalized water-car or fish car which was towed behind these barges as a series of live wells for bringing his catch to market so that no inland fishery could be truly remote. The photographs do come at a time when few of the metal boats imitating traditional pirogue and bateau designs had been produced. Nonetheless it is interesting that these successful innovations eluded the photographers of time. The simple houseboat, shown in **plate 19**, allowed some Cajuns to live in whichever part of the wetlands suited their need and inclination at a given time. The houseboat allows access to vast natural resources without the capital outlay or ecological cost of trying to remove the region from its wild state. These adaptations not easily modified to accommodate the newer creature comforts disappeared.

The Stryker photographers generally recorded scenes of relaxed domestic life and cheerful faces at work on the houseboat. The houseboat developed in the Atchafalaya region of Acadiana once the initial attempts at farming the remote islands and cheniers of the swamp had proven unprofitable. Many swamper families developed the lifestyle of hunter-gatherers and the houseboat allowed the family to stay together instead of remaining at home near a struggling garden and barnyard while the men of the family traveled from one run down camp to another in pursuit of furs, fish, frogs and fowl.

The bayous and channels remain places of work and recreation. The waters have ceased to serve as homes for families. During the summers, friends within a town may visit boat-to-boat and from the wharves which form the spine of so many towns. But the houseboat was an extreme adaptation and its passing into the status of relic and recreational vehicle has real significance as a sign of assimilation. Determining what it means for a culture to turn a formerly necessary cultural trait into an aspect of recreation has been a theme in the work of Gaines Foster's studies of a distinct Southern culture in the United States. Any keen observer of modern life sees highland games, fencing, track and field, martial arts, competitions, Hawaiian

lu'au and surfing realizes that much of recreation carries over from the past folkways of cultures that attached different significance to these same activities. In some cases, the activities remain powerful vehicles for transmitting the identity of the culture in which the practice originated, otherwise the activities may simply become absorbed into the subculture of recreation as it exists in a larger and totally alien cultural context. Many small towns and more "modern" lifestyles could also establish themselves around water. Captain Zenon Doucet of the "40 Fathoms" and his crew went after shrimp. They travelled out into the gulf and carried ice to preserve their catch. When they returned they sold their catch and lived for a while in the relatively modern town of Morgan City, Louisiana. At times, they would have tenders bring them ice and sell their catch (or more likely its oldest portion) to the tender to stay out a little longer. Plates twenty and twenty-one represent a number of photographs in which the Stryker photographers captured some aspect of the shrimping industry.

This lifestyle was much practiced in smaller towns such as Delcambre where these boats are docked. During hurricanes and storms, the off-season and holidays, shrimpers sometimes worked ashore. Often they had access to family farms or business where extra help was needed.

The four pictures in **plates twenty-two through twenty-five** -- a merchant and his son engaging in part time commercial fishing, a fisherman tarring his nets to preserve them in the hot and humid climate, a man shovelling oysters and a man collecting moss to be cured for upholstery -- together capture some of the rich diversity of life on the waters and wetlands. This fabric of work has evolved continuously, the photographers also took pictures of the hoop nets being tarred and of other forms of fishing. The seafood and fishing industry is not a simple industry in any way. the earliest recorded example of raising crawfish in artificial ponds is the 1770 account collected in Phillip Pittman's 1906 study

. A visitor to the region wrote "The craw-fish abound in this country; they are in every part of the earth...they send to their gardens, where they have a small pond dug for that purpose, and are sure of getting as many as they have occasion for. (34)" Large scale commercial crawfish production did not develop until the mid twentieth century. The raising of turtles in the Atchafalaya region and the development of catfish ponds throughout Acadiana has also developed mostly during the twentieth century, both were established when these photographs were taken. The raising of alligators and redfish have developed in the years since the photographs discussed and the crawfish industry has expanded along with the catfish. These aquacultural industries have benefitted by individual quick freezing technologies, better grading and packaging technologies and improved communications and transportation. This industry has continued a long tradition which was much more precarious in the 1940s than it is in the 1990s.

The seafood and fishing industry in Acadiana also includes a complex of extractive freshwater, salt marsh and salt water fisheries. Each of the species raised as an aquacultural product first became part of the diet through the efforts of extractive fisherman. The labor and capital invested in the preparation and care of oyster shoals and beds varies from bed to bed. despite oystering mariculture has never really existed in Acadiana. The saltwater bays and the Gulf of

Mexico have been exploited by extractive fishing alone. In recent decades the offshore oil production has increased the diversity of employment opportunities in the Gulf.

The freshwater extractive fisheries have long provided the plurality of livelihoods in the Atchafalaya region. The finest study done of the cultural geography of the Atchafalaya region is Malcom L. Comeaux's 1972 study *Atchafalaya Swamp Life: Settlement and Folk Occupations*. Comeaux's study shows the variety and complexity of technologies used to catch fish in the freshwater Atchafalaya Basin. Comeaux also shows the ways in which the local fisheries fit in with other aspects of the folk economies. Figure two, taken from Comeaux's book (page 98), illustrates how these various economic practices fit into the season of the Atchafalaya, how they changed over time and the way in which a single family might be involved in all of the traditional "swamping" activities.

The photographers captured an impressive portion of the richness of the life and work which spread out from the wetlands. The photographers observed realities such as the collaboration of a father and son and then expressed that reality in their own vocabulary. The artistry which shows the proud father with his son and their catch as a unit of strength does not come from the people, but rather from the composition and direction of the photographers. The artist has both father and son facing the camera as one, the fish joining them as a visual baseline and the heads controlled by the heads of the family. A journalist achieves the same unity by using images, facts and statistics to weave an argument about his or her subject. here, one rests assured that father and son actually shared and economic interest in the fish, faced customers and suppliers together and functioned under the headship of the father. The creative and imaginative work of the photographer told "the truth" about what he saw. Art need not mean "not factual." What was the role of imagination and ideals in the somewhat exotic world these people had set out to capture on film?

Notes:

Carl A. Brasseaux, The Founding of the New Acadia; 11 and 31.

My proposal is to begin with a few paragraphs giving a bibliographic and historiographic summary of the literature and research which has dealt with the Cajun house. These paragraphs will treat the historical and climactic forces which impacted on its design

See Kniffen's treatment of the shotgun house in his essay titled "The Study of Folk Architecture: Geographical Perspectives" which appears in the anthology Cultural Diffusion and Landscapes: Selections by Fred B. Kniffen; edited by H> Jesse Walker and Randall A. Detro.

Refer to the next chapter of this study, and look at Louisiana's Remarkable French Vernacular Architecture by Jay Edwardss

Todd Webb to Roy Stryker, May 9, 1947; Box 1, S.C.S.O.N.J. at E.P.A.

See Post especially Cajun Sketches. Writer also had considerable personal experience in farmhouses during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In Holtman, See Dorman 90-95. In Bayous of Louisiana Kane uses this and similar terms often throughout. The term ribbon farm was first applied by rural sociologists retrospectively studying the manorial and pre-manorial farms of Europe's past from the vantage point of the nineteenth century.

The original source of this abound. However, the wirter has excluded Papeles Procedents de Cuba from this bibliography. For the present see "Allons a la Louisiane", Brasseaux, Founding of the New Acadia. See also Post, Cajun Sketches, 39.

See Post, Sketches, 100-103 and 107-109.

Acadiana Profile magazine has done numerous articles on the local economy which indirectly address this set of "women's issues." The local economy today increasingly divides work from the home as is true of much of the world. Acadiana is rapidly becoming less distinctive regarding these things.

In fact despite the warmth of a few Walker Evans photographs men hugging children is not a common theme in American photography. The photographs are posed but not therefore insignificant. The subjects comfort in the situation is significant.

Audiencia de Santo Domingo, Leggio 2585.

Botkin, Southern Folklore, 590.

"Godfather" and "Godmother" the obligations are far more comprehensive than religious ones.

This inspires the comment of everyone writing of Cajuns in Louisiana after 1860.

"Halerie", hauling wood for buildings; "Boucherie" most festive and ritualized of cooperative events "killing", butchering and processing and storing a hog or several hogs. "Couverage" roofing and "fais do do" to "make (the babies)sleep" for an outdoor dance for adults, all remain tied to the outdoors.

The social use of the outdoor space in the South generally is a phenomena much remarked upon by northerners before compressed freon and electricity changed the region's idea of a pleasant summer evening. Much of cajun life remains tied to the outdoors.

Corinne Saucier's Folktales, 84.

See Comeaux's Atchfalaya for discussion of swamping boats and technologies and the function of these in a hunting and gathering lifestyle. Furthermore this lifestyle was largely commercial and in many ways less subsistence oriented than the more stable life of the smallest prairie farms.

Due to the withdrawal of my colleague Richard Simonton from the project on which we had collaborated and into which I had invested some considerable time, I have decided to ask permission to radically redefine my project in a way which requires little if any scientific and technical expertise, but which may have some considerable scientific value.