

EPISODE TITLE: Martin Furniture Works

CIRCA: 1935 – pre WWII

Guest Interview: Dale and Terry Martin

Project: Breakfast Table and Chairs

Status: Initial interview completed

Martin Furniture Works began in the blacksmith shop of Conrad "Coony" Martin in 1935. His son, Howard, made a simple set of wood furniture for his own use. Others liked it and asked him for a set. Soon, this "hobby turned side-business" became the mainstay of the Martin family. WWII interrupted furniture production as the shop was conscripted to make broom, shovel and hoe handles for the war effort. After the war, handle production continued and furniture production resumed.

The simple, durable and inexpensive furniture was popular with schools, restaurants, bars and families in post-war America. Thousands of sets of these tables, chairs and stools were delivered throughout Louisiana and the rest of the country.

The story is told by Dale and Terry Martin, sons of Howard. Dale and Terry operated MFW with their grandfather after their parents' untimely deaths. Video locations will be at Dale's home, Terry's home, the old MFW shop and the MT studio shop.

The model piece is one of the earliest embodiments of their popular dining table and chair sets.



Terry Martin (Left Sitting)
Dale Martin (Center Standing)
Conrad Martin (Right Standing)



Pre-WWII Breakfast Table & Chair

EPISODE TITLE: Miss Olive's Pie Safe

CIRCA: 1910

Guest Interview: Olive Freeman; Vermilion Parish Sheriff Mike Couvillon; Miss Olive's children

Project: Cypress pie safe

Status: Initial interview completed

Octogenarian Olive Freeman lost her ancestral home and most of its contents during the 2005 hurricane, Rita. This pie safe, or garde-manger, was badly damaged, but recovered. Her parents had purchased it used in 1910 for \$4. The pie safe was rebuilt using material salvaged from the on-site barn, also destroyed by the flood.

Pie safes can be found made of many different woods and variants, but this one is very typical of those found in Louisiana in the first part of the 20th century. This piece is made from cypress and is an assembly of assemblies. The front and back panel assemblies screw onto the side panel assemblies. Drawers, shelves, doors and trim are attached to complete the piece.

- A digital reproduction of the piece is animated to disassemble and show the original components and assembly procedure.

The story is told by 89 year old Miss Olive Freeman. Video locations will be at her past homestead, her new home and the MT studio shop.

The material will be newly milled kiln dried cypress, period hardware and bronze screening.



Restored piece



Digital Reproduction

EPISODE TITLE: Miss Lura's Table

CIRCA: 1945

Guest Interview: Lura "Luri" Schuff

Project: Pine breakfast table

Martel Fuselier built this table for his daughter, Lura, as a breakfast table as she first set out on her own in 1945. Her youngest daughter used it as her first kitchen table when she began her family in 1978. Serving the family for decades, the table later languished in storage, all but forgotten for years. Today, Martel's granddaughter and great-great-grandchildren use the fully-restored piece to play games and drink coffee on Nana's back porch.

This episode is filmed and completed and is the source of the five-minute demonstration video.

The project table is made from new and reclaimed cypress.



Lura Schuff



Project Table

EPISODE TITLE: **Father Teurling's Rocker**

CIRCA: 1915

Guest Interview: Janice McNeil – Curator; Museum of Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
Rosalind Foley – Author; One mile an hour : the priestly memories of Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. Teurlings

Project: Rocking chair made for Monsignor William Joseph Teurlings

Father William Teurling(s?), born in Tilburg, Holland in 1872, was instrumental in forming the infrastructure of the Lafayette area Catholic community. Respected by Jews, Catholics, blacks and whites, his dynamic personality inspired and influenced the spiritual and political growth of early twentieth century Lafayette. Father Teurlings opened his heart to the pleas of black Catholics and was instrumental in forming black and mixed-race churches in what is now known as Acadiana.

In 1915, Louis Sarcin Broussard made the mahogany rocker which now resides in the Museum of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette, Louisiana.

The story is told by Janice McNeil, curator of the museum. Video locations will be at the museum, Teurlings High School and Fr. Teurlings gravesite at the Calvary Cemetery and the MT studio shop.

The project will be a faithful copy of the original (sans repairs).



Museum Curator Janice McNeil

EPISODE TITLE: General Alfred Mouton's Secretary

CIRCA: 1850

Guest Interview: Anne-Marie Hightower – Curator; Alexander Mouton House

Project: General Jean Jacques Alfred Alexander Mouton's mahogany secretary

Mouton (1829-1864) was born in Opelousas, Louisiana, the son of former Governor of Louisiana Alexander Mouton. After graduating from West Point, he resigned his commission and took a position as an engineering assistant with the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad. Afterwards, he took up sugarcane farming in Lafayette, Louisiana. While living in Lafayette Parish, he became a prominent member of the community due to his family connections. He was well thought of and lived up to his position in the community. He served as leader of the Lafayette Vigilante Committee, which formed to dispense justice to those who paid off juries or perjured witnesses. He also served as brigadier general in the Louisiana State Militia from 1850–61. General Mouton died in the Civil War Battle of Mansfield on April 8, 1864.

It is unclear just when Mouton acquired the secretary, but it is understood that he moved it to each residence as he relocated. The top portion was nailed to the table from underneath. Also unclear is whether the table and adjoined secretary were intended as a set, but it is obvious that this was its use.

The story is told by Anne-Marie Hightower, curator of the Alexander Mouton House museum. Video locations are the museum and the MT studio shop.

The project will be a faithful recreation of the original.



Secretary



Anne-Marie Hightower

EPISODE TITLE: Rougeou Family Table

CIRCA: 1950

Guest Interview: Mrs. Clyde (Ruth) Rougeou and Benjamin Rougeou

Project: Round flip-top dining table/love seat.

Clyde L. Rougeou (1915-1980), born near LeCompte, Louisiana, received his B.S. degree from Southwestern Louisiana Institute (SLI, subsequently known as the University of Southwest Louisiana, aka; USL and then the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, aka; UL-L). Appointed instructor in Agriculture at SLI in 1937 he received Ph.D. from University of Minnesota in 1949. He was named acting president of USL, January 1, 1966 and assumed the presidency on July 1, 1966.

Dr. and Mrs. Rougeou had nine children. They quickly outgrew their dining table, but lacked adequate room for a traditional long table. A local artisan, Mr. Broussard, devised a solution that provided seating for all while allowing for their limited space. The unique flip-top table pivots on the back of what serves as the base of the table in one position and the back of a love-seat chair in another.

The table is currently in use at the home of Dr. Rougeou's youngest daughter, Nancy Jo Simon, in New Iberia Louisiana.

The story is told by Mrs. Ruth and her eldest son, Benjamin 'Benji' Rougeou. Video locations are the campus of UL-L, the home of Mrs. Simon and the MT studio shop.



Table top on down position

Table top in up position

Benji Rougeou

EPISODE TITLE: Prayer Kneeler - 'Prie Dieu'

CIRCA: 1600-Present

Guest Interview: Janice McNeil – Curator; Museum of Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
Anne-Marie Hightower – Curator; Alexander Mouton House

Project: Our interpretation of a traditional French Prie-Dieu

A prie-Dieu (French: literally, "pray [to] God"), also known as 'kneeler' or prayer desk is a type of prayer desk primarily intended for private devotional use. Often found in churches of the European continent, it is a small ornamental wooden desk furnished with a sloping shelf for books, and a cushioned pad (kneeler) on which to kneel. Sometimes, instead of the sloping shelf, a padded arm rest will be provided. With Louisiana's strong French-Catholic heritage, the prie-Dieu became a fixture in the lives of the Acadian "Cajun" people.

The prie-Dieu appears not to have received its present name until the early part of the 17th century. At that period in France a small room or oratory was sometimes known by the same name. A similar form of chair, in domestic furniture is called "prie-Dieu" by analogy. Sometimes, a prie-Dieu will consist only of the sloped shelf for books without the kneeler.

Mrs. Janice McNeil and Anne-Marie Hightower will give insight and history for the traditional and modern examples and designs. We'll examine an elaborate version made for Bishop Schexnayder in the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Video locations are the Cathedral and Mouton House museums and the MT studio shop.



Mrs. Jan McNeil with the Bishop's prie-Dieu Traditional French prie Dieu

EPISODE TITLE: Breaux Family Table

CIRCA: 1965

Guest Interview: Karl "Cajun Karl" Breaux; Host of Cajun Karl's Cook'n Adventures (TV show)
Wallace Breaux, Sr.
Sarah Webb West

Project: Dining table

Francis Charles Webb was a respected residential building contractor in post WWII Lafayette until the middle of the twentieth century. He seldom built furniture for others, but could be coaxed by friends for the occasional commissioned piece. Needless to say, furniture made by Mr. Webb is hard to find.

There are only two instances of a round dining table made by Mr. Webb. One was made for a local grocer, Mr. Wallace Breaux, Sr. of Lafayette, Louisiana. Mr. Breaux's youngest son, Karl, currently manages the family grocery store and has his own locally produced television show, "Cajun Karl's Cook'n Adventures."

Of special note is that Mr. Webb is the grandfather of the host of MT, Roy Couvillion. Roy remembers Mr. Webb building the table, but did not know to whom or where the table was delivered. This is in spite of the fact that Roy went to high school with Mr. Breaux's eldest son, Wallace Breaux, Jr.

Mr. Wallace, Karl and Mrs. Sarah West will tell the story about the table and its origin. Video locations are the home of Mr. Wallace and the MT studio shop.



Karl "Cajun Karl" Breaux

EPISODE TITLE: **Porch Swing**

CIRCA: ~1800-present

Guest Interview: Varied local craftsmen

Project: Cypress Porch Swing

The iconic porch swing is not exclusive to Cajuns, but it's hard to find anyone in Louisiana who doesn't have fond memories of family and a porch swing. From the farmhouse to the town house, the porch swing's rhythmic squeak signaled family gathering, quiet moments, discussions, stories and song in Louisiana.

Today, much as in years past, local craftsmen hold porch swings for sale from their front lawns and pick-up trucks. Generally, these are made from local cypress, a rot resistant wood. Otherwise, the styles and construction differ as much as do gumbo recipes.

In this episode, Roy will use his father's swing pattern to create a porch swing. Not surprising, he'll modify some structural details, but the profile and aesthetic design will be taken directly from the old patterns.



EPISODE TITLE: Chiffarobe

CIRCA: 1900 - present

Guest Interview: Family owners of heirloom pieces. State-wide interviews with antique dealers.

Project: Chiffarobe

Get a Cajun to tell you a story from his childhood and the two words “Ma-ma” and “chiffarobe” will probably get used in the same sentence at least once before it’s done. This compact combination dresser-armoire-hatbox has made its way into the homes Cajuns in every social stratum.

Many early 20th century homes had no built-in closets. Seldom hand-made, these inexpensive miniature armoires could be found in designs specifically for gentlemen or ladies or for no gender preference. They were commonly made in white oak or secondary hardwoods such as poplar and gum.

In this episode, Roy will copy a very common version of the chiffarobe. Originally made of poplar, the copy will be made of red oak with some structural improvements.



Original of stained poplar



Recreation of stained red oak

EPISODE TITLE: Gate-Leg Table

CIRCA:

Guest Interview: John H. Lawrence; Director of Museum Programs
The Historic New Orleans Collection

Project: Gate-Leg Table

Gate-leg tables originally appeared in 16th century Europe, primarily in England. Now found largely in the Jacobian and the William and Mary styles and mostly of European origin, this space-saving table appeared in 18th century colonial America as settlers' cherished possessions. The domestic interpretations of the gate-leg, sometimes called a 'drop-leaf' table, appear in white oak and domestic black walnut. Not usually found in rural Cajun farmhouses, they were not uncommon in New Orleans.

The model for this project is a pecan gate-leg of William and Mary style with end-drawers. The episode project piece will be made from American black walnut.



Pecan Original – open



Pecan Original - Closed



Sanding legs on walnut copy

EPISODE TITLE: **Fall-Front Writing Desk – Portable Secretary**

CIRCA: 1906

Guest Interview:

Project: White oak secretary

This hand-made writing desk is dated 2/19/6 in the apparent handwriting of its builder. The cast brass hardware is marked “Made In England” and the pencil and scribe markings of its maker reveal the workmanship. Imported hardware was commonly used on domestic furniture, so the hardware stamp doesn’t identify the country of origin. However, the turn of the century date format of M/D/Y is more common in the United States. European date conventions employ the D/M/Y format. Since there is no 19th month, this date format indicates a domestic origin.

There is no story attached to this piece that I know of...yet. It’s just really cool and I want to make one.

