



Furniture maker to found Northshore school

Story and Photos by Karen Glasscock

A Louisiana furniture artisan, whose custom French Creole and Acadian designs grace some of the state's oldest buildings, plans to found a school of decorative arts and craftsmanship deep within the piney woods of west St. Tammany Parish.

"It's part of our vision," said master cabinetmaker Greg Arceneaux.

The future site is on nine lush acres in Goodbee north of the Little Tchefuncte River and is surrounded by habitat and hardwoods native to Louisiana.

Arceneaux and his wife,

Liz, who is also his marketing-minded business partner, want the school to be reminiscent in the spirit of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright's legendary live-in apprenticeship program at his beloved Taliesin in the hills of Wisconsin. For in addition to meeting the requirements for the school's two-year program, students would be active in gardening and cooking, and the site is already a dedicated bird sanctuary and nature conservancy.

In addition to fine cabinet-making, students may also learn ceramics, textiles and

other applied arts. Even wooden boat building, a local craft form resulting from St. Tammany Parish's rich maritime heritage, will ultimately be part of the curriculum.

"We have such a strong arts community here we feel this will be the perfect place for such a school," said Liz Arceneaux.

Area legislators are exploring possible funding sources, and the couple hope the facility will be built and fully operational in five years.

Through the school Arceneaux wants to preserve and continue the craft of

making Louisiana Creole and Acadian furniture, something he has become a master at through the years.

Recreating history

Greg Arceneaux began his career studying sculpting but quickly discovered a love for working with wood. He hopes to share with students the craft that has enabled him to display his talent in many historical locales, including the Cabildo in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

Following the May 1988 fire that destroyed much of the Cabildo and its cherished

contents Arceneaux was selected to recreate the 15-foot-long mahogany table used for the signing of the Louisiana Purchase. Using the original handwritten specifications from 1793, he also constructed the table's accompanying 12 sturdy pecan chairs with traditional, swamp rush seats.

Today visitors can see in the Cabildo's sunlight-drenched Sala Capitular room the very spot where the historical transaction occurred in 1803, presided over by U.S. President Thomas Jefferson

The Seat of Culture



Louisiana master cabinetmaker Greg Arceneaux displays his reproductions of 18th century Creole-style pecan chairs with rush seats.

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