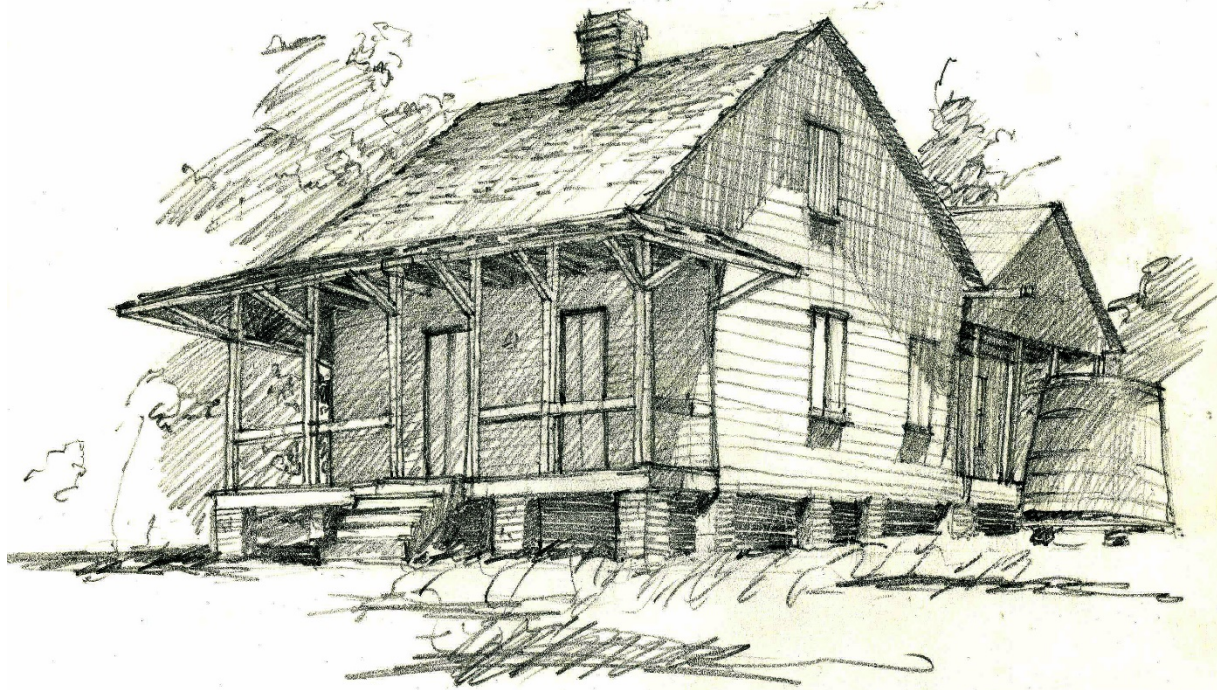


CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE EARLY GERMAN SETTLERS TO  
THE CREOLE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTHERN LOUISIANA



House no. 2

Creole House  
French Settlement.  
Alexandre Dumas  
of the square.

**“There are no insignificant houses, only inadequate ways of looking at them.”**

**Jay D. Edwards**  
**Dept. Geography & Anthropology**  
**Louisiana State University**  
**2020.**  
**gaedwa@lsu.edu**

## NOTIFICATION

This project has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior through the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, or the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the same entities.

This program received federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex or sexual orientation in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to:

Office of Equal Opportunity  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240.

This report completes a 2018-2019 project supported financially by the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. As originally proposed, the project was to include a considerable amount of archival research conducted in libraries and archives in and outside of the state of Louisiana. Much of this was curtailed due to the many complications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Out of state research had to be canceled, as did interviews with descendants of the families of original settlers reported on in the project.

The first portion of this project concerned the history of the earliest vernacular architecture of Louisiana. It was finished in April of 2020, and submitted for publication. It was published in September of 2020 as:

**Edwards, Jay D. 2020. Long Distance Implantation of Vernacular Architecture Traditions: The Canadians in Early Louisiana. *Material Culture Review*: 88/89: 45-78.**

That paper explores the early history of vernacular architecture in Louisiana. It deals with the introduction of French Canadian and West Indian architectural building traditions into the Gulf Coast of Alabama-Louisiana beginning with Iberville's settlements in 1699. It is the first part of a two-part study.

This current paper represents a second chapter in the story of the early architecture of Louisiana. It deals with the little-recognized influence of some 350 German settlers who began arriving in Louisiana in 1721 as a part of John Law's attempts to establish a productive French colony in the lower Mississippi Valley. Their contributions to Louisiana's material culture have remained relatively unappreciated by historians and students of vernacular architecture.

Frontispiece: Sketch of the Old Creole House, French Settlement by David Hutchinson, 1980: (Kniffen Lab survey, LSU). The house exhibits "cross-eyed" façade organization. The extended wrap-around roof is called a "hood" or "false gallery" in Louisiana. French Settlement was settled by many people of German decent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Introduction**

Despite an almost complete scholarly disinterest in the subject, the vernacular architecture of the early eighteenth century German settlers in Louisiana has much to tell us about the interrelationships between a people and its material culture. It asks us to more deeply explore previously unresolved questions, both historical and methodological. It encourages a clearer evaluation of the limits of the traditional approaches employed in the study of architectural history. In addition, it opens new questions surrounding the little-studied problem of the adaptive mechanisms favored by settlers who find themselves cast upon distant shores in alien environments. Under what kinds of conditions are immigrating populations willing to disregard their long-cherished architectural traditions in favor of novel solutions better suited to their newly adopted homelands? From whence do their new ideas derive?

The literature on the development of Louisiana's Creole vernacular architecture is extensive, if not to say, vast. Since the 1930s, studies of Louisiana's architecture have sprung from the standpoints of historical research (Wilson 1969), from that of style (Hawkins 2015), from the interpretation of distinctive cultural features of historic standing structures (Heard 1997), from archaeology (Dawdy 2008; Maygarden 2006), and from the standpoint of the dating, classification and aerial distributions of its numerous unique types and subtypes (Kniffen 1936). Each of these approaches has had its own story to tell. Sometimes they are cumulative, assembling a broader portrait of the whole. But sometimes they support conflicting theories of the origins and meanings of specific architectural types and features. There remains a tendency among some scholars to tie patterns of architectural form too directly to patterns of ethnicity. Folk architecture and ethnic culture each act under their own internal ground rules, largely independent of the other. The question of the origins of the Louisiana shotgun house, for example, has bedeviled scholars and resulted in no broad agreement among them (Edwards 2009).

One reason for the lack of agreement between architectural historians writing from the perspectives of their own individual scholarly traditions is that education in essentially every academic field of material culture emphasizes certain favored methods while neglecting or even disparaging other approaches and knowledge bases. It is no secret that academic fields are rather rigid silos. Successful

practitioners often seem more willing to discount the work of scholars of other fields, rather than to draw upon what might be useful in them. American Architectural historians, for example, draw their primary inspiration from the literature of academic architectural history derived mostly from European traditions, rather than from the shared orally-transmitted knowledge of cultures and crafts of the actual builders. An occasional explanation which places over-emphasis on the works of high-style architects and designers is one result of this perspective. An example would be the attribution of the turned, bottle or cigar shaped colonnettes found on Louisiana Creole houses to “Sheraton Style” (Guillet and Smith 1982: 227; Edwards and Kariouk 2004: 66). Architectural historians occasionally tend to exceed the limits of the evidence in their attempts to attribute widespread features of American vernacular traditions to high-style historic models from far-away Europe (Gowans 1964: 44-45; Toledano 1996: 12; Bacot 1997: 99-99; Bailey 2018: 458). Folklorists and anthropologists less familiar with the languages of the classical, medieval and neoclassical architecture, favor the study of vernacular traditions as adaptive features, transmitted through oral traditions and on-the-job practices. But their failure to recognize the process of “trickle-down” imitation of high-style in the vernacular houses of the countryside is sometimes apparent. In other words, the architectural historian favors the traditions and innovations of power elites, while the anthropologist favors an examination of the cultural processes and differential power relations embedded deeply in the contemporary culture of common people (Trouillot 1995).

As the trained architectural historian views the work of the social scientist, failure to reference the possible influences of elite historical culture (Serlio, Palladio) on features such as façade symmetry or the use of open-air galleries in contemporary vernacular traditions, amounts to questionable historical scholarship. For the anthropologist, the folklorist or the cultural geographer, an unwillingness to take account of contemporary social process and immediate advantages inherent in a popular design feature implies that the researcher has not completed an important component of architectural research – a socio-functional explanation set in the dynamics of the living culture. In each case, academic biases lead inevitably to a loss of something essential in the telling of the story of vernacular architectural traditions - a well-rounded multidisciplinary approach. These differences become more problematic when scholars

attempt to explain the popularity of antique forms which seem to hang on well past the times of their usefulness or relevance. Are ancient forms which continue to be adopted by vernacular builders even generations after they have lost their original meanings simply conforming to the power of some latent atavism embodied in the building arts, or are they sustained by hidden socio-symbolic functions which must be accounted for and understood in any complete telling of the tale of a vernacular tradition?

In what follows we will briefly sketch the history of the settlement early German and Swiss immigrants to Louisiana. We will then examine what is known of their housing traditions. Following that, we will explore the several competing accounts of the vernacular architecture of the Germans, and how we might improve our understanding of its contributions. Ultimately, we ask, what are the limits of the various methods of architectural history in the telling of an appropriately complete story?

### **Settlers from the Rhineland and Switzerland: A Brief History**

The Scottish financier John Law became the French Minister of Finance 1717. Two years later he assumed directorship of the Company of the West. At the time, France was deeply in debt. Since 1699, its Louisiana colony on the Gulf Coast had amounted to an enormous financial burden on the government of France. In the five years between 1712 and 1717, the holder of the Louisiana trading charter, Antoine Crozat, had lost the modern equivalent of roughly one billion dollars (HNOC 2020). John Law was hired by Philippe, Duke of Orleans, regent to the infant King Louis XV, to find a solution to France's debt problem. Law established the *Banque Générale* for France, and introduced paper currency. This, he hoped would increase commercial exchange and provide for a revitalized French economy. Now, in 1717, as head of the company which had been granted a monopoly over French North America, Law began to sell stock in the Company of the West, promising that it would pay regular dividends. The bonds were backed by the collateral of the supposedly vast mineral riches and trading opportunities in the Mississippi River valley. It was a kind of pyramid scheme, and at first it prospered. The value of the stocks (paper wealth) climbed ever higher as rumors of untapped mineral wealth on the Mississippi River circulated around France. Law encouraged the frenzy by placing ingots of gold which he claimed were from mines in

Louisiana in shop windows in Paris (HNOC 2020). In 1719, the price of a share in the Mississippi Company rose 1900 percent in less than a year. Investors from across Europe joined in the run. The term “millionaire” was coined to describe successful investors.

In order to populate Louisiana, the French had sent soldiers, criminals (salt smugglers), vagabonds and prostitutes to the Gulf Coast. These poor exiles were woefully unprepared for life on the frontier, and many perished. At best they were unproductive settlers who could neither farm, nor hunt, nor build. Governor Bienville complained of them in letters to his administrators in France (Edwards 2020: 73-74). The population of the colony remained low and required constant shipments of foodstuffs and supplies. The French territories of North America were a vast land, larger than all of France, yet they were remote -- a kind of mysterious terra incognita, about which citizens of France knew little. John Law sought a way to turn this vast landholding into a source of wealth by marketing its supposed potential to an unsuspecting public. In order to do this, he required an industrious work force which could be sent to establish plantations and mines. In 1718 there were only about 700 Europeans in all of Louisiana (Wikipedia, 2020, Mississippi Company).

Law was familiar with the people of the upper Rhine River which formed part of the border between eastern France and the southwestern German states. On the German side of the river the political landscape consisted of mostly dukedoms and principalities. This had been an area of constant strife since the Thirty Years war (1618 to 1648). Millions of Germans are said to have died of disease and starvation. The struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism (Calvinism and Lutheranism) was exacerbated by local political tensions, attempts at empire building, by horrible winter weather, and by epidemics. French armies arrived, pillaged and slaughtered, then vanished. When given the opportunity, many Germans from this area wished to migrate to America. William Penn was the first American authority to take advantage of the industrious and productive nature of the Rhenish Germans. Philadelphia was founded in 1682, and soon Penn was successful in bringing many Germans to that city, from which they settled southeast Pennsylvania and beyond, establishing successful farms.

This was not lost on John Law. To promote the interest of investors in his scheme, Law commissioned detailed maps of Louisiana which emphasized the possible commercial interests of French North America. These included a famous map by cartographer Guillaume de L'Isle (1718) and another by John Senex (1721). Law printed pamphlets and posters depicting the supposed riches of Louisiana. One, in particular, depicts Louisiana with stone forts and mountains, and friendly Indians from Mexico trading with French traders clad in northern European style garb (Jollain c. 1720).

A German-language broadside and accompanying map published in Leipzig and titled *Geographische Beschreibung der Provinz Louisiana in Canada von dem Fluss St. Lorenz bis an den Ausfluss des Flusses Missisipi* (Geographical description of the Louisiana province in Canada from the St. Lawrence River to the mouth of the Mississippi). It also focused on Louisiana's bounty and unparalleled fertility, encouraging prospective settlers to book the next possible transatlantic passage. According to its anonymous author, "the open fields of this wild land are filled with buffalo, deer, bears, partridge, quail, parrots, woodcock, turtle doves, beaver, otter, marten, and many other birds and game," "wood to build ships is available in abundance," "hemp grows without being planted," and there is "so much copper and lead that one could provide for a whole kingdom" (Greenwald 2016: 33, citing pamphlets published in Leipzig in 1720; Rathburn 1979: 304).

These propaganda posters were designed to appeal to German peasants. Some historians claim that something less than 4000 residents from both sides of the Rhine were originally conscripted for the venture. Law sent out paid recruiters called *Neulanders* with his propaganda. He recruited families from eastern-most France, southwest Germany and northern Switzerland to come to Louisiana as indentured servants to work as miners and farmers. Many packed up and started the perilous journey across France. They began arriving at the Atlantic port of Lorient on July 4, 1720. As the emigrants arrived, they were forced to live under less than adequate conditions. In the next three years some sixteen ships would be commissioned to transport French, Germans and Swiss across the Atlantic to Louisiana. Five, in particular, brought Germans.

Between 1720 and 1721, an estimated 2,600 potential immigrants had arrived at the ports of western France, particularly Lorient. Recent historians argue that the number was considerably less, but the records are filled with gaps. At that time, France was being visited by Bubonic plague. It decimated many of the families after their arduous trip across France. Lorient was selected as their principal point of departure because the headquarters of the Company of the Indies was located there (Le Conte 1967: 34). As many as one thousand persons were “ruined” at Lorient and Port Louis, dying of sickness before the ships contracted to take them were ready to sail. Others perished at sea, probably of malnutrition, scurvy and the plague. At Samaná, northeastern Hispaniola (Santo-Domingo), one vessel was completely lost to piracy. Something less than one thousand Germans survived to land in New Orleans and on the beaches at New Biloxi. There, little provision had been made to accommodate or feed the new arrivals (Blume 1990: 7-22). Le Page du Pratz describes the camp as being laid out in a sandy pine thicket with no possibility for suitable agriculture (Fig. 1). Vegetables could not be raised and the place was so overrun with rats that they ate the stocks right off of the muskets (oiled with animal fat?). He states that more than 500 people died of hunger, most presumably being German immigrants (1975: 31-32). The survivors lived mostly on oysters, gathered by hand from the waters of the bay. Out of a total of about 700 German immigrants, about one-half died there in New Biloxi. The Company of the Indies did not permit them to move inland or to settle on soil more suitable to agriculture (Kondert 2008: 19).

John Law had planned to send 1500 immigrants to his Arkansas settlement as part of a mining venture, but only a few Frenchmen and no Germans were said to have traveled there before he went bankrupt. Ironically, on November 14, 1720, as German settlers were boarding the first “pest ship,” *Les Deux Freres*, in Lorient, in Paris, John Law was fleeing France for his life following the failure of his Mississippi Plan and its financial bubble (Le Conte 1967: 36). Only 130 of the original 230 German passengers of that ship survived to arrive in New Biloxi. Later *La Garrone*, *Le Durance*, and *Le St. André* would depart French shores with hundreds more Germans. The *Durance* and the *St. André* arrived in New Biloxi in January and February of 1721. One of the last German transports, the *Portefaix*, left on March 7



and arrived on June 4, with the future leader of the German community, Karl Fredrick D'Arensborg aboard.

Based upon a brief “eye-witness” account written by Dumont de Montigny, Louisiana historians have long argued that many of the German survivors on the Gulf Coast were transported to John Law’s settlement in Arkansas (Dumont 2012: 156, 159-160). Historians, Marcel Giraud (1974), Morris Arnold (1990), and Albert Robichaux, Jr. (1997), all dispute these claims on the basis of a faulty report by Dumont, written in France in 1747, decades after the event. Though some French laborers and indentured servants arriving in Louisiana *before* the Germans remained at Law’s Arkansas concession for some time, no hard evidence of Germans in Arkansas in this period has appeared. So what did happen to the Germans?

It is clear that many of the German/Swiss immigrants were housed in New Biloxi for a period of months. The magnificent drawing of the New Biloxi settlement rendered by Jean-Baptist Michel Le Bouteux, the *sousdirector* of the camp, shows no less than ten sizable palmetto houses in what would become the German “concession,” each capable of holding up to perhaps a dozen residents (Fig. 1, far left). One must remember, though, that such official drawings were done with a domestic French audience in mind. The artists depicted the subject in a better light than actually existed. The drawing is dated Dec. 10, 1720. Elias Stultheus was the *Director General* of the camp, and M. le duc de Guiche was the officer in charge of the Germans and their settlement. His “concession” is clearly labeled (far left side of drawing), though most of the Germans had not yet arrived to inhabit it.



**Fig. 1. Veuë du Camp de la Concession de Monseigneur Law, au Nouveau Biloxi, Coste de la Louisianne, drawn by Jean-Baptist Michel Le Bouteux, *sousdirector* of John Law's camp, dated Dec. 10, 1720. Detailed captions describe functions of the different structures. Newberry Library Ayer collection, Map 30, No. 77. Le Bouteux refers to the thatched A-frame structures as *baragues*. The two in front function as medical facilities, but they are basically similar to the *chantieres* used in France by forest workers. Army tents, palmetto-covered *cabanes*, and an Upper Norman-style timber frame *magazin* or storehouse are also shown.**

Robichaux believes that the Germans were held at New Biloxi and in New Orleans for months in 1721 because more Germans arriving from France were anticipated. Some individual Germans appear to have begun tentative settlement up the Mississippi River above New Orleans. After enduring calamitous hardship and starvation in New Biloxi and perhaps in New Orleans, the Germans began to demand passage back to France. In December 1721, D'Arensborg negotiated with Governor Bienville for the Germans (Kondert 2008: 20). Bienville made a decision to provide incentives for them to remain in Louisiana, though some did return to France. First, he granted them free farmland on the west side of the Mississippi River some 26 miles above New Orleans in what is today St. Charles Parish. Their concession was on old lands that had belonged to the Taensas (Ouacha) Indians and had been cleared some years earlier, but then more recently abandoned (Blume 1990:15). This land was now considered to be the Michel Delaire concession (Kondert 2003: 30). This area is still known as *Côte des Allemands* (the

German Coast), or simply *Les Allemands* (the Germans). Second, Bienville provided provisions including hand tools (pickaxes, hoes, spades), cows, hogs, poultry, and foodstuffs, sufficient to last them for a year, but he did not provide them with the slaves that they requested. Third, Bienville released them from their financial obligations to the Company. As *engagés* (indentured servants) they would have had to work off the costs of their transportation and support. Then they would have had to purchase land to farm. Instead, Bienville permitted them to become *habitants*, or free and independent small farmers, living on small land grants. He required that they sell the produce they produced to the Company at fixed prices determined by it.

In January of 1722, Bienville issued an order for the owners of all “longboats and flatboats” to surrender their vessels in order to transport the Germans up the Mississippi River to their new homeland. Something less than three hundred Germans were settled by February of that year (Becnel, et. al. 2010: 24-25). In addition to these inducements, Bienville sent roughly eighty workers from the Company of the Indies in New Orleans: lumberjacks, carpenters and slaves. They helped the Germans build their first dwellings. Their original settlements were located between what are today Hahnville and Lucy in St. Charles Parish on the “right bank” (west side) of the Mississippi River.

The settlements consisted of three nucleated communities stretching back from the river, each separated from the others by roughly one half mile. The names given in the first census are: Calstings, Mariendal and Wen, each containing about eighty residents (Blume 1990:15). A tally of 257 persons was taken on May 15 of 1722 (Deiler 1909: 74; Kondert 1990: 35-36). On November 24 of the same year, the population had risen to 330 persons, though it is not known if those included the helpers from the Company of the Indies (Kondert 2008: 24). One of the settlements had: “the appearance of a French village. The huts are along a street. The yards and gardens are behind, and then their terrains. When we are in this area we forget that we are in Louisiana because we are in a French village” (Archives des Colonies, Series G1, Vol. 464, non-paginated; quoted in Robichaux 1997: 54). The Germans raised tobacco, beans, corn, rice, vegetables, peas, and also produced milk and poultry for the Company.

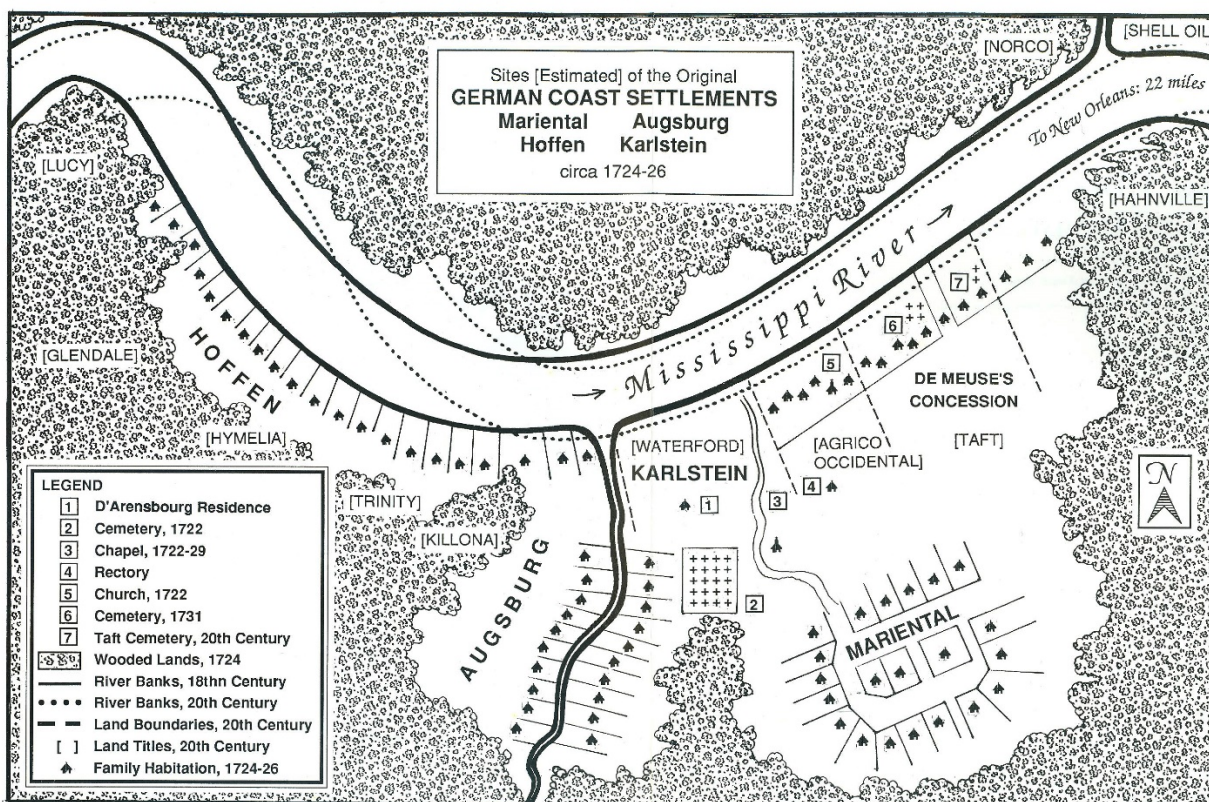
Unfortunately, on September 22-24, 1722, a slow moving Category 4 or 5 hurricane struck the Gulf Coast and devastated the first German settlement. Hurricane force winds lasted fifteen hours in New Orleans. There, the water level in the Mississippi River rose six or more feet and probably flooded the German coast as well (Roth 2010: 11-12). Those present in the new settlement claimed that the hurricane raised the level of nearby *lac des Allemands* (Lake of the Germans) flooding their houses up to the roofs. Two of these settlements had been located in lower lands on the back slopes of the natural levee. The reason for this appears to have been that these areas had been *champs sauvages* (Indian fields) cleared by the indigenous inhabitants some years before. As such, they could be re-inhabited by the Germans without the necessity of the back-breaking labor of clearing old-growth forests. Essentially all of the first German houses were destroyed in the hurricane, as was the would-be cash crop which included 8000 quarts of rice ready for harvest (Deiler 1909: 52). Even in New Orleans, the small original settlement was so badly destroyed during this storm that new streets then could be laid out by 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer, Adrien de Pauger, according the grid plan he had previously established but which conflicted with existing private property lines and standing structures. The future Vieux Carré would result from his handiwork after the storm (Wilson 1968:13-14).

It appears that a considerable number of the Germans died or departed as a result of the storm. The population of the community was reduced by 169 persons (Kondert 1990: 36-37). Over the next several years the population figures vary considerably as people moved and resettled, some to the other side of the Mississippi River and some up-river. After the hurricane, much of the original population resettled in a kind of line village along the crest of the natural levee in what came to be called Hoffen (Fig. 2). The villages of Marienthal and Augsburg were abandoned. There is no mention of workers from New Orleans coming to help the Germans rebuild their houses, but it is clear that drastic changes in the architecture were under way. Finally, between 1727 and 1731 the population of the German Coast more than doubled to 394 persons. A sustained development was underway (Robichaux 1997: 54-55).

And the Germans persisted. Within a few years the reestablished settlers of the *Côte des Allemands* were successful at supplying New Orleans with foodstuffs, carrying their agricultural products



downstream to market in their *pirogues* and “*voitures*” (boats), and helping the city to survive and prosper (Edwards and Kariouk 2004: 203). Their early settlement years were not, however, without continuing stress and hardship. As late as 1731, few slaves or horses to pull plows were yet available. In 1732 Governor Perier required the residents to construct a river road and levees across the fronts of their properties. This required an enormous investment in labor. In addition, Indian raids in 1729 killed many (Voss 1928: 15).



**Fig. 2. Assumed settlements of the Germans in St. Charles Parish, ca. 1723, as mapped by Norman Marmillion (Helmut Blume 1990: 17-18).**

### German Houses: the Rhineland

No architectural historian, to my knowledge, has attempted to reconstruct the houses of the Germans on the German Coast from the first decades of their settlement. It is no easy task. Archaeological surveys have not proved revealing and the written record is, to say the least, brief (Kondert 2003). Yet a knowledge of

the early vernacular architecture of the Germans is essential to an assessment of the development of Louisiana's vernacular architecture. Acadians from *Acadie* (Nova Scotia) settled next to the Germans on the First Acadian Coast, and soon amalgamated the two European folk cultures there on the banks of the Mississippi. The small houses of the Acadians are taken as foundational to the folk architecture of southern Louisiana, but it was perhaps the Germans who provided the most specific models, to which the Acadians adapted after ca. 1765. It was this interblended German/Swiss/Acadian population that distributed a distinctive architectural tradition throughout southern Louisiana. Many hundreds of Creole or Acadian cabins were built across the state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They stood as a dominant symbol of Cajun identity.

So exactly how do we determine the most probable forms of the earliest German houses? Were German traditions introduced directly into the *Cote des Allemands*? Assume for the purpose of this exercise that the Germans did not simply move into French style Creole cabins. Instead, following the hurricane of Sept. 1722, they were able to construct their own forms of small settler's houses based on their unique architectural and social traditions, accommodating the patterns of their own daily rounds and labors.

If this is true, then several kinds of evidence are relevant to our hypothetical reconstruction. First, we would need to know the places of origin of the surviving Germans who resided on the German Coast after Sept., 1722. Second, we would need to know what kinds of vernacular houses were popular in their homelands in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Third, we would need to examine the architectural histories of groups of Germans who immigrated to *other* portions of North America in this period. Finally, we would need to assemble all of the appropriate evidence concerning the earliest houses of the Louisiana Germans to determine whether their eighteenth and early nineteenth century traditions conformed to a recognizable pattern of long-distance diffusion of vernacular architectural traditions. In what follows, we will review evidence as it has been gathered and interpreted by previous scholars. I have conducted no original research on German architectural heritage, though I have been involved in surveys of the historic vernacular architecture of southern Louisiana.

By 1724, a population of some fifty-eight families of Germans were reported to be living on both banks of the Mississippi River in what is now St. Charles Parish. Le Conte lists the places of the origins of sixty-seven members of these families as follows (1967: 37):

Alsations	8
Swiss	5
Palatinate	10
Rhenish States <sub>1</sub>	15
Rhenish States <sub>2</sub>	4
Württemberg	6
Lorraine	4
Other German States	<u>15</u>
TOTAL:	67

In addition, two families of French settlers lived in the *Cote des Allemands*. Clearly, most of the Louisiana Germans derived from southwestern German states. These included Alsations, Rhinelanders, Württembergers, Swabians and Swiss. One historian estimates that ten percent of the population of German immigrants was Swiss. The village of Marianthal was probably named after the Franconian village of Marienthal, southwest of Wirtzberg (Robichaux 1997: 450).

### **Ancestral Models in 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany**

German vernacular farmhouse architecture is remarkably varied and complex (Oliver et.al. 1997; Weaver 1986; Chappell 1986). It is not possible to identify with much precision where the greatest inspiration for German architecture in the United States originated due to the tremendously unsettled nature of life in Germany from the mid-seventeenth through the early eighteenth century. German studies of historical vernacular architecture (*Hausforschung*) are extensive, but not without their problems. Chappell reminds us that “folk architecture does not fit neatly within the confines of political or ethnic divisions” (1986: 244-47). German scholarship has tended to overgeneralize and even to politicize accounts of their

architectural history. From the late middle ages on, German vernacular has accommodated itself to a wide variety of forces and constraints. Among these are: local laws, technological advances in appliances and construction methods, economic limitations, changing functions of the farmstead, inheritance laws which affected the stability of the sizes of land holdings, warfare, pillage and conquest, local differences in building materials and their costs, and changes in the patterns of cooking, baking, sleeping, sheltering animals and storing grain, among others. All of this resulted in a wide variety of timber and stone house forms, but with certain strong historical themes tying them together.

The Louisiana Germans were not the first large group of German refugees to settle in what is now the United States. William Penn encouraged Germans to immigrate to Pennsylvania. Most authors agree that the majority of early German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Maryland derived from areas on both sides of the upper Rhine River in southwestern Germany, or “Upper Germany.” Le Conte reports that the original German refugees to Louisiana were: Lorrainers, Alsatians, Swiss, (western?) Swabians, Rhinelanders, and Würtemburgers (1967: 34). In other words, we should look most specifically at the folk architecture of Rhine River headwaters: the Palatinate, Alsace, Baden, and Würtemberg, as well as lesser influences deriving from northern Switzerland, Bavaria and Lorraine (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3. Principal political subdivisions of Germany as of 1900 (Domer 1994: 12).**



The area of densest concentration of the emigrants leaving for Louisiana in 1721 lies roughly between the cities of Heidelberg, Germany and Basel, Switzerland, a NNE-SSW distance of roughly 135 miles, and within a width of roughly fifty miles on either side of the upper Rhine River north of Strasbourg and its tributary the Neckar River, north of Stuttgart. We will take this as our hypothetical study area (Fig. 4).

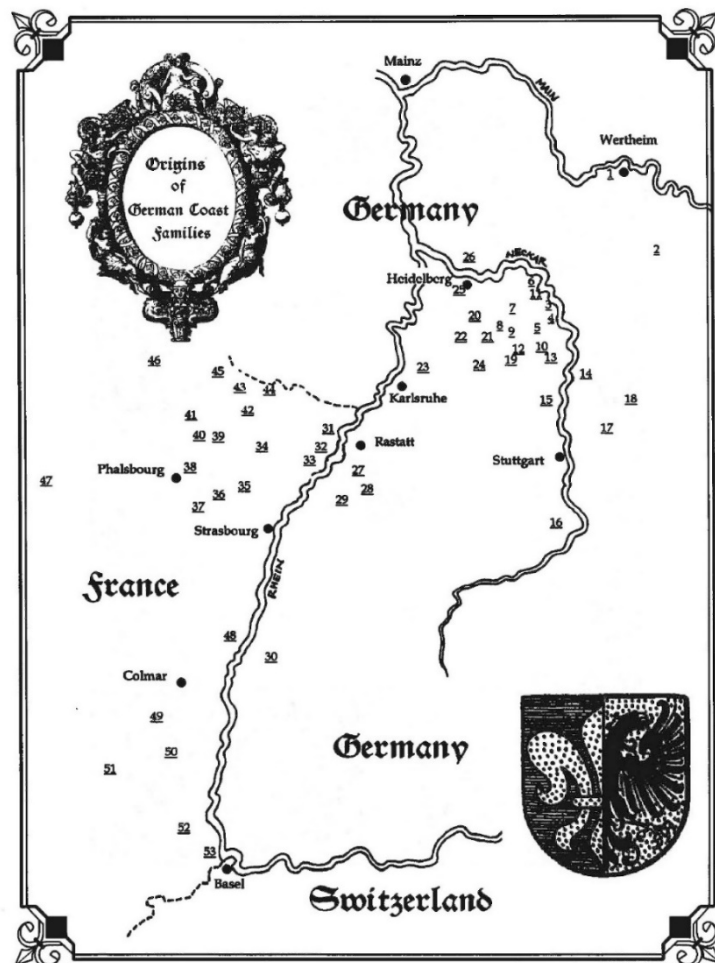
What, then, were the active popular traditions of housing in the upper Rhineland, and in northern Switzerland in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth? This is not an easy question to answer due to the complexity of architectural traditions in the region and the lack of good contemporary descriptions and surveys. General statements are available, such as those published in Vol. II of *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (Oliver 1997: 1348-1367).

In order to simplify the complex impacts of these intersecting forces, we will here limit our focus to two basic housing models which seem to have had considerable influence on the development of German vernacular architecture in North America.

### **German Vernacular Architecture**

The first model which is the most ancient, extends far back into medieval times. It was once widespread, its roots being also found in France and England. This basic two room plan, sometimes called the *oberdeutsches Haus* (southern German house), was transported by German settlers to Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries (Weaver 1986:253). In its basic form it is sometimes also known as the *Flurküchenhaus* (kitchen-hall house). It is composed of a core containing two square or rectangular rooms. They are often asymmetrical, one side being wider than the other: a *Küche*, meaning a hearth or food preparation room (Latin *coquina*), and a *Stube* or stove-heated room (L. *extufa*). The kitchen or kitchen-hall always had a front door. Often, the Stube had one as well, making two entrances in the front of the house. Often the doors are set close together in the center of the façade. In the Middle-Atlantic colonies -- Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia -- this is a feature which essentially always distinguishes a German-derived house from one of British or French origin, but that is not true in

Louisiana. A separate tropical tradition of Louisiana Creole houses in which multiple doors and no windows are placed in the front of the house was introduced into the Gulf Coast from Saint-Domingue as early as 1699, with Iberville's first voyage of settlement (Edwards 2020). This means that there were separate traditions of small houses with multiple doors in the long side facades in the oldest house modules of French Louisiana.



**Fig. 4.** Locations of the stated origins of 53 German settlers to the *cote des Allemands* in 1724, as plotted by Robichaux (1997: 78). The Rhine River divided Alsace on the west from the Rhenish states in the Rhineland and the Palatinate in the east.

The two multiple-door traditions, perhaps, reinforced one another. Most of the early houses of the German immigrants in Louisiana were one or two room cabins. They did not evolve into larger houses in the same ways that occurred in the Middle Atlantic. Rather, they followed more of a French Caribbean Creole pattern.

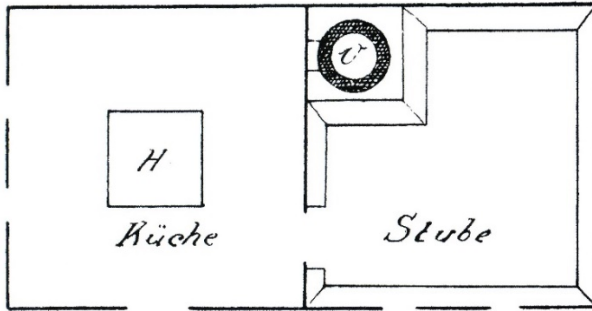


Fig. 10. *Oberdeutsches Haus* floor plan. From Rudolph Meringer, *Das deutsche Haus und sein Hausrat* (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1906), p. 22.

Fig. 5. The ancient southwestern German two-room plan. The *Küche* is the place of the hearth -- the kitchen. The *Stube* is the place of the warming oven -- the living room. In its eighteenth century form the *Stube* had built-in benches and was well lighted with windows. Before it was introduced as a living room in late medieval times, the *Stube* space had often functioned as a stable (Weaver 1986: 253, as republished from Rudolph Meringer, *Das deutsche Haus und sein Hausrat*. Leipzig and Berlin: 1906, p. 22.)

Interestingly, in both Germany and in Middle-Atlantic North America, the southern German house grew into a three and a four-room plan in which the additional rooms were not of the same size. This led to a plan in which two doors, often set closely together were set in the façade of the house. These doors might also be accompanied with additional windows (Fig. 7).

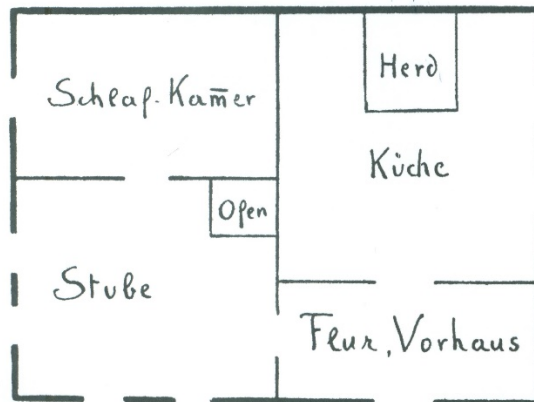
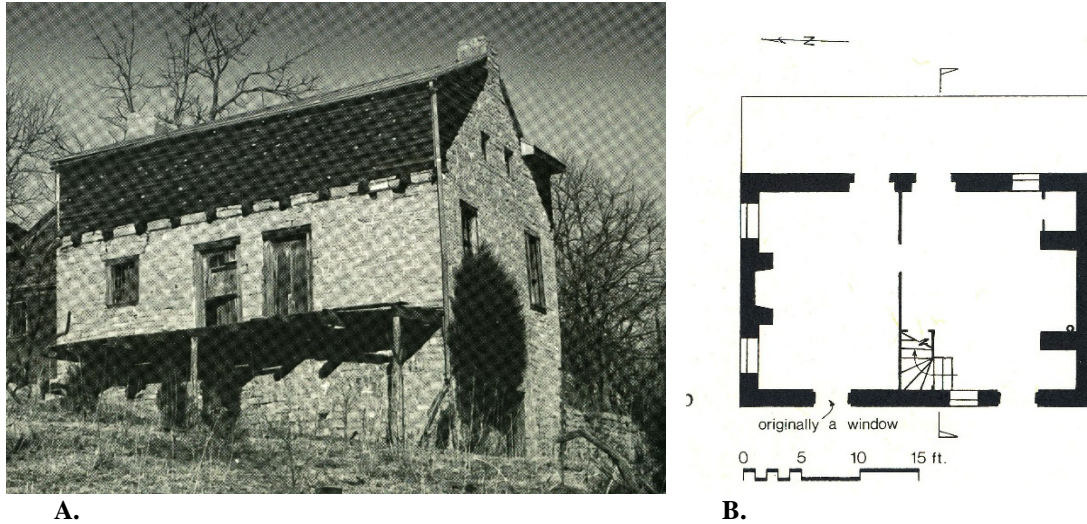


Fig. 11. *Kreuzhaus* floor plan. From Rudolph Meringer, *Das deutsche Haus und sein Hausrat* (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1906), p. 26.

Fig. 6. The *Kreuzhaus* in Germany, expanded from the southwestern German two-room *Ernhaus* module. The *Flur* or *Ern* is an entrance hallway. The *Vorhaus* is a lobby. The *Schlaffkammer* (sleeping room) is the principal bedroom (Weaver 1986: 253, as republished from Rudolph Meringer, *Das deutsche Haus und sein Hausrat*. Leipzig and Berlin: 1906, p. 26.)



**Fig. 7. Fort Paul Long, an eighteenth century German house in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. This house has adopted certain features of Anglo vernacular architecture (chimney placement) while retaining the façade geometry and the placement on a hillside slope of a Rhenish house (Chappell 1986: A, Façade Elevation (p. 50); B. Plan (p. 38)).**

The second type of indigenous Rhenish German house which most scholars accept as being influential in the building traditions of German-Americans is based on a tripartite plan. It usually goes under the name of *Wohnstallhaus* (house-barn). This type has also been referred to as the *Ernhaus* (hall house) which refers to the hall-like entry space before the kitchen. This hall, also called a *Flur*, has its own front door, as in the *Vorhaus* depicted in Fig. 6. “Characteristically, the *Wohnstallhaus* had two or more separate doors on the long side for people and animals” (Domer 1994:10). This was the most prevalent type of farmhouse between the Rhineland west of Silesia by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was popular as far east as Bavaria and was common to Alsace, the Palatinate, Württemberg, and Hesse (Domer 1994: 14). The *Wohnstallhaus* became increasingly numerous in southwest Germany after ca. 1550, as changes in farming practices resulted in smaller herds of cattle being housed in the same building as the humans. The house was organized into three zones: The family’s living zone (*Stube*) was separated from the byre (*Stall*) by a central hallway, the *Flur* or, in Franconia, *Ern*. The *Flur* had its own front door. At the rear of the hallway stood the stove or kitchen where food was prepared. The *Flur* opened into both zones of the house, providing access to the clean living area (*Stube*) and to the stables and grain storage (*Wirtschaftsbereich*). Front doors provided entrance to the *Flur* and the *Wirtschaftsbereich* (Figs. 8 - 9).

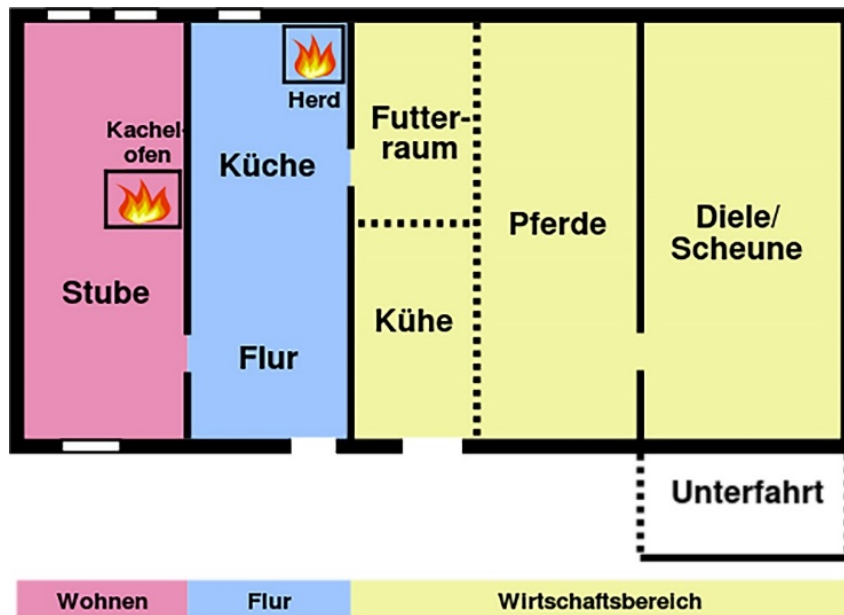


Fig. 8. Simplified ground floor plan of a Middle German House. Key:

Wohnen: living area:

*Stube:* living room

*Kachelofen:* cocklestove,  
(ceramic stove/heater)

*Ofen:* warming oven

Flur (Ern): hallway

*Küche:* kitchen

*Herd:* cooking stove

Wirtschaftsbereich: working area.

*Kühe:* cows

*Futterraum:* fodder area

*Pferde:* horses

*Diele/Scheune:* barn

*Unterfahrt (Vorhof):* porch for working.

(Wikiwand 2020).



Fig. 9. A Timber-framed Middle German House in Klein Schöppenstedt near Cremlingen, sketched around 1900. Note *Unterfahrt* (extended porch). Compare with Fig. 11 (Wikiwand 2020).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries as German farming practices changed, as heating technology improved (tile ovens), and as urbanization put increasing pressure on medieval housing traditions, the mixed-use *Wohnstallhaus* evolved into single residence. Livestock was moved into detached *Hofs* (farm buildings). Gradually, the *Stube* became the social and symbolic center of family life and the stove became the essential focal point of domesticity (Weaver 1986: 257-58; Dömer 1994: 15-16). It transformed the warm room of the house into the “white room,” the kitchen not being heated except when cooking was underway. The *Stube* was clean and smokeless while the kitchen was smoky and smelly.

The *Stube* became the heart of the more traditional three-cell farmhouse (*Flurküchenhaus*). In addition, a smaller but increasingly popular two-pen German version of this house, with *Stube* but minus *Flur*, evolved (*oberdeutsches Haus*; Weaver 1986: 252). Its seventeenth and eighteenth century *Stube* had built in benches against the walls and windows on the sunny side, and these persisted even into the homes of the Pennsylvania Dutch (Chappell 1986: 68). Despite the loss of the function of the second door in the *Flur* or the byre, the traditional southern German house retained its double front doors, often being set close together in its façade. This tradition continued in Germany well into the eighteenth century. The other major change in the German house was that the *Stube* was progressively subdivided into a formal living room and a separate sleeping room, the *Kammer*. Each of these traditions was carried into the Middle-Atlantic states by German immigrants, not all at the same time and not all in the same place. Patterns of diffusion lead to a wide variety of German-influenced houses in North America, from the east coast all the way into mid-western states such as Wisconsin. Throughout this entire area, however, one discovers old houses with two front doors, but with a wide variety of floorplans, including Anglo style houses such as the I house. As early as 1972, Henry Glassie had suggested that Pennsylvania houses being built even into the nineteenth century reflected a remembrance of the old German plan (Chappell 1986: 72).



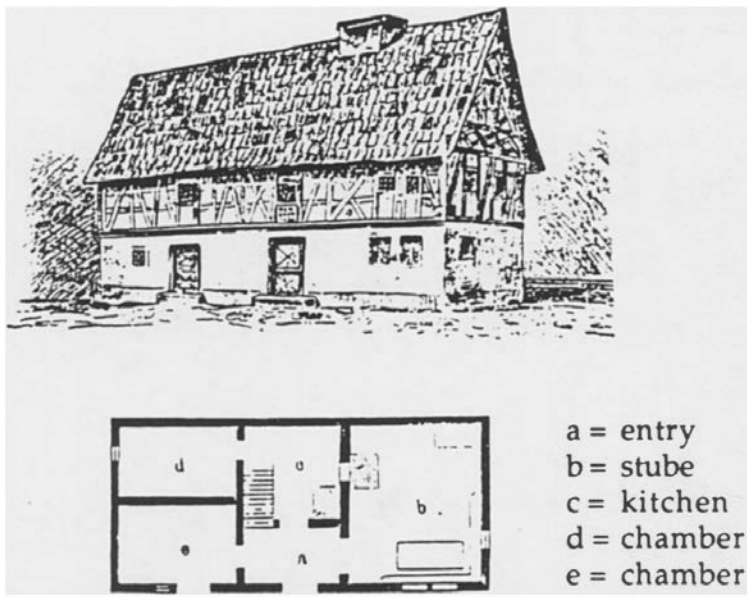


Fig. 10. A mid-seventeenth century *Wohnstallhaus* near Frankfurt. The traditional location of the animal stalls has been converted into two bedrooms on the ground floor (left side of plan). Despite its new domestic function, this zone of the house retains its original entrance door. The front entrance of the earlier *Flur* (passageway) has been partitioned as a lobby (Domer 1994: 16, as republished from Henning, *Das Deutsche Haus in seiner historischen Entwicklung*).

### German Houses in North America

German settlement in North America was extensive. Large numbers of Germans immigrated after 1680.

They continued building German-influenced houses as late as the 1920s (Domer 1994: 1). From Pennsylvania they migrated to coastal and piedmont North Carolina, and down the valley of Virginia as far as Georgia. They also moved westward into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Iowa and later, Texas (Domer 1994: 26). Everywhere, they constructed houses which retained a certain *brauch* (remembrance) of their ancestral architectural patrimony, including houses with two doors on their front facades. The Germans favored gable-sided houses or occasionally houses with a jerkinhead (clipped gable) roof, but not the full hip roof form. Many had roofs with extended eaves, particularly on the long sides.

At first, some Pennsylvania Germans constructed purely German house forms. Scant evidence remains of these ancient implants, but archivists have turned up rare sketches showing that they were once

common (Figs. 10, 11). Tax lists from the eighteenth century specify “house-barns” in three counties in southeastern Pennsylvania in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Some 800 “cabin barns” are listed mostly west of the Blue Ridge (Domer 1994:17).



Fig. 11. Eastern Pennsylvania. German log *Wohnstallhaus* (“cabin-barn”), sketched 1817-1825 by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur. This building is in the mode of the eighteenth century. It has a tripartite floorplan with front doors opening to the threshing bay (large double door) and the living quarters. Note large *Unterfahrt*-like roof overhangs (in Pennsylvania: *Vorhofs*). Compare with Fig. 9 (Weaver 1986: 262).

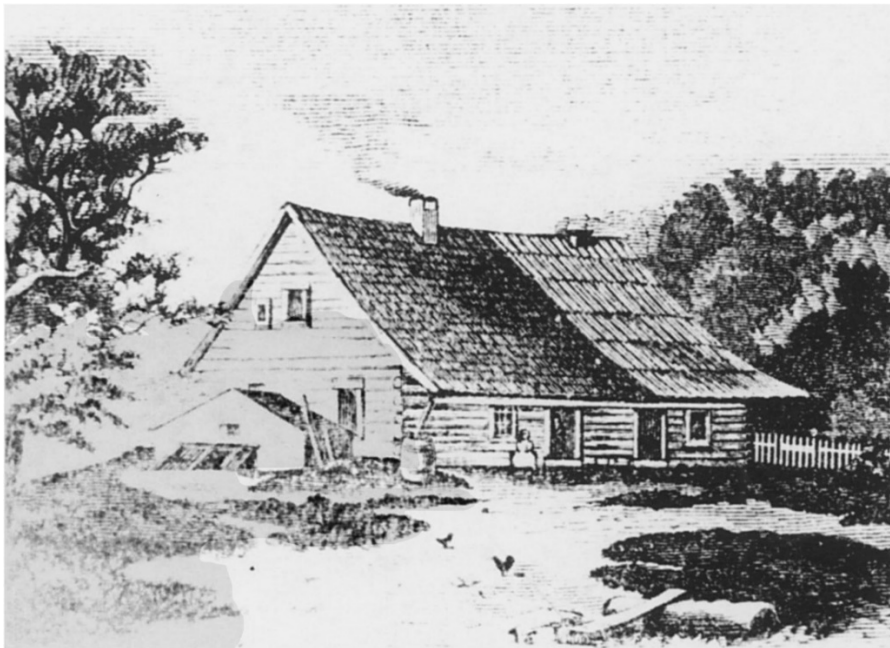
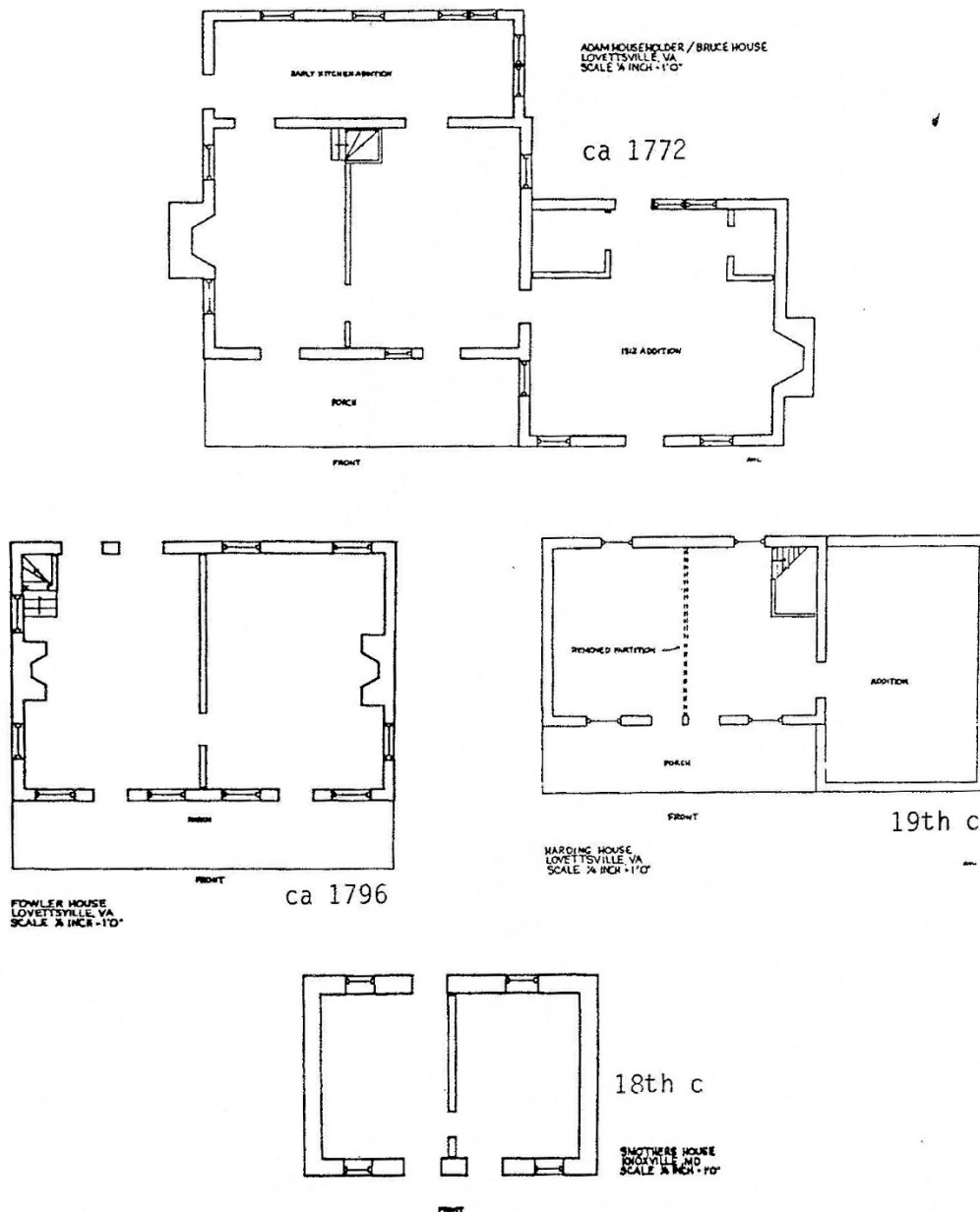


Fig. 12. Log, double-door log *Wohnstallhaus* (“house-barn”), the first Moravian building in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, dated to 1741 (sketch from Domer 1994: 18, as provided by Henry J. Kauffman). Note broad roof overhang, reminiscent of the Louisiana “false gallery” (compare with Frontispiece).



The diffusion of the two-door German house has been studied most extensively by Dennis Domer. He states: “Over five million Germans immigrated to America, and a small number of two-door houses can be found in many places, but not in all places where Germans settled [1994: 26]. The first large group of settlers included about one-hundred-thousand immigrants out of Middle Germany who settled in Pennsylvania. As later generation descendants of these early settlers moved southward and westward “they took the two-door house with them.” One example of a Pennsylvania German-settled community which Domer describes as being rich in two-door houses is Loudoun, County, Virginia, in the Catoctin valley around Lovettsville. It was settled in the 1770s or 1780s (Fig. 12). Here, we see two patterns of two-door façade arrangement, one in which the doors are set very close together in the center of the façade, and another in which they are separated by a central wall segment so that the doors enter into the centers of the two front rooms. Neither of these traditions would be employed by Anglo-Americans, accepting, perhaps, rare cases of deliberate imitation of German neighbors. Indeed, it might be claimed with considerable authenticity that small houses with two front doors conflict specifically with Anglo traditions of façade arrangement, leading to confusion and misunderstandings among Anglos concerning the proper functions of the doors and questions about which one should be approached and entered. The same would be true of French traditions.



**Fig. 13. Plans of two-door houses in Lovettsville, VA, settled by Pennsylvania Lutherans and Reformed Germans. The houses were built as early as 1780, and continued as a viable tradition into the 1920s. Sketch by Anita Landry (Domer 1994: 27-28).**

### **Explaining the Persistence of Rhenish Architectural Symbols**

In order to investigate the contributions of the early Germans to the cultural landscapes of Louisiana, we must enter the realm of architectural symbolism in vernacular architecture, and in particular, the symbolism of immigrant eighteenth century Germans in North America. We are specifically concerned with the kind of

symbolism which accompanies acculturation, or the patterns of cultural accommodation made by strangers in a strange land settled by people of other cultures. How do immigrants adapt their natal architectural traditions to new circumstances in which people of other cultures hold the dominant power?

The scholar who has studied the acculturation of German vernacular architecture in North America most extensively is probably Edward S. Chappell. To Chappell, cultural forms, including building practices, are highly symbolic. "Patterns of continuity and change in essential forms, such as recurring or changing combinations of spatial arrangements in architecture, reflect corresponding stability or unrest within the culture" (Chappell 1980: 27-28). In the eighteenth century in conservative German settlements such as those of the Rhenish Swiss Mennonite settlers in Virginia, there was considerable resistance to outside cultural pressures and "staying up with their Anglo Virginian" neighbors. Changes in their architecture occurred piecemeal at first, as where Anglo-style chimneys were inserted into otherwise German style houses for better heating of the whole interior of the dwelling. In groups, these settlers resisted being absorbed by their Anglo neighbors for seventy-five or more years until the beginning of the nineteenth century when they became more willing to discard the visible symbols of their ethnic identity. The English language was adopted even more slowly -- local German dialects still in common use as household sociolects until about 1830 (1980: 28).

Dennis Domer proposes an explanation for the long-term survival of German architectural features in America (1994). These might have included patterns such as: raised cooking stoves, social uses of the *Stube* including family dining, house-barn configurations, open front porches or broad eaves used for working and protecting farm equipment, gabled roofs, and two-door facades on small houses. He argues that they are memetic, or based on imitation of earlier popular symbols of ethnicity, religious belief, or social conservatism. Because such things are kept alive in situations of ethnic complexity or conflict, Domer believes that they have the agency of atavism or the inertia of tradition apart from any immediate social functions they might perform. They might be almost completely non-functional but still hold the value of symbolic identity through remembrance. Domer is careful to point out that atavistic agency is not alone in explaining the persistence of *retardataire* (disfunctionalized) symbols.

### German and Cajun Houses of Eighteenth Century Louisiana

Our first impulse is to map the historic vernacular architecture of Louisiana, to see where multi-door houses might be found. Unfortunately, they are abundant. Our problem is that Louisiana is chock full of multi-door vernacular houses but German houses are rare. Even the smallest one and two room wide Acadian cabins and shotgun houses come with multi-door facades. So we must distinguish between those which might have had German roots and others that have West Indian and even African origins. Small multi-door houses were not a popular French or French-Canadian style, so those places can be easily set aside as original sources. In Seventeenth century Acadie (Nova Scotia) the Acadians abandoned their natal French house-barn style buildings. They separated their barns from the houses so *Wohnstallhauses* were not used. Yet, multi-door houses appear in the earliest decades of the Acadian settlement in Louisiana. Comparative studies have revealed that the use of multiple doors in the façade of small houses is common in the French Caribbean, and even West Africa. In addition, houses in both places today are fronted with broad front galleries.

What evidence can we glean from historic records? Legal descriptions of the earliest generations of houses on the German Coast during the French colonial period are both scarce and brief. Observers agree that following the first disastrous hurricane, the same form of house was always constructed.

After a few years both large and small concessionaires adopted the method of building houses on posts or piers.... In general, the houses were built completely of wood. Very durable swamp cypress was used for building these houses... The entire roof was covered with cypress wood shingles rather than palmetto fronds, as had frequently been the practice... Galleries were constructed on houses at least on one side, usually on two, and occasionally on all sides... Even modest houses as the one described above had galleries on two sides and were built on posts (Bloome 1990: 76).

Descriptions of the French Creole houses built by the French and Canadians may be found in our earlier report (Edwards 2020: 58-60). Front and rear galleries are described as commonplace even before 1711. No detailed descriptions of the first generations of German houses on the

German Coast have been discovered, so it is elsewhere we must turn to find analogies with the peasant homes of the Germans.

None of their earliest houses survived due to several dramatic rearrangements of the cultural landscape. The first followed the successful crystallization of sugar in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In the early years of the nineteenth century, businessmen seeking wealth from sugar production bought out all of the small holders along the *Côte des Alemands* and converted the area to large sugar plantations. West Indian style raised Creole plantation houses and slave cabins replaced the former homes of the German farmers who were forced to relocate either upriver or onto the “back *bruslies*.” These were lands beyond the rear of the forty arpent line which marked the rear boundaries of the long lots of the sugar plantations. Many Germans, by now speaking Cajun French and intermarried with Cajun families, moved down Bayou Lafourche. Elements of their German heritage were preserved selectively in their new homes. The most common form appears to have been a one or two room wide cabin with a broad front gallery and, perhaps a cabinet-loggia range of smaller rooms at the rear. Non-domestic functions of the farm were housed in separate free-standing structures such as stables and grain-storage buildings.

Gable-roofed houses were the norm for Cajuns and acculturated Germans. This distinguished them from the French Creoles who preferred hip-roofed abodes. Sidney Marchand (1943; 1965) listed the architectural features recorded in inventories of many dozens of original eighteenth century houses built in Ascension Parish by the Acadians who arrived beginning in 1765. Some Germans had settled among them, and some were apparently there prior to their arrival. Since the Acadians arrived impoverished, their first generation houses were much like those of the Germans some forty-five years earlier. The typical dimensions were 20 to 30 feet wide (2 rooms) by 14 to 16 feet deep. In the inventories they were described as being constructed on ground sills, posts in the ground, or raised on blocks. They were said to be “surrounded, covered and planked with pickets (*pieux* – split or rough sawn planks of cypress; 1965). At first, many were set on the ground with dirt floors. Steep, narrow stairways with tall risers led to the *grenier* or attic area, which served as a bedroom for the young men of the family. Daughters of the family

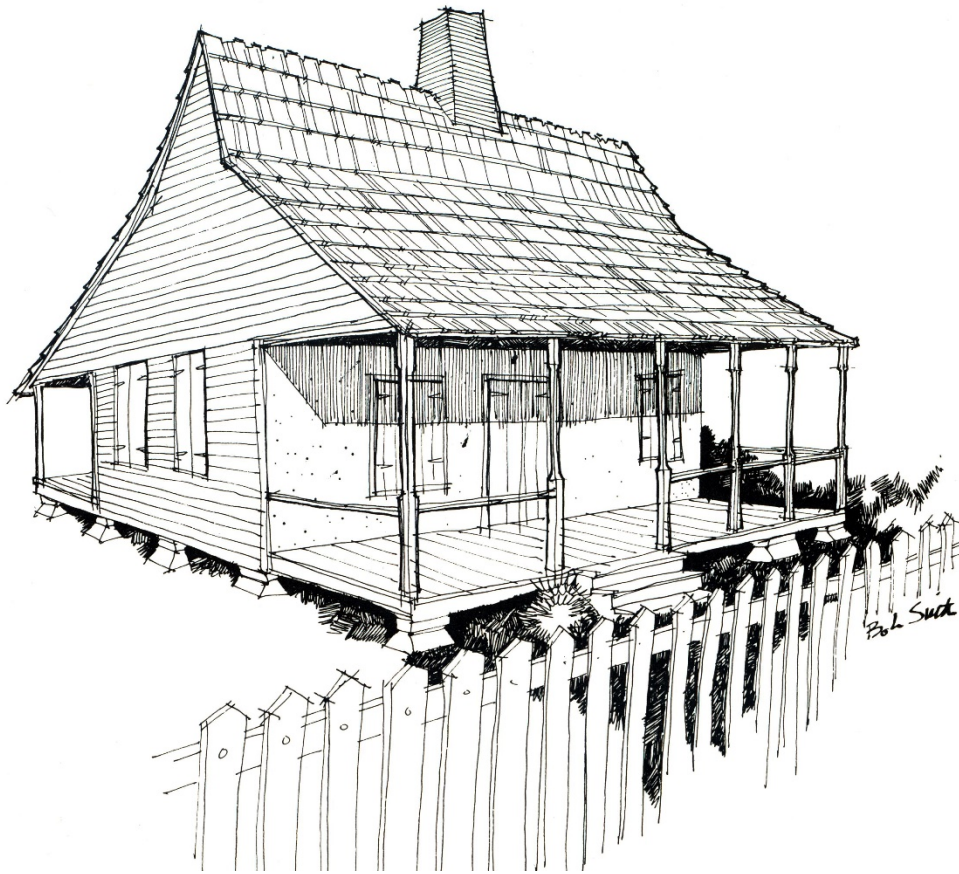
often slept in rear cabinet rooms where the only entrance was through the parents' bedroom. Galleries were nearly essential to farm life in Louisiana and almost all houses had galleries front and rear. In a survey of inventories taken 1771 through 1804, in Ascension Parish, the proportion of galleried Cajun houses increases through time:

<u>Years:</u>	<u>Number of Houses:</u>	<u>Houses with galleries:</u>	<u>% with galleries:</u>
1771—1782	52	8	15
1783 – 1794	57	16	28
1795 – 1804	51	18	35

In Marchand's other survey of records on Acadian houses, the percentages of galleries is even higher, and everywhere it would continue to climb towards nearly 100 percent in the nineteenth century. Another feature of construction which increased dramatically through time was the use of *bousillage entre poteaux* in timber frame walls (Blokke 2009; Blokke and Knight 2013). This method was already in use by the Canadians and French in Louisiana in the first decades of settlement. What we do *not* learn from these archival inventories is anything about the organization of the façade or the floorplan. It is clear that the Germans creolized the floorplans into something quite unlike the houses of their forbears. What, exactly, were the differences between German designed and French designed houses? The archives provide little information so we must look elsewhere for clues.

### **Clues from Façade Geometry**

Our own 1975 – 1982 surveys of the vernacular architecture of southern Louisiana turned up some curiosities. We recorded over 150 Creole and Cajun houses -- the oldest we could locate -- with drawings, photographs, and measured floor plans (Edwards, 1982; 1985). We discovered that the builders used quite different methods of placing doors and windows in the façade of their small houses. There was no interpretation of these differences in previous surveys of rural vernacular architecture (Edwards 1982: 27-28, 48-52). Here, we refer only to simple two room houses with two front doors.

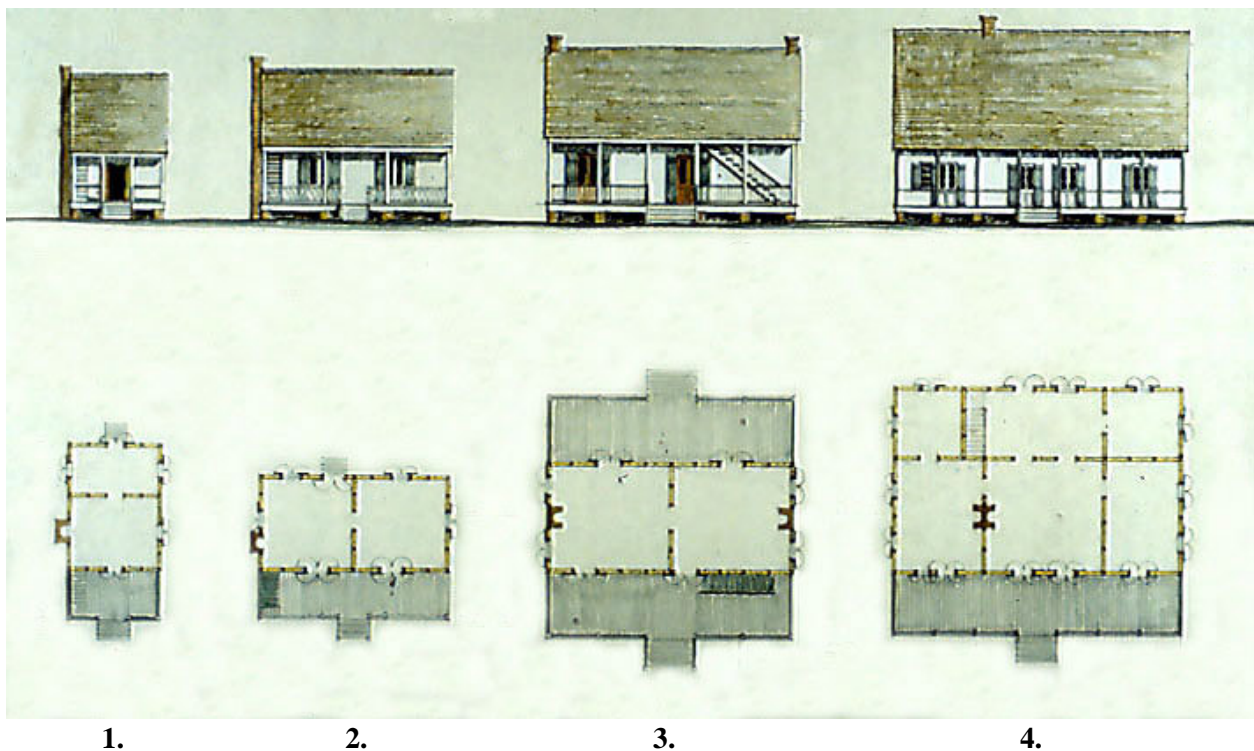


**Fig. 14. The 18<sup>th</sup> century style Hypolite Bordelon house in Marksville, LA, ca. 1825, as sketched by Robert N. Smith. This cabin exhibits “room-based” fenestration (Guillet, Smith, et. al. 1982).**

Perhaps the most popular way of organizing a façade was through what we termed “façade-based fenestration.” In that system, the front wall of the house is interpreted as a dominating geometrical composition based upon the principle of symmetry. Regardless of the relative dimensions of the rooms behind the façade, one side is a precise mirror image of the other. An older system of façade organization is called “room-based fenestration.” The openings in the façade are arranged in accordance to the dimensions of the different rooms into which they enter. If the house has two equal-sized front rooms, there is no apparent difference between the two principles, but when a house has a larger room on one side and a smaller on the other, the dominating room-based principle becomes quickly apparent (Fig. 14).

In southern Louisiana, two-room Cajun cabins were, until the early twentieth century, the most common form of small wooden house. In the eighteenth century their facades appear to have been

organized mostly on the basis of room-based fenestration. Facades were symmetrical only if the rooms behind them were of equal sizes (Fig. 15, Cabin No. 2). Otherwise, the openings in the façade would be organized around the geometry of the plan of the house. That often provided the visitor with information as to which door entered into the public space of the house (wider panel = front door), and which doors opened into the principal (private) bedroom (narrow spaces). Other considerations were also taken into account. If a stairway to the *grenier* (loft) was placed on the front gallery, the doors might be pushed to one side to accommodate the space taken by the staircase (Fig. 15, Cabin No. 3).



**Fig. 15. Creole Cabins with their facades organized on the basis of room-based fenestration. Placement of the openings in the façade reflects the geometry of the several rooms and other features such as the placement of stairways on the front gallery (Kniffen Lab, LSU, 1980).**



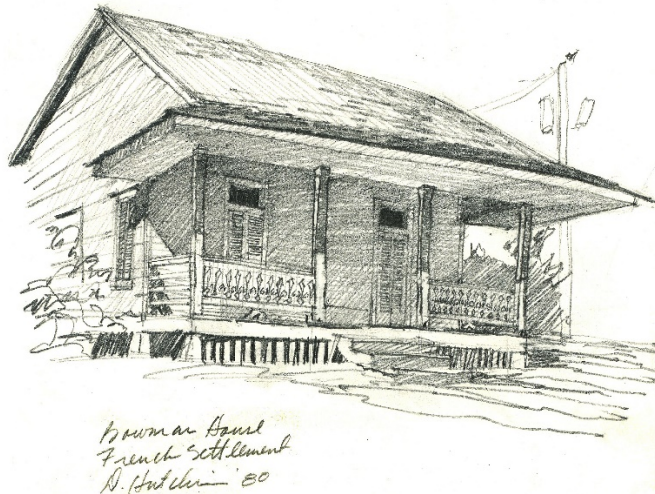


1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

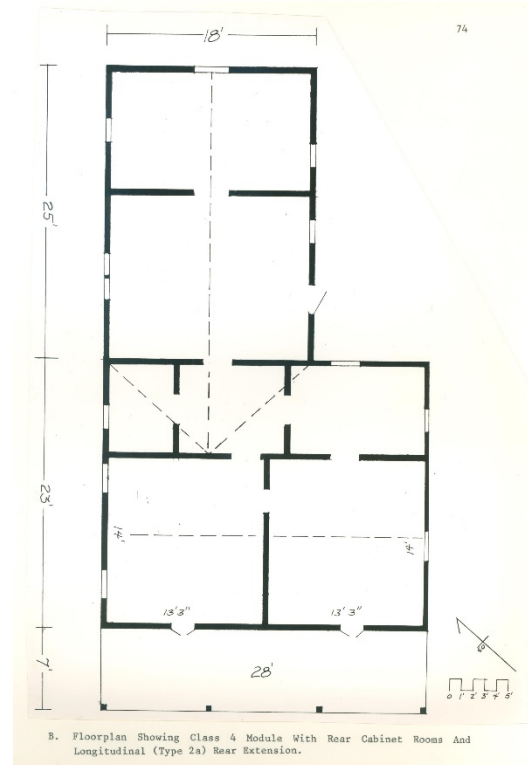
**Fig. 16. Post 1800 Creole cabins with their facades organized on the basis of façade-based fenestration. The facades are symmetrical regardless of the arrangement of the rooms or other features (Kniffen Lab, 1980).**

Beginning in the 1790s, however, symmetrical plans with equal-sized rooms became an increasingly important feature of vernacular architecture (Fig. 16). This was probably in part due to the popularity of a new high-style architectural geometry which accompanied the rising popularity of neoclassical architecture in the Federal and the Greek Revival periods. The older eighteenth century asymmetrical *salle-chambre* plan of the Acadian house was transformed into one with two equal-sized front rooms. This left the person who planned the house with two options. One was to fall back on room-centered placement. In a house with two doors in the façade, this left each door (or set of openings) centered on its room, plus a panel in the middle of the façade which was twice as wide as the panels on the outside edges of the doors (Fig. 16, Cabin No. 4; Fig. 17). We came to refer to these as “wall-eyed” houses. The second Cajun option was to widen the two outside panels at the expense of the middle panel so that all three panels were of equal widths (balanced façade-centered fenestration). Each of the doors is centered on a line which divides the façade into equal thirds (Fig. 16. Cabin No. 5; Fig. 18). This system was sometimes even applied to houses with asymmetrical plans, indicating that it is a façade-based

system of fenestration (Fig. 19). These systems of organization can be found all across southern Louisiana wherever Cajuns built their rural houses. Similar changes may be found in the vernacular architecture of other ethnic groups in the United States, including Germans. In neither place were these principles employed by every builder. Many used other, often idiosyncratic, patterns.



A.

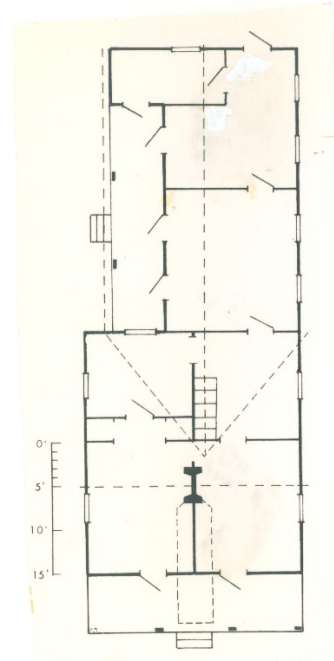


B.

**Fig. 17. The Bowman House in French Settlement, Livingston Parish, LA., as surveyed and sketched by David Hutchinson, 1980: A (elevation) and B (plan). In this “wall-eyed” house the center panel of the façade is twice as wide as those on either side (LSU Kniffen Lab survey). Note “false gallery.”**



A. View from the street.

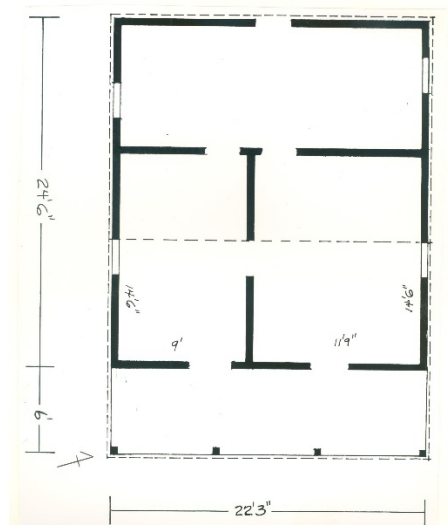


**Fig. 18. The Landry House on Bayou Lafourche, south of Donaldsonville, ca. 1870. The house exhibits “balanced” façade based fenestration in which each of the doors is centered on line of division separating the façade into equal thirds (author survey 1973).**

Figure 22-29: Edna Plantation Quarters



A.1. Front View Showing Typical Lafourche Area Facade



**Fig. 19. Edna Plantation Quarters, at Valentine in Lafourche Parish, LA. It exhibits “balanced” façade-based fenestration in which the façade is divided into equal thirds, although the floorplan is asymmetrical, based on the traditional Anglo hall-and-parlor plan (LSU Kniffen Lab survey, 1980).**



Surprisingly, in our 1973 – 1980 surveys of the River Parishes (St. Charles to Ascension) and down Bayou Lafourche to Terrabone Parish, we discovered many “Cajun” houses with another -- more alien -- type of façade geometry. Again, still referring to houses with two rooms and only two doors in the façade, we noticed that houses with center panels narrower than the two outside panels were also popular. In other words, the two front doors had been pushed together towards the center of the façade so that they both opened near to the center wall dividing the two front rooms. We came to refer to these houses as “cross-eyed” houses (Figs. 20, 21). The pattern was even discovered on houses with only a single front room (Fig. 22).



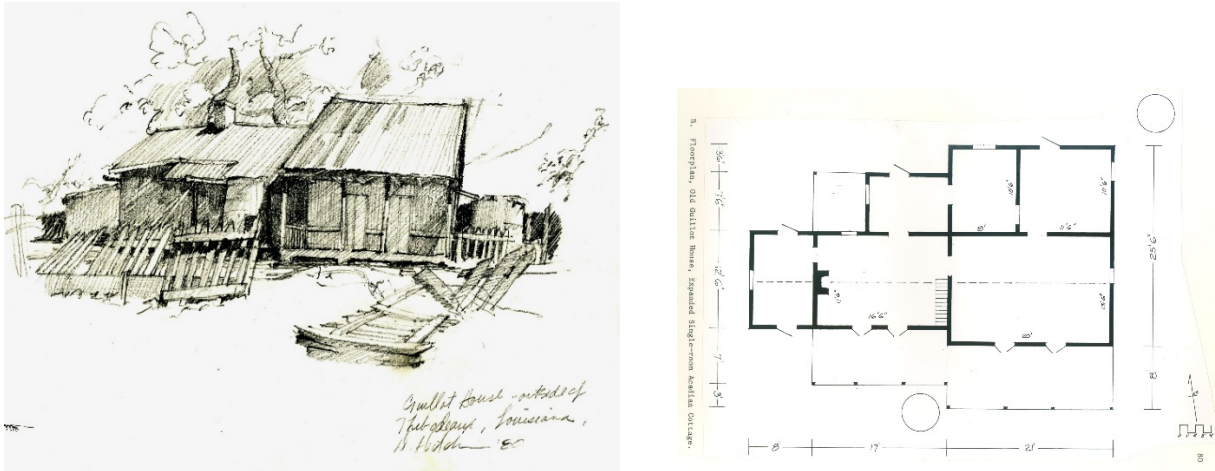
**Fig. 20.**

**Fig. 20.** A two-room “cross-eyed” house in Labadieville (between Donaldsonville and Thibodaux), on Bayou Lafourche (author photo, 1973).



**Fig. 21.**

**Fig. 21.** The Ory house in Baton Rouge, LA on Highland Road, settled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by German immigrants (author photo, 1990).



**Fig. 22. The Old Guillot House on Hy. 308, NNW of Thibodaux, Larourche Parish, LA. Survey. Drawing and Plan by David Hutchinson, 1980. The single large front room appeared to be undivided.**



**Fig. 23. A two door German farmhouse in Pennsylvania, built ca. 1812.**



**Fig. 24. Raised Cajun house with double doors set near the centerline of the façade. Sketch by Henry Glassie (1963; Kniffen Lab, LSU). Compare geometric spacing of the façade panels in the two structures. In both houses the openings are squeezed towards the center line of the façade.**

For those new to an interest in façade geometry these differences may seem to be impossibly subtle. Once one has become accustomed to recognizing the different styles of façade geometry in Louisiana houses, though, it becomes surprisingly easy – almost automatic -- to spot the culturally-significant differences.

There are two significant things about the “cross-eyed” pattern of façade geometry: The first is that in Louisiana it occurs almost exclusively in those river parishes which were settled by substantial

numbers of Germans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when German ethnic identity and language were still important cultural concerns. Second, it is a popular pattern found almost exclusively among the houses of German settlers in the Middle-Atlantic and Mid-Western states where groups of Germans migrated and settled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (refer to Figs. 7, 12, 13). It is, in fact, one of Dennis Domer's atavistic symbols of German identity (Figs. 23-24). Its occurrence even extends far back into the architectural history of the German *Wohnstallhaus* (refer to Figs. 8, 9). In North America it persisted even into the twentieth century in some conservative German settlements.

It should not be assumed that the cross-eyed pattern was universal, or even dominant, among the descendants of Louisiana's first German settlers. About 19 percent of the 140 historic standing structures surveyed in our 1980 survey in southern Louisiana had two room modules with a single door opening through each half of the façade. Another 1.4 percent had two matching doors, but both opened into a single large room (Edwards 1982: 48).

As in other parts of North America, different patterns of façade geometry were practiced by this diverse Rhenish immigrant group. The value of "cross-eyed" fenestration lies in the fact that it was originally sufficiently popular in Louisiana to permit us to distinguish German from French and French-Canadian builders. These latter immigrants arrived with no tradition of multiple doors in the facades of their small houses, and no tradition of pushing the doors and windows towards the center line of the façade. That multiple façade doors became popular among Louisiana French Creoles in the early eighteenth century is certainly due to its prior popularity among early West Indian Creole immigrants who replicated the door patterns of their West Indian Afro-Creole vernacular architecture in Louisiana. Like above ground tombs and shotgun style houses, houses with doors in their facades remain ubiquitous today in Haiti (Figs. 25-26). So, in the River Parishes we find a reinforcement of two traditions resulting in a broad acceptance of houses with only doors in their facades. But, it was only the Germans who pushed two front doors closer together in the center of the façade than French vernacular room-based fenestration rules would have accepted.





**Fig. 25. The “Ti Kay” (traditional double front door shotgun style) house Pointe Sonde, Hwy. 1, Haiti (author photo, 1995).**



**Fig. 26. 18<sup>th</sup> Century style town houses in Cap Haïtien, northern Haiti (Colonna d’Istria photo, 2016).**

### Conclusions

The contribution of the early Germans to the cultural landscapes of Louisiana is twofold. From 1724 on, their houses acted as prototypes for the cabins of the arriving Acadians who, deported from *Acadie* (Nova Scotia) by the British in 1755, began finally settling along Louisiana’s rivers and bayous in 1765. Many



more Cajuns than Germans were eventually to settle on the first and second Acadian Coasts, immediately upstream from the Germans. Not only did the Cajuns blend their farming traditions with, and intermarry with, the more experienced, knowledgeable, and successful German settlers, they also borrowed extensively from their well-tested architectural wisdom. It would appear that Cajuns adopted the German/French Creole cabin form almost completely (Fig. 14). Soon, they were adding their own distinctive Acadian features to the mix, including their own principles of façade organization. Even into the 1850s, larger Cajun cabin-style houses maintained much of the same appearance as their smaller progenitors (Figs. 15-16). In all, many hundreds of these cabins dotted the landscapes of southern Louisiana, gradually expanding into increasingly larger forms. In rejecting the popular Louisiana rural Creole style of house with its “witch’s hat” hip roof and surrounding peripheral galleries, gable-roofed Cajun houses symbolized a highly important alternate identity of French-Canadian rural attainment. As the Cajuns spread out across the southern third of Louisiana, they carried with them much of the architectural patrimony of the Germans, probably without the *brauch* (remembrance) of its origins.

Second, the Germans introduced special atavistic markers of their own into the vernacular architecture of southern Louisiana. Steep, narrow, interior staircases, even in tiny cabins, were one feature they favored. Another was the cross-eyed pattern of fenestration, obvious to local residents aware of the patterns of subtle cultural markers distributed up and down the rivers and bayous of southern Louisiana. Here we observe an apparent obvious example of the inertia of tradition. We should not assume, however, that tradition, unsupported by social function, bears an inherent agency of its own. It could not be the case that the selection of a cross-eyed façade in the face of contrasting patterns in the facades of the houses of so many of one’s friends and neighbors could be simply accidental or casual. Rather, we must assume that the process of selection between competing designs was a part of the language of architectonic communication based in some degree in ethnic competition and the contextual importance of symbolizing one’s special identity and the shared value of one’s German heritage.

## REFERENCES

- Anonymous. 1720. John Law\_Cartoon\_Island of Mad-Head. Accessed 12.12.20 at:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi\\_Company#/media/File:The\\_Very\\_Famous\\_Island\\_of\\_Madhead\\_1720\\_Cornell\\_CUL\\_PJM\\_1019\\_01.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_Company#/media/File:The_Very_Famous_Island_of_Madhead_1720_Cornell_CUL_PJM_1019_01.jpg)
- Arnold, Morris S. 1990. The Myth of John Law's German Colony on the Arkansas. *Louisiana History*: 31 (1): 83-88.
- Bacot, Barbara Sorelle. 1997. The Plantation. In, Jessie Poesch and Barbara Bacot, eds., *Louisiana Buildings 1720 – 1940*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press: 87-173.
- Bailey, Gauvin Alexander. 2018: *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Becnel, Joan Weaver, Suzanne Friloux and Marilyn M. Richoux. 2010. *St Charles Parish, Louisiana: A Pictorial History*. Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co. Publishers.
- Blokker, Laura E. 2009. Building with Bousillage: Perpetuation of a Construction Tradition in Louisiana. *Arris* 20.
- Blokker, Laura Ewen and Heather A. Knight. 2013. Louisiana Bousillage: The Migration and Evolution of a French Building Technique in North America. *Construction History* 28 (1). 27-48.
- Blume, Helmut. 1990. *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. Destrehan, LA: The German-Acadian Coast Historical and Genealogical Society.
- Bourgeois, Lillian C. 1998. *Cabanocey. The History, Customs and Folklore of St. James Parish*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co.
- Chappell, Edward S. 1986. Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley: Rhenish Houses of the Massanutten Settlement. In, Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press; 27-57.
- Chauvet, Jean-Yves. 1997. Alsatian [Germanic Architecture] (France, NE). *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*. Vol. II. Ed, Paul Oliver. Cambridge University Press: 1352-1353.
- Conrad, Glen R. 1974. *Abstract of the Civil Records of St. Charles Parish, 1770-1803*. Lafayette. University of Louisiana at Lafayette Historical Series.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee. 2008: *Building the Devil's Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Deiler, J. Hanno. 1904. *Die ersten Deutschen am unteren Mississippi und de Creolen deutscher Abstammung*. New Orleans: The Paul S. Gendser Printing Co., Ltd.
- , 1909. *Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent*. Philadelphia, PA: American Germanica Press. N.S. No. 8.
- Domer, Dennis. 1994. Genesis Theories of the German-American Two-Door House. *Material Culture* 26 (1):1-35.

Dornbusch, Charles H., and John D. Heyl. 1958. *Pennsylvania German Barns*. The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, vol. 21. Allentown, PA: Schlechter's

Dumont (de Montigny), Jean-François-Benjamin. 2012. *The Memoir of Lieutenant Dumont, 1715-1747*. Chapel hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Edwards, Jay D. 1982. *A Survey of Louisiana French Vernacular Architecture*. Vol. II, (2 vols.). A Report submitted to The Jean Lafitte National Historic Park of Louisiana, and the Division of the Arts of the State of Louisiana. Baton Rouge: Museum of Geoscience, Louisiana State University.

----- . 1985. *A Survey of Louisiana French Vernacular Architecture*. Vol. I. A Report submitted to The Jean Lafitte National Historic Park of Louisiana, and the Division of the Arts of the State of Louisiana. Baton Rouge: Museum of Geoscience, Louisiana State University.

----- . 2009. Shotgun: the Most Contested House in America. *Buildings and Landscapes* Vol. 16 (1): 62-96.

----- . 2020. Long Distance Implantation of Vernacular Architecture Traditions: The Canadians in Early Louisiana. *Material Culture Review*: 88/89: 45-78.

Edwards, Jay D. and Nicolas Kariouk. 2004. *A Creole Lexicon*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press.

Giraud, Marcel. 1974. *A History of French Louisiana*. Vol. III. Baton Rouge:

Gianelloni, Elizabeth Becker (compiler). 1965. *Calendar of Louisiana Colonial Documents, Vol. III, St. Charles Parish*. Pt. 1, The D'Arensborg Records, 1734-1769. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Archives and Records Commission.

Glassie, Henry, 1972. Eighteenth-Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building. *Winterthur Portfolio*. Republished, in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, Eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. 1986. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press: 394-425.

----- . 2000. *Vernacular Architecture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press

Gowans, Alan. 1964. *Images of American Living*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania University Press.

Greenwald, Erin M. 2016. *Marc-Antoine Caillot and the Company of the Indies in Louisiana*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Guillet, John Curtis, Robert N. Smith, et. al. 1982. *Louisiana's Architectural and Archaeological Legacies*. Natchitoches, LA: Northwestern State University Press.

Gschwend, Max. 1997. Mittelland [Vernacular Architecture] Switzerland, In Paul Oliver, ed. *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*. Vol. II. Cambridge University Press: 1361-1362.

Hamy, E.T. 1904. Les voyages du Naturaliste Ch. Alex. Lesueur dans l'Amerique du Nord (1815-1837). *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, 5:1-111.

Hawkins, Dominique M, A.I.A. 2015. *City of New Orleans Vieux Carré Commission Design Guidelines for the Vieux Carré Historic District*. New Orleans: Vieux Carré Commission.

Heard, Malcolm. 1997. *French Quarter Manual*. New Orleans: Tulane School of Architecture.

Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC), 2020. German Settlers in Louisiana and New Orleans. Accessed at: <https://www.hnoc.org/research/german-settlers-louisiana-and-new-orleans>.

Jollain, François-Gérard. 1720 (ca.). Le Commerce que les Indiens du Mexique Font avec les François au Port de Mississipi (colored engraving, poster, 18 x 32 inches). Historic New Orleans Collection. Accessed, 12/12/20 at: <http://hnoc.minisisinc.com/thnoc/catalog/1/2813>.

Kniffen, Fred B. 1936. Louisiana House Types. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 26 (4): 179-193.

Kondert, Reinhart. 2003. *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana: 1720-1803*. Stuttgart. Hans Dieter Heinz. For the St. Charles [Parish] Historical Foundation.

----- . 2008. Charles Fredrick d'Arensbourg and the Germans of Colonial Louisiana. Lafayette, LA: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Le Conte, Rene. 1967. Germans in Louisiana in the eighteenth Century. *Louisiana History*. 7. Republished in, Carl A. Brasseaux, ed., *A refuge for all ages: Immigration in Louisiana History*. Vol. X, The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History. Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies of the University of Southwestern Louisiana. 1996: 31-43.

Le Bouteux, Jean-Baptist Michel. 1720. Drawing: Veuë du Camp de la Concession de Monseigneur Law, au Nouveau Biloxy, Coste de la Louisianne. Ayer collection, Newberry Library.

Le Page du Pratz, M. 1975 (1774). *The History of Louisiana*. Translator, Joseph Tregle, Jr. Baton Rouge: LSU Press.

Lesueur, Charles-Alexandre: c. 1817-1825. Drawing: Tripartite 18<sup>th</sup> century German log *Wohnstallhaus*. Eastern Pennsylvania. This house has the *Vorhof* or external shed room. Weaver 1986: 262, from the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Le Havre.

L'Isle, Guillaume de. 1718. Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi: Dressée sur un grand nombre de mémoires entr'autres sur ceux de Mr. la Maire. Accessed at: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3700.ct000666/?r=-0.369,-0.05,1.626,0.705,0>.

Marchand, Sidney A. 1943. The Humble Homes of the Pioneers. *Acadian Exiles in the Golden Coast of Louisiana*. Donaldsonville, LA: Privately published by the author.

----- . 1965. An Attempt to Reassemble the Old Settlers in Family Groups. Baton Rouge: Claitor's Book Store.

Maygarden, Benjamin. 2006. Building in Colonial Louisiana: Creolization and the Survival of French Traditions. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16 (3): 211-239.

Moen, Jon. 2001. John Law and the Mississippi Bubble: 1718-1720. Mississippi Historical Society. Accessed 12/12/20 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160301192346/http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/articles/70/john-law-and-the-mississippi-bubble-1718-1720>.

Oliver, Paul, et. al.. 1997. Germanic. *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1348-1367.

Rathburn, Robert R. 1979. The Germans. In, Nicholas Spitzer, Editor, *Mississippi Delta Ethnographic Overview*. New Orleans: National Park Service. Pp. 303-309.

Robichaux, Albert J. 1997. *German Coast Families: European Origins and Settlement in Colonial Louisiana*. Rayne, LA: Hébert Publications.

Roth, David. 2010. Louisiana Hurricane History. Accessed at:  
<https://www.weather.gov/media/lch/events/lahurricanehistory.pdf>.

Senex, John. 1721. A Map of Louisiana and of the River Mississippi. Dedication to William Law (John Law's brother?). Accessed 12/12/20 at:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi\\_Company#/media/File:Senex\\_A\\_map\\_of\\_Louisiana\\_and\\_of\\_the\\_River\\_Mississippi\\_1721\\_UTA.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_Company#/media/File:Senex_A_map_of_Louisiana_and_of_the_River_Mississippi_1721_UTA.jpg)

Toledano, Roulhac. 1996. *The National Trust Guide to New Orleans*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Vail, R.W.G. 1938. The American Sketchbooks of a French Naturalist, 1816-1837. *American Antiquarian Society*. April: 39-150. [Lists Lesueur's drawings of houses].

Voss, Reverend Louis. 1928. The German Coast of Louisiana. *Historical Bulletin of the Concord Society*. No. 9. Hoboken, NJ.

Weaver, William W. 1986. The Pennsylvania German House: European Antecedents and New World Forms. *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (4): 243-64.

Westlager, C. A. 1955. Log Houses in Pennsylvania during the Seventeenth Century. *Pennsylvania History* 22 (3): 256-66.

Wikipedia. 2020. Mississippi Company. Accessed 12/12/20 at:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi\\_Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_Company).

Wikiwand. 2020. Drawing: A Timber-framed middle German house in Klein Schöppenstedt near Cremlingen, sketched around 1900 <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Farmhouse>

Wilson, Samuel B. Jr. 1968. *The Vieux Carré New Orleans: Its Plan, Its Growth, Its Architecture*. New Orleans: City of New Orleans Bureau of Governmental Research.

Yoes, Henry E. III. 2005. Louisiana's German Coast: A History of St. Charles Parish. *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*.