Housing Technology

Temple, Translation of French Text:
“Temple of the Savages, constructed of posts in the ground, covered with mats of cane, and roofed with same, ending in three [pyramids] of wood, 3½ feet long, 18 inches [wide], and 4 inches thick, crudely colored and [sculptured]. The 3 pyramids (elements attached to the roof) of wood, trimmed with painted cane [3½ feet] in height. The 3 figures, the body and tail of which represent turkeys and the head of the eagle, which seemed to us the most like it.”

Cabin of the Chief, Translation of French Text:
“Cabin of the Chief, of posts in the ground plastered with clay or earth mortar, also covered with mats. The temple is 22 feet long and 14 feet wide; it serves as the sepulcher for the chiefs of the nation. All the Cabins of the Savages are of similar construction, all being round, this one is 18 feet in diameter.”

DeBatz’ drawing of the temple (top) and the wattle and daub Chief’s house (bottom) at Natchez, dated A.D. 1732. © 2007 Harvard University, Peabody Museum, 41-72-10/16 T347.3.

“Surveyed and sketched at the Village of the Acolapissa the fifteenth of April of the present year. Redrawn at New Orleans the twenty-second of June 1732. DeBatz.”

Postmolds (small circular areas) defining two walls of a structure at the Mount Nebo site in Madison Parish. The large circular excavation in the upper right proved to be a modern disturbance.

Palmetto (Sabal sp.), like river cane, was widely used by the Louisiana Indians. Among the Choctaw and Houma it served as a house covering, and palmetto-thatched houses still exist in the Houma country near Golden Meadow, Montague, and Dulac, Louisiana. Kniffen et al. The Historic Tribes of Louisiana: 1542 to the Present, 1987.

Swanton 1946: 401 quoting Bushnell 1909: 7: “The frames were formed of small saplings; the tops and sides were constructed of palmetto thatch. According to the present inhabitants [in 1908-9], many of the circular houses were large, affording shelter for many persons. Only one door was made, this in most cases facing the south. A fire was kindled on the ground within the lodge, the smoke passing out through an opening made for the purpose at the top near the center.”

Applying daub (clay with Spanish moss) in wattle to create a wall.

6.1

6.2

6.3

6.4