

# Albania restored to its former glory

BY KARMA CHAMPAGNE  
THE JEANERETTE ENTERPRISE

If Charles A. Grevemberg could return to the stately mansion he constructed in the early 1840s, he would find the appearance has changed very little over the years.

Albania Mansion, constructed by Grevemberg between 1837 and 1842, proved to be more than just a perfect setting for the first Jeanerette Chamber of Commerce business after hours gathering of the year.

The event, hosted recently by Hunt Slonem and sponsored by First National Bank of Jeanerette, provided an opportunity for guests to not only exchange business ideas, but to step back in time as they toured the magnificent antebellum home and mingled under the moss draped oak trees.

The unusually large two and half story Greek revival plantation home nestled along the Bayou Teche near the outskirts of Jeanerette still continues to intrigue people from far and near with its wealth of history and culture.

Slonem, a prominent New



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**Albania, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, exemplifies the rich history of the south.**

York artist and new owner of the mansion, has made sure Albania Mansion will continue to remain a part of Jeanerette and Louisiana's history.

Charles Grevemberg constructed the mansion to replace the original home built on the land by his father, Francois C. Grevemberg, after it was destroyed by a fire in the



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**Patsy Nolan, left, a descendent of the Grevemberg family, looks over old family photos with Butch Bailey, Albania Mansion property manager, at Jeanerette Chamber Business After Hours.**

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# ALBANIA: *Restoration a labor of love*

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1830s.

Patsy Nolan, a resident of New Orleans and a descendant of Francois C. Grevemberg, had never toured the home, but owns some of the original furnishings that once graced the mansion.

"You have no idea what this means to me. It's wonderful just to be able to tour the home and to see that it is restored," said Nolan.

In less than two years, Slonem had given a new breath of life to the old mansion. When Slonem acquired the property in 2004 from the estate of Emily Cyr Bridges, the home and grounds were shadowed by years gone by. Neglect had taken a heavy toll on the once stately mansion.

Slonem's love for the south and passion for old homes quickly changed all that. After extensive renovations, the mansion has been restored to its former glory.

Butch Bailey, a friend of Slonem and property manager involved in the renovations, called the restoration project a true labor of love.

"Albania is such a unique piece of property and is considered to be one of the larger plantation homes in Louisiana. It is one of the most important and significant historical properties in the region," Bailey said.

"Hunt was sorry he couldn't be here for the gathering and sent his apologies, but said he was happy to open Albania to the Jeanerette Chamber."

The private home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places but is not open for public viewing.

Slonem, a world renown contemporary artist with exhibits across the world, developed his interest in the south while studying art at Tulane University.

The 54-year old artist has



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**Linda Skipper, from left, Patsy Nolan, First National Bank President Rene Baudry and Chamber President Butch Bourgeois visit at Jeanerette Chamber of Commerce After Business Hours gathering at Albania.**

had more than 170 solo exhibitions since his first professional showing at New York's Fischbach Gallery in 1977 at the age of 24. His work is included in more than 50 museum collections.

"He has a genuine love and interest in Southern plantation homes and furnishing," said Bailey. "

"It's wonderful of Hunt to put the time, effort and resources into preserving the treasures of Louisiana."

Although none of the contents are original to the home, Slonem selected furnishings of the same era.

"It has always been my dream to see the inside of this home," said Monica Fitch, Jeanerette Chamber of Commerce vice president.

"It just feels wonderful to know that he has restored part of Jeanerette's history. Jeanerette has lost so much already and it's wonderful to

know that we won't lose this beautiful old mansion."

One could never doubt Slonem's passion for old homes. He is just as well known for bringing a breath of new life into an old home as he is for the hallmark imagery of birds in his luscious, colorful art paintings.

In 2001, Slonem purchased and restored Cordt's Mansion in Kingston, New York located high above a bend along the Hudson River.

Slonem seems to be drawn to southern plantation homes and the need to bring them back to life. Slonem and Bailey are currently working on the restoration of his most recent purchase of Lakeside Plantation near New Roads.

Albania Mansion drew much attention in the spring of 2005 when it was used in the filming of "All the King's Men." The movie is scheduled for release in September.