Abbeville Airs Street Names
To Give Them More Distinction

By Joe Choate

ABBEVILLE — It makes no difference to 39 home and business owners on 3 blocks of Charity St. in Abbeville, surveyed and ready for four-lane improvement, whether the state route continues to bear that name or another.

Seventeen of the 45 home and business owners contacted would rather that it stays Charity St., mostly from the business standpoint. The majority of those against renaming of the street contends that the change would cause confusion in correspondence where businesses are concerned.

Eight residents of the street are totally willing to change the name to “something more distinguished than just Charity.” One would like to see it ”change to some of French origin, “La Rue Petites Soeurs de Charite.”

In translation, the original French name of the street reads “Little Sisters of Charity Street.”

It was the name given the road by Abbe Mege, founder of the city, in honor of an order of nuns who once maintained a convent on the street. The convent was located where the residence numbered 706 on Charity St. now stands.

One of the residents who would like to have the name change said it is his desire to see the street name from its east city limit to the west city limit bear the name Pere Mege, in honor of the city founder. Such action would cause a change of names on three streets along the state route in the city limits, Charity, Concord and West Port. The section of the state route in front of St. Mary Magdalene Church already has been changed to Pere Mege St.

The possible change of the street’s name was suggested when several persons felt that a four-lane highway should have a more dignified name than Charity. Others suggested that Charity St. has become almost as synonymous to Abbeville as Canal St. to New Orleans and that changing its name would cause confusion.

Others yet suggested that the state route within the city limits continue to be called Charity with “drive” or “lane” instead of plain “street” to give it some recognition. Motion by Roy R. Theriot already has indicated that he likes Charity Drive.

Most of the interviewed residents who want the name changed said they and visitors are usually confused when they tell them that “we live on Charity.” Others jokingly said their out-of-town friends usually ask if they chose a home site on Charity St. because they needed charity or were charitable people. Several of the residents in the “no difference” bracket stated that it did not make them feel “demoralized” to tell anyone that they live on Charity (street, that is). Yet another stated that it is “needed charity from the state to get it improved.”

The one person who would like to see the original French name come back to the street said it would be an important move in perpetuating a French heritage “which is quickly dying in our area.” He also suggested giving back the original French name of Rue de la Paix to Peace St. in the city, along with several other changes that would add in symbolizing a certain degree of culture.

Some of the older residents of the street remembered that the original road mapped by Abbe Mege as “La Rue Petites Soeurs de Charite” once was not on the present state route and was blocked in a dead end where the state highway curved along today’s Prairie Ave., in Abbeville. In other words, residents of the primary road could not enter the highway on the east end, but had to travel westward to the business district and turn on small avenues to reach the state route. For that reason the city street once was nicknamed “La Rue de Misere,” or “Misery St.”

Officials are fairly confident that records will show that the street in question still actually is “La Rue Petites Soeurs de Charlie” and has not been changed by legal ordinance. They believe that a progressive and fast moving people in the city eventually chopped the “Little Sisters of” part when referring to the street which made their name become known commonly as “Charity.”

No one had any definite suggestions as to what name the street would bear should it be changed. Presumably, they are leaving that up to the city fathers who must take final action on any such proposals.