OLD SOUTH REVISITED

Acadiana—Remember Days Of Steamboat And Dummy?

Planners and promoters of the Cajun Country Park which is proposed to be built near Lafayette as a tourist attraction, apparently have done a good and thorough job, but they have not announced plans to include in their park a stern wheel steamboat and a “dummy” (small gauge) railroad system.

Wonder if these are in the works?

There’s something about a chugging sternwheel steamer and a puffing, diminutive locomotive that epitomizes the romance, color and adventure that was the old South.

The “dummy” engine, which nervously strained and huffed its circuitous route through the south Louisiana cane fields during the harvest season, should be given at least some small token of appreciation for its enormous contributions to the sugar economy of the pre-tractor and trailer era of transportation.

We have never gotten over our disappointment caused by the sale and removal of the last dummy engine in this area. It stood a lonesome vigil at Orange Grove plantation for years until some Yankee bought it. What non-southerner could offer it the love, care and consideration it richly deserved?

Unlike the small gauge railroad engine, the steamboat was an awesome giant of tremendous proportions and importance during an era when other means of transportation did not exist or were ineffective.

And as a tourist attraction, not even the imposing horse-drawn stage coaches of Six Flags could hold a candle to the majesty of a filigreed, belching billowing, whooshing steamboat with a spraying off-key calliope playing “Dixie.”

The most powerful legislative body in the world, the Congress of the United States, has recognized the sentimental attractions of a stern wheeler, the Delta Queen, a symbol of American emotionalism and sentimentality, without economic and political influence.

Wonder what became of the V. J. Kurzweg, the Interstate and the Albert Hanson?