Agriculture in Louisiana

Opened on Meager Note

It has been said that the Longhorn cattle originated in Louisiana, and not in Texas, and also that cattle-raising in southwestern Louisiana has an earlier starting date than does Texas. The early Texas herd stock, reports say, came from Louisiana.

In 1734 the French king's Council came up with a provision that had a two-fold aim of recruiting soldiers and extending Louisiana agriculture. It granted each year to two soldiers in each company of French troops a furlough and tract of Louisiana land with an annual rental of a sou for every four acres.

The governor made the selection of the two soldiers from among those who had displayed exemplary conduct. Those chosen were required within three years to clear whatever part of the land the governor designated. At the same time they continued to receive their military pay and rations.

The Swiss soldiers in Louisiana were also given the privilege of participating in this program under the same conditions.

The measure was as successful as the Council had anticipated, and many of these military men who traded muskets for the soil were the founders of families whose agricultural pursuits extend into the present.

RECEIVES BOOST

Farmimg received a boost in 1750 when an arrangement was made by which all Louisiana tobacco was sold to France at a good price.

High waters inundated and destroyed crops along the Mississippi River in 1788 hitting hardest the refugee Acadians who were trying to make a home on the banks of the stream.

Spanish Governor Estevan Miro came to their relief to the amount of $12,000.

Settlers along the German Coast farther south were seeking similar aid, and Antoine Peytavin was offering to reconstruct a strong embankment to stop a river crevasse, borrowing $16,000 from the Royal Treasury, provided the lands in front of which he would protect would become his.

When Etienne de Bore, with indigo failure on his hands, wanted to turn to manufacturing sugar to recoup his fortune, his wife, the daughter of Jean Noel Destrehan who had unsuccessfully tried that, attempted to dissuade him, remembering her father's losses.

But he succeeded with sugar, and around 1830 two St. James Parish planters, Valcour Aime and Thomas Morgan, with the aid of expensive machinery and top chemicals of the day, produced a high grade of refined sugar that put Louisiana in the position to compete in the American market.

Some Colonists Had to Depend on Indians

By CLAIRE PUNKEY

DONALDSONVILLE, La.

As July 19 ushers in "Farm Safety Week," a glimpse into the past reveals that there were times when farming in Louisiana went begging and a time when its non-existence took the colonists to the point of starvation.

Back in 1706, the colonists, like the Indians, were subsisting on corn, some cheerfully, some unhappily.

Bienville noted in a dispatch that "The males in the colony, begin, through habit, to be reconciled to corn, as an article of nourishment. But the females, who are mostly Parisians, have for this kind of food a dogged aversion."

In 1708 the colonists in the nine-year-old settlement had neither the inclination nor intention of engaging in agriculture and looked to France for their subsistence.

Such a disposition could lead to drastic results and did, so that the start of 1709 found the people in the midst of a famine and living on acorns.

By 1710, the shortage of food was so great that Bienville had moved most of his men to the Indian villages where their hosts received them warmly and shared their provisions with them.

The lack of interest in soil cultivation alarmed Iberville, the colonizer of Louisiana, who asked his government to send "honest tillers of the earth, and not rogues and paupers, who come to Louisiana solely with the intention of making a fortune, by all sorts of means, in order to speed back to Europe."

TWO-FOLD AIM

In time there came those who would begin the long agricultural history of Louisiana. There were tillers of the soil and there were such men as Joseph Blanpain, a man of education and refinement, employed by the French government, and operator of the first ranch at Vacherie, south of here, in the 1730s.