Attractive Louisiana Bayous Are Loveliest at Springtime

Origin of Stream Names Traced to Indians

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DONALDSONVILLE, La. —

Bayou Lafourche is a land of bayous and never are they lovelier than at this time of the year when spring greets them with their gentle touch of soft leaf-stirring breezes.

Bayou Lafourche at this time of year carries the reflection of the lovely garden settings that line its banks. Its neighbors are the mighty Mississippi River at its upward boundary and the great Gulf of Mexico at its downward point.

Mingling in such company, this gentle and quiet stream has reason to be proud of its upper reaches and houses the craft of a booming industry of the sea at its lower end.

There are many other attractive bayous in this state and springtime seems ideal for a visit to some of them.

BAYOU PLAQUEMINIE

Upward from Donaldsonville some 20 miles is Bayou Plaquemine, flowing through the city of the same name in Iberville Parish. It was on this stream that the real life counterpart of Longfellow's Evangeline made her way in her search for her beloved Gabriel.

Emelie LaBiche did not find her Gabriel in time, but she did stop, en route to the Teche country, on the bank of Bayou Plaquemine to make inquiries about him and to spend a while resting from the ardors of her journey.

It is said early explorers coming down the Mississippi River who veered off onto this bayou found it lined with persimmon trees. They ate the fruit and bread made from it by the Indians who lived there. This Illinois Indian word for persimmon, Pikamine or Piakmine, gave the bayou its name.

Bayou Grosse Tete, also in Iberville Parish, has a French name meaning "big head." Accounts have it that French explorers discovered a large skull in the area. There was no body or other means of identification, so it was never learned what nature of beast it was. But this discovery named the stream.

INeINDIAN TRIBE

Also in Iberville is Bayou Choc'taw, which derived its name from the Indian tribe, after a surveying party accompanied by a Choc'taw Indian guide came to the stream at the end of a long, hard day. The Indian, irritated and in bad temper from the stringent events of the day, had to answer an interminable list of questions put to him as he rested after supper. This led to the bayou's receiving a nickname of "Bayou-Go-To-Hell," because that is the response the guide supposedly finally made to his questioners.

Bayou Manchac once connected Lake Maurepas and the Mississippi River. Early French explorers called it Iberville. Indians named it Ascania. When Louisiana was Spanish-dominated it became known as Manchac, from an Indian word meaning "rear entrance."

Corne a Chevreuil is a bayou in the vicinity of New Roads in Pointe Coupee Parish. A settler by the name of Lafitte, who was a great deer hunter, placed a pair of antlers on posts at the entrance gate to the home he had built.

HOME AND BAYOU

Both the home and the bayou became known as "Corne a Chevreuil."

In the vicinity of Alexandria is Bayou Lamourie, and many ideas as to the naming of this stream have been broached. Back in 1802 old maps showed it as "Lamoureux," meaning the lower.

It was also known as "Le Mourir," meaning "of death," "L'A'mo u r," meaning "love," and Lamourie. Legend and tradition have it that a young lover, turned down by the girl of his dreams, drowned himself in the bayou. Then another legend notes that the bayou bears the name of an Indian chief.

"Lamourie" is a corruption of "Le Murier," meaning "mulberry tree," and it is also thought that the many mulberry trees along the streams and in the area are responsible for the name.

BUFFALO HIDES

Bayou Amulet is near Natchitoches and in Louisiana's early days it was a verp busy stream. Buffalo hides, silver from Mexico, horses and mules and other products were brought up the Red River and the Mississippi River from New Orleans and were loaded and unloaded there for passage to and from the west.

The bayou is said to have first been named "Bayou a la Mule" and then changed to "Amulet" by a map maker, and still another version is that it was named for the Indians' fondness for amulets.

In Southwest Louisiana is Bayou Teche, a stream with a name that has a number of versions, a stream that stretches through such historic places as New Iberia, Breaux Bridge and the like.

These are some of Louisiana's bayous, places that belong in the springtime setting of a lovely land.