100th Birthday Fete Near for Bayou Goula Church
St. Paul's to Get Refurbishing for '71 Rites

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(T-P Bayou Lafourche Bureau)
BAYOU GOULA, La. — With its 100th birthday coming up in 1971, the Catholic Church of St. Paul here will get a refurbishing and a new look for the celebration, according to parishioners who have initiated plans for renovation of the historic edifice.

It was in the Bayou Goula area that the first mission church in Louisiana was built by Father Du Rhu, a Jesuit missionary, in 1700.

Until 1877 this area was served by the St. Gabriel Catholic Church pastor across the Mississippi River who rowed across the stream to say Mass in a structure that had formerly housed the Iberville Parish courthouse.

In 1871 this church was built and Father Dubernard, pastor at St. Gabriel, was put in charge by Archbishop Perche, who became pastor here when Bayou Goula was made into a parish. Archbishop Perche placed the parish under the patronage of St. Paul.

A series of pastors served this church until its suppression by Archbishop John Shaw in 1929 when it became a mission of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in White Castle.

Removal of the church site was necessary when in 1929 the Mississippi River levee had to be moved. To place the church where it is now, the parish cemetery had to be moved to another location. This location was St. Raphael's cemetery upriver.

Anthony Pasqua of Bayou Goula has been named chairman of the committee seeking to renovate the old church. A meeting at the church has been called for June 10 to elect permanent officers and make further plans, according to Allison J. Barbier, the committee's publicity director.

The committee has held one meeting to initiate plans for projects to raise funds to finance the renovation. One of these, it was announced by Pasqua, will be to contact former residents who might be interested in helping keep the church open.

Barbier said because of lack of available funds, several months ago it was thought the church would have to be closed because of its general condition which made it almost unsafe for use.

"An overwhelming desire of the people of Bayou Goula to keep their church open motivated the movement to raise the needed money to make repairs before the centennial celebration planned for next year," he said.

When first built the church had an accommodation for some 400 people and was often filled to capacity for Sunday Masses, but today with a noticeable decrease in population in this area, an average of about 125 attend Mass and other services there, Barbier said.

Barbier said that the finance committee of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in White Castle has given the fundraising permission, because the White Castle group does not have the necessary funds.