Bayou Lafourche Attracts Famed Writers’ Attention

"Beayeau de la Fourche" Was One Description

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(T-P Bayou Lafourche Bureau)

DONALDSONVILLE, La. - "The Fork of the Chitimaches." The Chitimaches and his name for it was the Fork of the Chitimaches. Today only "Lafourche" or "Fork" remains of the original name.

Gayarre has also recorded an autumn visit in 1805 to this bayou by the Marquis of Casa Calvo, who left New Orleans to visit the area, after giving Governor William C. C. Claiborne notice of his intentions.

These were, writes Gayarre, "to pass through Bayou Lafourche and Bayou Teche to sea, and thence to the mouth of the Sabine, their principal outlet of the Mississippi River which has probably been the first channel through which it discharged its water into the Gulf of Mexico by way of Big and Little Caillou, the Terrebonne, Bayou du large, Bayou du cadre and Bayou Black, besides several others."

He reported that the bayou soil, although alluvial in origin, "like the Mississippi bottoms," appeared of older formation and was more impregnated with oxide of iron," and its "vegetable fossils more decayed."

In 1812, Stoddard's "Sketches of Louisiana" described the bed of the bayou as "about 90 feet in width", usually "dry in the summer season for a few miles, when the water makes its appearance, probably collected from the swamps, and gradually deepens as it rolls towards the Gulf."

This account described settlement 45 miles down from the river, with a population of some 200 families of mostly Spanish origin. "They cultivate rice, corn, cotton and flax, and also afford to the New Orleans market considerable quantities of provisions," went the account.

Others of the past have noted on paper that Dr. John Watkins on a visit here in 1804 recommended to Governor Claiborne that the stream navigation should be improved.

Historian Francois Xavier Martin called the bayou "an outlet of the Mississippi River which has probably been the first channel through which it discharged its water into the Gulf of Mexico by way of Big and Little Caillou, the Terrebonne, Bayou du large, Bayou authorized Alfred Hennen of New Orleans and Henry Johnson of Donaldsonville to raise $15,000 through lottery for such improvement."

Again in 1822, a lottery to improve the bayou was given the nod by the legislature and David A. Randall, Carlier D'Outremere, parish judge of Ascension, and Narcisse Landry were named to conduct it.