Cecilia Spells Hospitality

Cecilia — Whether you spell it with two “I’s,” as its citizens prefer, or spell it Cecelia, with two “E’s” as state highway signs designate it, Cecilia (or Cecelia) spells hospitality.

This unincorporated village on the edge of St. Martin parish prides itself on the friendly atmosphere that prevails. There is also an air of trustworthiness in the community that is not evident in larger towns.

There are few locked doors in the village and there is no marshal on patrol—rather, the citizens depend upon sheriff’s deputies for their law enforcement. Since it unincorporated, Cecilia has no mayor, but Jesse Guidry, an insurance man and member of the St. Martin Police Jury, serves, more or less, as the village spokesman.

“We've never made any move to have incorporation procedures drawn up,” he said. “Our people seem to like the status quo and, actually, at this time we can see no advantage to being incorporated.

“All our major streets have been paved through action of the police jury and that has not required a bond issue or any additional taxation,” Guidry said.

A street paving project is still underway in the community and five streets are being blacktopped.

For many years, residents of this community depended on their own wells for their water supplies. However, the village will have its own water system that is expected to be in operation and serving from 350 to 400 families in mid-March.

This project is being financed through the Farmers Home Administration. “This will provide us with an ample water supply and will result in lowered fire insurance rates for people in the area,” Guidry said.

The water system will be operated by a non-profit organization of which Guidry is president.

A health unit, similar to the one now in Breaux Bridge, will be built in Cecilia, probably sometime this year, Guidry said. The Police Jury already has renewed and increased taxes to meet its share of the cost for building and operating the $25,000 facility in the 5th ward. Cecilia applied for Hill-Burton funds to bring the health unit there.

Officials of this community also are making arrangements for engineers to make a feasibility study for a sewerage system, according to Guidry.

During the past year, eight acres of land were purchased for the community’s primary school to be used for a playground and for future extension. A contract also has been let in Cecilia for the construction of a branch bank.

At present, Cecilia has an efficient volunteer fire department whose members are ever ready to answer an alarm. They never hesitate to lend their support to other areas when called upon during major fires.

There are two schools in Cecilia with a high school, elementary and primary grades, for whites and elementary and primary facility for Negro students. The primary section of the white school recently had several additional rooms to accommodate the growing school enrollment. There are also two churches located here — St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and St. Rose of Lima.

While most of the citizens depend on farming for their livelihood, there is a cotton gin, a sweet potato canning factory, a crawfish processing plant and a sweet potato processing plant that adds additional income.

Citizens of the area, ward 5, have united with those of ward 3 in St. Landry parish for the construction of a new hospital at Arnaudville serving Cecilia, Leonville and Henderson. Officials are now advertising for bids for construction of the $500,000 project. It is expected to be underway in early spring.