Cemetery At Cheniere Au Tigre Is Preserved

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CHENIERE AU TIGRE

Except the little patch where the graves are. The ground there is carpeted with green wild onions. The rickety wooden crosses are a fresh white and, on top of a couple of mounds, imitation flowers show their bright faces to a sunless sky.

But the beaten old wire fence can’t hold out the clean, cool sea breeze and the rustling sound of the palmetto and a feeling of isolation like you were somewhere between stepping off the boat alive and buried here beneath seashell-covered mounds.

Today Cheniere au Tigre is in limbo. Years ago it was the home of a number of families. People here grew fruit and vegetables and raised cattle and others from the mainland came to relax, sometimes for the whole summer. And its future is bright. Money has been appropriated and plans made to build a road from La 82 near Pecan Island to Freshwater City. From there, it would only take about six miles of road and a couple of bridges to put Cheniere au Tigre within the reach of the motoring public. Local promoters and public officials alike are reeling with the vision of a Miami-like mecca at Abbeville’s back door.

Right now, though, visitors are few and far between. Some still come in the summer to relax at the couple of camps near the beach. Some come to tend their cattle and horses. And, once a year, a group of people come to take care of the little cemetery.

Called the Cheniere au Tigre Cemetery Association, the group was formed in 1960 by Zoe Cesare Sagarra. Since then the last permanent resident has moved away and Hurricanes Audrey, Edith, Hilda, et al, plus a whole slate of unwatched storm tides, have scattered the simple wooden markers and headstones all over the island. Each time, the association has rebuilt the fence, replaced as many of the markers as could be found and rebuilt many more. On All Saints Day, a delegation armed with flowers and paint pays its annual restoration visit to the final resting place of Sagarra, Choates, Broussards, LeBlanc, Dysons, Guilfoys, Tacos, Helbrants, Coles, Whites, Cassacs, LaPlaces, Rodrigues, Raggins and unlabelled others.

But as generations pass the bond between the living and the dead of Cheniere au Tigre rapidly weakens. Many of the people who knew them as walking, breathing personalities are themselves dead and buried elsewhere. The remaining members of the cemetery association now are feeling the squeeze for money and labor to keep the graves in good condition.

Donations, either of labor, materials or money, are welcomed. Get in touch with Mrs. Dallas Hanks, 410 W. Seventh St., Kaplan.

LIVE OAK AND WILD ONION — Shaded by stately live oaks and carpeted with bright green wild onions, the lonely cemetery at Cheniere au Tigre stands in silent memorial of the families who once lived there. The cemetery association is seeking help — money, labor, materials — in building a new fence and preserving the grave markers. (Advertiser Staff Photo)