Construction Shows Lafayette's Boom

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Construction and its allied fields, and real estate and building, continued at a record pace in Lafayette during 1965 and the same or better is anticipated by members of those fields for 1966.

One merely needs to look around the city to see that construction is constantly underway. The rapid growth of the city has been responsible for much of the construction, as more people means more homes, and more homes mean more services, such as the need for more hospital space, businesses, shopping centers, streets, and schools.

There were 340 homes constructed in the City of Lafayette during 1965. No official record is kept on homes outside the city limits, but because of the growth of some of the subdivisions outside of the city limits, quite a few were also constructed in those areas.

Another indication of the healthy growth of the community is revealed from the number of businesses constructed in 1965. There were 72 commercial business, with a total valuation of $2,345,764, built in 1965. There were also 423 additions and alterations to private residences, and 76 additions and alterations to commercial properties.

One major project completed early in 1965 was the Lafayette General Hospital, built at a cost of about $5 million and dedicated in March. This together with additions to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital the year before, made Lafayette a major medical center of Southwest Louisiana.

Another major project completed in 1965 was the Doc Bonin Power Plant on Walker Road. Cost of construction was about $5.5 million. The plant, dedicated in October, doubled the power capacity of the city—a gain for the purpose of keeping up with the growth.

It took most of the year to get the bonds, but at the end of the year, the contract was awarded and the parish was on its way to realization of a new courthouse. The seven-story structure is to be completed in two years. It is being built at a cost of about $2,800,000 and is being financed principally through a bond issue approved by the property owners.

The Lafayette Parish School Board was also much in the building news during 1965, having made improvements and additions to several schools to keep pace with the school enrollment. The board also initiated work on the large Ovey Comeaux High School, in the southeast part of the parish, due when completed and expected to be ready for occupancy in December.

The school board also announced that a survey on the needs of the schools indicated the expenditure of about $7 million between 1966 and 1971 in construction.

At USL, the music building, at a cost of about $1.1 million, was completed and dedicated. Also completed was a dormitory for boys on Woodson Street. A private dormitory for girls, Agnes Edwards House, was also completed and ready for occupancy in September.

Attempts were made to improve the Blackburn Coliseum, but the bids were higher than the money allocated. Instead, a metal building, at a cost of $76,000, was added behind the coliseum in time for the annual Louisiana Gulf Coast Oil Exposition.

One large project underway at the end of the year north of Lafayette was Evangeline Downs racetrack. Construction there was estimated to cost over $1 million and was due to be completed by the end of this month, with racing to begin in April.

The City of Lafayette was on its way towards construction of some of its capital improvements. There were lighting improvements, street construction, and sewage construction throughout the year.

The city also completed the Young Adults Recreation Center at Girard Park, and additions to the banquet hall at the Lafayette Municipal Auditorium.

Churches were in the forefront of the construction limelight in 1965, too. Completed early in the year was the St. Luke's Catholic Church off Landry Road, and additions to the Catholic chapel at USL. Construction was underway on the St. Barnabas Episcopal Mission on Camelia Blvd. Also underway was construction on a church education and recreation building for the Northside Baptist Church on Jefferson.