Covington Stages Gala Fete on 150th Birthday

Eventually Bernardo de Galvez, Spanish governor of Louisiana, would dramatically wrest it from the English hands that had obtained it in 1763, and it would have a history under still other flags.

It was 1779 when Galvez marched out of New Orleans and up the Mississippi River to aid the American freedom cause. The English forts at Manchac and Baton Rouge fell before Galvez' onslaught, and the Spanish governor went on to break the English hold in Louisiana and to gain West Florida for Spain.

In 1810, American and English residents of West Florida rebelled against the Spanish and on September 22 of that year the republic of West Florida was brought into existence. Its life was extremely brief.

Five weeks later, on Oct. 27, Governor W. C. C. Claiborne of the Territory of Orleans, was ordered by United States President James Madison to take possession of West Florida by armed force.

This order was given to Col. Leonard A. Covington, commander of U.S. troops of the Mississippi territory.

NAME IS CHANGED

Later, the settlement which began as St. James in 1803 on land acquired by Jacques Drieux of New Orleans, and which on July 4, 1813, became Wharton, for John Wharton Collins of New Orleans, who had bought the Drieux land, was to be named Covington for this officer.

Covington went on to become a general who fought by the side of Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans.

Claiborne's ordinance giving West Florida to the United States was dated Dec. 7, 1810.

Next came this section's inclusion in the County of Feliciana, and 35 days later the county was divided into the parishes of St. Tammany, St. Helena, East Baton Rouge and Feliciana.

A legislative act of March 6, 1819, carved Washington Parish from St. Tammany, and as the first act of Louisiana's general assembly to establish an additional subdivision.

St. Tammany lost an additional part of its area in 1869 when it and other parishes contributed to the new Tangipahoa Parish.

Today St. Tammany has an area of 581,120 acres of pine, alluvial and wooded lands. Its population in the 1960 census was 38,643, a 43 per cent increase over the 28,983 in 1950. The percentage of women is slightly larger than that of men in this parish where the median age is 25, and 61 per cent of people live in the rural areas.

Covington, on the west bank of the Bogue Falaya River, is the center of the ozone belt. It has its share of historic structures, among which is Robin's home on the Bogue Falaya dating back to 1818, and which was the first courthouse of St. Tammany Parish.

The new mingles with the old in St. Tammany Parish, and stretching across Lake Pontchartrain to nearby Mandeville is the 24-mile causeway, reputed to be the longest bridge of its type in the world. This bridge has placed Covington close to New Orleans and onto the threshold of the space age.