Cypress swamp donated to group for preservation

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

Once Bayou Teche was lined with bottomland hardwoods, now only a small island of the vast cypress swamps remains.

A boy once fished there, marveled at the great numbers of wintering waterfowl and watched oxen haul away the huge logs from the surrounding area.

There were bullfrogs and alligators and in the summer dense green vegetation.

Now that boy and his sister, who jointly inherited the land, want to make sure those last 76 acres don’t vanish into the farmland that surrounds it.

To do that, they have given their prized swamp away, happy to keep its memories and to know that it’s natural state will be protected.

Dr. Sidney Frederick, who has cut a few trails into the swamp so it can be enjoyed by youth groups, and his sister, Grace Frederick Moity, have donated the land to the Nature Conservancy, which describes the property as the largest forested natural area remaining in the Bayou Teche drainage system.

The land is located near the St. Martin Parish town of Arnaudville.

The Louisiana Nature Conservancy is committed to the preservation of natural land and the plants and animals that inhabit them. So far, the state organization has protected more than 100,000 acres in Louisiana, including habitat for the bald eagle and the Louisiana black bear.

The latest property protected is a 76-acre patch of hardwood forest surrounded by cleared lands and is all that is left of the primeval swamp that once dominated the landscape in that area, according to Nancy Jo Craig of the conservancy.

“Surrounded by agriculture, this forested oasis stands out along the bayou,” she said. “Frederick’s Swamp Preserve will serve as a lasting reminder of what makes southwest Louisiana so special.”

Some of the cypress stands are well over 100 years old, and the forest is also filled with tupelo, willows and hackberry, and includes a prominent ridge dominated by live oaks.

“These trees have been an important part of my past,” Frederick said. “The Nature Conservancy shares the same goals that my sister and I have regarding preservation of wild Louisiana. The donation of these woods to the Conservancy will assure that future generations will see the real Bayou Teche.”