IN LAFAYETTE

Disney-Type Park Viewed

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A group of Lafayette and area businessmen met last night at the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce offices to explain and discuss financing a proposed $750,000 tourist attraction to be constructed here that is expected to draw 250,000 visitors in its first full season, afford about 200 job opportunities for college student summer employment and a full-time staff of some 25, and produce a payroll of approximately $340,000.

The men spearheading the project are W.L. “Bill” Daly, Bob Gates, J. Menard, Bill Ashy, and Dave Perkins.

Daly announced last night that the attraction will be a 117 acre "Disneyland-type" park depicting Acadian life as it was 100 years ago. The park will be titled "Cajun Country" and the developers hope to get enough shareholder commitments by February to begin construction.

July 4 Weekend

Daly said if construction began in February the park could be finished and ready for opening this July 4 weekend.

The park will feature a Cajun Country village in an authentic reproduction of an Acadian settlement designed in detail as well as a "bayou boatride" through simulated typical Louisiana swamp, stocked with wildlife animals and vegetation typical to the state.

The site of construction is three-fourths mile south of the Lafayette airport on Highway 90. The property is faced by the highway and goes back to Lake Charles.

Levee Planned

The park will be surrounded by a levee to hold a planned four lakes and the bayou boat ride waterway.

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swamp lands and wildlife preserve.

Developers hope to keep the park open from May to September and have planned facilities for 150 caravan campers and a parking lot for 2,000 autos.

Daly said they need at least $500,000 in pledges to buy stock at $100 per share before the construction can begin. He said the stockholders would file with the state and officially incorporate the park as Cajun Country Attractions, Inc., with members of a board holding 50 shares of stock.

Depict Life

As outlined in the present plans, the Acadian village would house stores and shops depicting life in the area as it actually was, with persons working in the shops and stores and selling the items to tourists.

The Acadian village calls for shops such as spinning and weaving, blacksmith, tanning, and trapping and ice cream parlor. Other crafts and industries shops will be a candle factory, praline candy kitchen, Louisiana hot sauce, syrup mill, grits mill and bakery and watermelon stand.

A simulated salt mine above ground is in the plans as is an oil rig along the bayou boat ride to show tourists two of the major industries of the modern day Acadiana.

One major attraction along the boat ride, developers say, will be piratcraft, Jean Lafitte Island. The boat ride will stop at the fort for passengers to spend some more money on souvenirs.

Daily Advertiser, Jan. 6, 1971, C.5-6

Daly says that by 1980 tourism will be the "biggest business in the nation" and Acadiana can profit handsomely from tourist attractions such as the proposed Cajun Country Attractions.

He said the park would be improved each season to attract former visitors back to see the new. He also pointed out that the park would have a small center for directing tourists to other points of interest in Acadiana such as The Shadows in New Iberia, the St. Francisville area, the Jim Bowie Museum in Opelousas and other areas.

Encourage Tourism

Atchafalaya Basin President B.E.M. Skerrett III, said at the meeting that if the federal government makes part of the basin a national recreation area the two will complement each other and encourage more tourists to stay longer in Louisiana.

Daly pointed out that the proposed north south Louisiana highway would bring more tourists to Acadiana and the Interstate 10 completion across the Atchafalaya Basin will bring more people here. He said Acadiana will become the crossroads of north-south and east-west travel.

Daly said the college students employed would be assured of a complete summer's employment and the park would guarantee employment of nearly 200 college students every summer, thus helping students help themselves through school.

The 25 full-time employees will include a managerial staff and clerical department, plus maintenance personnel.

Daly said the developers hope to spend $50,000 in building the Acadian village and some $300,000 for site improvements before construction of the village begins.

Executive Director of the Louisiana Tourist Development Commission, Morris Ford promised at the meeting that his commission would back the planned park and would lend assistance in national advertising.

The Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission has said it will supply the animals for the game preserve for the park.