Events on Bayou Lafourche During Past Junes Recalled

Early Days of Summers in 1800s Viewed

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DONALDSVILLE, La.

That "good old summertime" is here again, with its "what is so rare as" June days. School's out, fishing and other vacation ventures are in the making, and the sun of this sixth month of the year is beckoning devotees to beaches and the like.

The trappings of vacation time are different now from those in a distant past, but the excitement of summer has always been fast in the hearts of humans, past as well as present. Sometimes other events have made this opening month of summer memorable.

Let's see what occurred in early summer on Bayou Lafourche a long time ago. For instance, in June 1801, William Conway, native of Ireland, had just bought a farm that in a short time would become of historic significance with founding of Donaldsville.

Children who in years to come would be important to the guidance of the community went merrily by this place, perhaps with fishing poles over their shoulders, minds intent only on the simple pleasure of the moment.

LAUSSAT CHOSEN

Farming was in the thoughts of Ascension dwellers in June, 1803, when Pierre Clement Laussat was designated by France to receive the Orleans Territory from Spain through Don Manuel de Salcedo and Don Sebas-tian de la Puerta O'Farrill.

June apparently was a favorite month with Conways dealing in land. On the 25th in 1806 he advertised property for sale, two acres fronting on the Mississippi River here. He noted in his ad that there was little doubt "that the spot must soon become a town of very considerable note."

Then came the year of 1808 with William Donaldson on June 21 advertising the sale of a lot in his projected town. The ad noted that the sale was "in the town of Donaldson, now establishing at the extreme of the Fourchon" would start July 7.

"The plan of the town may be seen at his house on the premises and also at his residence in New Orleans, where the prices and conditions of sale will be made known," the advertisement said.

ENGAGED IN DUEL

While the young and their elders were about their respective pursuits in June, 1807, Gov. William C. C. Claiborne of Louisiana and Ascension landowner Daniel Clark were engaged in a duel at Manchac. Clark was owner of Burnside plantation.

In June, 1808, Thomas Randall was called from whatever plans he had for the coming summer to be the first postmaster of first U.S. Post Office in Donaldson's new town, the first to be created in Ascension by the American government.

Randall, however, had little time to function, because almost immediately after his appointment he became ill and died within a month of assuming office.

It was June 14, 1819, that church wardens entered into a contract with Jean Francois St. Gees, architect, for construction of a new Ascension Catholic Church of brick, to cost $12,500.

PUBLIC SALE

Antoine Peytavin's plantation below Donaldsville was up for public sale on June 17, 1822, the land containing six arpents in front and 40 in depth. V. M. Maurin was sheriff then.

A description shows that "The buildings of the sugar house are in bricks, and well conditioned, the dwelling house large and commodious, and the fences in good repair. There is on that land a considerable crop of cane."

A new generation of youth was enjoying the summy June of 1825 in barefooted glee as those who had once known these carefree times sat down to contract for the construction of a state house to house the Louisiana government in Donaldsville.

Antoine Peytavin was the contractor, and he was to build the legislative structure to a measure of 15 feet in front and 100 feet in depth. An entire square had been bought from Francois Lefort. The commissioners entering into contract with Peytavin were David A. Randall, Christophe Colomb, Valery Landry, Victor Maurin and Trasmon Landry.

To the young fry, sugar cane meant a luscious delicious taste derived from chewing on the stalk. To the planter, then as now, it was a crop to be nurtured and inspected with care. In June, 1832, the crop was "never more dissatisfactory."

The sugar cane, on many plantations, looks like Eastern-Shore Corn that tassels when knee high — in some places, the discouraged planter has suffered the weeds to hide it. ... This was summer long ago.