Fall Festival Will Offer Fun and Chance to Help

By PIE DUFOR

It takes a lot of hard work, unbounded enthusiasm and high optimism to set out, these days, to raise $300,000 for any worthwhile project.

But members of the River Road Historical Society have dedicated themselves to hard work, have plunged into their program with enthusiasm and optimistically look for public support for their project.

And what is the project of the River Road Historical Society? It is to restore and preserve the historic Destrehan Plantation manor house on the River Road at Destrehan, a fine old place older than the American Constitution.

And what is the program of the River Road Historical Society? It is to hold a series of fund-raising events until the $300,000 that is needed has been raised. The first event in the fund-raising drive will be a Fall Festival to be held next Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 11 and 12 on the Destrehan Plantation grounds.

The American Oil Company, which used the manor house as an office for its refinery at Destrehan, some months ago donated the 185-year old mansion, with four acres of ground, to the River Road Historical Society. This organization was formed three years ago for the express purpose of preserving the manor house, which after the closing of the refinery, had begun to deteriorate, more rapidly as the years went by.

Negotiations were begun with the American Oil Co. to donate Destrehan to the non-profit group for preservation. Active in securing the manor house for the River Road Historical Society were former president of the group, Mrs. Wayne Gaupp, architect Paul Murray and State Rep. Ralph Miller.

Immediately after receiving the gift of Destrehan, the River Road group set into motion its program to restore the manor house, built in 1787, to its former splendor. The plans of the society are these:

1. Restore and preserve the manor house.
2. Secure the designation by the Louisiana Tourist Development Commission of Destrehan as an historical site.
3. Secure Destrehan’s listing in the National Registry as an historic site, which would make the River Road Historical Society eligible for federal matching funds for restoration.

While these laudable aims and aspirations are “in the machinery,” as past president of the group Harold Cambré has stated, the immediate goal is to stage a successful Fall Festival the coming weekend.

“This is a major undertaking, since it has been estimated that the cost of restoration approximates $300,000,” said Mrs. Sandra McManus. “The Fall Festival will be the first of such events to raise the necessary funds.”

Mrs. McManus stated that members of the River Road Historical Society have been working for some time to prepare the Destrehan property, which had become run down.

Continued in Sec. 2, Page 5