Final Sesquicentennial Event to Include Antebellum Homes

Celebration Nears Close in Donaldsonville

By CLAIRE PUNKEY (T.P. Bayou Lafourche Bureau)

DONALDSONVILLE, La. — Over the historic years of this area, antebellum homes have come to be a part of the countryside, giving in this generation a glimpse of the past, preserving a corner of reminiscence of "once upon a time."

As the sesquicentennial celebration of this Mississippi riverside city comes to its close, visitors have the opportunity to view from the inside some of the homes that have become synonymous with the sugar cane industry in the heart of Louisiana's Sugar Bowl.

There are six homes participating in this closing event of Donaldsonville's 150th birthday this Sunday. Two of them are in neighboring Assumption Parish, one is upriver in Ascension, and the others are in Ascension Parish.

"Belle Alliance" is about five miles from Donaldsonville, along Bayou Lafourche, in Assumption Parish not far from its boundary with Ascension. The land on which it rests was granted to Don Juan Vives by the Spanish government in 1775.

FROM HOLLAND

Charles Koch built the present house, second on this site, in 1846. He had come to the United States from Holland about 1830. He was a sugar cane planter.

The heirs managed it until 1915. Today it is the home of Charles Louis Stewart Church, whose late husband figured prominently in saving the sugar industry in this section.

This mansion has foundations and walls of solid brick that rise as high as the attic. It is described as "an enormous raised cottage," and has ornamental ironwork described as usually associated with the New Orleans Vieux Carre.

Also along the bayou, some 18 miles from Donaldsonville is "Madewood," now owned by Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Marshall of New Orleans. Thomas Pugh began this stately home in 1840.

Eight years later it was finished but shortly before that Pugh died of yellow fever.

His widow Eliza continued the construction and manages the plantation. The home and a half stories high, and 14 is in the classic Greek Revival style. Into it went only the best of materials, such as beams of heart cypress, more than 60,000 home-fashioned bricks, walls 18 to 24 inches thick.

MULBERRY GROVE

Upriver on the west bank of the Mississippi is "Mulberry Grove" in Ascension Parish near its meeting with Iberia Parish. Present owner is Mrs. C. C. Clifton, Sr.

Built in 1836 by Dr. E. J. Dufel, this two-story home is of Colonial architecture with 12 columns front and back. It has a hidden stairway.

Dufel bought Mulberry Grove from several small tracts that had belonged to Eugene Babin, Evarist Babin, Ansekin Landry and others who moved to the New River area.

Today, it stands along the river road resplendent in its restoration, a dignified landmark in a setting of history.

ONLY RIVER LINK

To get to the other side of the river and the homes on the east bank, there is the Sunshine Bridge, connecting Ascension Parish, its only river link, a bridge spanning the river in St. James Parish.

Upriver, the first of the three homes is "Tezcuco," with its gallery of fine antiques, a raised cottage with a wide gallery. Dr. and Mrs. Robert Potts, formerly of New Orleans, are the owners and residents of this house named for a Mexican lake.

Numerous moss-covered trees dot the entry drive to Tezcuco, and inside the visitor first enters a wide central hall before going into the rooms that flank it. The front gallery has ornamental wrought iron railings, as do the side galleries.

Then, up a gravel road to "Houmas House," built in 1840 by John Smith Preston of South Carolina, and today owned by the heirs of Dr. George B. Cross. It was restored by John Smith Preston of South Carolina.

SETTING OF OAKS

Magnificent, it stands back from the road in a setting of oaks, an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture. The house is of plastered brick, two