DOWN THE BAYOU

Flag Waved Over Historical Events During 19th Century

National Week Honoring ‘Old Glory’ Begins

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As National Flag Week starts, it is interesting to go back through history noting events over which the American emblem has waved.

Just scanning the 19th century and selecting certain years, in this instance those ending in “zero,” reveals considerable activity in Donaldsonville and its environs witnessed by “Old Glory.”

On Sept. 19, 1810, for example, William Donaldson, founder of this city, added to his 1806 land donation for a community a site for a courthouse.

Since that time the Ascension Parish Courthouse has remained on the same spot and the flag of this nation has been its companion.

Gen. Wade Hampton, who had fought in the American Revolution and later became a landowner in Ascension Parish, sold an undivided one-third interest in his mammoth estate called “The Houmas” on April 25, 1820.

STATE CAPITAL

The city of William Donaldson became the State Capitol in 1830 and the American flag flew atop the Capitol building, a structure that was never satisfied to the lawmakers who tried desperately and succeeded in returning their deliberations to New Orleans.

In April, 1840, the Jockey Club races at Donaldsonville were receiving attention in the press of the day. So were concerts in the same city in the same month.

That was the year Andrew Gingly on April 13 donated a lot to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Donaldsonville. Also, that April a new Ascension Catholic Church was going up at a cost of $19,000, payable at $100 a month. August brought sugarcaneests.

On Oct. 1, 1850, Victor Maurin succeeded Andrew Gingly as Donaldsonville postmaster. Congress was being petitioned in the spring of that year for twice-weekly mail service between here and New Orleans.

DUFFEL NAMED

Native son Albert Duffel was elevated to the Louisiana Supreme Court March 12, 1860. The Canonneers of Donaldsonville, local military unit, marched to Baton Rouge to contend for premiums with other units, the American flag at its head. Soon, for a brief period, the Confederate flag would replace the Stars and Stripes.

In 1860 there were rumors of secession and on Oct. 10 the state legislature met in extraordinary session to discuss such action. A convention was set for the following Jan. 23.

That year, residents of lower New River across the Mississippi River from this city were granted a post office called White Houmas with Vincent Paul Landry as the first postmaster. This was on the present site of the town of Gonzales.

In 1870 the New Orleans, Mobile and Chattanooga Railroad company applied to the Donaldsonville Town Council for permission to cross its streets in the rear section of the city.

Permission was granted and by late December of the following year the train station at the foot of Cabanossa Street, now Railroad Ave., was nearing completion, to the delight of passengers, who would be able to buy tickets “before entering the cars.”

VALUABLE GOODS

Early in January, 1880, the Southern Express Co. placed a messenger on the New Orleans and Donaldsonville railroad enabling local people to transmit and receive valuable goods from all over the country.

Mail service was good and a telegraph line had been added, and John Burnside, the “Sugar Prince” and large Ascension Parish landowner, had given a right-of-way on his land to permit the New River road to pass. Sugarcane crops were good that year.

In 1890, the Donaldsonville Town Council ordered construction of brick sidewalks on certain streets. The lucky ones were Nicholls Ave., the north side, and Iberville Street’s south side.

The flag of America has waved over Ascension Parish through many events and through some uneventful days.

In a proclamation issued for Flag Week, 1970, Louisiana Gov. John J. McKeithen has this to say: “All of us have a duty to pledge anew on each anniversary of Old Glory’s adoption our faith to the principles for which it stands.”