February Events Viewed in Ascension Parish

Bayou Lafourche Area Had Its Share

By CLAIRE PUNEKY

DONALDSONVILLE, La. — February has been set aside as the "American History Month," and a look over the pages of a history book will reveal that many events have actually occurred in this month.

This tiny corner of America tucked away in the South Louisiana meeting place of the Mississippi river and Bayou Lafourche has its own share of February historic happenings.

It was in February, 1804, that Joseph Landry, a wealthy farmer who had come from the country of the Acadians, became the first American commandant of this district, then known as "Lafourche de Chetichaches."

His appointment came from Dr. John Watkins, who had been deputized by Gov. W. C. Claiborne to select officials in the country parishes as his representative from Ascension Parish. At that time, the seat of government was in New Orleans until May, 1829, then moved to Donaldsonville.

Meanwhile, in Feb., 1817, Walter Gilbert had received the Legislature permission to build a toll bridge across Bayou Lafourche at Donaldsonville. He died before he could construct it.

On Feb. 14, 1826, the Legislature turned down a bill proposing to exempt Donaldsonville residents from payment of parish taxes.

The seat of government moved in and then moved out of the city, and in Feb., 1831, Translamb Landry resigned his seat in the Legislature as representative from Ascension Parish, in disgust at the move back to New Orleans.

Local history records that on Feb. 25, 1839 report of the Secretary of State, public schools of Ascension Parish were valued at $693 and the Johnson Female Institute, a quasi-public school here, had a valuation of $750.

Translamb Landry on Feb. 9, 1846, as Louisiana's first Lieutenant-Governor began performance of those duties. He died in January of 1846, but the military sheriff of Assumption Parish. General Nathaniel Banks ordered an election held Feb. 22, 1864, and the military sheriff of Ascension, Joseph Stewart, reported to him that in balloting Michael Hahn had polled 233 votes, and a man by the name of Flanders, his opponent, seven.

In Feb., 1875, the railroad announced an extension when its superintendent of the Louisiana Division, C. H. Allen, came to Donaldsonville on an inspection tour and projected plans to run the line 14 miles beyond the then terminus, Bayou Goula.

History has it that the Ascension police jury in 1876 was apparently without funds and in February had moved its meeting to a law office because there was no fire in the courthouse stove and no money with which to buy coal.

The city council bought 200,000 bricks to build sidewalks in Feb., 1889, and that same month and year the parish courthouse was destroyed by fire.

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