Bayou Lafourche's History
Since 1840 Is Recounted

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THIBODAUX, La. — Bayou Lafourche, wending its way from the Mississippi River at Donaldsonville to the Gulf of Mexico, is crossed by a series of bridges spanning its banks.

There was a time when crossing the relatively narrow stream was not so easy and people depended on a ferry to get them from one side to the other. Back in 1840 the Thibodaux Town Council adopted an ordinance fixing a tariff for bayou ferry service there.

The rates varied for foot passengers, horses, sheep, hogs, cattle and vehicles, ranging in price from four cents to $2.

A pleasure carriage, for instance, with two wheels and one horse was charged 25 cents to make the short crossing, but the ferryman was not allowed to charge for the individuals in a pleasure vehicle. No doubt, it was a pleasure indeed for a number of persons to ride in the same carriage across the stream.

TOLL HIKED

If a pleasure carriage was drawn by two horses the ferryman was allowed to remain on the bank without crossing for 15 minutes after shouting “for the ferryman to cross him, the ferryman is subject to a fine not to exceed $10.”

Jurymen and military personnel received special privilege on the ferry in conformity with state law, and clergymen were also to be crossed without any charge.

REMAIN AT POST

Three years later, in 1847, the Town Council decreed that the ferryman would have to remain constantly at the ferry landing from daylight until 9 p.m., and “sleep at night in the ferry house erected for the purpose, under the penalty of a fine.”

It need not be round-the-clock service for one individual, because the ferryman had the privilege of placing an employee on duty so that one of them would be “within call at all times.”

For his franchise to operate on the bayou at the head of Marongs Street, the ferryman was bound “to keep constantly at the ferry landing a good substantial flat bottom boat of sufficient size to cross four horses at a time.”

He was also required to provide “one good commodious skiff to cross foot passengers.”

THREAT HELD

To make sure the ferryman or his assistant would not wander far away from the location, the council held another threat over his head.

It stated that if any person