HOTEL FROM THE PAST — This hotel painting done by Gerard Sellers shows the old Segre'ra Hotel at Chenier Au Tigre as it looked around the early 1900s. Chenier Au Tigre was a resort area during the late 1800s and early 1900s, complete with a dance hall and beach cabins. The hotel no longer stands, but Sellers is in the process of tracing the history of the area from old records and interviews with people who remember Chenier Au Tigre in its booming days. The Gulf Island no longer has residents, only occasional visitors. (See additional picture on Page 58)

WEATHERBEATEN — This old barn at Chenier Au Tigre drawn by Gerard Sellers of Abbeville, has been through quite a bit. Islanders fled to its shelter during the 1918 tidal wave which struck from the Gulf. Sellers, who is compiling a history of the former resort area, said.

CHENIER AU TIGRE

In Search Of Elusive History

By MARIA GALL
Advertiser Area Reporter
ABBEVILLE — Gerard Sellers is trying to fill the bits and pieces of the past into a complete puzzle. A free-lance artist, he has been actively working on compiling the history of Chenier Au Tigre for about a year and a half. Chenier Au Tigre is an isolated area in Vermilion Parish on the Gulf which was once a resort spot, but is now barely inhabited.

A jack-of-all-trades, Sellers has done everything from hunting alligators to running an art gallery. His excursions into the past began when he was working with his father as a duck guide at a camp and he read a story on the romanticized area. "It sparked my interest. There has been a lot of fantasy mixed with the facts about the history of Chenier Au Tigre," Sellers said.

"Chat Au Tigre," as it was referred to in old boating records, is a brackish marsh area, teeming with abundant wildlife, with only remains left of a hotel and settlement which once occupied the area.

The first reference to the place was found by Sellers on an 1804 Orleans territory map. Sellers has gathered bits and pieces of information from people who remember the past settlement and archives and other old records. "The pieces are beginning to fit together," Sellers said.

The past of this mysterious place leads back to Texas history and the occupations of the South by France, Spain and England. The first link comes with a reference to the occupation of the Chenier in 1818 and a schooner owned by Isaac White called the "Sister," a lumber ship which operated between Morgan City and Galveston.

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The link between the schooner and the Chenier has not yet been found. However, Sellers said that in 1815 Chenier Au Tigre was used as a training center for soldiers under the leadership of Col. Henry Perry, Mexican War to gain Texas independence. The water and sun were good for rheumatism and "burying people in the sand" as kids still do nowadays and giving them salt baths were considered remedial.

Looking at pictures of the remains of the buildings, it seems a long way back that music filled the old dance hall into the early hours of the morning and the beach was full of bathers and children playing in the sun.

Sellers has done many sketches and some paintings of what the area once looked like. He has hundreds of slides and has visited the area, which is now accessible only by boat many times.

Where will he go from here? "There are still a lot of loose ends. I'm going to try to look into some old diaries of people who traveled through there and interview more people," Sellers said. "I find people who remember Chenier Au Tigre, its romantic aspects, and the fine times there.

The last persons living in the area left, with nothing to keep the younger people there and the beach filling in. Trappers and fishermen and camp owners are about the only visitors to Chenier Au Tigre now, but development of the area as a state park is still being planned.

Looking back into the past has shown him the mixture of French, Spanish and English cultures here. Sellers said, "I have found that after studying architecture, the principles of relating things together has helped in my information gathering on Chenier Au Tigre." There is still plenty of research to be done and a book may be in the future.

"I wanted to take the time to preserve the history of Chenier Au Tigre before the people who remember it and the old records are gone," Sellers said of his work. "I see that history disappearing throughout America and we need to preserve our history to understand how we've gotten where we are today.

STUDYING THE PAST — Gerard Sellers, a free-lance artist from Abbeville is in the process of putting together the bits and pieces of history about Chenier Au Tigre, an area near the Gulf only accessible by boat.
A POTENTIAL PLAYGROUND — A sandy beach like this that runs some 17 or 18 miles on Chetner au Tigre is what Vermilion Parish explorers found when they visited the island and re-dedicated it last month. With the beach opened up, many believe the island could become one of Louisiana's most popular resort areas. Allan E. Breux, a ULL journalism professor, took the picture of the beach near White's camp during the May expedition.

CHENIER AU TIGRE

Vermilion’s Forgotten Isle Teems As Natural Resort

BY LANNY THOMAS

Advertiser Area Reporter

ABBEVILLE — Incredibly deep in the marshland of Vermilion Parish, a forgotten island quietly teems as a natural resort. The island offers an escape from the hustle and bustle of mainland life, providing a peaceful retreat for those seeking solitude and tranquility.

The island, known as Chetner au Tigre, is situated about 12 miles off the coast and offers a unique natural environment. Its sandy beaches, lush vegetation, and abundant wildlife make it a hidden gem for outdoor enthusiasts.

The island’s beauty and potential as a resort have long been recognized. In the 1950s, a group of investors explored the possibility of developing the island for tourism. However, due to the challenges of accessibility and logistics, the plans never came to fruition.

In recent years, interest in the island has resurfaced. Local authorities and environmental groups are working together to preserve the island’s natural beauty and protect its wildlife. The goal is to develop sustainable tourism practices that respect the island’s ecological balance.

There are plans to establish nature trails, ecotourism activities, and educational programs that will allow visitors to experience the island’s unique ecosystem. These initiatives aim to raise awareness about the importance of conservation and responsible tourism.

The island is also home to several species of birds, including herons, egrets, and pelicans. The wetlands and marshes provide a vital habitat for these birds and other aquatic life.

Despite its remote location, the island continues to attract nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts. It is a place where visitors can connect with nature, unwind, and escape from the demands of everyday life.

The future of Chetner au Tigre as a resort appears promising. With careful planning and management, the island could become a destination for those seeking a unique and serene getaway.

Once a Resort — This was the old summer resort hotel used by those who went to Chetner au Tigre for health reasons during the 1930s and 1940s. A doors-domingo, who lives at 125 Louise Dr. in Lafayette, took the picture of the abandoned structure when he explored the island in 1952.

According to an article in a New Orleans newspaper in 1952, there were only 18 persons on the island. Eighty years of wave action had damaged the area. The elevated area was not found in the old-time schoolhouse.

Mail By Boat — At that time, their teacher was Mrs. Rose Marie McAvoy. Her husband worked on the island as a guide man on an oil rig. When the island was inhabited, a boat made weekly trips from the island to bring mail. Once a year, it brought a visiting teacher to the Vermilion Parish school system to check on attendance and keep track of the school.

The hurricane winds in recent years have damaged many of the old buildings on the island. The school, the old church, and the old store have been damaged. The hurricane winds have also affected the island’s natural environment. The island is facing challenges due to erosion and sea level rise.

However, the island’s potential as a resort remains intact. With continued efforts to preserve its natural beauty and promote sustainable tourism, Chetner au Tigre could become a cherished destination for generations to come.