Civil War Body Possibly Stirs Young Interest

ATLANTA — The Louisiana Civil War Centennial Commission may have succeeded in "stirring the interest of a whole new and younger generation" in the War Between the States, Mrs. Elaine V. Johnson, secretary-treasurer of the group, told the seventh national assembly of commissions here Friday.

Mrs. Johnson took part in a panel discussion on what the centennial commissions had accomplished during the four years of the commemoration of the Civil War, which she recalled was once called "the greatest historical binge this country would ever indulge in."

Noting that the four-year program would end in a year, Mrs. Johnson said it was time to take stock, to determine whether the commemoration had contributed to the lasting interest of people in the Civil War, to find out what will endure after 1965 and to determine what state commissions have done of permanent value.

Louisiana determined that its primary purpose should be to produce or create records of the war that would survive long after 1965 and be available to later generations. In the main, Mrs. Johnson said, the Louisiana Commission avoided re-enactments although the commission did sponsor a re-enactment of the secession convention. "We have chosen a different emphasis," she said. "That emphasis was to engrave the story of the war in words."

With this in mind, the Louisiana commission became aware that many individuals were interested in researching the war records of their ancestors. The microfilm rolls of the service records of 60,000 Louisianians were purchased and placed in the Louisiana State Library in Baton Rouge.

"It has been consulted by hundreds of citizens," Mrs. Johnson reported. "We have every reason to think that people will continue to utilize this extensive source for years to come."

The Louisiana commission also encouraged citizens to research events in their own areas and the state organization then provided markers for these. "The results were encouraging and downright astonishing," Mrs. Johnson said. "Individuals plunged into the labor of researching the war in their area. They engaged in research and found it could be a very exciting and entertaining business. With some of them we are sure this new interest will be an enduring thing. As a result of their activities, the state now has 60 new tasteful and accurate markers recounting important episodes of the war and more are on the way."

The Louisiana commission has produced five different pamphlets that describe the war in Louisiana. "They represented our effort to bring the story of the war to the widest possible audience and particularly to younger students of the conflict," the speaker continued.

In addition, the commission sponsored publication of three books and has plans to publish next year one of the most valuable items imaginable — a list of every Louisiana unit in Confederate service with its officers, principal battles, its size and its casualties.