CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Lafayette's Birthday Bash Features Year Long Party

When the people of Lafayette, known for their spirited celebrations, set out to observe the 100th anniversary of the city's naming, they could plan nothing less than a year-long party. The festivities which begin with today's river parade will continue for the next 12 months (maybe longer), culminating on May 5, 1984, the date of the Hub City's 100th birthday.

This kick-off week offers a full schedule of activities, including an interfaith service tomorrow night at the Municipal Auditorium (to be attended by Governor Treen), entertainment and crafts shows at area malls, an official celebration in Jefferson Street's Le Parc de Lafayette on Thursday and special events at the Acadian Village.

Centennial co-chairman Judith Hebert has been anticipating the coming attractions since she was involved with organizing the city's first Lafayette Day honoring its 50th birthday in 1975. For the last four years, she's been doing research and taking mental notes on the way other areas mark similar occasions.

Consequently, she was prepared last year when Mayor Dud Lastrapes asked her to chair the commission along with Marilyn Tarpy, Lastrapes's wife, Rhonda, is honorary chairman.

Mrs. Hebert, who considers the celebration a "nostalgic, emotional" event, is pleased by the number of people who want to be a part of the Centennial.

"There's enthusiasm from every angle," she explained, noting that all of the participants are involved on an equal level as volunteers.

Mrs. Tarpy and Glyn Abel, an assistant to the mayor who is the coordinator of the affair, share Mrs. Hebert's feelings. Abel points out the "unbelievable number of people who volunteered, a genuine feeling that wants to make it a great tribute," while Mrs. Tarpy reiterates that the most impressive aspect of the Centennial is that it involves so many people representing a variety of different interests.

Appointed by the mayor, the Centennial commission consists of seven members, serving in seven areas and assisted by 20 special advisors. In addition, there are over 200 honorary committee members, many of whom are Lafayette old-timers and can recall the city in years long past.

These individuals will be involved in what the commission expects to become monthly "nostalgia parties," during which they will convene to discuss the good old days among themselves and for others.

The fact that the Centennial is being celebrated by young and not-so-young alike makes it a true community event. There will, in fact, be festivities throughout the year which will appeal to and involve all ages and interest groups.

To begin with, local organizations sponsoring an annual event, such as a fair or dance, are being encouraged to designate the occasion as a Centennial affair. The first such activity will take place next Saturday at Lafayette Arts Council ball at Acadian Village.

The Village will also observe Acadian Day June 6, when General Marquis de Lafayette’s Birthday, Egyptian State will mark the opening of the Vermilionville exhibit in City Hall. Also in September, the Centennial will be noted during the Festivals Acadiens, featuring a celebration on the riverboat Vermillion Queen.

The University of Southwestern Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns have dedicated their October 22 football game against Lamar to the Centennial.

During April and May of 1984, French programs on Acadian Heritage Days, a history of Lafayette sponsored by CODOPT, will be shown on Acadiana Open Channel.

On April 29, the second river parade will open the festivities for Centennial week, which will feature activities similar to those going on this week.

A Centennial Parade, highlighting area ethnic groups, and including old-time horses and buggies, will march down Congress St. May 4 and end with a fireworks display at Cajun Field where a fais-do-do will be held.

Finally, the birthday candles will be burning as a Centennial Festival will be presented May 5, Lafayette's 100th birthday, in Girard Park. Two stages with continuous music, ethnic foods, arts and crafts, dancing and souvenirs will be featured along with the Lafayette Art Association Spring Fiesta.

But the party won’t end then as attractions will continue through the summer of '84 to tie in with the World's Fair in New Orleans.

The committee expects to put together a special display of items from early Lafayette, such as jewelry, pictures and doubloons, which will be rotated among area schools and banks throughout the year.

A cookbook by Jean Daniel, called "Volla" is in the making, as is a text by Mario Mamalakis consisting of historical descriptions of area old homes, a compilation of her works which appear weekly in The Sunday Advertiser.

Centennial souvenirs, including t-shirts, buttons and caps with the official logo, will be available within the next few weeks in addition to a five-part poster series of old photographs.

Commemorative quilting is being done by a group of seniors, while graphic artist Alan Laurie has designed a special plate for the event. His creation features eight Acadiana scenes, such as a crawfish, swampland, St. John's Cathedral and the Pinhook Bridge, surrounding a view of downtown Lafayette with a background of Acadiana's famed Evangeline Oak.

Doubloons marking the city's birthday will be produced for Mardi Gras, which the committee hopes will adapt a centennial theme.

Recent and past history of Acadiana will be preserved in a time capsule to be buried later in the year and through a video-taped oral history to be presented at area schools and organizations.

The virtues of southwest Louisiana have been outlined musically in "Sweet Home Acadiana," an original composition by Henderson (Hendy) Foote which is the official song of the Centennial celebration.

Observing the city's 100th birthday with such a flair is a "reminder and celebration of where we've come from," Abel noted, "and a gratification of where we are.

All those who are contributing to the celebration with such enthusiasm are doing so because in Mrs. Tarpy's words, "It's the last Centennial we'll ever work on."

Sunday Advertiser
May 1, 1983