NEW IBERIA — Six bilingual markers commemorating places and events of historical significance in the City of New Iberia were dedicated in ceremonies here Sunday as 5,000 people looked on.

The plaques, each bearing a descriptive summary in English and French, were presented to the City by Mrs. Jacqueline Voorhies, representing the Iberia Parish Chapter of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). Mayor J. Allen Daigre accepted the gifts on behalf of the city.

The ceremonies were held in the Civic Plaza here in front of City Hall. Giant moss-draped oaks surround the plaza.

30 Plaques

Some 30 of the special French-English plaques will eventually be turned over to the city in a plan to take visitors on a walking tour of the city and acquaint them with the French culture of the community.

Similar plaques are expected to be presented to other communities in Acadiana.

Presentation of the markers here Sunday was a project of the Iberia CODOFIL chapter, the Attakapa Historical Association and the Center of Louisiana Studies at USL in Lafayette. Gov. Edwin Edwards was guest speaker at the event.

In presenting the markers, Mrs. Voorhies said it was important that efforts be made now to save the legacy of the past.

Cast Into Oblivion

"In the name of progress and efficiency, the old familiar landmarks and the French linguistic heritage in our state are slowly and surely being cast into oblivion," she told the large crowd.

The governor said he was proud of being a "Cajun" and that he bore the ceremonies in order to give his personal "stamp of approval" to the bilingual concept.

"The French language is not just a tool used to draw trade or tourism," Edwards said. "We have tangible evidence enough through our economic benefits, that the language is also a continuing expression of age-old loyalties and a proud heritage."

Six Markers

Among the markers to be put up and maintained by the city will be one on the first federal building, a post office, constructed in 1902; one at the site of the first courthouse, built in 1871 and which was destroyed by fire in 1905; one at Week's Grove, a stand of live oaks which was once a park; and a plaque recognizing the colorful steamboat era on Bayou Teche from 1830 to 1943.

Included is a plaque for the existing Erath Building, a structure of unusual architecture whose owner, August Erath, affixed his initials on the west wall. Erath once served as mayor of New Iberia.

The sixth marker commemorates the fire of Oct. 10, 1899, which leveled an entire square in the downtown area, destroying what was, at that time, 50 per cent of the business district.

Among dignitaries present were Sen. Paul Hardy, Rep. Elias Ackal, Iberia Parish police jury president Ernest Fouquier, school Supt. George Fuller and school board president Leroy Aucoin.