'Poydras Brides' Now Coming Into Own From Legendary Fund

By JAMES MCLEAN

PORT ALLEN, La. (AP) — The 130-year-old legend of a wealthy Louisiana plantation owner, disappointed in love, comes alive again tomorrow for the "Poydras Brides" of West Baton Rouge Parish.

In this flat cane country, across the Mississippi River from industrial booming Baton Rouge, the Julian de Lallande Poydras dowry fund is ready to be distributed.

Girls in the parish who were married in the last 12 months and who are eligible will share in the proceeds of a curious bequest. Checks vary but can range up to $200.

Poet and moneymaker, a believer in romance and true love, Poydras was a French peddler who soared to financial and political greatness in 19th century Louisiana.

He left $30,000 each to the parishes of West Baton Rouge and Pointe Coupee to provide dowries for girls "who get the chance of being married."

The fund distributed this year will amount to about $3,000, representing interest on mortgage loans.

Pointe Coupee years ago by legislative act, diverted proceeds of its school fund into its school system.

In West Baton Rouge, where the $30,000 principal has doubled, there are 23 applicants this time, said Secretary C. I. Dameron of the Police Jury.

To be eligible, brides must have lived in the parish for at least five years. According to tradition, the brides must give the money to their husbands.

Eligibility and amount of the Poydras dowry each girl receives depends on a complicated formula that takes into consideration the assessed value of the property held by the bride's parents and how much of the property she is entitled to.

Police Jury President B. C. De- vall, Sheriff Sidney Dubroca and Dameron will recommend the brides who will benefit. The Police Jury meets tomorrow afternoon to receive their report.

No documents exist to show why Poydras made his bequest. But the favorite legend tells of a romance that shattered on the rocks of old dowry customs.

The story goes that Poydras, who died a bachelor, fell in love with a girl in Brittany whose parents were poor. The suitor wasn't concerned about a dowry, but French custom ruled against the match.

There are other stories, one that his intended bride died before he had earned enough to support her properly, and another that he had refused to marry a dowryless girl.

The will, made in 1822, said only that Poydras was a bachelor and had "neither ascendants or descendants." He expressed a desire to do good for fellow citizens "and the country I have adopted as my own."

Friends, relatives and charity shared in his vast fortune.

Penniless when he arrived in New Orleans, after spending two years as an English prison of war,