Several Memorable Events Occurred During February

Claiborne Asked Report on Ascension in 1804

By CLAIRE PUNEKY
(T-P Bayou Lafourche Bureau)

DONALDSVILLE, La. — When February makes its appearance, low as temperatures may dip and wild as the weather may be, there is a sensation that winter is on the wane and that the next page on the calendar is the springtime month of March.

February has brought its cold and windy days to Bayou Lafourche, but, despite the force with which this month pounds and chills, the people have made it a time of activity.

Back in 1804 Gov. W. C. Claiborne in February sent Dr. John Watkins to visit Ascension and make a report on it to him. Here is what Watson did and reported, "I commissioned in the place of Mr. Croquet, Mr. Joseph L'Andry, a wealthy farmer, and the person who had always acted as Commandant Per interim during the absence of Mr. Croquet." Landry was the first American Commandant here.

It was on Feb. 22, 1814, that a bill to remove the seat of state government from New Orleans was taken up in the House for consideration, with the contest between Donaldsonville and Baton Rouge.

STILL UNSETTLED

In February, 1822, with the seat of government still unsettled, the Senate rejected designation of Baton Rouge, and another section was introduced designating Donaldsonville as Capital of Louisiana. This met rejection, and the Senate rejected the bill.

In 1823 in Donaldsonville a re-capitulation of state taxes imposed on Ascension residents for 1822 was published in February. An historic account by the late

Sidney Marchand, local historian, showed that the value of all land and immovable property in the parish was $661,750.

The taxes on that amount totaled $1,200, and the total taxes due by Ascension citizens was $3,713. In the transportation category there were two carriages with four wheels and 17 carriages with two-wheels in Donaldsonville of 150 years ago, as of Feb. 17.

On Feb. 10, 1826, it was reported that, on behalf of the legislative commissioners appointed to buy ground and construct a State House here, Trasimond Landry made his report. The Legislature had authorized borrowing $30,000 to defray construction costs for the edifice.

WEDDINGS HELD

February appeared to be a popular month for weddings in this area. After all, it is Cupid's month of the Valentine. On Feb. 12, 1848, a year that is 125 away from this one of 1973, Capt. Narcisse Landry, a leading citizen of the parish, married Coralie LeBlanc. The officiating clergyman was the Rev. John Bouliet of Ascension Catholic Church.

On the same day there was another wedding—that of Cornes Mire and Noemie Berteau.

The following year Judge Robert Wellman Nicholls of Donaldsonville married Jane Phillips of Assumption parish. The Right Rev. Leonidas Polk, Bishop of Louisiana, was the officiating clergyman at the ceremony on Feb. 8 at the home of the bride.

In February, 1875, a ferry on Bayou Lafourche here was proving to be more profitable than the one on the Mississippi River. "The number of persons having to cross the river nowadays is exceedingly small." read an account of the day.

BRIDGE TURNED

That same month it was noted that it was necessary to turn the bayou bridge twice a day to permit trains to pass en route to White Castle. The freight agent for the railroad turned the bridge as an additional duty thrust upon him.

Sometimes, conditions were not of the best. In February, 1876, the Ascension Parish Police Jury had no coal and no cash to buy any. So, it its members met in the law office of Duffel and Landry because the courthouse stove had no fire in it.

A building boom was beginning in February, 1877, as Bernard Lemann started construction of the largest building in this community.

In February, 1881, the Bayou Lafourche bridge was being demolished to be replaced by a new and more substantial one. The railroad tracks within 10 miles of Donaldsonville were undergoing an industrious clearing and repair job.

The old railroad depot was to come down and a new one was to go up, and there were prospects of eight trains stopping here a day.

In February, 1886, the Burnside and Donaldsonville Packet Co. was organized, and the Gracie Kent arrived here to connect the two sides of the Mississippi River with faster service. Gracie replaced the Henrietta. This packet firm had the franchise on the river until the Sunshine Bridge came into existence.