Visit the area that some call "The Cajun Riviera"

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CYPREMORT POINT — In 1920, when she was just 7 years old, Edna Lee Landry and her parents first went to Cypremort Point. The family, avid fishermen who had heard about the joys of casting off the Point, were from Crowley and it took two days by wagon over muddied cattle tracks to make the trip.

At nightfall on the first day, the family set up camp a few miles from the Point.

"That night, I could reach out my hand and grab a fistful of mosquitoes in mid-air," Landry recalled.

Since then, she and her family and thousands of others have made the trip to the Point to relax and enjoy the laid-back ambiance of what many call The Cajun Riviera.

The Point was named by French settlers for the hundreds of dead cypress trees they found there. The trees once lined a fresh water bayou through the center of the Point, but when that bayou clogged with silt, the salt water encroached and the trees died.

During the summer, boaters make their way to the public dock and folks from around Acadiana amble out to the beach. The Point is lined with camps, most with their own dock.

At sunset, relaxed camp owners sit at the end of their piers, drink in one hand, plate of crabs in the other, chatting with friends, serenely gazing at the fiery-looking Vermilion Bay.

Every weekend, sons and granddaughters splash in the brown water, nephews fish for their dinner, and brothers-in-law grab the last beer from the refrigerator.

Although the essential simplicity and slow pace of the Point have not changed in years, the resort is growing. The roads have been improved, residents pay for additional police and fire protection, and a mosquito control program has wiped out the clouds of bloodsuckers Miss Edna had to deal with 75 years ago.

There are about 337 camps on the Point now, with about 20 of the houses occupied year-round.

Dan Regard, a New Iberia attorney who has owned a camp for more than 20 years, loves the Point and spends as much time there as he can.

"It used to be all old rattle-shack camps," Regard said. "Now, it's turned into a social scene."

Not too many years ago, the bridge over the Intracoastal Canal on the road to the Point had to be opened manually.

"You used to have to have to wind the bridge open with a three-foot long key," Regard recalls. "It was like an old-fashioned tin toy."

Besides the new bridge and road, Cypremort Point now has two marinas, a grocery store, a night club, and one of Acadiana's most popular fishing rodeos. The public beach and state park may be expanded and rental cottages built. A new development is taking shape that will offer about 75 waterside residential lots for new camps to be built.

But for all of the recent improvements and expansions, Cypremort Point still retains its unique Louisiana charm and simple pleasures.

As one happy camper expressed it, "Bring a fishing pole, a sack of boudin, and a six-pack of Dixie or Dr Pepper and you'll think you've died and gone to Cajun heaven."