Religion in Louisiana: a History

St. Louis Parish Churches Predecessors of Basilica

By WESLEY JACKSON

Although there were religious services in New Orleans almost from its founding in 1718, there was no permanent church here until 1727.

The oldest continuous church in Louisiana is St. Charles Borromeo Church in Destrehan, which celebrates its 250th anniversary on June 2 of this year.

Immediately after its founding, New Orleans had religious services at makeshift buildings, one of which was a beer tavern, and one which was a slave quarters. The year 1788 was a time of unrest in Louisiana, with the Spanish threatening to take over the city.

In 1722, Father Francois Xavier de Charlevoix, a Jesuit, arrived in New Orleans. He designed a church, which was to be completed in 1727. When he died in 1733, the church was not yet finished.

Later, Adrian De Pauger, the first bishop of New Orleans, designed a new church, which was completed in 1742. It was destroyed in the Good Friday fire of 1744, and was not rebuilt until 1754.

During the 18th century, New Orleans had only one church, the Church of the Gesu, which was a Jesuit church. It was destroyed in the Good Friday fire of 1744, and was not rebuilt until 1754.

In the 19th century, New Orleans had several churches, including the Cathedral of St. Louis, which was completed in 1851. It was destroyed in the Good Friday fire of 1854, and was not rebuilt until 1858.

For its 250th anniversary, St. Charles Borromeo Church in Destrehan will celebrate with a week of events, including a mass at the original site of the church.

Catholic Church