Behrman Was Greatest Mayor, Smith Says

Algiers is as old in time as New Orleans, though it was not officially annexed to the city until 1870, a member of the board of the Algiers Annexation Centennial Committee explained to school children Tuesday.

James W. Smith addressed fifth and sixth grades of Adolph Meyer Elementary School in Algiers, the second day of a series of events planned to celebrate the anniversary of the annexation, which was Monday.

“At the time of the annexation, Algiers had a police jury type government,” Smith explained, “which was abolished when the area became part of the city of New Orleans.”

The area (about 22 square miles) then became the 15th Ward and the Fifth municipal district of New Orleans, and remains so today, he said.

But the area was thriving as long ago as 1808, when Jean Lafitte passed through it between New Orleans and his...
“pirates’ nest” in Bataria Bay, Smith said.

The area has great political as well as historical interest. One of its native sons, Martin Behrman, served 16 years as mayor of New Orleans, longer than anyone else.

“We feel he was the greatest mayor New Orleans ever had,” Smith stated.

Behrman, he added, was the uncle of Gen. Joseph Lawton Collins, who swiftly captured enemy territory during World War II.

Gen. Collins, nicknamed Lightening Joe, was on hand for ceremonies in his honor in Algiers Monday. He is considered “the greatest living Algerian,” Smith commented.

Smith told students that their school was named for Gen. Adolph Meyer, who was “a great friend of Algiers.”

He was responsible for acquisition of land which is now the area’s Naval Station and “which greatly boosted our economy,” he added.

During the session at the school its principal, Miss Elvina M. Echezabel, also was praised. Smith made her an honorary citizen of Algiers, in recognition of her work in the field of education in the area.

Miss Echezabel was a principal for 25 years, the last two at Adolph Meyer. She is also parliamentarian of the New Orleans Principals Association and treasurer of Phi chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, an international honorary sorority.

The award is given to outstanding members of the community. Miss Echezabel was also principal of Krutschmitt Elementary, McDonogh No. 31 Elementary, B. M. Palmer Elementary, and Joseph Kohn Jr. High School.