N.O. DAR TO MARK ACRES OF DESTINY

A tract of land, marked for destiny, which just missed being the site of the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 will be marked Sunday, May 2, by New Orleans Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

The almost-legendary French grant of 34,500 acres of Gilbert Antoine de St. Maxent in 1763, located at the place called Chantilly (Gentilly) from the boundary of a tract granted to a Monsieur du Fossat to a point called Chef Menteur," remained intact for almost two centuries, according to Mrs. S. R. Campbell, member of the Prescott Murphy DAR Chapter in Baton Rouge, and Ray Samuel, author of ". . . to a Point Called Chef Menteur," who did the research for the historical marker.

These acres of destiny at the confluence of Bayou Gentilly and Chef Menteur Pass went from plantation to moon shots. It became an early travel route between the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans because in those days travelers had little knowledge of how to navigate the Mississippi, and it is destined to play a part in space flights of the future as the site of the NASA Moon Rocket plant.

St. Maxent owned his plantation for more than 30 years. Two of his daughters married Spanish governors of Louisiana, and the parishes of East and West Feliciana were named after his lovely daughter, Felicity.

In 1796 he sold his plantation to Louis Brognier de Clouet, who sold it in 1801 to Bartolomey Lafon — civil engineer, architect, builder, appraiser, major in the militia, publisher, theatrical impressario, and surveyor. His maps are well known even today, specially the map of Louisiana of 1805, territorie d'Orleans.

He was not only a privateer and a smuggler incognito, but he worked closely with the notorious brothers Lafitte. He actually wore two hats, or costumes. He could sail with the corsairs of the Gulf, or dance with the best ladies in the salons of the elite on Royal st.

For several days it looked as if Lafon's plantation would be the battleground instead of Chalmette when the British invaded Louisiana. Jackson's engineer-in-chief, Major Lacarriere La-Tour, reported that on Dec. 14, 1814, the enemy had landed at Chef Menteur. Some soldiers had even seen and pursued on the prairie several Red Coats, according to Latour. But word came that the report of the landing at Chef Menteur was a false alarm.

Major Lafon was busy cutting the levees behind the British on the other side of the river. After the battle Jackson ordered the redoubt at the Chef Menteur and Bayou Sauvage confluence completed and stationed a body of free Negro troops on the Lafon's plantation until he was certain the British had departed from the coast.

Lafon laid out the city from Faubourg Ste. Marie to the City of Lafayette. In 1805 he saw the practibility of a road continuing on beyond Chef Menteur to the East — and this early mail route was later established.

In Lafon's succession in 1821, creditors began to pounce on the holding, and at sheriff's sales lots began to go. But the largest section was left to a brother in France, Jean Pierre Lafon. This was the only time major portions of the Chef Mentuer have been separated from the main plantation.

In 1827 a new name appeared on the horizon, Antoine Michoud, who bought the section from Lafon's brother. Michoud was an art dealer with a shop on Royal st. No one knows why exactly he gave up his career as an art dealer and connoisseur to become a recluse who dealt in rusty junk. But a secluded junk dealer he did become — and a rich one.

He sold a portion of his plantation at Chef Menteur between Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne to the U.S. for the site of Fort Macomb, which still stands.

Many of the small lots from the original plantation were scattered to the four winds — but Michoud managed to put the entire tract back together again.

His nephew, Jean Baptiste Michoud, a man who never saw his uncle or his property, sold the shore of Point-aux-Herbes to the U.S. government for a lighthouse and a 100-foot right of way through the property to the New Orleans, Mobile, Chattanooga Railroad company, which became the Louisville and Nashville Railroad company.

Upon the death of his father Marie Alphonse Michoud became the heir. He sold another right of way to the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad company. Otherwise, the tract remained intact until 1910.

In that year John Stuart Watson bought the property from Alphonse, which was sold to Watson's company. In 1923 Edgar de Montluzin bought the Michoud tract which became the Faubourg de Montluzin.

One of the epochal events in his ownership was the wartime construction on a 1,000 - acre site of the Higgins Aircraft plant. In 1959 he sold his property "to a point called Chef Menteur" to New Orleans East, Inc. — and it became the site of the NASA Rocket Plant — Michoud Operations.

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A descendant of St. Maxent — Mrs. Claire McMahon Boston of Mobile, Ala., will be here to take part in the unveiling ceremonies at 2 p.m. near the Congress Inn on Chef Menteur highway.

The marker will be unveiled by Pamela McClure O'Brien, Lynn McClure Clapp, and Sharon McClure O'Brien — grandchildren of the chapter regent, Mrs. Ronald C. McClure, who will welcome the assembly. The plaque will be presented by Mrs. Palma Munson, Baton Rouge, assistant director of the Louisiana Tourist Development Commission, and accepted by Mrs. McClure and Mayor Victor H. Schiro.

Mrs. Benjamin B. Mathews, New Orleans, state second vice-regent, will place a wreath at the site, and les Grenadiers d'-Orleans will fire a cannon salute.

Mr. Samuel will be the guest speaker. Mrs. Rudolph J. Holzer, Jr., New Orleans, honorary state regent, will be mistress of ceremonies.

Greetings will be brought by Mayor Schiro; Harold E. Cook, executive vice-president of New Orleans East, Inc.; James M. Funkhauser, public affairs officer of Michoud Operations; Mrs. Joseph A. Tobin, Lafayette, state regent; Dr. Percy Querens, New Orleans, president of the Louisiana Society of the Sons of the American Revolution; Miss Gwin Lucy Groth, New Orleans, president of Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, Chapter, Children of the American Revolution; J. G. Bisson, consul general of Canada here; and Hans Mormann, consul general of the Federated Republic of Germany.

Others taking part in the ceremonies will be Mrs. B. G. Wehrenbeg, chapter chaplain; Mrs. Jack DeFee, flag chairman; Mrs. Clyde G. Huggins, Americanism and DAR Manual for Citizenship chairman; Mrs. George T. Meinsinger, American music chairman; and Mrs. William Jeansonne, historic marker chairman.

—Photo by The Times-Picayune.

PLACING A WREATH near the historical marker indicating a tract of land near the Chef Menteur hwy. which was acquired in 1763 by Gilbert Antoine de St. Maxent are (from left) Mrs. Joseph T. Bostow, de St. Maxent's fourth great-granddaughter; George S. Rapier, his third great-grandson, and Marilyn Rapier, his fifth great-granddaughter. The marker was unveiled Sunday in ceremonies by the New Orleans Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The plaque was erected near the Congress Inn by the Louisiana Tourist Commission to mark de St. Maxent's plantation, which was considered a possible site for the Battle of New Orleans.