1763: The first permanent settlement at what was to become Baton Rouge

It took a while before Baton Rouge "took."

As early as 1542, DeSoto's followers paddled by the site of the city, but didn't stop.

And if LaSalle and his fellow explorers paused on their way to the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1682, nobody knows about it. But Pierre le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, sailed up the Mississippi, bypassed New Orleans, and landed at the now infamous "red stick" on March 17, 1699.

However impressed Iberville and his adventurers were with the terrain and game of Baton Rouge, it was two decades before anyone returned — a settlement in 1718 by Bernard Diron Dartagnette had vanished by 1727. Not until 1763, when the British had control of the area, was a permanent settlement made at Baton Rouge, with the British even attempting to change the name to New Richmond. That name obviously didn't stick.

Home to the state capital since 1850, Baton Rouge's life revolves around state politics, two universities, the petro-chemical industry and a climate that is marvelous for about nine months of the year and just a tad too warm, but bearable July through September.

Neighborhoods are almost patriotic with their own sense of identity, and the feeling of living in a small town persists even though the population within the city limits is 241,557. Long confined to terms of "North" Baton Rouge and "South" Baton Rouge, growth in the city has exploded in the eastern part of the parish beyond Sherwood Forest Boulevard. Think about it. Fifteen years ago, those were empty fields with just a house here, a farm there — now they're filled with homes and shopping centers.

Baton Rouge isn't just the city proper. The parish has several other towns, including Baker (14,189) and Zachary (8,971), with a remaining population (those living outside the city limits of the three main municipalities) of 121,459.

PARISH FACTS:
East Baton Rouge — Parish seat, Baton Rouge; 473 sq. miles; created in 1810; Population 1900 — 31,153; 1988 — 386,176.