A Day in the Life of Abbeville

Frederick Reutte, 71, uses a stick to push the puck into Abbeville. Reutte has lived in the area for 30 years.

Abbeville was like most other small towns in Abbeville. People go about their daily routines and to office jobs, to shops, and schools. The street is quiet, and the town is calm. A few minutes before noon, a brilliant sun reflected off the Vermilion River as the community began to settle down.

On April 22, 2003, the day was as beautiful as the other days in Abbeville before the storm. People worked hard all day, and then it started to rain. The rain fell steadily, and soon the town was flooded.

Terry Tonn, a resident of Abbeville, said that the rain was unexpected. "I didn't think it would be this bad," she said. "We're used to the warm weather here."
Abbeville

Sleepy city begins to wake up

Donuts and the news of the day await residents

Kristi H. Dempsey
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ABBEVILLE — It's midnight and city employee Troy Duhon has just started work on April 22. His shift lasts until 8 a.m., and besides the last few customers who struggle out of the historic Concord Club downtown, he's mostly got the city to himself.

He'll quietly go about picking up trash and not-so-quietly blowing the dirt and leaves off public sidewalks. His job takes him all over the town, and the town is the other the statue of the city's founder.

Duhon is busy making the town pretty for the 12,000 people who live here and for the tourists who frequently stop by.

They come to see the historic downtown homes and buildings, eat in the famous restaurants, buy unusual products only made locally and shop in the retail stores.

At 3 a.m. Tina Williams, a doughnut cutter, and Angie Nunez, a doughnut frier, open the door to Meche's Donuts, where they begin molding 4 pounds to 8 pounds of dough into the dozens of doughnuts Abbeville will consume this day.

Lynn Goulart at Lynn G's Seafood and Steakhouse has also started his day, making the roux that will become gumbo for the lunch crowd.

By 5 a.m. at the doughnut shop, the air is dusty, the doughnuts frying into perfectly round confections.

“Somebody's got to do it,” said Cynthia Steves, who helps customers at the counter.

The Meridional newspaper, the city's oldest business, is already on the stands, with a lead story chronicling an age-old problem, the vandalism of political signs.

The election won't be until October, but it'll be on the minds of lots of voters as the day unfolds.

The most riveting race will be for sheriff, since Sheriff Ray Lemaire announced his retirement.

Also on the front page is the Annual Hospice Spring Plant Sale and the sad fact that Abbeville High School girls' basketball coach Laura Lefleur will retire. It's a blow for a city that saw the team go to the state championship game this year.

Residents come to Comeaux's Cafe to break bread

Kristi H. Dempsey
kdempsey@theadvertiser.com

ABBEVILLE — As the April sun begins to lighten the sky, a rousing-voiced waitess at Comeaux's Cafe, called CC's by the locals, is already filling the coffee cups.

City worker Troy Duhon prepares to get off work and CC's manager Marilyn Davidson almost always knows what the regulars will order.

"But sometimes they'll surprise you," she said.

This is the jump-off for a day in Abbeville, where lawyers and judges, office workers and housewives all gather to break bread. They'll talk about politics and grandbabies, weddings and deaths.

On the other side of the Courthouse Square, at Comeaux's French Market, Joel Howard talks about CC's "famous" grilled biscuits. He co-owns the popular produce market and the cafe, along with Russell Comeaux.

"Russell would sometimes have leftover biscuits, so one day he put butter on one and grilled it. It completely changes the taste of a biscuit. They have to be at least a few hours old and we have to make extra to grill the next day," he said.

Howard opened the picturesque produce market, with its maroon and burgundy awnings, about six years ago.

On this day the fresh produce of choice included red and yellow onions, shiny tomatoes, deep-purple eggplant and more, the perfect ingredients for Eggplant Parmesan, which would reflect the Italian cultural influence found in Abbeville.
Area touts preservation

Judy Stanford
jstanford@theadvertiser.com

Abbeville — In a time when the downtown areas of many cities are withering away, Abbeville’s downtown is vibrant. Businesses are thriving side by side with historic attractions that bring in tourists from around the world.

Part of the credit goes to the town’s Main Street Program, said Main Street program manager Charlene Beckett.

The Main Street Program is a revitalization project created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to restore the downtown areas of cities and towns.

“We focus on the physical aspects of the downtown, on existing businesses, what you would like to see happen in the future and focus on getting volunteers to put it all together,” Beckett said.

“The state office maps out an area that has enough historic buildings that warrant it being a historic district,” Beckett said.

The program has been in existence in Abbeville for about 10 years, but the idea was born in 1989, when the movie, “The Blob II,” was filmed here.

The movie’s crew painted the facades of existing downtown buildings and installed awnings on the storefronts, recalled Abbeville Councilwoman Pam Gaspard, who was the mayor’s secretary.

“It really was a shot in the arm for the town, as well as the elderly people who came downtown to watch the film being made,” Gaspard said.

“We heard again and again, ‘This is how it used to be. People downtown, walking to the picture show. There was no bypass.’

That was when the city applied to the Main Street program.

Abbeville’s 10-block Main Street area contains 119 buildings, and 89 of them qualify as historic. In addition, Abbeville has residential districts that boast stately Victorian houses.

“One thing about Main Street is that we believe that preservation is economic development. My example — and the world’s example — is New Orleans. If they hadn’t kept it the way it was, why would anybody want to go there? You try to keep your community as authentic as possible and that authenticity is what attracts people.”

Although promoting tourism is part of the program, it has a broader scope.

“If you focus only on tourism, you will fail,” Beckett said, “because you’re not seeing about other stuff. If you don’t take care of the physical appearance, and tourists get here, they’re not happy. If the restaurants don’t treat them well, they’re not happy.”

During the past decade, about $4 million in improvements have been poured into the downtown area.

Success comes from getting everyone involved.

“It’s getting that balance. It’s about getting people interested in helping, because I don’t have a staff. You have to have a city council behind you. You have to have business participation,” Beckett said.
**ABBEVILLE BY THE NUMBERS**

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**Marital status**

- Population over 15: 8,889
- Never married: 2,451 (27.6%)
- Married, not separated: 3,939 (43.4%)
- Separated: 354 (4.0%)
- Widowed: 930 (10.5%)
- Divorced: 1,215 (13.7%)

**By homes**

- Housing units: 5,125
- Occupied units: 4,499 (87.8%)
- Vacant units: 626 (12.2%)

- Homeowner vacancy rate: 2%
- Rental vacancy rate: 11%

- Owner-occupied units: 2,753 (61.2%)
- Renter-occupied units: 1,746 (38.8%)

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**ABBEVILLE —** Mayor Mark Piazza woke up about 5:30 a.m., preparing to meet a photographer on top of city hall for a sunrise shot of the city.

It didn't work out, but no bother. There's plenty to do.

A Belgium delegation that's coming to town from Abbeville's sister city Lasne, needs to be accommodated. There's a Kiwanis Club luncheon at noon and still work to be done to recover from the severe damage that Hurricane Lili did to the city's electrical system last October. People have also been calling about trash service troubles, but there's not much he can do because the city doesn't oversee that.

"The first thing I do is take a little ride around town, look at the parks and make sure everything is picked up," said Piazza, who is entering his second year in office.

He then checks in on the family business, Piazza Office Supply. The business was founded by his grandfather, who came here with other Sicilian immigrants at the turn of the century.

Russo, Piazza, Scalsi, Guarino, Campisi. The families that brought those names to town—known for Italian cooking as much as good, fresh seafood—give it much of its flavor.

"They were broke, starving and living in poverty," Piazza said. "This was the land of opportunity. They came mainly for the farming. Some were blacksmiths, dry cleaners, in clothing or they owned grocery stores."

The oldest family-owned store in town, Robie's Food Center, is owned by a Sicilian family, he said.

Piazza, 45, worked in his family's store for most of his life.

"I still stop in a few times a day to check in," he said.

City hall opens at 9 a.m.

"I always check in with the department supervisors, see what they have scheduled for the day and make sure everyone shows up for work," Piazza said.

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**Fast fact:**

City's overall budget: $16 million

Sales tax revenue: $1.9 million

As the day goes on, Piazza said he takes it as it comes.

"Being the mayor is not something routine," he said. "There is always something—ribbon-cutting, fund-raisers, phone calls, taking care of all the little problems that come up."

"The mornings are usually tight, he said, but things can ease up in the afternoon if there aren't too many appointments."

"At 3 p.m., if not much is going on, I usually take another ride around town, another tour of the city," he said. "Maybe I'll stop to watch the kids play sports."

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**ABBEVILLE —**

**The Cultural center sees international visitors**

**To learn more:**

Abbeville Cultural and Historical Alliance Center, 108 S. State St., (337) 898-4114

**Fast fact:**

ABBEVILLE — Over at the Abbeville Cultural and Historical Alliance Center, a family from Abbeville was among one of the early visitors. What's so unusual about that? They were from Abbeville, France.

"I was totally surprised when I began working here at the variety of people who come here," said Jeannie Comeaux, assistant curator of the downtown center that is part art gallery and part museum.

Pastel drawings depicting scenes from the Louisiana Purchase, being celebrated this year, line the walls of the gallery of the one-time clothing store. It has been the cultural center for five years.

The drawings were the work of eighth-grade students taught by Charlotte Bursard in each of the eight middle schools in Vermilion Parish. Historic photos of Abbeville hung on another wall. In a far corner were illustrations depicting the Acadian dispersal from Acadie, now modern-day Nova Scotia, and their ultimate journey to Louisiana.

Display cases were filled with old sheet music.

At one point, a reporter was the only visitor, but, Comeaux assured, it is regularly visited by school groups, local residents and a surprising number of people from a surprising number of places.

"From time to time we've talked about being Shut down, but we're hanging in there," she said. "Tell the people what a nice museum this is, and tell them we need help. Tell them we need help desperately."
City offers glimpse of past

Judy Stanford
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ABBEVILLE — Bonnie Broussard shows up for duty in St. Mary Magdalen Cemetery clad in a long blue skirt, white blouse and red vest, topped off with a red beret. Broussard, who works in a mosquito control program of the LSU AgCenter, conducts tours of the historic graveyard in French and English.

Certified public accountant Allen LaBry, her counterpart at the town’s Magdalen Square, is similarly attired.

The pair are volunteer tour guides who introduce visitors to Abbeville’s historic downtown district. They are two of 20 volunteers under the direction of chairperson, Lelia D. Minvielle, who founded the group in 1989.

“We’ve given over 675 free tours in French and English,” said the 84-year-old Minvielle, affectionately nick-named “The General,” who walks along with every tour group.

For any tour, about six of the volunteers are stationed at different points to give a presentation. “Included in that is St. Mary Magdalen Church,” Minvielle said, “the cemetery behind the church, Magdalen Square, and then we walk down to Concord Street ... then we go to the Vermilion Parish Courthouse.”

Near the entrance to the cemetery, Broussard pointed out the oldest marked grave, that of Euphemie Broussard, who died in 1852.

A large number of graves had fallen into disrepair, Broussard said, but many were restored, partly through the efforts of volunteers like Wanda LeBlanc, who learned the art of masonry to repair the brick on some of the tombs.

Broussard also pointed out the French inscriptions and detail work on many of the tombs, as well as the iron crosses that reflect the Spanish influence in the region.

In Magdalen Square, just a stone’s throw from the church and cemetery, LaBry was waiting to tell the story of Père Antoine Désiré Megret, who founded Abbeville.

The square itself is rich with history. The oak trees, some of which are more than 100 years old, were once used by funeral homes for posting handbills to announce deaths in the community, LaBry said.

On this morning, Minvielle and her troops were preparing to greet a group of French tourists scheduled to arrive the next day. French visitors are most often interested in the familiar-sounding family names, Broussard said.

“They also are very interested in the food,” he said.
Abbeville

Abbeville-the banks of the Vermilion River in 1843. The congregation met in the renovated home of Joseph LeBlanc until 1856, when it was destroyed by the Ile Derniere hurricane. A second, larger structure built on the same site burned in 1907.

In 1910, the cornerstone for the present church was laid under the leadership of pastor Pere Laforest. Fire again gutted the church in 1981. The interior sacristy was rebuilt a year later under pastor Monsignor Richard Mouton.

Early renovation plans in the wake of Lili include repairing the steel cross, replacing the asbestos roofing tiles with a copper sheeting, re-securing the wooden steeple and bell tower to the lower brick structure and waterproofing the exterior of the church. The work is expected to take six months to complete.

Clang. In the meantime, construction workers continue erecting the scaffolding in front of the Romanesque-style church, unsure what they may find, or how long this job may last. Clang.

Lili brought a lot of the damage on, but the damage is not all Lili.

Chris Mouton
Deacon at St. Mary Magdalen Church

St. Mary Magdalen still recovering from Lili

The rosary is prayed at St. Mary Magdalen Church.

ABBEVILLE - Clang. The whisper of cars passing along Pere Megret Street breaks the muted activity of a sunny Abbeville afternoon. Clang. The bells of St. Mary Magdalen Church announce the noon hour is over. Clang. Any other afternoon in the downtown area would be much the same, with the passing cars, the church bell. Clang. But this afternoon wasn't normal. Clang.

On this day, construction workers erected more than 30 feet of steel scaffolding in front of the church - one of two Roman Catholic churches that minister to about 48 percent of Abbeville's 12,000 residents. The city also is home to six Baptist, one Assembly of God, one United Methodist, one Pentecostal, one Presbyterian, one Episcopal, one Apostolic and several other denominational and interdenominational churches.

St. Mary Magdalen suffered heavy damage last fall when Hurricane Lili blew through. The steel cross atop the steeple was bent. A statue that once stood atop the bell tower broke free. Patchwork merely reduced the amount of water that trickles in with each rainfall. Asbestos roofing tiles were blown off by winds exceeding 90 mph.

Preliminary insurance estimates rate the damage at about $250,000. But, church officials said, there's no way to know how extensive the damage may be until the scaffolding is up and construction crews can inspect the steeple and bell tower.

"Lili brought a lot of the damage on, but the damage is not all Lili," said Deacon Chris Mouton. The church is old. Pere Antoine Desire Megret, a French priest, founded the church parish and the town of Abbeville along the banks of the Vermilion River in 1843. The congregation met in the renovated home of Joseph LeBlanc until 1856, when it was destroyed by the Ile Derniere hurricane. A second, larger structure built on the same site burned in 1907.

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John Rowland/jrowland@theadvertiser.com

Matthew Badeaux

Matthew Harmes builds a scaffold to aid in repairs under way on the church.

The rosary is prayed at St. Mary Magdalen Church.

"Lili brought a lot of the damage on, but the damage is not all Lili."

Chris Mouton
Deacon at St. Mary Magdalen Church
Abbeville

Vermilion River key to city's economy, enjoyment

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ABBEVILLE — Vermilion Bay, which is used for recreation by tens of thousands of people each year and is a jumping off point for the Gulf of Mexico, is a great place for fishing.

The Vermilion River snakes through the city, and many people earn a living here, too.

Jody Hebert, co-owner of Dupuy's Oyster Shop, said the restaurant's founder, Joseph Dupuy, used to pole his boat from the bay and the lower Vermilion River to sell oysters at the same Main Street location where the restaurant stands downtown today.

"The river, the bay and the Gulf all tie in together," he said. "It's like a highway down here. It's the lifeblood of the parish in a lot of ways."

Mike Russo, owner of The Sportsman Boat and Bait Shop here, said he doesn't do a lot of fishing himself, "but a lot of customers come in all the time who are headed there."

Rickey Brown of Kaplan, one of Russo's customers, agreed the bay is a popular fishing destination.

"If you go fishing in Vermilion Bay you are going to catch fish," he said. According to Russo and Brown, Vermilion Bay has a lot of redfish, speckled trout, croaker and drum.

"Along with redfish, I have also seen some flounder caught out of the bay. But when I go, I do a lot of shrimping."

Ted Boudreaux
A customer of The Sportsman Boat and Bait Shop

Among the most popular baits used in the bay are live shrimp and artificial lures. "I guess it just depends on the water," Russo said. "I know people who use both fresh bait and artificial bait and have done really well."

None of the men had a fish story about the biggest catch to come out of the bay, but Boudreaux said his biggest was a drum. "It was about 30 pounds," he said.

3:50 p.m. — The bridge on La. 14 across the Vermilion River is up to allow a tugboat to pass.
Abbey Players use creativity to stage community theater

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ABBEVILLE — The silence of the Abbey Players theater was eerie. The only sound was the clunk, clunk, clunk of shoes on the hollow stage.

The stage itself is surprisingly small and in two tiers. It's a weekday and there's not much going on here today.

Marie Vaughn finds it a perfect time to reminisce a bit.

Reminders of past performances are everywhere. In the lobby, with its checkerboard floor and mirrored bar, show posters line the brick walls. Vaughn lists the shows off the top of her head, crowned by a shock of Lucille Ball-red locks. She knows the actors, the directors, the writers, everyone. She should. In the past 23 years, Vaughn has had a hand in a lot of the shows and is in her third term as the troupe's board president.

"I've even cleaned the commodes," she said without hesitation.

It's been an impressive run, four shows a year and more than 100 shows in all. The productions range from the famous — "Kiss Me Kate," "Driving Miss Daisy," "The Odd Couple" — to the home-grown — "Esplanade Avenue Bridge Club" and "Breaking Legs."

For entertainment, the Abbey Players is considered one of the best options in Acadiana.

The troupe was 5-years-old when it moved into its present home, an abandoned bar, in 1981. The players had been staging productions in abandoned department stores, city hall and living rooms. Theater lore contends the fledgling group used empty Steen's Syrup canes for fixtures on its stage lights.

Over the next two decades, the accouterments have gotten a bit better.

"It's comparable to some of New York's lighting," Vaughn said.

But far from Broadway, the Abbey Players aren't restricted by traditional theater rules. Improvisation and plain ingenuity play a big role here.

Lighting, for instance, eases changes in scenery. In a small theater such as this — there are only 130 seats — such tricks are common.


And in a town this size, it's not unusual for several members of the same family to be involved in productions. Every August, Vaughn directs a children's show, passing Abbey Players' traditions down to a new generation of thespians.

"The children who started with me when they are 8, 10 years old are now in main shows," Vaughn said.
Belgians come to Abbeville

Abbeville couple has hosted tour groups to city for 10 years

Marsha Sills
msills@theadvertiser.com

ABBEVILLE — It was raining in the afternoon, but Bobby and Beverly Hebert had someone to meet.

The couple sat together under the gazebo at Magdalen Square waiting for a busload of Belgian tourists from Abbeville's sister city in Lasne, Belgium.

For the past 10 years, the couple has hosted touring couples in their Abbeville home.

"We just like people," Beverly said with a shrug. "Off the top of her head, she couldn't remember the couple's name but said she'd know their faces when she saw them.

"They're usually so tired when they get off the bus," she said. "They're ready for a rest."

The tourists were to land in New Orleans and arrive between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. But at 4:30 p.m. Bobby Hebert said the time was always iffy.

"Last year we waited for three or four hours," he said. "The driver got lost."

But it was worth the wait, his wife said.

"We had a good time," she said. "We swapped stories about past guests and blunders we made."

The tourists were in town until Sunday morning with plans to stop in Lafayette, Eunice and other outlying areas before boarding the bus for New Orleans for the return home.

Tuesday afternoon, the rain kept other host families in the shelter of their vehicles. As the storm rolled further into the city, thunder and the possibility of lightning sent Bobby Hebert back to his car. As the wind began pushing the water into the gazebo, Beverly Hebert soon followed. Her rainbow-colored umbrella bopped across the darkening square, before disappearing in the downpour.

4:39 p.m. — A pedestrian crosses Concord Street during an afternoon downpour.
Richard whips up leather products at historic barn

ABBEVILLE — Johnny Richard of Stockyard Saddle Repairs sat on a hollow log, whittling a piece of cedar kindling with a Barlow pocket knife. White curlicues of fragrant wood piled up at his feet.

He looked up over his granny glasses under the shade of his sweat-stained cowboy hat, smiling under the luxurious brush of his gray walrus mustache. Shaking the cedar shavings off his feet, he stood up, stretched and yawned. “Time to braid some whips,” he said.

Richard runs Stockyard Saddle Repairs on South Henry Street at the same location as the historic Richard’s Auction Barn, one of the earliest cattle sale barns in Vermilion Parish. His grandfather, Avery Broussard, began selling cattle under a large live oak tree on the banks of the Vermilion River circa 1918.

“This old sale barn was built in 1938,” Richard said. An iron auction ring surrounded by a half-moon of worn wooden bleachers now is home to Le Bayou Legendaire, a non-profit cultural and historical preservation society run by Richard and his wife, Kathy, a jeweler who uses alligator teeth and bones.

Richard’s grandfather and father were among pioneers in the industry that has made Vermilion the top cattle-producing parish in the state, with a brood herd of more than 40,000 animals.

Richard, 53, began braiding a custom whip, crossing the strips of cured leather back and forth in a pattern that looked like a diamondback rattler. He also makes custom saddles, bridles and other tack for farmers and ranchers.

Kathy was at the Vermilionville Cajun-Creole folklife village and Randol’s Restaurant in Lafayette, setting up displays of rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and other jewelry made from “swamp ivory.” Her shop here is a former abattoir in a cathedral of trees on a high bluff above the west bank of the river.

She gets alligator heads from hunters and farmers and places them in the woods for her co-workers, the swarms of black ants that strip the skulls clean. The smaller teeth go into earrings, the larger ones into necklaces. Bones go into bracelets and rings.
Concord Club anchors downtown night scene

Bernard Chaillot
buchaillot@theadvertiser.com

ABBEVILLE — Jeni Schafer and Roslyn White look like they might be sisters. The statuesque blond bartenders may look even more like siblings Sunday at The Concord Club's “School's Out” promotion, when many others will dress like schoolgirls for the start of the summer vacation season.

The promotion is among many ways the club owned by Henry native Neal Bomersbach — a quality control technician at Riviana Rice Mill — is breathing new life into the city's entertainment scene. Bands, with a $4 cover, play every Friday and Saturday. Happy hour is 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays.

There's free food and billiards every Sunday. Along with The Abbey Players Theater, the Concord Street club between the Magdalen and courthouse squares just across Magdalen Square from Black's Seafood Restaurant and Oyster Bar is among the premier entertainment venues in town.

Bomersbach, 31, is a former basketball standout at Henry High. His fiancee, Christie Hebert, helps run the club. “We've made a lot of improvements since buying the place from Jack Gooch two years ago this month,” he said.

The historic building features the high ceilings and solid brick construction common at the turn of the 20th Century. Bomersbach often unwound here when Gooch was in charge. “When he decided to get out, I got in,” he said. “This is a beautiful space. We've tried to make it even more so.”

At the flip of a switch, the quiet upstairs lounge looking out over the downstairs bar and bandstand glistens with a royal-blue glow. Deep-cushioned leather sofas beckon bar patrons.


Newspaper headlines from famous moments in history add to the ambiance. “Nixon Quits,” “Kennedy Assassinated,” “Berlin Wall Tumbles” and “First Man on the Moon” fuel conversations and sentimental memories among regulars.

The club opens at 4 p.m. and closes each evening or morning at the bartender's discretion. Under parish closing laws, it can stay open until 4 a.m. — just in time to head over to Meche's Donuts on West Port Street for fresh pastries.
ABBEVILLE BY THE NUMBERS

Population in 2000: 11,887
(up 6 percent from 1990)

By gender
Male: 5,486 (46.2 percent)
Female: 6,401 (53.8 percent)

By age
Under 5: 967 (8.1 percent)
5-9: 960 (8.1 percent)
10-14: 970 (8.2 percent)
15-19: 1,009 (8.5 percent)
20-24: 748 (6.3 percent)
25-34: 1,441 (12.1 percent)
35-44: 1,615 (13.6 percent)
45-54: 1,354 (11.4 percent)
55-59: 531 (5.4 percent)
60-64: 422 (3.6 percent)
65-74: 907 (7.6 percent)
75-84: 687 (5.8 percent)
85 and over: 276 (2.3 percent)

Median age: 34.1
(Up from 31.1 in 1990)

Men: 32
Women: 36

By ethnicity
White: 6,454 (54.3 percent)
Black: 4,584 (38.6 percent)
American Indian: 23 (0.2 percent)
Asian: 687 (5.8 percent)
(Vietnamese: 586 (4.9 percent)
Two or more races: 128 (1.1 percent)
Hispanic of any race: 229 (1.9 percent)

Language spoken at home
Population 5 and over: 11,034
English only: 8,367 (75.7 percent)
Language other than English: 2,667 (24.3 percent)
Speak English less than "very well": 1,173 (10.6 percent)
Spanish: 218 (2.0 percent)
Asian, Pacific Island languages: 603 (5.5 percent)
Indo-European languages other than Spanish (includes French): 1,848 (16.7 percent)

Ancestries reported on census forms
English: 179 (1.5 percent)
French (except Basque): 3,233 (29.1 percent)
French Canadian (includes Cajun): 3,944 (11.7 percent)
German: 2,065 (7.7 percent)
Irish: 212 (1.8 percent)
Italian: 224 (1.9 percent)
Sub-Saharan African: 79 (0.7 percent)
United States or American: 1,349 (11.3 percent)
(A total of more than 4,000 ancestries were reported)

By living arrangements
In households: 11,708 (95.5 percent)
In group quarters: 181 (1.6 percent)
ABBEVILLE BY
THE NUMBERS

Residency since 1995
Population over 5: 11,034
Same house as in 1995 ... 6,721 ... 60.9 percent
Different house in U.S. in 1995 ... 3,960 ... 35.9 percent
Same parish as in 1995 ... 2,967 ... 26.9 percent
Different parish or county ... 993 ... 9.0 percent
Same state ... 559 ... 5.1 percent
Different state ... 434 ... 3.9 percent
Elsewhere in 1995 ... 393 ... 3.5 percent

By work
Population 16 and over (2000): 8,738
In the work force (2000): 4,444
Portion of population 16 and over in the work force: 50.9 percent
Portion of female population 16 and over in the workforce: 62.4 percent
Unemployment rate (2000): 10.8 percent

For Vermilion Parish
February 2003 ... 7.9 percent
January 2003 ... 8.0 percent
February 2002 ... 7.9 percent

Working outside Vermilion Parish
Differential ... 27.7 percent
Average one-way commuting time (2000): 25.1 minutes

Occupations
Management, professional ... 20.8 percent
Service ... 21.1 percent
Sales and office ... 25.1 percent
Farming, fishing, forestry ... 2.4 percent
Construction, extraction and maintenance ... 9.7 percent
Production, transportation and material moving ... 20.8 percent

Industry
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining ... 11.6 percent
Manufacturing ... 10.3 percent
Wholesale trade ... 2.7 percent
Retail trade ... 15.3 percent
Transportation and warehousing ... 4.6 percent
Information ... 1.8 percent
Construction ... 9.7 percent
Financial, insurance, real estate ... 6.3 percent
Manufacturing ... 10.0 percent
Education, health, social services ... 18.5 percent
Professional, management, scientific, administrative services ... 5.2 percent
Constitutional, transportation and material moving ... 20.8 percent
Information ... 1.8 percent

By income
Number of households: 4,583
Annual Income (1999):
Less than $20,000 ... 1,284 ... 28.0 percent
$20,000 to $24,999 ... 1,244 ... 26.8 percent
$25,000 to $29,999 ... 920 ... 20.1 percent
$30,000 to $34,999 ... 505 ... 11.0 percent
$35,000 to $39,999 ... 151 ... 3.3 percent
$40,000 to $44,999 ... 91 ... 2.0 percent
$45,000 to $49,999 ... 52 ... 1.1 percent
$50,000 to $54,999 ... 21 ... 0.4 percent
$55,000 to $59,999 ... 11 ... 0.2 percent
$60,000 to $64,999 ... 10 ... 0.2 percent
$65,000 to $69,999 ... 14 ... 0.3 percent
$70,000 or more ... 35 ... 0.8 percent
ABBEVILLE BY
THE NUMBERS

By income
Median household income: $19,714
Per capita income: $11,680
Median income for male full-time year-round worker: $27,766
Median income for female full-time year-round worker: $16,073

Households with earnings ............3,073 ..........67.1 percent
Average earnings per household: $31,251

Households with Social Security income ...............1,463 ..........31.9 percent
Average Social Security income: $9,235

Households with Supplemental Security Income (disability) ....549 .......12 percent
Average Supplemental Security Income: $5,482

Households with public assistance ...............319 .......7.0 percent
Average public assistance income: $1,868

Households with retirement income ...............562 12.3 percent
Average retirement income: $12,466

Families with poverty-level incomes ...............1,017 .......33.3 percent
With related children under 18: 835
Percent of families with children under 18 below poverty level: 46.1 percent
With related children under 5: 423
Percent of families with children under 5 below poverty level: 58.4 percent