1850
Abbeville
"... a 100 years old treasure chest of memories"
By GENE YOES, JR.

1950
Rev. A. D. Megret
Published
November, 1950

Sponsored By The
ABBEVILLE CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

ABBEVILLE MERIDIONAL
Publishers

Copyright 1950 by Gene Yoes, Jr.
PART ONE

In 1843, a Roman Catholic priest said "no" to the originator of the settlement of Perry's Bridge. This reply resulted in the founding of the city of Abbeville, La., which is celebrating its centennial this year.

The priest was Rev. Antoine Desire Megret, "exiled" pastor of the Catholic church in Vermilionville (now Lafayette). For many months, he had watched with interest the settling of the area towards the Gulf of Mexico.

The originator of the settlement was Robert Perry, who later was to engineer the creating of Vermilion parish out of the parish of Lafayette.

Rev. Megret had quit his church at Vermilionville after a series of difficulties with the Marguilliers, a group of men who served as a board of directors of the church. He approached Robert Perry in an effort to obtain land for the establishment of a church in Perry's Bridge.

For some reason—history does not tell us which one—the priest was offered a tract of land which was flooded almost continuously by the waters of the Vermilion River. Pere Megret declined his offer and vowed to establish a settlement of his own.

On his trips to Perry's Bridge, the priest had noticed a high bluff about two and a half miles above Robert Perry's settlement. The land was owned by Joseph LeBlanc, a devout Catholic.

For the sum of $900, Rev. Megret purchased the home of Mr. LeBlanc and the property it was situated on which consisted of four arpents on the Vermilion River extending forty arpents in depth.

On the plot of ground he erected his settlement which was to become Abbeville. It was his town, patterned after the villes of his native France. Property was dedicated for a chapel. Then came narrow streets converging on two public squares.

To begin with, he converted a part of the residence on the property into a chapel, the other part he lived in. By the end of 1843, he had fully paid the purchase price of the property by the sale of lots at "La Chapelle" as he called Abbeville at that time.

There is a town in France near Father Megret's home called...
Abbeville and many believe that he chose that name. There are others, however, who point out that an Abbe is a priest. The town, or ville, was the results of the labors of only one man, the priest. They conclude that common usage of Abbe (priest) and ville (town) combined the two words to form Abbeville.

The emphatic "no" delivered to Robert Perry in 1843 wasn't to be forgotten with the successful founding of La Chapelle. Although the city wasn't chartered by the state of Louisiana until 1850, the priest began whittling away at Perry's Bridge.

When Vermilion parish was created in 1844, Perry's Bridge was named parish seat. But by 1845, the population of "La Chapelle" had increased to such an extent that it exceeded the population in and around the parish seat.

Pressure was brought against the legislature and, as a result, an election was called to allow the voters of the parish to determine if the seat of the parish government would be at Perry's Bridge or at La Chapelle.

After the election was called, the priest went into action again. He appeared before the police jury, meeting at Perry, and offered to build streets, operate a ferry, erect a courthouse and provide other facilities if the seat of government was moved to Abbeville.

The election was held, La Chapelle was the winner. Then evolved the period when half of the parish offices were located at one place and the other half at the other. Robert Perry was then sheriff and he refused to move his office to La Chapelle as the others did.

But there was a flaw in the procedure. The state legislature failed to pass an act making the results of the election official. Robert Perry's rebuttal was to have another election called to determine the parish seat.

Supporters of Abbeville didn't recognize the legality of the election and, therefore, Perry's Bridge was the winner. The priest immediately filed suit against the parish contesting the election.

It wasn't until 1854 that the case was decided. Abbeville was declared the winner.

Father Megret died before his city was chartered, before it became the parish seat. When he left Vermilionville in 1843, he promised church authorities that he would return only after the practices of the Marguilliers were restricted.

At that time, Catholic churches were not allowed to own property. When a church was begun, a board of directors called Marguilliers was organized to serve as official owners of the land.
and properties.

In most cases the Marguilliers and the pastors worked together. But this was not the case in Lafayette where the directors objected to the appointment of a foreigner as pastor. The priest’s efforts to give spiritual instructions to the slaves further incensed them.

After a short period during which the priest was subjected to violent attacks, he went into “exile” and remained away until 1846 when he was able to present a deed to all properties of the church of St. John the Evangelist in Vermilionville.

Father Antoine Desire Megl'et died on Dec. 5, 1853, in the town which he had founded. An epidemic of yellow fever was raging and he was called to administer the last rites of the church to the sufferers.

He left his Vermilionville church to answer the call and was attacked by the disease. He was buried in Abbeville but his body was later transferred to Lafayette and buried where the Cathedral now stands.

Today, as the citizens of Abbeville celebrate their centennial, three landmarks of the Catholic priest are still very evident. First, there is the St. Magdalene Catholic church, which rests firmly upon the same plot of ground on which the St. Mary Magdalene chapel was erected by Father Megret.

Adjacent to the church property is the St. Mary Magdalene square created through the Abbe's desire to re-create the features of his native France. And one block away is the courthouse square, the original section of land which he designated for use as a location for the parish offices.

Into his primitive town of 1850 have poured people of all races, colors and creeds. But it is the French culture of which he was so proud that is still predominant.
PART TWO

Hundreds of years before the priest arrived at the home of Joseph LeBlanc to purchase land for his town, this area was inhabited by the Attakapa Indians. Early writers suggest that there was a large Indian settlement or village somewhere between the coast and Lafayette.

An effort to substantiate this belief has failed and there are no existing indications that this was true. There are areas in the parish where signs of Indian inhabitants have been found.

Historians also differ on the customs of the Attakapa tribe. Many believe that they were man-eaters—that they ate human flesh. Others claim that this is not true. It is certain that such characteristics, if they were ever present, existed before the advent of the white man.

There have been no claims of this sort made by any of the white settlers of what was to become Vermilion parish.

Although it is believed that the white man came to this area about 1700, it is definite, according to one historian who has spent many years studying the early history of Louisiania Indians, that a white man came into this area in 1760.

This man was Fusilier de lu Clair who arrived at the mysterious Attakapa village of "Lamonier" in November of 1760. Mr. de lu Clair, we believe, was the first white man to own land here.

He purchased from Rinemo, chief of the village, the land between the Vermilion river and Bayou Teche of "two leagues" (approximately 24 miles) North and South of the village. This purchase included a large amount of land and, depending upon the location of the village "Lamonier" could have included all or part of the present cities of Lafayette, Abbeville, New Iberia and St. Martin-ville.

Members of the Attakapa tribe did not leave this area until 1779 when the historian reports that they had scattered, many going to the West where the influence of the white man was not quite so strong.

Other white men came to live here. They came in such numbers that the parish of Vermilion was created in the year 1844, one year after Fr. Megret purchased the property from Joseph LeBlanc, and six years before the city of Abbeville was chartered.

Vermilion parish was carved out of the parish of Lafayette. It extended from the western limits of Lafayette parish (the same as exist today) all the way to the Mermentau River on the West.

The parish of Lafayette had been created in 1823, being taken from the parish of St. Martin. The parish of St. Martin was created in 1807 through Act 1 of the first legislature of the ter-
ritory of New Orleans.

Prior to that time, the old parish of St. Martin had been known as the county of the Attakapas, a name which was derived from its earlier Indian inhabitants.

According to Felix Samson, former parish representative and one of the very few historians of Abbeville, Vermilion parish was created during the administration of Governor Alexander Mouton, an eminent Creole of Lafayette parish.

Sponsor of the act was Daniel O'Bryan, representative from Lafayette parish, who lived on the Vermilion bayou opposite Perry's Bridge. Therefore, the act provided that the seat of justice of the new parish “shall be located on the West side of the Bayou Vermilion at not more than one-half mile from Perry's Bridge.”

(Another report says that Robert Perry was the Lafayette parish representative and that he sponsored the bill which created Vermilion parish).

Vermilion parish was created on March 25, 1844. On July 25, 1843, Fr. Megret had purchased from Joseph LeBlanc “a certain tract of land ... measuring four arpents front on the east side of the Bayou Vermilion by forty arpents in depth; bounded above by the land of Michael Trahan and below by the lands of Olivier Blanchet.”

(This tract of land is that portion of the present city which is bounded on the north by St. Valerie Street, and on the south by Lafayette street, and extending from the Bayou Vermilion eastward to the road at the eastern end of the corporation limits.)

When the parish of Vermilion was created, Fr. Megret attempted to have the seat of justice located on the tract of land he had purchased. The sponsor of the act, either Robert Perry or Daniel O'Bryan, prevailed, however, and Perry’s Bridge was named.

It was the animosity which Pere Megret's efforts to influence the legislature had created that, most likely, caused Mr. Perry to offer the swampy lot for the erection of the chapel at Perry’s Bridge.

Vermilion parish was created, with its seat of justice at Perry’s Bridge. The first parish officers, as appointed by Governor Mouton were William Kibbe, parish judge; Felix O'Neil, clerk of court; William Caldwell, recorder; Robert Perry, sheriff, and A. Young, representative,
PART THREE

"In 1845, despite the establishment of the seat of justice at Perry's Bridge, the population of "La Chapelle", as Fr. Megret's settlement was known, had increased to such an extent that it exceeded the population in and around Perry's Bridge," Mr. Samson writes.

Consequently, an act authorizing the legally qualified voters of the parish to locate the seat of justice was passed by the state legislature.

Pending the election which was to be held on June 19, the priest appeared before Judge Kibbe, Joseph LeBlanc and Felix O'Niel and made his offer to prepare his settlement as the parish seat.

He offered to donate all that the parish might require for streets, public squares and public edifices, to construct at his personal cost and expense, a suitable courthouse within two years from that date, to purchase within two months from that date the house of Mr. Adrien Martin to be used for the purpose of a courthouse, to give immediately a commodious flat (ferry) and maintain it for the use of the inhabitants, and to have made at his expense a plan for the village.

The election was held and Abbeville was the winner—by one vote as the story goes. Sheriff Perry and his successor, Nathan Perry, refused to abide by the results of the election and continued to maintain their offices at Perry's Bridge. Other officers moved to Abbeville.

Fr. Megret repeated his offer to the members of the police jury. In March, 1847, Lufroi Mayard and Leon Decoux were named as commissioners to accept all of the offer except the part about the courthouse. John B. Theall recorded their acceptance which was witnessed by N. Demary and Michael Cavillhez.

The courthouse clause was not accepted due to the failure of the state legislature to examine the results of the election held in 1845 and declare them official.

As a consequence, there was another election, and according to Mr. Samson, Perry's Bridge was the winner. Again, by conjecture, we assume that the selection of Perry's Bridge resulted because Abbeville residents didn't regard the election as valid.

Mr. Samson continues:

"Father Megret immediately filed suit against the Parish of Vermilion. The object of the suit was to set aside the vote at the election for various alleged informalities, and should he fail in this, he asked for $10,000 damages against the parish for the violation of the contract which he alleged they had entered into with him, of establishing the seat of justice on his land."
Lower courts decided the case in favor of the parish but Fr. Megret carried an appeal to the supreme court which didn’t hand down a decision until 1855. They ruled, belatedly, in favor of Fr. Megret.

Prior to their decision, the state legislature, meeting in 1854, settled the question by naming Abbeville as the parish seat.
Souvenir Program

Abbeville Centennial Pageant

Abbeville Memorial Baseball Park

Monday, November 13, 1950

7:30 P. M.

Directed by
Irby Herbert

Script by
Gene Yoes, Jr.

Narrators
Emmett Brasseau
Frank Summers

Music by
Henry Cary

Costumes by
Charles Nunez

Casting by
Mrs. Pierson Lewis
Mrs. Felix Samson
Mr. Charles Nunez
Mrs. R. E. Evans
Mrs. A. D. LeBlanc
Mrs. J. E. McClellan
Mrs. Jimmy Vorhoff, Sr.

Lighting by
Nedier Richard
Frankie DeGraauw
Bobbie DeGraauw

Setting by
Cecil Gremillion
Marc Gosselin
W. G. Thomas
R. R. Theriot
Paul St. Marie
J. Elliot Cade

Dancing directed by Mrs. A. W. Herpin
Technical assistance by Scranton Mouton, Jr.
Sound equipment by LeBlanc Corporation
Costume sketches by Miss Marilyn Lutgring
I—THE ATTAKAPAS INDIANS OF EARLY VERMILION PARISH.
Scene—On the shore of Vermilion Bayou. Members of the tribe perform actions characteristic of the life among the Attakapas Indians before the advent of the white man.

II—A HOME AT PERRY'S BRIDGE IS VISITED BY A PRIEST.
Scene—Rev. Antoine D. Megret, pastor of the Catholic church at Lafayette, visits the home of Robert Perry in an effort to locate a chapel at Perry's Bridge.

III—REV. ANTOINE D. MEGRET PURCHASES LAND FOR ABBEVILLE.
Scene—The priest arrives at the home of Joseph LeBlanc three miles from Perry's Bridge and purchases the site for the town of Abbeville.

IV—REV. MEGRET ATTEMPTS TO MAKE ABBEVILLE THE PARISH SEAT.
SCENE—The priest appears before members of the Vermilion parish police jury and offers to erect a settlement and offer land for a courthouse.

V—ABBEVILLE IS CHARTERED UNDER THE LAWS OF LOUISIANA.
Scene—Abbeville's charter is presented to the first city council to serve the newly organized municipality.

VI—THE DAYS OF THE VIGILANCE ARRIVE.
Scene—Members of the Vigilance break into the parish jail, remove a prisoner and then hang him on St. Mary Magdalene square because he stole a cow.

VII—YELLOW FEVER CAUSES A RIGID QUARANTINE.
Scene—A man who has been in a town where Yellow Fever has been reported returns to Abbeville and is met by the health commission on St. Mary Magdalene Square.

VIII—MT. CARMEL ACADEMY IS OPENED.
Scene—A group of nuns arrive to begin the operation of the Mt. Carmel Academy and they are welcomed by the people of Abbeville.

IX—THE COURTHOUSE IS BURNED.
Scene—The Vermilion parish courthouse is burned during a November night destroying all of the parish records.

X—NEW COURTHOUSE CORNER STONE IS LAID.
Scene—With appropriate ceremonies, a new Vermilion parish courthouse was constructed and the cornerstone was laid in 1891 with elaborate ceremonies.

XI—A BOXING MATCH IS HELD IN ABBEVILLE.
Scene—Abbeville residents screamed and yelled when the now popular art of fistic endeavor was introduced to Abbeville.

XII—FUNDS ARE SOLICITED FOR AN ABBEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL.
Scene—Abbeville citizens, headed by Mr. Gus Godchaux, worked hard to raise sufficient funds to erect a high school here.

XIII—ABBEVILLE CITIZENS FIND TIME FOR RELAXATION.
Scene—Abbeville Citizens did not have many activities to occupy their leisure moments but they made full use of those which were available. A favorite past time was dancing in the St. Mary Magdalene square.

XIV—WARS CAME AND ENDED AS ABBEVILLE GREW TO BE LOUISIANA'S TREASURE CHEST.

MEMBERS OF THE CAST

Rodney Langlinais
Kenneth Morvant
Daniel Bouigny
Rainer Broussard
Oris Broussard
Johnny Corcoran
Brady Broussard
Wanda Landry
Nedia Vidalier
Pat Briley
Geneva Libersat
Lynn Moresi
Doris Duhon
Shirley Duhon
Shirley Bee Savage
Fernand Montagne
Nicholas "Pete" LeBlanc
Mrs. Jimmie Vorhoff, Sr.
Edward McClellan
Frenzel Pere
Rev. Emery Labbe
Lynn Vorhoff
J. E. Kibbe
Jack Ledet
Ben Frederick
Love Boudreaux
Young Broussard
Paul A. Bourgeois
Henry Gautreaux
Nicholas Broussard
Otto Langlinais
Pat O'Dea
Mrs. Pierson Lewis
Mrs. A. D. LeBlanc
Mrs. J. E. McClellan
Gabriel Abshire
Margaret Apple
Dolores Hebert
Mary Primeaux
Paula Sellers
Msgr. Paul M. Fusilier
Albert Richard
L. O. Broussard III
Roger Edwards
Emery Hollier
Raymond Rodriguez
Andrew Hebert
Barbara Broussard
Betty Melebeck
Martha Frederick
Paulette Langlinais
Benny Melebeck
Sonny Kirkpatrick
Jimmy Gore
Eddie Gore
J. Elliot Cade
Mrs. Odile Cade Broussard
Burton Cade
Capt. Claude Blanchard
Mrs. Oris Broussard
Rachell Williams
Eaton Chauvin
Phyllis Miller
Larry Godchaux
Jimmy Gooch
Cordell Hebert
Simon LeBlanc
Mickie Broussard
Susan Lewis
J. B. Broussard
William Guidry
Guster Veazey
Bo Fusilier
Galvez Baudoin
Albert Richard
Joe Weekly
Edward Connor
Horace Vincent
Emery Sonnier
Oday Abshire, Jr.
Dudley Frederick
Irby Luquette
and many others—
From the time when Fusilier de III Clair purchased land from Rinemo, it is certain that white men lived in what is now Abbeville and Vermilion parish. The names of these first settlers, however, have been lost through deaths and fading records.

Possibly the best, and earliest study of the first inhabitants of this area was made by Judge W. W. Edwards a pioneer jurist. His studies date back to 1844 and include the principle settlements of the parish—Bayou Tigre, Bayou Que de Tortue, Prairie Greig, Grand Cheniere, Lake Arthur and Lake Peigneur.

Among the earliest settlers of Prairie Greig was John Greig and Mark Lee. Coming later were Celestin Nunez, William Henry, the Trahan, Johnson and Primeaux families. Principally, these were stock raisers.

Sugar planters on the lower Vermilion Bayou were Allan Campbell, Robert Cade, Daniel McCaskell, Notely Young and Brashear. Joseph Nunez, father of Adrien Nunez, one of the most prominent figures in early Vermilion, was a large stockman on the west side of bayou near Abbeville.

Sebastain Nunez, the father of Demosthene and Joseph Nunez, was a large stockman on the west side of the bayou. The heirs of Marion Mouton—the Moutons and Bodins—lived on the lower end of Hebert’s Cove.

In Abbeville, Pere Megret completed the first church in 1846 and a sizable community was awaiting its completion. He had sold lots and offered others to those who would pledge to support his church. (This church was blown down by a storm in 1856).

According to Judge Edwards, the earliest settlers of Abbeville were Hilaire Davide and Emile Bodin (Duhon) who owned the first store. Jean Pierre Gucydan was among the first merchants, owning a place of business on Rue de bas de ville, now Washington street, opposite the Catholic cemetery.

John Bte Cavailhez opened a store on what is now Magdalene Square. A brick yard was operated by Alonson Spaulding east of town. Eugene Demary and Leo Landry were among the other older settlers.

Early settlers at Perry’s Bridge were a Dr. Mudd, Dr. William Mills, Jacob Isaacs, Joseph Wise, John Stiffel, C. Asher, William Caldwell and William Kibbe. Elijah and Wm. Ewing kept a store there and were the town’s first merchants. Ambrose Toups, the grandfather of Adrien Nunez, was another early resident.
All didn’t go smoothly now that Abbeville was founded and, before 1860, the parish of Vermilion, including its parish seat—Abbeville—was thrown into one of its blackest moments. This was a time when there was a judge and a jury, but a judge and a jury without any power.

A committee of the Vigilance composed of many of the citizens of our parish heeded the words of one Captain St. Julien, head of a similar committee in Lafayette parish, and wrestled the exercise of law and order from the rightful officials.

They were molded into a powerful force by a ringing speech delivered by Captain St. Julien:

"Concitoyens:

"Organized into a Committee of Vigilance, that is to say into an extra legal tribunal, we owe you an account of the motives which impel us into an insurrection of temporary duration against the regular administration of justice; this account we tender you today.

"We would blush to say one word, to address one single word to the bandits who infest our parish; still less to the friends and accomplices of these bandits; to their calumnies made at a distance, we offer our contempt; to their calumnies made to our faces we respond with a whip.

"Citizens, the evil doers pillage, burn and ravage every day in our parish. Their aggressions on property are made every day, at all hours, and we may say at every moment. Crime has here an army able to organize itself in this parish where there are so many men of honor. We are going to speak plainly.

"The jury—this institution devised by modern philosophy; this institution created to protect the innocent and to punish the guilty—the jury has failed a thousand times in its duty. Yes, in the face of God and country, it has committed a hundred times one of our most abominable crimes against society—Prejury! Yes, perjury, for by acquitting those whom the witnesses and the evidence prove to be guilty, the jury committ this crime—a crime which reduces them to the level of those whom they set free.

"Citizens, have you not seen acquittals rendered in spite of testimony and evidence to the contrary. It is a crime against society. But these verdicts, so contrary to evidence, are remembered by the perverse of our community. The acquittal of one bandit may become an encouragement to others. The escape of one guilty person produces a hundred criminals. Who sows the wind shall reap the tempest, says the scriptures, and this parish furnishes an eloquent example.
“Thus it is, we see that justice is disarmed in the presence of the guilty. Theft by breaking in and by force, under the most aggravating circumstances! Thievery by slaves incited by whites, and by whites without the aid of slaves! The more audacious the theft, the greater is the security of the thief from punishment! Ought we to trust to the juries the prosecution of these bandits?

“No! We have rallied ourselves to the law of “Public Safety” that law which primes all other laws and we have constituted ourselves into a temporary tribunal against these Brigands. We name ourselves now: “The Committee of the Vigilance.” Our programme consists of only a single word: Chastisement.”

“The Summary and implacable chastisement of all those who commit the crime of theft, or any other crime in our vicinity. The whip and the rope will be our two arms, both withering and terrible.”

The speaker was undoubtedly correct in many of his assertions, but not all of them. Because they were not all correct did not halt them, however. Only the arrival of the Civil War, when many of our citizens marched off to defend the glory of the Confederacy caused a slackening of their authority.
PART SIX

For many years, we had members of the Vigilance and the Regulators, who came later. They ruled over this little town with an iron hand. At times, their strength faded away, but they always came back strong. Until 1878, they stifled all that was good and encouraged the continuation of mob law. In 1873, four negroes were hanged by this band. They were still powerful in 1881 when they took another Negro from jail and hanged him.

Abbeville was growing very slowly in those days. There were times when the town was broke. In 1859, the city market place, which was located on St. Mary Magdalene square, had to be sold at public auction because the town owed more money than it had available.

One of the biggest disease threats came in 1878. Yellow fever swept the country and we lived under a rigid quarantine for several months. There were rumors, threats and action—all caused by dread fear.

They established a powerful quarantine. There were guards posted outside the city limits and the parish had guards outside the parish limits. But Yellow Fever didn't strike, and the quarantine was lifted over the country. To give you an idea of how much fear there was, here is an article that was printed in the Abbeville Meridional.

"Alive to the duty they owe to their fellow men the City Council and then the Police Jury have passed ordinances establishing a rigid quarantine against all infected points. In their general purpose we find much to commend and but little if any to criticize. By the provisions of the ordinances, persons coming from an infected locality are allowed to enter the parish after undergoing a twenty day quarantine. In many places their entrance is positively prohibited. Dry goods, coffee or any other articles supposed to convey or communicate yellow fever; coming from an infected district cannot be brought into the parish until thirty days after the disease has disappeared in the place whence said articles came, under penalty of a fine of fifty dollars, and the seizure and forfeiture of said articles of contraband to the parish. Persons living in the parish, going to an infected district are not allowed to return into the parish under twenty days from their exposure to the disease, under penalty of a fine of twenty dollars. Person in charge of public conveyances, carrying any person or persons from a yellow fever point into the parish, together with the persons who shall harbor them, are subject to a fine of one hundred dollars. The board of health, designated by the ordinance is empowered to make all additional rules and regulations for the enforcement of the quarantine and it is made the duty of the sheriff and his deputies with all constables and many citizens to carry out the provisions of the quaran-
1879 came in with a bang. The regulators, in one of their better moments, marched up to the sheriff and turned over to him two fugitives from justice. Then came the complaint that dogs were taking over the town and the town marshall went hunting them with his rifle.

Before the year was over, the Brass Band, which had been disorganized during the Yellow Fever scare, got together again for public performances in St. Mary Magdalene square. Possibly the most important thing to happen in this year was when Abbeville beat Perry's Bridge 13-12 in the first game of baseball ever played in Abbeville.

In 1880, the town marshall got out his rifle again, this time to rid the town of part of its cat population. Agitation was raised for the organization of a fire fighting company and the Brass Band played on.

The census bureau made its report, listing 8777 people in Vermilion Parish as compared to 4447 in 1870. We had 30 voters in Abbeville in 1882 and they voted R. C. Smedes mayor by a count of 21-9.

There wasn't a vacant house in Abbeville in 1883, but we weren't growing fast enough. An immigration society was organized to get people to move here but they could do little until they could get a railroad connected here.

The railroad didn't come, but a new Catholic church did. Eggs were selling at 10c a dozen and swimming was popular. A group of our young fellers left their clothes in an old warehouse below town and jumped in the bayou. When they returned, the warehouse was locked and they had to creep home with the best coverage they could find.

1884 was filled with school talk. First a petition was passed in an effort to raise $1,500 for a public school. Later in the year, a meeting was held in the courthouse to get a high school erected in Vermilion parish.

Mt. Carmel Academy began to take shape this year as the Old Catholic church was torn down and the lumber used to build a school building.

The Academy was built and opened in 1885.

But the big news of this era was not the opening of school, the price of eggs or the music of the Brass Band. The big news came when somebody struck a torch to the courthouse. The Meridional describes the fire as follows:
"During the silence and darkness of the early hours of one Tuesday morning, some hellish wretch applied the torch to the courthouse and the flames, fanned by the stiff southeast gale then blowing, speedily enveloped the building from foundation to steeple in one huge, roaring, seething mass of fire. It was in this condition when discovered at about one o'clock. Tho' the firemen responded with alarcity, it was evident that all was beyond hope of relief.

"Blazing shingles were carried half a mile by the wind and seriously threatened buildings in their tracks. The building at the northeast corner of the courthouse in which were the telegraph office and the law office of Messrs. O'Bryan and White was in eminent danger and only saved by great exertions. The new Methodist Church, the residence and carriage house of O. Bourque were also rescued after a hard fight.

"All of the parish and court records, together with the books, papers and furniture in the office of the clerk, sheriff and assessor were totally destroyed. The Masonic Lodge which held it's meetings in an upper room of the court house also suffered the loss of its paraphernalia and jewels.

"So great was the heat that the sheriff deemed it wise to remove the prisoners from the jail, and under strong guard, the terrified occupants of the Little Brick Bastile were led out, and when the fire had subsided were all safely returned to their cells.

"No clue was discovered, and the perpetrator as well as the motive actuating him to the commission of the hellish deed remained a mystery."

In 1886, the people of our fair city were upset because cattle were grazing on St. Mary Magdalene Square. The Brass Band continued to play and the need for a good shoemaker was becoming acute.

The main topic of conversation was the Sunday closing law. The law was passed and our citizens divided up into sides with those in favor of the regulation being in the majority. The opponents hollowed and fought and even planted a protest flag on St. Mary Magdalene Square but the law remained.

The grand jury met in 1887 and pushed the police jury towards building a courthouse. The railroad question continued to take up much time. A meeting was held between the people of Abbeville and citizens of Jeanerette. They planned a railroad, announced a few weeks later that work was begun and then had to admit failure before the year was out.

A new courthouse was discussed again in 1888 and the police jury approved plans for the most prized structure in Southwest
Louisiana. Former Abbeville Mayor R. C. Smedes continued to take a prominent part in public life as he was elected district attorney with the most top-heavy margin registered in the history of the parish—he defeated L. L. Bourges, his opponent 2147-3.

The so-called Abbeville revolution occurred in this year. Newspapers over Louisiana reported that the Negro population had massed to take over the city. What really happened turned out to be a highly commendable joint effort of the two races to rid the town of undesirable elements.

Living in the city at that time were lower class people who were both white and black. Five hundred persons gathered at the courthouse to run these elements out of town. The job was accomplished by a committee of 15 persons—five white from the city, five white from the country and five Negroes. Needless to say, such cooperation did the necessary job very successfully.

The first city string band was organized after the "revolution" and thoughts returned to peaceful Cajun music.

More railroad talk dominated 1889 with the citizens of Abbeville voting a five mill tax to assist in having the railroad built. The city limits were also extended by a unanimous vote.

In 1890, an ice factory was built in Abbeville and citizens felt a tremor run up and down their spines when it was rumored that Perry's Bridge was attempting to get Abbeville's railroad.

Work had been drawing to a finish on the new Vermilion Parish courthouse and the corner stone was layed in 1891 with elaborate ceremonies.

A quarantine was enacted in 1893 against Jennings because of the prevalence of small pox there. But the history making event of that time occurred when the first boxing match was held in Abbeville. The combatants were Dave Osburn, middleweight champion of Austin, Texas, and F. O. James, Lake Charles champion.

In 1894, there were 350 students attending the parish schools, and, to the accompaniment of the Brass Band, they marched off together for their annual picnic carrying heavy laden baskets.

The most important occurrence in 1895 was the presentation of the Operatta "The Henrietta" by the Emma Warren Opera Company.

1896 rolled by with the organization of the Vermilion fair organization and a continuation of efforts to have a high school built in the city. Mr. Gus Godchaux circulated a petition and obtained $1,300.00 for the school. This movement continued in 1897 when a musical concert was given for the benefit of the high school fund.

This was also the year when our city was full of agitation for
a parish-wide stock law. The fight was hot with the police jury passing the law in July with the beginning date set as January 1, 1898.

Opposition to control the measure rose, however, and in August a motion to repeal the law before it went into effect ended in a 3-3 tie with the president of the police jury deciding the issue by voting against the law. To top the year off, we declared a shotgun quarantine against New Orleans and New Iberia because of Yellow Fever.

Another quarantine was enacted in 1898 against the same Yellow Fever. In the same year, the price of Abbeville property was at its top level. One sale of a lot on the West side of State Street between Concord and Lafayette brought the owner, Jean M. Beauxis, $2,500.00 from Theodore Laporte.

1899 was known as the year of jail breaks in Abbeville. In 12 months, our parish prison had been broken out of six times. Our citizens reported that the prisoners were demolishing the jail to degrees making us the laughing stock of the state. A need was also being felt for a garbage cart.

There was a big fire at the turn of the century. This year also saw the breaking of ground for a huge rice mill and the enactment of a stock law by the town council.

Abbeville grew. The automobile and railroad came. A water and light plant was installed. Streets were graveled and then many of them were paved. No sidewalks became board sidewalks which became concrete sidewalks.

The rice mill was erected and the sugar company was put into operation. Oil was discovered to supplement the fishing and agricultural industries which developed.

Abbeville became a city, a city populated by progressive people who have united to guide and direct the future of Abbeville—the settlement Fr. Megret began when he purchased land from Joseph LeBlanc over 100 years ago.
1960 Louisiana Dairy Festival Parade, Abbeville
Former President Harry S. Truman and Mayor Roy Theriot
Movie and TV Star Clint Walker and Friend with Mayor Roy Theriot
Dairy Festival  October 1964  Abbeville, Louisiana
TV personality George Gobel and Mayor Roy Theriot in the Blue Room at the Roosevelt Hotel New Orleans
Cool weather and leaves changing colors marks the beginning of the ANNUAL LOUISIANA CATTLE FESTIVAL which originated on September 24, 1949 by Roy R. Theriot, Sr., manager of the Chamber of Commerce and former Mayor of Abbeville. Originally known as the Dairy Festival, the name was changed in 1979 to honor all the Cattle Industry of the state.

At this September 1949 gathering, Governor Earl Long addressed the people which were followed by a parade. In that year, a Dairy Queen was selected to reign over the festivities. A King and Queen have been selected every year since 1949. Come join us the first week end in October, on Concord Street in Downtown Abbeville.
Ambrose Thibodeaux, Happy Fats LeBlanc, Mayor Roy Theriot, Unknown and Alex Broussard
Dejeuner de Boucherie Acadienne, Baton Rouge (Annual Cajun Breakfast)
Well known entertainer, movie and TV star Bob Hope, Mayor Roy Theriot, Louisiana Dairy Festival Queen Annette Fisher at State Capital, Baton Rouge
Western Singing Star Tex Ritter and Mayor Roy Theriot Abbeville Dairy Festival 1955
Movie Star Preston Foster with wife front right, General W. A. Carter, Jr. and Mayor Roy R. Theriot Dairy Festival Abbeville. Driver unknown.
Former Governor Sam Jones with Judge Frank Summers honoring Mayor Roy Theriot as “Mr. Cajun” of Louisiana
Senator Russell Long, Dairy Festival Queen, Congressman Ed Willis, State Senator Cliff Gaspard and Mayor Roy Theriot  Dairy Festival – Abbeville