GENERAL INFORMATION ON BATON ROUGE
PUBLISHED BY THE BATON ROUGE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

HISTORY—A tall red Cypress stripped of its bark once stood on the present site of Louisiana's Old State Capitol. It marked the boundary between the hunting grounds of the Houma and Bayou Goulá Indians. The early French explorers gave the tree a name, "le baton rouge" (the Red Stick). 

Baton Rouge was founded by the French in 1719 on the first high land that could be reached during the exploration of the Mississippi River. The town of Baton Rouge was incorporated in 1817. Seven governments have held sway over Baton Rouge including France, England, Spain, Louisiana, the Florida Republic, the Confederate States and the United States.

Baton Rouge's military history records three battles, the last in 1862 when the Confederate forces under Breckinridge fought the Third Battle of Baton Rouge against the army of William and the fleet of Farragut.

At the turn of the century, Baton Rouge entered a period of rapid expansion on the basis of its strategic location on the Mississippi River. The city grew rapidly during the early 20th century, and by the mid-1900s, it had become one of the major industrial centers in the state. Today, Baton Rouge is home to numerous industries and is a major hub for transportation and commerce.

INDUSTRY—Baton Rouge is the center of the chemical industry in the South. The original production of rubber from petroleum was started in Baton Rouge in the early 1900s and the major industrial development has been centered around the petroleum industry and its byproducts. Today, Baton Rouge is a major center for petrochemical production, with several large refineries and petrochemical plants in the area.

CULTURE—Living in Baton Rouge is enhanced by many cultural advantages. Numerous concerts, dramatic productions and other events are presented during the year at the Louisiana State University Union Building. The old Governor's Mansion has been converted into the Louisiana Arts and Science Center, which features exhibits and workshops, along with one of the largest planetariums in the world.

The Baton Rouge Little Theater produces a schedule of five plays each season. Several art groups and all representative civic clubs meet regularly. The Louisiana Art Commission has its galleries in the historic Old State Capitol.

EDUCATION—The home of Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, Baton Rouge is a well-known Southern education center. LSU has an enrollment of 17,800 students and is located on a 500-acre campus with a 500 million plant. The beautiful campus buildings include one of the largest agricultural colleges in the nation, a new library and the latest in student housing facilities.

The parish has over 125 schools, including 25 parochial and private schools, accommodating 71,000 students from the first grade through high school.

In addition, the city has four business colleges; two trade schools; four trade schools; and Southern University, the largest predominately Negro university in the nation, with a 1969 enrollment of 7,600.

TAXES—An average of 42 mills is levied in the city and an average of 34 mills is levied in the parish. Levies for special purposes occur in certain portions of the city and parish. These basic figures include state, parish, school, recreation and city taxes.

New industries or additions to existing industries are granted 10-year tax exemption on ad valorem taxes by state law.

Sales tax in the City of Baton Rouge totals 5%, including 2% state sales tax.

WATER—Baton Rouge water is among the softest in the nation—a fact which is quickly noted by newcomers. It tests at zero hardness, is absolutely pure and requires no treatment. The entire supply is obtained from deep wells. Cost of water for the typical Baton Rouge family of four is $3.50 per month.

STATE CAPITOL—Chief among the points of interest in Baton Rouge is the State Capitol, "America's Most Beautiful." Rising majestically 450 feet on 27 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, it is one of the most outstanding attractions in the South. Into its exquisitely decorated interior has been written a history of the state itself in marble and bronze. The Capitol is the center of many state buildings housing the government agencies of Louisiana.

RECREATION—Baton Rouge's public recreational facilities include: 7 recreation centers, 58 stadia, gymnasiums and athletic fields; 5 golf courses; 28 parks; 55 playgrounds and 21 tennis court areas. Excellent boating, hunting and fishing areas are within a short distance from the city. Other swimming pools and golf courses are located at the Southern Forest Country Club (Baton Rouge Country Club, Piedmont Club and LSU).

Baton Rouge is the home of the LSU football team which attracts over 60,000 spectators to each of its home games in Tiger Stadium. High school athletics and other outdoor events are staged in the Memorial Stadium.

HOSPITALS—Baton Rouge is served by four hospitals. The two general hospitals have 764 beds, the charity hospital, 350 and the new Women's Hospital, 90.

NEWSPAPERS, RADIO AND TV—Baton Rouge is served by two newspapers; Morning Advocate, daily and Sunday; The State-Times, evening, daily; Public Service Broadcasting—WABR, WBOF-FM (NBR), WLOQ, WQXW-FM (ABC), WYJQ, WYNK and WYNI-FM, WLUX (ABC), WAFP-FM, WABT-AM, Channel 9 (CBS-ABC), WBRZ-TV Channel 2 (NBC-ABC).

PORT—Baton Rouge is the flattest inland deep-water port on the Mississippi River to which ocean-going ships can travel. Docks and terminals serve both deep water and river transportation. A 40-foot channel is maintained for 230 miles from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico with connections to the Intracoastal Canal. Several of the largest industrial plants maintain dock facilities along the seven-mile port for both import and export shipping. Total tonnage handled at the Port of Baton Rouge in 1968 was 57,273,856, ranking Baton Rouge as the third largest port on the Gulf and seventh in the nation.

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE—Baton Rouge is an important wholesale and distribution center for many commodities. Wholesale firms serve South Louisiana, South Mississippi and some Southeastern states from Baton Rouge. They employ 4,700 persons with an annual payroll of approximately $12 million.

With modern and progressive stores, Baton Rouge is the home of an important retail trade with a store frontage of more than 491,000 square feet. Employment in 3,100 retail establishments.
is 15,600 people, with an annual payroll of $82 million and retail sales of $600 million.

East Baton Rouge Parish is one of the nation's blue ribbon markets with a per household effective buying income of $10,420 in 1969.

AGRICULTURE — Farming is also important here because Baton Rouge is located in a fertile agricultural section producing a great variety of farm products including cotton, sugar cane and truck farming of all kinds.

Its beef cattle production and dairying have become valuable industries, with a steady increase in volume and quantity of livestock being shown each year.

An excellent climate, adequate rainfall and a long growing season insure a fine agricultural production level.

GAS — Natural gas is a major fuel for all purposes in the Greater Baton Rouge Area. A plentiful supply of this clean-burning fuel is available, with 12 gas fields in the vicinity. The city is served by two large diameter pipe line systems. Annual gas consumption in Baton Rouge is 80 billion cubic feet.

ELECTRIC POWER — A ready, adequate supply of electric power is available for all industrial, commercial and residential consumers in Baton Rouge. Gulf States Utilities Company supplies electricity to the area from its two power plants (totaling 1,344,000 KW capacity) located in the area. Gulf States system capability is in excess of 3 million KW. Rates compare favorably with any in the nation.

TRANSPORTATION — Air — Baton Rouge has two airports. Downtown Airport is used as a private flying and instruction field. Ryan Airport, the commercial airport with runways ranging from 3,500 to 6,000 feet, is equipped for day and night operation. Three air lines, Southern, Delta and Texas International, supply air mail, passenger and express service with 29 flights daily, including jet service to major cities.

Bus — Two bus lines serve Baton Rouge: Greyhound and Trailways. Both are national bus lines and through their various connections furnish service to all sections of the United States.

Highways — Baton Rouge is served by highways U.S. 61, 65, and 190; many other paved highways reach all sections of the trade territory. Baton Rouge is a control point in the federal Interstate and Defense Highways Program. It will be a junction for I-10 and I-12 when they are completed. Two bridges span the Mississippi River at Baton Rouge, the U.S. 190 bridge north of the city and the new I-10 bridge near the downtown area.


Water — Being at the head of deep water navigation on the Mississippi River, Baton Rouge has ocean-going vessels serving this port at all seasons of the year.