Carencro had proud pre-town history

The big doings in connection with the Carencro centennial celebration prompted reader Helen Ballback to share some reminiscences of her hometown in days not-so-long past.

She remembers a few places that aren't there anymore, including The Bear's Den, Lloyd's Cafe and the service station and club that used to be on the corner where the AutoZone is now.

"Also, across Hwy. 182, there was a gas station — I think it was an American station and a Mr. Guidroz ran it," she writes. "Then, there was a drug store on the right, next to Angelle's Insurance. ... Where the Carencro branch library is at first was Miller's Grocery Store, then Tony's Superette and across from there — where the city hall is, there was a merchandise store."

Across the street from Melancon's Drugs used to be another grocery store. Pizzaville USA used to be the doctors' offices of Clause and Dugal.

"And, of course, we can't forget the ever-present Mr. Jimmy's gas station," she wrote.

The centennial marks the anniversary of the incorporation of the town as Carencro, but the community had a rich history before it was incorporated.

The first post office was established Jan. 11, 1872, with Auguste Melchior as postmaster. The telegraph line reached Carencro in 1884. The first telephones were installed by the Teche and Vermilion Telephone Line in 1884. The company had headquarters in New Iberia.

What probably was the first school in the area was established in 1874 on Melchior's farm and his wife, Vivianna, taught there.

Cotton, sugar and cattle were the mainstays on the Carencro prairie in the early days.

There were several horse-powered cotton gins in Carencro before 1876, when Avignac Arceneaux built his gin, which used steam power. Cotton gins continued to operate until the mid-1970s, when the last two of them, Cotton Products Co. and Farmer's Gin Co., were closed.

By 1889, Carencro had two sugar factories, one operated by J.C. Couvillion and the other by G.L. Singleton. In 1894, Victor E. Dupuis formed the Carencro Sugar Company to build another mill alongside the Morgan Railroad tracks that, by then, had linked Carencro with the world.

By that time, according to a newspaper account, Carencro boasted "a good hotel, town hall and all the other appurtenances of a first-class country town, including ... a well-organized hook and ladder company."

By the census of 1910, it was a little town of 609 people and growing every day.

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