Acadiana

Getting to know you

Church Point got name from tall steeple

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CHURCH POINT — The town of Church Point is named, obviously enough, for a church with a tall steeple.

Early in the 1800s, residents of the community traveled to Grand Coteau for religious services where a church already was established.

But, bowing to the area’s growing need, the Jesuits built a church in nearby Acadia Parish.

Residents were spared a 15-mile ride over rough roads and the community was presented with its own place of worship in about 1848.

The community continued increasing in population, necessitating a new larger church — with an imposing steeple rising toward the sky.

“So, that’s how the name was derived,” said Mayor Harold Beaugh. “The church steeple was the first thing people saw when arriving.”

The church, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, still stands near city hall — another source of pride for the community.

Church Point’s City Hall, in sharp contrast to the old church, was completed about four years ago with a $242,000 grant.

The city has received about $3 million in grants over the past several years, using state and federal funds to renovate housing as well as making street, water and park improvements.

Another improvement to the park is in the works, with the city constructing a pavilion measuring 50 feet by 100 feet.

“We have the ground prepared and are ready to pour the concrete,” Beaugah said. “This pavilion can be used during the buggy festival and for other events.”

The Church Point Buggy Festival, since it was established eight years ago, has become a popular outing in Acadiana.

“Our festival, during the first week in June, just keeps growing and growing,” Beaugah said. “Money from the event goes to support the community hospital.”

The festival, sponsored by the Acadiana/St. Landry Medical Foundation, is designed to accent the culture of an earlier day, when buggy travel was prevalent in the area.

There is, of course, a buggy parade, but there are also other festival happenings involving carnival rides, crafts, food and music.

The town of Church Point, population 4,800, is located along Highway 35 near its intersection with Highway 95 in northeastern Acadia Parish.

Among its principal businesses, the town can count Church Point Wholesale Grocery, Church Point Wholesale Liquor, Canal Refinery and Garan Industries.

There also is a representative collection of retail outlets and related businesses, like banks.

Then, there is farming — long a key part of the area’s economy.

“This is where rice country begins,” Beaugah said, “stretching from here to the western part of the state.”

Other crops include sorghum and soybeans. The soybean crop is relatively new to the scene, serving as a replacement for cotton which faded when prices dropped.

Indeed, cotton literally was king at one time as the town could point with pride to three gins. The town was incorporated in 1893, with Homer Barousse as its first mayor.

The state was at first called La Pointe de l’Eglise, French for the Point of the Church. However, when the post office opened in 1873, the federal government began using the English translation of Church Point.

The town was incorporated in 1893, with Homer Barousse as its first mayor.

He was mayor for two years and then was elected to the state Senate where he served for 35 years.

Laurent Barousse, Homer’s son, started a 17-year career as mayor in 1908, the longest in the town’s history — so far.

The record could be erased if Mayor Harold Beaugh, who already has 16 years in the office, wins a new term this fall. He was on the town council for eight years before that.

His family has been involved in town politics for years, including Raoul Beaugh, a cousin, who was mayor for 14 years starting in 1948.

Louis Beaugh, Harold’s father, served 12 years on the town council.

“This was a parttime job but I have been working fulltime since retiring from Gulf States in 1986,” Beaugah said. “The pay is still parttime, though.

“I don’t hunt, fish or play golf,” he said, “so this gives me something meaningful to do.

“Or course, I enjoy it,” Beaugah said. “I see it as a way of helping others.

“I know everybody in town and for several miles around,” he said, “since I was born here and plan to stick around for a while.”