Largest recreation area for white children is the Cormeaux Park, which has a baseball diamond, barbecue shelters, wading pool and playground facilities. There are also Godchaux Park, with its swimming pool, and the Abbeville High playground, which has a baseball diamond and stadium.

For those who want to learn how to skin a nutria, be a farmer or auto mechanic, study business administration, radio-television or electric appliance repair, or how to handle natural gases in the field, Abbeville has the Vermilion Parish Trade school. Opened in 1953, it started with an enrollment of 242. Both full and part-time students now number 1500.

Although today it is the center of trade education, a growing city with expansion problems, a potential offshore oil boom town, Abbeville had a rather uncertain start in life. It was born because, in 1843, Father Antoine Desire Migret had a disagreement with the board of directors of his parish church in Vermilion (now Lafayette).

He left his church and purchased the land that is now Abbeville to start his own community. He called his town La Chapelle.

When Vermilion parish was created in 1844, another settlement, nearby Perry's Ridge, was named temporary parish seat. By that time "Abbe" Migret's community had a much larger population than Perry's Ridge. An election was held and La Chapelle was the winner but, due to a technicality, the victory was set aside. Meanwhile, the founder-priest died, and the town's name was changed to Abbeville (probably in his honor).

A year after his death, in 1845, Abbeville finally was named parish seat.

Abbeville grew steadily in spite of yellow fever epidemics and a near bankruptcy.

Today, still predominantly French and Roman Catholic, it still has much of the spirit of its founder's first small village. But it also has the joys and headaches of a growing community.

Abbeville is still sauce piquante. It is also meat and potatoes.

One of town's top amateur cooks is auto salesman Savvy Hebert, who hovers lovingly over big pot of chicken sauce piquante. Preparing a treat like this is often the excuse for a big "invite-everybody" party.
WHEN A COLORFUL TOWN like Abbeville grows, does it have to change its personality, lose any of its charm?

Since 1850, Abbeville has gradually edged its way into the 10,000-population class. With growth has come, of course, all the typical problems: how to expand utilities and school space, how to keep on growing.

But some citizens also ask a question that is distinctly Abbeville: "Will the city lose its old-time French flavor?"

"New people move in, times and interests change and this is good," says Abbeville's Mayor Roy R. Theriot. "But it would be a little sad if the next generation of Broussards, Heberts and LeBlancs grew up not knowing how to speak the French language and sing the French songs."

Abbeville is holding the "French front" valiantly and cheerfully, however. The past that it is trying to preserve is far from the old decadent plantation tradition. It is rather a happy one of singing, dancing, hospitality and good food.

The spirit of Abbeville is kept alive by men like old-time folklore expert Fernand LaBauve Sr. and Mayor Theriot.

"The spirit of Abbeville is in the voices of Miss Lelia LaBauve's first-graders singing Acadian folk songs at the elementary school. Miss LaBauve is president of the Cerceau Francais Acadian, organized in 1954 to keep the old traditions alive."

The spirit of Abbeville is alive in Savv Hebert as he bends over his pot of sauce piquante. (This is a hot sauce of rice, flour, onions, tomato paste, celery, chili powder, parsley, peppers, etc. It goes with a variety of main dishes like chicken and fish.) Savv is acknowledged to be one of the best cooks in Abbeville. He selects all the ingredients himself and chases his wife out of the kitchen when he works. "Sauce piquante at Savv's" is a mouth-drooling phrase in Abbeville.

As much as they care for the sauce piquante of life, the people of Abbeville are interested as well in the solid meat and potatoes side. No longer are they citizens of a small French community. The 1950 census showed the city grew 46 per cent in 10 years, from 6,972 to 9,988. Present population estimates vary between 11,600 and 12,900.

Increased prosperity is illustrated by the rise both in bank deposits and loan activity in Abbeville's two banks. Total deposits on Dec. 31, 1950, were $10,623,054.16. On Dec. 31, 1955, the deposits were $13,416,257.77—an increase of nearly $3 million in five years! Loans outstanding for both banks combined are about $200,000 ahead of five years ago.

Reason for the extra change jingling in Abbeville's pockets and cash registers can partly be explained by the big oil boom that hit Southwest Louisiana in recent years. So far Abbeville has had a moderate, appetizing taste of oil money.

Oil production for Vermilion parish is about six million barrels a year. "Our big future in this parish is offshore oil," Mayor Theriot says. "We are working for a deep-water channel to the Gulf. Then we could service offshore operators. The boom will be such that the town wouldn't know what hit it."

For the present, however, Abbeville relies on staples like the dairy industry. The Vermilion creamery, to which 85 dairies sell, processes 1,881,500 gallons of milk a year.

Big tourist attraction in Abbeville is the annual Dairy Festival, held in the fall. Begun in 1949 as a simple parade, the festival now has dozens of floats, thousands of visitors and big-name entertainment. (Last year's attraction: Tex Ritter.)

Abbeville, the parish seat, fortunately sits in the middle of a farm-rich parish, for which it is the center of trade. Most important crop last year was rice; latest figures show annual production for the parish to be 1,484,182 barrels or 240,437,484 pounds.

With even moderate prosperity and expansion come problems. That is a fact of growing city life that Abbeville is fast learning.

Recently the citizens voted a $2,900,000 bond issue, which was passed by a 7-to-1 margin. The money will be used:

1. To expand sewerage facilities and build a new disposal plant, large enough to service one and a half times the present population.

2. To improve the water distribution system.

3. To build a 125-foot water tower with one-half-million-gallon capacity and also a one-half-million-gallon underground reservoir.

4. To repair sidewalks, streets and swimming pools.

5. To expand electrical facilities and to add power substations.

Tentative plans also include a new city hall. The present one is a former bank building. Only a short distance from the gleaming courthouse erected in 1953, the City Hall, most residents agree, looks insignificant by comparison. It is in this old building the mayor holds municipal court.

"This additional duty," Mayor Theriot admits, "is a holdover from the period when Abbeville was a small town. On occasion I come down here at night just to accommodate people. Once I was coming home from a late dinner at about 1 a.m. and I happened to meet a policeman who asked me if I would mind coming down to City Hall and hearing the case of an SLH student who had been caught speeding.

"The kid had an 8 a.m. class, so I came down and held court at 1:30 in the morning."

While some public buildings like the City Hall need to be either renovated or replaced and utilities need expanding, Abbeville's citizens feel the school and recreation setups are quite adequate at least for the present.

Large combined grammar and high schools are the fashion in Abbeville. Three out of five of the city's schools are this type. Newest school in town is James A. Herod High school with 29 classrooms for 725 pupils.

This Negro elementary and high school combined was opened last September. Nearby is a Negro swimming pool and park, opened last summer.

Informal talks are sidewalk affairs. From left, Police Chief Nelson P. Hollier, Fire Chief A. L. Lene, Mayor Roy R. Theriot, Officer J. V. Guillote, Fernand LaBauve

Young people relax beside Bayou Vermilion which flows through Abbeville. From left in foreground: Wayne Summers, Kathy Cade, Jimmy Gooch, Audrey Veasey

New courthouse, completed in 1953, is Abbeville's pride. Town has been Vermilion parish seat since 1845. Standing in foreground: Bill Miller, left, Otto Langlinias

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