Interesting Ascension Parish Election History Is Recalled

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DONALDSONVILLE, La.--At this particular moment in November the greatest item of interest in Louisiana is the election. This state has a long and interesting election history and so have the parishes within its boundaries.

Taking a look at one of them, it is noted that back in 1805, before statehood came, two Ascensionites were elected to the territorial legislative council authorized by the U.S. Congress that year.

The two were Joseph Landry and William Conway. When Louisiana became a state in 1812, Landry was elected to the state Senate. Stephen A. Hopkins and Genevi Roussain were elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives that year.

Ascension gave its biggest vote, 73 out of 82, to Hopkins for Congress, but Thomas Boling Robertson was the statewide choice, and W. C. C. Claiborne was gubernatorial over James Villere.

Hopkins, representing Ascension in the state Legislature, was elected speaker of the House. However, Claiborne's election caused Senator Landry to resign his seat, and Jacques Vitau became his successor. Then Roussain resigned in Landry's wake and James Mathier was elected to succeed him in the House.

Ascension picked a winner for governor in 1816 when it gave Jacques Villere 106 and Joshua Lewis 26 votes. However, it backed a loser in 1820 when it gave Pierre Derbigny 72 votes and Thomas Boling Robertson, the winner, 47 votes.

ELECTED OFFICES
In 1817, no candidates could be found to accept the posts of sheriff and clerk of court in St. James Parish, so the Legislature by act provided that the Ascension Parish sheriff and clerk serve in St. James until officials could be elected and commissioned.

Henry Johnson, who made Ascension Parish his home, was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1818. In 1824 Ascension gave him 147 votes in his race for governor and gave Governor Villere 50. Johnson polled 2,847 and Villere 1,831 statewide and Johnson won.

In 1826 Ascension gave its biggest vote to native son Trahum Landry for Congress, but Edward Livingston was the winner. Ascension, again in 1828, voted in a gubernatorial winner, giving Derbigny 176 votes. It gave Edward Douglas White, father of the U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, 173 votes for Congress, and gave David A. Randall 162 votes for the state senate.

PRESIDENTIAL RACE
In the presidential race that year Ascension played no favorites, giving Andrew Jackson 101 and John Quincy Adams 106.

In 1830 David A. Randall ran for governor, getting the highest count of Ascension votes, 133, but polling the lowest in the state, 465. Andre Bienvenu Roman of St. James, who won the election, polled only 21 votes in Ascension. His total state count was 3,638. Trasimmon Landry had no opposition in his race for State Representative.

When in 1831 the seat of Louisiana government was removed from its brief stay in Donaldsonville, Trasimon resigned his House seat in protest. The following year he was elected to the state senate to fill a vacancy created through Randall's resignation.

Two Ascension residents were Congressional candidates in 1834, and the parish favored Thomas C. Nicholls by giving him 159 votes, putting Henry Johnson second with 109. But Johnson was elected, Nicholls running a poor third. Johnson's vote was 2,423 and Nicholls' 223. Charles Gayarre's count was 1,354. In Ascension he received four votes.

In 1838 Ascension favored John Slidell over Edward Douglas White, its Bayou Lafourche neighbor, and Miles Taylor who had interests in Ascension Parish, for Congress. It failed to pick a winner for governor, giving Roman, the successful candidate, its low vote.

In 1847 the Whigs of the Second Representative District met here and nominated B. G. Thibodaux as Congressional candidate. Democrats nominated Pierre Theodule Landry. In 1849, the Whigs nominated Duncan Kenner, Ascension planter, for lieutenant governor. He lost.

Donaldsonville hosted the 1853 Whig Convention which was marked by dissension between the urban and rural members. When the city delegation walked out, they were persuaded to return, and their candidate, T. G. Hunt of New Orleans, became the Congressional candidate.

When native son Francis T. Nicholls ran for governor in 1876, deputy U.S. marshals were delegated to serve in Ascension Parish during the election. Nicholls was inaugurated Jan. 13, 1877.