BAYOU TECHE

By:
Mike Holloway
8th Grade
Oak Park Junior High School
"Shaded by china trees in the midst of luxuriant gardens,
stood the houses of the planters, with negro cabins and dove-cots.

Now through rushing chutes, among green islands, the plume like
Cotton trees nodded their shadowy crest, they swept the current,

Then emerged into broad lagoons, where silvery sand-bars lay in the stream, and
Along the wimpling waves of their margin, shining with snow-white plumes,

Large flocks of pelicans waded." - Longfellow
Bayou Teche has a wonderful and enchanting history. During the Ice Age, huge glaciers pushed down from the Arctic, over Canada, and covered most of the North American continent. When these glaciers melted, the water from the melting ice flowed down the empty river-beds, formed by the glaciers, to the Gulf of Mexico. When these rivers overflowed they formed smaller rivers. The Teche was one of these smaller rivers.

As Bayou Teche has flowed through the centuries, it has been a witness to many events and has been traversed by various groups of people.

The first known human beings to settle on the banks of Bayou Teche were the Attakapa Indians. These people settled on a low region six miles west of the present town of St. Martinville. The Attakapas, being cannibalistic, set to eating members of nearby tribes and continually waged war on them. Finally, tribes of the Opelousas and Chitimache Indians banded together and drove the Attakapas westward into present day Calcasieu Parish. The Opelousas and Chitimache tribes then occupied this territory and continued to dwell on the banks of the Teche Bayou, hunting, fishing and trapping on its banks from the source near Opelousas to the swamplands where it reaches an outlet to the Gulf of Mexico.
The Teche flowed on and in 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed into the Caribbean Sea and discovered the New World. The European powers were interested in the new land to the west and many ships filled with adventurers, explorers, scientists, and men of military experience sailed to the New World. The coming of the Europeans changed the history of the Teche and left landmarks on its banks.

In 1540, Hernando de Soto discovered the Mississippi River, one of the empty river beds described earlier. In 1682, Robert Cavelier de LaSalle sailed all the way down the Mississippi to its mouth, and claimed Louisiana, in which the Bayou Teche is located. In 1699, the LeMoyne brothers, Iberville and Bienville, arrived from France to establish the First French settlement on the Gulf coast and thus firmly establish French claim to the territory known as Louisiana. From this settlement many expeditions into the interior of Louisiana were launched. The land of the Teche was visited and explored by the "coursers de bois" and explorers of various expeditions.
Because of the aid Spain gave France during the French and Indian War, Spain gained control of all of the French holdings West of the Mississippi and the Isle of New Orleans. During the thirty-seven years of Spanish rule of Louisiana, Bayou Teche and the surrounding country-side felt the influence of Spain. New Iberia, the "queen city" of the Teche Country, which was settled in 1765 by the Spanish, was named for the Iberian Peninsula, an ancient name for Spain.

February 29, 1765, started the Acadian occupation of the Teche Country. On that date several small boats floated up the Teche with one hundred and ninety-three Acadians, who had been in exile from Acadia. They soon established homes in the Poste de Attakapa area, where their descendants are found today. In the cemetery on the banks of the Teche is found the grave of Emmeline Labiche, one of these Acadians, who was immortalized in Longfellow's poem "Evangeline". Here too, on the Bayou Teche is found the Evangeline Oak under which Emmeline and Louis Arceneaux met after years of wanderings. The land along Bayou Teche has become known as the "Acadian Country" and St. Martinville, the former Poste de Attakapa, is the heart of this Acadian
Country. These Acadians brought to Louisiana a new heritage that has left its influence in the Teche country and the State of Louisiana.

In 1929, the motion picture "Evangeline" was filmed on nearby Catahoula Lake. The actors and actresses donated a monument of Evangeline which stands today in front of the Catholic Church in St. Martinville on the Teche. It was here, too, on the same Bayou Teche banks under the famous and historic Evangeline Oak that Huey P. Long in dedicating the Evangeline monument made his famous "Tears of Evangeline" speech.

Following the occupation of the land along Bayou Teche by the Acadians, there came another group of exiles. This was a group of people seeking refuge from the French Revolution and the guillotine. They were French noblemen and their families who had escaped the fate of many of their kinsmen. They, too, settled along the banks of the Teche. The settlement then became known as "Le Petit Paris", as these noblemen and their ladies tried to maintain in extravagant style the social life of Paris.

Bayou Teche did not play a large part in the history and story of the Civil War. However, it was used as a means of transportation at times by both Union and Confederate
soldiers. The main battles for the Teche were fought at Morgan City, Franklin, and New Iberia. The only time the Teche was in Union hands was the period from December 17, 1862 to February, 1863. It was at this time that General Banks and his Union Army advanced up the Bayou and captured Opelousas. Much destruction and desolation lay on the Land of the Teche after this siege. Some time later Generals Taylor and Mouton recaptured Opelousas and the other Union occupied towns along the banks of the Teche.

The pride of the Teche country is its lovely plantation homes built by the sugar cane and cotton planters in ante-bellum times. Many of these survived the war between the States but were almost lost during the depression years. In recent years they have been restored to their former elegance and are portraits of the history they have witnessed.

Bayou Teche is as important to modern day Louisiana as it was to the past. It is a water way highway from the interior of Louisiana to Morgan City and the Gulf of Mexico. Every day tugboats haul a variety of goods up and down the Teche. Goods that are shipped are products such as cotton, salt, oil, rice, yams, sugar,
seafood, and lumber. Plans have been made to widen the Teche so more and bigger ships may pass on the waters of the Teche.

The Bayou stretches for 61 picturesque and historical miles from its mouth, the Lower Atchafalaya River, through the land of the swamp dwellers, the fishermen, the muskrat trappers and the sugar cane planters to its source, the fork of the Cocodrie Bayou and Bayou Boeuf. The width of the Bayou Teche ranges from fifteen feet at its source to three hundred thirty-six feet at its widest point.

This is the story of the Bayou Teche, of its picturesque beauty that has quietly flowed through the years and witnessed the development of its countryside and the state through which it flows.
2. Bernard, Alfred L. - Portraits of Patriotism.
American History Month Essay Contest - February, 1967

1. Subject.
   The subject for this year's essay contest is AMERICAN NAVAL BATTLES. Select any one of the many exciting battles in the history of the United States Navy, and write about it in your own words.

   Examples: The battle of the Bonhomme Richard and the Serapis, when John Paul Jones said "I have just begun to fight"; the daring fights with the Barbary pirates; the victories of the famous Constitution; the battles that gave meaning to "Don't give up the ship"; the Monitor and the Merrimac; Pearl Harbor; and the decisive World War II battle of Midway.

2. Due Date.
   Essays must be received by the sponsoring DAR Chapter by February 1, 1967. They can be written any time before that date, whenever they best fit into school work.

3. Length.
   Students in 5th and 6th grades write 300 to 500 words.
   Students in 7th and 8th grades write 600 to 1000 words.
   Each contestant should count the words and show the total number of words at the end of the essay. Every word will be counted, except that dates (such as January 25, 1776) will be counted as one word. Any essay exceeding the word limit will be disqualified.

   Essays will be judged on interest, accuracy, originality, composition, and neatness. Credit will be given for clearness of thought, well-expressed ideas, sticking to the subject, and original wording rather than copying from a book. The student will find it helpful to make an outline, putting his ideas in proper order, before writing the essay. This outline should not be submitted with the finished essay.

   Each essay should have a title page which shows the full name and home address of the contestant, his grade, the name of the school, and the name of the sponsoring DAR Chapter.
   The essay should be submitted as handwritten by the contestant. It is preferable to submit a typed copy also, but this is not required. If someone other than the author does the typing, no changes should be made, and the original handwritten by the author should be attached.
The DAR is pleased to recognize scholastic proficiencies in the study of American History and of Civics. We will present certificates of award to all students who have straight A's through the first five grading periods in the above listed courses.

A typed list of the students (names shown as desired on certificates) who are eligible for these awards should be sent to:

Mrs. Joseph E. Bass
403 Hodges Street
Lake Charles, Louisiana

The list should include the grade level of the student, name of the school and in what course the certificate has been earned.

Please see that these lists reach Mrs. Bass by May 1, 1966, so that the certificates can be properly completed and delivered to the schools in time for Award Day exercises.
6. **Bibliography.**

Include a bibliography of all books, pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles, etc., used as references in writing your essay. Your library should have **NAVAL BATTLES AND HEROES** published by the American Heritage Junior Library, and other fine books on this subject.

7. **Awards:**

(1) First place winner in each grade - $25.00 U.S. Savings Bond.
(2) Second, Third and Fourth place winners in each grade - National Societies History Award Certificate.
(3) National District Winner - History Book.
(4) National Winner - $25.00 U.S. Savings Bond.