Evolution of Veranda Hotel continues

(Editors Note: This is a continuation of Ken Dupuy's feature on the Veranda-Audrey Hotel).

Henri Blanc, a native of France, and his wife, Mary Stone — probably a daughter of Samuel Stone — managed this hotel for a number of years, beginning some time after the Civil War. In 1870, the census listed him as a 49-year-old hotel keeper, Mary's age was 32.

In 1859, Henri was a town councilman; in 1871, he was the mayor of Abbeville. In 1873 he was President of the Police Jury. In 1874 and in 1875, he was once more on the town council. Blanc was a carpenter by trade and did some repairs to the ill-fated wooden courthouse in 1861. Additionally, he had a shop — at one time on State Street — where he repaired such furniture as armories, rockers and chairs.

According to an ad that first appeared in the Sugar Bowl on July 13, 1876, Henri Blanc operated a stage line between Abbeville and New Iberia. A similar ad might have appeared in the Meridional, but there aren't any existing copies of that newspaper before 1877.

The stagecoaches ran daily, except for Sundays, and apparently left these two towns at 8 a.m. Not only did his stagecoach, this building had served as a corn crib, and had had an additional usage; it had been the "town calaboose or lock up." In the stormy times of the past, heavily loaded bad men were stowed away to sleep off the effects of his liquor," according to the Meridional.

In 1893, Adam Brasseux bought of Mrs. H. Abadie and Mrs. Louis Thibeaux, the western end of the hotel's lot, where the stable had stood for many years. On this portion of lot 40, Brasseux had a two story building built, and he opened his "Little Gem Saloon" there, in December 1898.

In August 1898, Elias Broussard had a wood frame addition built on the west side of the hotel, adjoining the main building. Its dimensions were 16 feet by 40 feet with a "protection extending over the sidewalk on Concord Street." It was to have

J.P. Gueydan's 1898 booklet had this to say about the "Verandah" — under Broussard's ownership. It is "one of the best houses in the country, in its decorations and appointments. It is a first class hotel in every respect, yet its charges are very moderate.

The rooms are described as being "all nicely and some of them elegantly furnished." The parlors are well furnished and the office and reading room is hire reliable, dependable employees. Whatever the reasons, Mr. Bourriague and his daughters took over the Veranda Hotel.

This action almost cost Bourriague his life, and led to him receiving some severe wounds. In early August 1899, he and Theodore Theriot, the owner of the Central Hotel, got into an argument that developed into a physical fight. When it was over, according to the newspaper account, Mr. Theriot had cut

I wonder where Ballard bought his gasoline. Perhaps there were other gasoline stations, sufficient in number to warrant a dealer to sell gasoline in Abbeville. Dr. J. F. Young's electric car — the first automobile in Abbeville — didn't arrive in town until 1902. Also in June 1901, Mr. Trahan had the brick sidewalk extended in front of the hotel.

In March 1903, Desire Trahan, and F. Jaubert, who was from New Orleans purchased the hotel. Here is how this property was described in the Meridional on March 14, 1903: "the big two-story brick with slate roof and the two wooden wings, each two stories in height, together with the small house in front of it... and the adjoining lot, making a front of 135 feet." On State Street.

They paid $9,000 to Azelia Nunez's granddaughter, Mrs.

Journey Into the Past

By Ken Dupuy

Desire Trahan, a native of France, and his wife, Mary Stone, were the owners of the Veranda Hotel and its lot. Although Miller was named as an owner, Desire Trahan received the credit for the improvements made to the hotel. For example, in 1913, Trahan had the ground floor replaced by a concrete one.

Many business houses were replacing their wood floors with concrete ones, in 1913, when all of those cement sidewalks were being constructed about town. I believe that the same contractors were doing both types of jobs. Trahan had the hotel painted and the bricks washed. Even the office received the attention of the painters' brushes. In 1913, Trahan also had an "automobile house" built near the hotel, and this new building was soon to be occupied by a new "auto."

To me, one of Trahan's major improvements to the Veranda was the screening in of the "ladies' room."
paper before 1877.

The stagecoaches ran daily, except for Sundays, and apparently left these two towns at 8 a.m. Not only did his stagecoaches carry passengers, they also transported the "U.S. Mail." It cost his passengers $2.50 each way, which is relatively expensive for the times. Since he and his wife were also engaged in managing the Veranda Hotel, it is probable that his first stop in Abbeville was at his hotel.

Surely he didn't encourage potential customers to stay elsewhere.

In a more humorous vein, we might say that Henri Blanc was not guilty of spreading "roomers.'

While he was engaged in these many endeavors, it appears that it was Henri's wife, Mary, who was running the Veranda Hotel, at least in 1874, 1875, and 1876. She was given occupational licenses for those years as hotel keeper and her "keeper." We'll get to that night later.

At the time of the census of 1870, Henri Blanc was 49 years old, while his wife, Mary Stone, was only 22 years old. They had two daughters at this time. Henri Blanc died in 1885, while Mary died in 1908, in Lake Charles.

In April 1897, Elias Broussard took charge of the Veranda. Unfortunately, I know nothing about Elias.

Was he the same individual who was Dr. F.F. Young's receptionist, or was he the one who opened a livery stable in what is now known as "Jair's Menswear" building on the corner of Tivoli and St. Charles streets?

Whoever he was, Elias made some major changes in the hotel's physical makeup. One of the first changes that he made was to have the stable on the west side of the hotel, on Concord Street. Unfortunately, I know nothing about this.

In February 1899, J. Alcide LeBlanc bought the hotel for $1,500. As with modern hotels, there was a need for a watering hole even back then.

cheerful and pleasant." Adding to this praise about the Veranda, the booklet goes on to compliment the food and its dining area: "The choicest viands the market affords are found on the table at meal time and they are prepared by good cooks and served in an appetizing manner."

Elias Broussard was praised as a "man who has the faculty for making people feel at ease and rested." I found it refreshing to learn that in addition to a saloon, a barbershop and a restaurant, the Veranda also had a "reading room."

For reasons unknown to me, Elias Broussard leased the hotel to Mr. Bourigue in February 1899, to Joseph Bourigue, a man from Lake Arthur. Possibly, Broussard was overwhelmed with the stress created by having to please those occasional chronic guests, and catering to their unreasonable whims.

Perhaps he found it difficult to Bourigué's left arm and right hand with a pocketknife. Some of these wounds were said to have been severe. Mr. Theriot was arrested.

Mr. Bourigué continued as owner and manager of the Veranda until the beginning of 1900. He then moved to New Iberia, and Desire Trahan became the new manager. Trahan was "a well known citizen of the parish," who had conducted a hotel for several years in Erath. Not only would he remain as manager of the Veranda, Desire Trahan would soon become part owner.

In June 1901, Bob Ballard, the hotel barman, was one of the first individuals in Abbeville to have a 2-horsepower gasoline engine installed to operate a fan in his shop.

Remember that electricity had not yet arrived in Abbeville, so Ballard was getting a jump on his competitors with this cooling contraption.

Paula Adolph, for her one-half interest in this property, Jaubert sold his one-half interest to Mr. J.B. Miller in 1911, according to the Meridional in their October 27, 1926 issue. Somewhere along the line, the family of Louis Thibodeaux sold its interest in this property.

In 1903, shortly after this sale, rumors, hopes, and dreams began flying about like a nest of seagulls. Trahan and Jaubert would soon construct a three-story brick hotel that would cost the stock company - as yet unformed - $30,000.

This hotel-to-be was described as being "an ornament to our growing city, handsome in architectural beauty and replete with all the conveniences usually to be found in a first-class hotel in any city of more than double the size and population of Abbeville." However, it would be twenty-five years before such a dream structure would rise on that lot, and it would be even grander than was this new building was soon to be occupied by a new "auto."

To me, one of Trahan's major improvements to the Veranda, was the screening in of the "large galleries on the second floor." Imagine no more need for nets over the beds to keep out those pesky mosquitoes and other nocturnal insects. He had these screens installed on the galleries early in 1918.

According to Mae J. Trahan, Desire's daughter, in an interview in 1950, much of the credit of running this great hotel had to be given to Desire's wife, Louise, née Comeaux.

Mae Trahan told the Meridional that she recalled that "each room contained a double bed, a washstand with a basin and pitcher and a smaller pitcher for ice water."

The "communal bathroom contained a cast iron bathtub and a separate commode." According to Mae Trahan, the first floor contained the dining room, an office, a parlor, and a "special room for the men to gather, smoke and exchange stories."

Apparently, men felt that they just had to get away from their women folk so that they could have serious discussions, which women weren't expected to understand, or to be able to contribute to. "You've come a long way, baby," as the cigarette company's slogan goes.

Desire's daughter added that the dining room had been staffed by Mrs. Mae, and that Mae continued to live in the Veranda Hotel "with her family," until 1993, when Mrs. Desire Trahan sold her one-half interest in the property to J.B. Miller, who was already part owner.

Mrs. Trahan's duties of running the hotel "alone" were done by Mr. Trahan, who had died on January 6, 1900, according to Mae, were such that "the demands on her strength and time were getting to be more than she could do to care for." The existence of the Veranda was now to be short lived. A more modern, "commodious" hotel was built called for the soon-to-be-built Audrey Hotel.

Built in 1887 on Lot No. 40, where the present Abbeville City Hall stands, the hotel was originally begun as a parish courthouse. The plan to construct a courthouse on the property was abandoned and the property and partially-built building was sold to a private citizen, who constructed the Varanda Hotel.