Woman's Club Member Writes Brief, Interesting History Of Abbeville For National Publication

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The following is an interesting article by Mrs. Adeline Stuller on Abbeville submitted for inclusion in a national publication by the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Stuller is a member of the 59-year-old mother club in Abbeville, the Woman's Club.

"Riding along the historic Old Spanish Trail in southwest Louisiana, one enters the Acadian country. This is the Deep South, the Bayou country, the land of the Acadians. Time has shortened the word Acadian to Cajun, but call it what you like, this is an area of beauty, contrast and change completely unlike any other in the United States.

"On the banks of the Vermilion River is the lovely town of Abbeville - a town of majestic oaks and magnolias, first settled by Acadians from Nova Scotia. Its founder, Abe Megret, laid it out like his native town in a French province, surrounding the church with a public square and narrow, winding streets. The church still stands on the original site. About fifty years ago, St. Mary Magdalen Catholic church was destroyed by fire but the magnificent edifice which now dominates the landscape was built. In recent years the interior was redecorated, making it one of the most beautiful churches in the southwest.

"Many old customs and traditions have been kept alive. The language of France, mellowed into an Acadian dialect, mingled with the language America on the streets and in the shops and homes of Abbeville.

"Magdalen Square has undergone a few changes through the years, from the park where the band played for the strollers beneath its lovely oaks to its most recent restoration, undertaken by the Kiwanis Club, which has surrounded it with a brick wall, lamp-style lights, bordered walks, and winding paths, in keeping with the original French province plan adopted by "Pere Megret."

"The people are renowned for their hospitality and friendliness. Coffee is a way of life in French Louisiana - almost a ritual. Long ago, the French Talleynand laid down the ground rules for coffee-making when he insisted that coffee must be:

"Noir comme le diable — Black as the devil; Chaud comme le-fever — Hot as Hades; Pur comme un Ange — Pure as an angel; Doux comme l'amour — Sweet as love.

"Courthouse

"A courthouse, resembling a cross between a southern mansion and a Greek temple, was dedicated in 1933. It embodies all that is impressive of Greek and Antebellum architectural styles. The white brick building is a block long and occupies an entire square. It is two stories, with vaulted columns. Its interior boasts a high polish finish, with a partially non-supported spiral staircase. Throughout the colonnade's style building are hand-painted oil paintings of the surrounding countryside which represents one of the fine art collections in the state by leading Louisiana artists.

Iris

"The century old city of Abbeville is located in the center of the area where the beautiful wild iris grows in abundance. In and near the town are some of the most extensive fields of native iris in the state and many gardeners have transplanted the hardy plants to their homes. The colors range from light blue to deep purple and red and grow in much beauty and profusion. The irises are at their best in the latter part of March and early April. At this time the native Iris society visits each year, searching particularly for the famous "Abbeville Red."

Dairy Festival

"Each Fall the Dairy Festival sets a high point in Deep South celebrations. Prominent guests, big name bands, Cajun fiddlers, hilarious contests and all-around festivities set a rapid pace as the King and Queen of Dairyland are crowned in honor of the growing dairy industry. Elaborate parades are staged - since its inauguration, it has become an important mainstay in Southwest Louisiana's parade of festivals.

"Steen Syrup Mill

"Local citizens point with pride to the fact that their city contains one of the world's largest industries of its type and agree in unison that the C. S. Steen Syrup, Inc., is an important asset to the economy of the town and parish. The present plant, erected in 1930 on the site of the first 1911 plant, occupies three acres of land located in the heart of Abbeville, on the shady banks of Bayou Vermillion.

During the period of full operation it employs over a hundred men in the factory and about the same number on the mill-owned farms. On the average day, the mill produces about 25,000 gallons of syrup as the tantalizing odor of boiling cane syrup floats over the village. Visitors are always welcome to this modern plant which now produces more earned cane syrup than the total pack of all other mills in the world.

Louisiana State Rice Milling Company, Inc.

"Rice always has been and remains today the basic food of more than half the world's