Beauregard Parish is located in what was originally the northwest corner of Opelousas County, created in 1806 as a division of the Territory of Orleans. The boundaries of Opelousas embraced the entire southwestern section of the state and extended almost to the Mississippi River on the east. With the inception of the parish form of government in 1807, the area of Opelousas was renamed St. Landry Parish. The boundaries of St. Landry Parish were altered in 1840 to create Imperial Calcasieu Parish.

The recorded history of the region begins in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the land between the Rio Hondo and Sabine Rivers, called the Neutral Strip, was under Spanish jurisdiction. After the first land grant in 1797, the territory became a notorious refuge for desperadoes, this continued for many years before it was inhabited by permanent settlers. Settlement by the white man was not made as early in the region of Calcasieu, from which Beauregard was created, as in other portions of Southwestern Louisiana. White people entered the region around 1815 and formed settlements along the Calcasieu River, then known as the Rio Hondo. These settlements spread with the westward advance of the pioneers and resulted in the organizations of new parishes in old Opelousas area.

Prior to the coming of the white settlers, the area was inhabited by a few tribes of Attakapas Indians. The tribe consisted of a large number of small bands along the gulf coastal region from Vermillion Bay to Galveston Bay, and along the Vermilion, Rio Hondo (Calcasieu) and the lower Sabine and Naches.

There were four Indian Villages in what is now Beauregard Parish, possibly more. One was six or seven miles south of Sugartown, on Indian Branch; another was on Bundicks Creek; another along the mouth of Anacoco Creek; and another at Merryville, just across the street from where Merryville High School now stands.

The Sugartown community was the first permanent settlement in the Parish, established in 1825. The second community was that of Dry Creek.

GROWTH OF BEAUREGARD

The movement to create Beauregard Parish began in 1908 by a group of business men from DeRidder, Sugartown, and Merryville. Through the efforts of these men, an unsuccessful bill was introduced in the State Legislature for the creation of a parish. The second attempt was passed in 1912, when interested citizens met at DeRidder and delegated a group to go to Baton Rouge to lobby for the creation of the parish. DeRidder was selected as the location for the parish seat by an election on October 15, 1912.

Beauregard Parish comprises a total of 757,760 acres of land or 1,184 square miles.

DeRidder, the parish seat of Beauregard, was established in 1897 and incorporated in April 1903. It was known by various names until it was named DeRidder by Jan DeGoeyen for his sister-in-law, a beautiful German girl, Elfa DeRidder. Mr. DeGoeyen played an important role in the early days of the Kansas City Southern (Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf) by obtaining from Dutch investors a considerable part of the funds required by 'R. Arthur Stillwell when the railroad was under construction.

The first form of government was the mayor-alderman type. On November 15, 1921 the commission form of government was adopted for DeRidder. The selection of the new system of government consisted of the election of a Mayor, Commissioner of Finance and Utilities, and Commissioner of Parks and Streets. This form of government went into effect on June 20, 1922. July 1, 1962 the City Government was changed to the City Administrator-Council form, the first City and at present the only one in Louisiana to have a City Manager.

AGRICULTURE

A few scattered pioneer settlers who came to this section before there were any saw mills, and descendants of those pioneer families, were very successful in raising cattle and sheep on the open range. After careful and thorough investigation and experimentation, it has been found that grassland farming or improved pastures for livestock is not practical and lucrative type of farming for this cut-over coastal plains soil.
The development of improved pastures has brought about a great increase in the number of both beef and dairy herds. Local stock sold at commission barn annually, exceeds $2million; dairy herds produced over 18,000,000 lbs of milk in 1969.

Poultry is another outstanding farm enterprise in the parish and accounts for more than ten percent of the income of the farmers.

The first sheep were brought into Beauregard Parish in 1830, and today it is the leading wool producer in the state. Ranchers sell wool through their own organization, the Beauregard Wool Growers Association, 1969 production was 50,000 lbs.

The history of this area saw timber, grass and livestock to be the more stable sources of income. Today there is more than 300,000 acres of pine trees plantations in the parish. Rice plays an important role, producing $695,688.00 in 1969.

The major manufacturing industries are based upon forest products such as, timber, pulp wood and pine stumps, supporting saw mills, wood preserving plants, and chemical plants engaged in the processing of naval stores and pulp and paper.

TRANSPORTATION

Beauregard Parish is served by three railroads: Southern Pacific, Sante Fe and Kansas City Southern.

It is also served by McLain and SAIA Truck Lines and Continental Trailways Bus Lines.

The Beauregard Parish Airport, owned and operated by the Police Jury, was formerly the DeRidder Army Air Base, has the following facilities: The runway is 150 feet by 4,600 feet, and a hanger with 32,400 square feet, unicom radio, gas tetrahedron, complete A & E service. The airport is fully lighted for night operations.

The U. S. Highway 171 traverses the parish from north to south and U. S. Highway 190 east and west crossing in DeRidder, also State Routes 26, 27 and 112.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Major fuels such as natural gas, butane, oil, gasoline, and wood are available in Beauregard Parish.

Fresh water occurs to the depth of 2,900 feet in the immediate vicinity of DeRidder. Beneath Beauregard Parish there is more water than any single spot in North America.

DE RIDDER AND BEAUREGARD PARISH TODAY

The 1970 census population of Beauregard Parish is 22,888. The census of DeRidder is 8,030.

DeRidder has two local newspapers. They are the Beauregard News established in 1945 and the DeRidder Enterprise, established in 1903. The Beauregard News is published twice weekly and the DeRidder Enterprise weekly. KDIA - AM & FM radio stations serve this area.

January average temperature is 53.8°, July 82.4°. There is practically no marsh land in Beauregard Parish and a very little swamp land, even along the streams, which flow cool, clear and swift.