Iota Was Created By Railroad

The past history of Iota, another Acadia Parish town created by the railroad, is identified with Pointe-aux-Loups, one of the oldest place names in southwest Louisiana. Pointe-aux-Loups, or Wolf Point, was the location of mineral springs that attracted summer visitors for half a century, beginning about 1858.

The older settlement was located on Bayou des Cannes about two miles west of the present town of Iota. A post office, named Cartville for the first postmaster, Samuel Cart, was established in the vicinity of Pointe-aux-Loups Springs in 1884. Ten years later, in 1894, a railroad branch line, laid from Midland to Eunice, bypassed Cartville by a mile or so. The railroad company built a depot at a point on the line nearest to the Cartville-Pointe-aux-Loups settlements and named it Iota.

The name of the Cartville post office was changed to Iota in 1900. Postmasters to 1920, other than Samuel Cart, were Adolph Baumann, Savinien Cart, Louis Cart, Jesse H. Nordyke, Nellie E. Nordyke, Henry L. Daughenbaugh, Alonzo F. Fruge, Viola M. McMillian, and Viola M. Fontenot.

C.C. “Curley” Duson is credited with being the founder of Iota. It was he who promoted the construction of the Southern Pacific line to Eunice, the new town he founded in St. Landry Parish. At the same time, 1894, Duson acquired the land on which Iota now stands, a 160-acre tract which had been homestead by Archille Doucet in 1835. Duson divided the land into town lots and sold them. Duson was the prime mover in the establishment of the Acadia Canal Company in the vicinity of Iota, and was president of the rice mill put up in Iota in 1901, the two businesses said to have been responsible for the town’s economic development.

Some 12 years after Duson had the town lot sale in Iota, some interesting litigation grew out of the land transaction. When Archille Doucet, the original landowner, died, he left a widow and six children, four of whom were minors. The major heirs sued the widow for a partition of the land; at the ensuing land sale the widow bought half of the land and W.W. Duson, the remainder. Both the widow and W.W. Duson sold their halves of the land to C.C. Duson, who proceeded with his plan for town development.

The early 1900s found Iota with an estimated population of 300 and a dozen or so business firms in operation. A parish business directory, published as a weekly feature of the Crowley Signal, carried advertisements for 10 Iota firms. These include Adolph Baumann, general merchandise; J.A. Sabatier and Company, general merchandise and implements; E. Barousse, general merchandise; Callahan Manufacturing Company, lumber and building supplies; H.I. Daughenbaugh, general merchandise; R.A. and J.A. Murff, blacksmiths; Fenelon Brothers, warehouse; Menou and Company, grain, feed, lumber; Hayes Pharmacy, in office of Dr. F.N. Hayes, physician and surgeon; Crescent Saloon, Cart and Regan, “jug trade a specialty.”

A hotel was opened in the summer of 1901 by William J. Young who was assisted in running the hotel by his wife and daughter, Rosebud. The hotel was destroyed by fire a few months after it opened for business. A 12-room hotel with two baths replaced the burned structure.

The Crescent Saloon changed hands in 1901. The business was sold at a sheriff’s sale “to satisfy the State of Louisiana for the license the gentlemen neglected to take out when they commenced selling liquor.” The saloon was sold to Theodore Daigle and Cornelius Richard, both of Church Point, for $1,300, and the name was changed to the Club Saloon.

Iota’s first hotel, from 1903