Split personality Junction City celebrates 100 years

By The Associated Press

JUNCTION CITY — For most of her 76 years, Allane Thompson has shopped in Arkansas without ever leaving her Louisiana hometown.

That's because she lives in Junction City.

This past weekend, Thompson and other townpeople celebrated the 100th birthday of their town, divided by the Arkansas-Louisiana state line as well as the lines that separate Union Parish, Claiborne Parish and Union County, Ark.

"We are having a field day up here," Thompson said. "We are having all sorts of entertainment and all kinds of food."

Most activities were in the vicinity of the town's only traffic light. It's at the Arkansas-Louisiana line on U.S. Highway 167, a road scheduled to be four-laned.

Thompson remembers a day when there were no paved roads. "When this town first started and for a long time there was no concrete. It was just muddy," she said.

Junction City was born when a railway extended its line, held a barbecue and sold lots in 1884. Trains made frequent trips through town.

There's but one train a day now. And the big depot that once stood three blocks from Thompson's home has been erased from the town's landscape.

"I just loved to hear the train whistle," Thompson said.

Twice, fire razed the business sector on the Arkansas side of town. The first came when the town was 6 years old. In 1930, Thompson was a girl of 12 watching from her yard as another blaze consumed the town's wooden stores.

"That was the worst fire I ever saw in my life. It was just horrible," she said.

Thompson could hear one building fall then see the next catch fire. "It looked like the whole world was burning up," she said. "Every time I see a fire I think of that."

People rebuilt with brick. And the town has since prospered with the lumber industry.

Now there are two town halls, one post office, one school and one fire department. It's always been a close-knit town, although there have been some disputes recently over where money will come from to pay for Louisiana students to attend the school in Arkansas.

Thompson hopes the disputes can be settled soon.

"Until now, we never thought about whether we were in Arkansas or Louisiana," she said. "We were just each others' friends and we still are."