Louisiana's town graveyard

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In the back of a steel card lie in an office on the 19th floor of the State Capitol, there's a little stack of yellowed index cards, each representing a small town that's given up the ghost.

Most of the towns disappeared only a generation or two after they sprang up at the turn of the century. Others, like Verda in Grant Parish, lingered on until there wasn't enough left to call a town.

There's little information on Verda in the secretary of state's files except that it was incorporated by proclamation of Gov. Newton Crain Blanchard on July 22, 1907 and dissolved by its citizens in 1955 when they voted to recall the mayor and aldermen, but to keep the town marshal.

According to "Louisiana Places," a book by Clare D'Artois Leeper, Verda was the site of the first college and the first agricultural high school in Grant Parish and began its slow decline when the railroad came through about a mile from town and began drawing away its citizens. In 1952 there were only 57 people left who called Verda home.

Gov. Murphy J. Foster issued a proclamation on July 13, 1898, to create the village of Marthaville in Natchitoches Parish. According to Leeper's book, the village was created on the old mail route between Alexandria and Shreveport and later was the site of a large sawmill, planing mill and shingle mill.

When the Vernon Parish town of Stables was incorporated on March 24, 1910, it already had 1,929 citizens.

Gov. J.Y. Sanders issued a proclamation "dedicating the use of the streets, alleys and sidewalks of said proposed municipality, to the traveling public, for the purpose of recreation and peaceable amusement by the people of said municipality, as well as for the purpose of having said streets, sidewalks, etc., ornamented with shrubberries and shade trees."

When Stables was dissolved by the secretary of state in 1955, it hadn't had an election since 1916.

In 1910 there were 289 citizens of the village of Rio in Washington Parish. Like the village of Stables, Rio's charter was dissolved in 1955. Like Stables, there hadn't been an election there since 1916.

Randolph in Union Parish was created by governor's proclamation on April 9, 1912, and dissolved in 1955 after 23 years had gone by with no elections there. The mayor of Randolph was Dr. W.L. Miles, who in 1910 wrote the governor that he believed it would be in the "best interests" of the 350 inhabitants of the place "for it to be incorporated."

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Alden Bridge was created by governor's proclamation on June 17, 1902, and dissolved by the secretary of state in 1955 after having had no elections since 1932.

Naborton was incorporated in DeSoto Parish on Oct. 21, 1914, by incorporation of Gov. Luther Egbert Hall. The map filed with the secretary of state showed the village had been divided into 66 blocks laid out around a railroad track. The streets had names like Zuma, Eula, Logan, Producers Ave., and nearly all were completely empty, according to the map.

On Oct. 3, 1914, attorneys for the town wrote the governor that, "We are not particular as to who may be officers of this village. As heretofore advised, it is very essential that the people living in this town have the town incorporated for the reason that this is an oil field and the worst elements in the parish generally hang out in such places."

Naborton was dissolved in 1955 after having had no election since 1927.

Morrow, in St. Landry Parish, was created by governor's proclamation on Dec. 15, 1917, and held its last election in 1922. Like all these other small towns, Morrow had a mayor, three aldermen and a marshal. At its height as a stop on the Texas and Pacific Railroad, Morrow had a population of 265 people.

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The Bossier Parish village was created on a tract of land donated by the Whited & Wheless Ltd. Lumber Co.