New Iberia church is demolished

By MARY BROWN
Advocate correspondent

NEW IBERIA — A piece of New Iberia history went down in the rubble as workers began tearing down First Baptist Church.

The church was destroyed by fire in June, and architects said that the two-story brick structure had to be demolished because the roof was caving in.

On Wednesday, demolition teams moved in.

The church, located at the corner of Weeks and St. Peter streets, had stood there since 1937.

Church officials said it was the first Baptist church in the area, starting in 1927 with a handful of members. From that church, a number of other Baptist churches developed. The church has about 400 members.

A.W. Smart said he had mixed feelings as he watched the church being torn down.

"Everyone has a lot of sentimental value connected to that old building," Smart said. "Lot of people been married there, lot of people have had loved one's funerals there, and a lot of people have been saved there."

Since the fire, church members have been using a building that once housed the old city library, directly across the street from the church. They also purchased the old school board office located near the old library.

Smart said members plan to rebuild the church on that property. Once the old church is completely torn down, it will become a parking lot.

Smart said the congregation has been anticipating building a new church and has started a building fund. However, it will be about a year before a new church building is under way, he said.

"It's not going to be easy, and our building committee is doing a good job. We're working together, and pretty soon we ought to be willing and ready to break some ground for the new building," he said.

Other church members say it will be nice when the new church is built and the town will be able to easily identify it.