Origins Are Given of Place Names in Ascension Parish

Only Three Communities Are Incorporated

By CLAIRE PUNEKY

DONALDSONVILLE, La. -- Ascension Parish has three incorporated communities. These are Donaldsonville, Gonzales and Sorrento. But there are many other place names, some now part of the past, in areas where there are no corporate limits.

Places like Bayou Narcisse Settlement, Big Swamp, Bluff Settlement, Carencro, Conway, Gold Place, Hobart, Landry are names not as widely known today as those of St. Amant, Smoke Bend, Dutchtown, Hohen Solms, Duplessis, Acy and Barton.

Some years ago, Sidney A. Marchand, local attorney and historian, researched the place names of the parish, but with a tremendous surge of industry into the parish and other paces of time, the picture of these areas has undergone a certain amount of change.

William Acy was one of the pioneers who settled in an area about seven miles from the present site of Gonzales, where on the western site of Gonzales, where on the levee was established.

FIRST TO SETTLE

Spanish pioneers were the first to settle on Bayou Lafourche about three miles south of Donaldsonville, and as early as 1822 a post office was established there and named Barton for the family whose land holdings were in the area.

Narcisse Gautreau in the middle of the 19th century settled land just northeast of Gonzales, and the stream along which he built his home in the woods became Bayou Narcisse and the settlement that grew there took the same name.

The lovely plantation home, Belle Helene, is up and across the Mississippi River from Donaldsonville, standing in the midst of the one-time post village of the same name where the second post office in Ascension Parish was established in 1889.

George B. Reuss, prominent Ascension Parish businessman and philanthropist, at one time operated a brick yard and cotton gin there.

AREA MISNAMED

Big Swamp was misnamed because this area between Prairieville and Hope Villa became the scene of thriving farmland and became known as Oak Grove.

Farms on a highland or bluff near Dutchtown account for the name Bluff Settlement being given to that area.

Brusly McCall, upriver from Donaldsonville, was once thickly populated, but thinned out when crevasses on the Atchafalaya River sent backwaters into the homes and lands of the people.

In 1851 Carencro, south of Gonzales, was a roadless dense wilderness and its only inhabitant was Evariste LeBlanc. By 1900, a wagon road had been formed to the Mississippi river.

OFFICE OPENED

North Carolina planter J. C. Cofield bought Point Houmas below Donaldsonville about 1870, and a post office was opened in 1886. The place became known as Cofield Settlement after the man who had organized the Cofield Guards around 1880.

William Conway, an Irishman who had early holdings here, is recalled in the name of Bayou Conway, a stream that flows along land once named for him.

Darrow, founded by Ben Gibson and named for the Darrow family, is across the river from Donaldsonville and was the landing site of the river ferry until recent years.

Leon A. Duplessis was the first postmaster of the community named for him and formerly known as Calebasse. This area was once the scene of thriving activity. Dutchtown, once the scene of a large sugarcane operation, was once known as Dutch Shore.

REUSS RESPONSIBLE

Gold Place was noted as a farming community, as well as Hobart. At Hohen Solms, about 10 miles above Donaldsonville, John Reuss was responsible for obtaining a post office in 1877. Gov. Henry Johnson of Louisiana had his Chatham plantation there.

Lake gets its name from Lakes Villard and Martin in the northeast section of the parish. Landry, near Sorrento, was the site of a store owned by Emery A. Landry where in 1906 a post office was established.

Port Barrow, incorporated as a municipality in 1862, is now a part of Donaldsonville. Fort Butler there was a point of contention in the Civil War. Smoke Bend, just up the river from there, derives its name from Indian campfires seen by early travelers on the river.

On the banks of New River, below Gonzales, St. Amant is in the midst of a farming community. The name comes from Joseph St. Amant, who was its first postmaster in 1864.