Little information is available today on education in the Calcasieu territory settlements before Louisiana was admitted to the Union. According to Ward Anderson, Lake Charles City Schools superintendently began about 1830.

The Louisiana state public school system had its beginning with the Act of 1831. This act empowered the police jurors of the state to select five administrators of public schools for their respective parishes. It was the duty of the parish school administrator to visit all the schools in his district and report their condition to the police jury.

The five appointees of Old Imperial Calcasieu Parish had to cover the area which is today the parishes of Cameron, Calcasieu, Allen, Beauregard, Jeff Davis, and St. Landry. That was a hard job in those days, since in the period from 1815 to 1840 traveling was slow and difficult. Partly because of slow travel and communications, the people of Old Calcasieu placed little confidence in state or parish aid and slowly by their own efforts organized and financed private schools to educate their children.

The private school movement began about 1830 when the first school of that type in the parish was opened near Lake Charles. The movement continued to expand until about 1840 and then declined and finally ended in the early 1850's when the public school system became able to assume the full responsibility of parish education.

During the 70's years of their operation, private schools gave the parish community excellent service and the schoolmasters in those places played an important role in the life of the community.

In the earliest days of school operation, and some time later, a teacher's ability was measured by his power to maintain discipline mostly by a good stout stick or rod. Discipline was a thing that all parents demanded and their children usually received it.

Schoolmasters were influential and important people in the small community and their knowledge and education were greatly respected.

It is true that some of the early schoolmasters had barely enough education to teach the rudiments of the 3's. However, the majority of the teachers were capable and conscientious instructors, with college training that enabled them to maintain high standards in their schools.

In those early days, the private school was the finishing school for most of the young people in Calcasieu Parish. To a great degree, therefore, the future destiny of the youth of each generation depended upon the qualifications of their schoolmasters.

The private schools in Southwest Louisiana provided fine school work, working with meager equipment at a very reasonable cost to the people. Tuition costs in the elementary grades ran from two to three dollars a month and five dollars a month in the advanced grades.

Some schools operated night evening courses in commercial subjects so students who were unable to attend day classes could take night classes. Tuition costs were as low as $1.00 a month for the night school.

In the 19th century, the academies were excellent schools and were probably the most valuable schools developed by educators during the 19th century. They served as the preparatory schools for the university.

Some parents were too poor to pay tuition so the state and parish, when public money was available, paid the costs of private tuition for the needy children. Because of this practice, the early public schools were sometimes called Pauper Schools.

In the Civil War the demand for schools beyond the elementary grades grew due to increased enrollment numbers. In response, for more advanced schooling, the academy was brought to the parish.

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The St. Charles Academy School of Lake Charles opened in 1895 and admitted boys the next year. The school was under the supervision of the Sisters Marianites of the Holy Cross.

Another parish academy operating in 1881 was one located in Sugartown. The school was known as Professor Baldwin's Male and Female School. An ad in the Oct. 22, 1881 edition of the newspaper, Echo, gave a brief description of the school as thus:

"The school stands about a half mile from Sugarown on commodious grounds, surrounded by a good plank fence. It has a convenient water supply, and the schoolroom is large and comfortable with a washroom at each end for the young men and the young ladies. The school was immediately respected. Some parents were too poor. The St. Charles Academy was opened in 1895.

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