Rare History Book Given To USL

The gift, by Dr. T. J. Arceneaux, Lafayette, of an original copy of a rare book on the early history of the Attakapas area, was deposited at the library by Percy Bernard, a nephew of Mrs. Cochrane in 1971, according to her instructions. Volume II covers the years from 1888-1944. The official document appointing Cochran as branding officer and signed by Gov. Newton Blanchard in 1906 is also on display.

Dr. Arceneaux has emphasized the importance of the brand books as a source of early history of the Attakapas and Opelousas districts. Recorded in the brand books are the names of the early settlers of the area and their cattle brands. The books have been used by genealogists and others seeking information of early settlers.

Troubled Times

The book is the record of the troubled times here in Southwestern Louisiana when a vigilante committee was organized to combat crime, particularly cattle rustling. Listed in the book are the names of those caught by the committee, some publicly whipped and many exiled from the state. A final confrontation of the part of the account. Book vigilantes forms a dramatic cattle rustling gang with the is written in French. However, a translation of the book is available in Dupre Library. Also on exhibit is the "Brand Book for the Opelousas and Attakapas Districts, 1739-1888," volumes I and II, which Dean Arceneaux was instrumental in obtaining for the library. Volume I was donated to the library in 1949 by Mrs. Gradney Cochrane, whose husband was the official branding officer for the Attakapas-Opelousas Districts.

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"In time it became very common for parents to have more cattle brands registered, for each of their children," Dr. Arceneaux said. "In some cases these brands were modifications of the original family brands, thus giving some indication of family connections. These brands really became a sort of 'Heraldry of the Range,' because if you amounted to anything in those early days, you owned a well stocked 'Vacherie,' which meant that you had your very own 'Iron Coat of Arms,' duly registered in the official brand book of either the Attakapas or Opelousas Districts."

Dean Arceneaux has also given the library an old branding iron which is included in the exhibit.