Residents of Donaldsonville
Who Made History Recalled

Community Was Harbor of Exiled Acadians

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DONALDSONVILLE, La. — Every community, every area can look into the past and find those individuals who through their performance in life have become part of the forefront or the background of history.

This community, one of the early harbors of the exiled Acadians, is no exception, and has contributed the names of citizens to the historic annals of their times.

The name of Father Angelus de Reuillagodos of the Capuchin Order stands out as the founding pastor of the Ascension Catholic Church parish, which will observe its 200th anniversary in 1972.

Also written boldly on local history pages is the name of William Donaldson of New Orleans who, Feb. 10, 1806, purchased the land on which he founded what is today the City of Donaldsonville.

FIRST COMMANDANT

Joseph Landry became the first American commandant here in 1804, and in 1805, Elijah Fromentin became prosecuting attorney for the counties of Acadia and the German Coast. Donaldsonville was then in the County of Acadia.

With establishment of a Post Office here in 1808, Thomas Randall had the distinction of becoming its first Postmaster. That was in June. A month later Randall died following a brief illness.

Moving through the pages of local history at random, it is revealed that William C. Randall became postmaster here in 1818 and Robert Lawes attained that office the following year.

State Sen. David A. Randall in 1823 called for removal of the state's capitol to Donaldsonville, but his bid was rejected. Randall in 1830 announced his candidacy for Louisiana governor. Two years later he received his office and Transimon Landry of this city was his successor.

CANDIDATE CHOSEN

Earlier in the year Landry had been chosen a candidate for presidential elector backing Andrew Jackson for U.S. President and Randall was named his substitute.

Henry Johnson, who had made Ascension Parish his home, became Louisiana governor in 1824. In 1829 he married Elizabeth Key in Georgetown, Hoar B. Trist of Ascension Parish in 1831 was named surveyor-general of Louisiana.

Andrew Gingry who, in 1833, was appointed local postmaster to fill a vacancy when 35-year-old Postmaster Richard Bond died, again made history in 1840 through his donation of land here to the Methodist Episcopal church.

LAND DONATED

In July, 1847, R. R. Barrow donated land to the town of Donaldsonville. A part of this city annexed in recent years was called "Port Barrow" prior to its incorporation and continued to have that reference in designating that portion of the community.

In 1847, after a Whig convention in Donaldsonville nominated B. G. Thibodaux as candidate for U.S. representative of the Second District, newspaper pressure was applied to the Democrats to nominate Hoar B. Trist of Ascension at their September convention here.

However, the Democrats chose Pierre Theodule Landry for the nomination. The vote in Ascension Parish was close with Landry ahead of Thibodaux by one vote, 241-to-240.

Robert Wellman Nicholls of Donaldsonville became Judge of the 4th Judicial District in 1848 to fill a vacancy created by the death of his father, Thomas C. Nicholls. The newly-appointed judge married in February of the following year Miss Jane Phillips of Assumption Parish.

CLERK OF COURT

Also in 1849 Lawrence D. Nicholls, Ascension clerk of court, married Miss Francisco Virginio Bond of Donaldsonville in May. Officiating at the ceremony was Father Jean Boulliier of Ascension Catholic Church who, three months earlier, had officiated at the marriage of Jean Lafitte Jr. of New Orleans and Marie Emma Viala of Donaldsonville.

In that year of 1849 P. Arthur Hatkinson was elected mayor of Donaldsonville.

H. O. Maher became first president of Phoenix Fire Company No. 1 at its organization on Dec. 8, 1873 at a meeting in the local Methodist Episcopal church. The following year a second fire company came into being with Christian Kline as president.

These are some of those who stood in or walked into the path of history and have their names written on its flagstones. There are many more, but in a random sampling only a small number must serve to illustrate the whole.