Sweet Lake H.D.C. Tour 1971
Welcome to our Lake Communities. To each of you we extend a warm welcome. This is the seventh consecutive year that the Cameron Parish Home Demonstration Council has sponsored a "Know Your Parish Tour" for homemakers.

The Sweet Lake Home Demonstration Club wishes you well today and hope you have come to have a good time. Ours is a rural farm area with mostly rice and soybeans grown. Cattle and poultry are also a big farm industry in this area. We have two lakes in our area. Hunting and fishing are very popular also.

We owe thanks to many people for the preparation of this book. We cannot name them as they are too numerous, but they know who they are and to them we say many thanks.

Mrs. Albert Guidry
President
ITINERARY
OF
LAKE COMMUNITIES

Group met at Sweet Lake Community Center.

As you leave, the first building on left is the Sweet Lake Catholic Church named St. Patrick's Chapel, dedicated in 1937. The Rev. Lloyd Hebert is pastor. The bell in belfry of chapel was imported from France and presented to the church in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton LeDoux by their son and daughter and in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde LeDoux and Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Hanks. The acre of land on which the sanctuary stands was donated by Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company.

Come to cross-road - make a right turn on Hwy. 42, traveling north. From this point on until we come to Helm's settlement, buildings and land on both sides of highway are property of Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company.

First tenant house to our right is occupied by the Murphy Gradneys. First house to our left is the home of Mrs. Tom Taylor, Cameron Parish Pilot's first Sweet Lake reporter - Reporter At Large since 1960. Mrs. Taylor has been employed by Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company for over 30 years as payroll clerk. Her office (formerly her husband's office) adjoins her home. Her husband was, at the time of his fatal traffic accident in 1957, canal superintendent for Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company. He had been in their employ since 1926.

Coming to north curve - to our left is the Sweet Lake Gospel Tabernacle with the Rev. René Saltzman, pastor. The acre of land on which this sanctuary stands was also donated by Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company. Between the church and the old Helm's estate tenant house is a shell road leading north to the Ward 4 dump located on the Helms estate. Traveling east we come to another curve - to the right on the corner is the Clayton LeDoux's old place now occupied by the Elias Breauxs. Mr. Breaux is the company's farm manager. He has been on their payroll since 1924. He holds the record of being the living employee with the highest seniority with Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company. About 1/2 mile east of the Breaux's is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Fruge. Mrs. Fruge's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Babe LeDoux, moved into the Sweet Lake Community when she was nine months old. Here we make a left turn traveling North again. First house to our left is the Clyde LeDoux home and back of it is their son's home, the Dwight LeDouxs. The house the Clyde LeDouxs occupy was one among the first to be built by the company. It was first occupied by Clyde's grandfather, Mr. Babe LeDoux. About two miles further is the Claude Robinson home. Here we make a left turn and the first house to our right is the Leon (Mack) Robinson home. Now we are nearing the Helm's settlement. First is Edmund (Bully) Helms' two tenant
houses. First one to left is occupied by Duford Matt, the one to the right by Albert Prejean. The red brick house to our left is the home of the Edmund Helms, Jr., and next to our left, his parents home, the Edmund Helms, Sr.

Coming to another crossroad - to our right on the corner is the Sweet Lake United Methodist Church, the origin of which dates back to 1908. When this new church plant was nearing completion, the members, in recognition of their spiritual heritage, decided to change the name of the church from Sweet Lake Methodist Church to Sweet Lake Memorial Methodist Church. The two front pews side by side in the Sanctuary are symbolic of the loving service of two great men for whom they were dedicated, Bro. Willie Hebert, first pastor of the church, and Mr. H. G. Chalkley, Sr., financial supporter, who worked together for the betterment of the community as well as for the spiritual growth of the church. Bro. Willie was a Methodist and Mr. Chalkley - a Quaker. Both were members of the Holy Universal Church. The acre of land on which this sanctuary stands was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Helms. Across the road west of the church is the old Fielder Helmshome, now the property of the Helms' estate. Mr. and Mrs. Helms were among those who were pillars of the Sweet Lake Methodist Church in its infancy. Their home was headquarters for the preachers.

Here we make a left turn - to our left is Walter Helms' rent house occupied by the Wilbert Beards; next to it is Jerald Helms' tenant house occupied by the Milfred LeBlancs. To our right on the corner is the Walter Helms' and son Jerald's rice dryer with a 15,000 barrel storage capacity. West of dryer, south of shell road, is the home of the Walter Helms, flanked to the east by their daughter and son-in-law, the Hardy Stones, and to the west by their son and daughter-in-law, the Jerald Helms. Walter Helms served as state representative from 1944-1948.

Leaving the Helms settlement, to our left is the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company tenant house, home of the Harold Fruges. To the right - the buff brick house - is the Ray Allen Beard's home. Next is the home of the Lyons Breaux (red brick) then a beige brick home of the Preston Robinsons. Next is the home of the Arvellian Doucets. The two vacant tenant houses to our right are property of the Helms' estate. Here to our right we come to the last home within Calcasieu Parish - the white rock-face brick home of the Wayne Fosters, and to the rear is their "Ox Yoke Arena" and welding shop.

Entering Cameron Parish - to our left is the company tenant house occupied by the Aleus Matts. About 1/2 mile west of the Matts can be seen the Albert Matt's home (Mr. Matt, a long-time school bus driver, now retired), also the home of the James Cox - Mr. Cox is president of Cameron Parish Cattlemen's Association. Next, to our left is the home of the John Taylors - Mr. Taylor
is chief engineer of the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company's relift pumping station known as the West Pump. Here we make a right turn on blacktop. To our left is the company tenant house recently occupied by the Linens Bellards. To our right is the William (Bill) Johnson home built in 1958 of lumber from the Cameron Elementary School; the roof has the original slate shingles. To our right is another company tenant house, home of the Sam LeDouxes.

Here we come to another crossroad - to our right on the corner is the home of the Lazime LeBeouf. Back of their place is a trailer house belonging to their grandson, the Larry Broussards, and next to them is his parents home, the Antoine Broussards. At that crossroad we make a left turn. To our right is the old Eli LeBeouf home and to our left the Little League's ball park in the making. The Little League was granted this track of land by Mr. Chalkley, president and manager of Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company, and will bear his name, "Chalkley Field." The Little League's achievement thus far has come about as a result of civic minded people giving of their time and money to make it a success. They now have a home run fence built, two dugouts and one concession stand. They have high hopes of achieving their goal in the very near future. Little League coach is Gary Lavergne and area director is Rufus Lavergne.

Here we meet the Gulf Hwy. Travel on it a short distance then straight on our way to Pure Oil Camp (so named due to development of the oil industry in Sweet Lake by Pure Oil Company in 1925.) First house (buff brick) to our right is the home of the Glenn Heberts. Next is the Charles W. Hebert home. Mrs. Hebert is well known in these parts as the "Day Lily Queen" of Sweet Lake. Here we go over bridge crossing the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company irrigation canal (this spot provides a swimming hole, a delight to youngsters) - make a short turn to right. Houses to left are the homes of the Octave Connors, Charles LeBleus, Herman Prechts and Jim Youngs. Other homes in camp include Virgil LeBleus, Wilton Youngs, W. L. Duhon, J. B. O'Blances and the old home of the Placid Chessons, now a rent house occupied by the Morris Breauxs. Here is located the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company relift pumping station. This irrigation system was conceived and put in use about 1905. It is still serving now and with added refinements can now take care of 5,000 acres of rice, pumping 80,000 gallons of water per minute. Across the street from the pumping station is a company house where one of their earliest employees resided. He was affectionately known as Uncle Charlie Miller, their chief engineer. He was a native of Switzerland. He became employed by Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company's predecessors, the North American Land & Timber Company, in the early 1900's. The transition came about when the North American Land & Timber Company was bought out by American stock holders in 1923 and established as an American company known now as the Sweet Lake Land and Oil Co.
Uncle Charley lived to see the transition. Here was the location of the company's first commissary (later it was moved to Holmwood near railroad station.) There was also a post office here in those early days.

Here we backtrack and go by the Hebert and Precht rice dryer, constructed in 1952, with a storage capacity of 33,000 barrels. Next is the newly erected Spanish style brick home of Charles Precht, Sr. Mr. Precht is police juror of Ward 4. To our left - red brick house - is the home of the Charles Precht, Jr. A short distance to our left can be seen large oak groves, site of the old Batiste Broussard home, one of the first settlers in the Sweet Lake Community. It is now the home of his daughter, Eliza Broussard. Next door is the home of the Frank Wollards.

On your right we have Sandras LaBove and the John B. DuHoun homes. Next is the Joseph LaBove home, Alfred DuHon and poultry farm. In front is John B. DuHon's Hunting Club; next Ralph LeBoeuf; next Dan LeBoeuf. On your left are the Melvin Granger and McKindley Broussard homes. The two trailer homes on the right are Mike and John Newell's homes. On your left is Eldred Richard's home; next is Leo DuHon, Ervin Richard, Clyde DuHon, Gilfred Richard and John A. DuHon. On your right are Kenneth Meyers, Noble Theriot and Irvin Vidrine. On your left we have Absie DuHon; on your right Mrs. Rena Guidry, Leon DuHon and Jessie DuHon; on your left Nolton Richard. On your right is the Old Narcisse DuHon home built about seventy-five years ago. On your left is the John A. Faulk, John G. Demarest, Ruby Faulk Houston's and Kenny Faulk homes. On your right is the Russell Moutons home and on your left the Amos Faulk home. Next door is his son Amos Bud Faulk. On your right are the William Poole and Greta Smith homes. Next is Roderich Poole, Richard Poole and Odell Vinson. On your left is Nelson Faulk--in back Vernon McCain--Mrs. George McCain. On your right is Gerald Richard; on your left George Greathouse; on your right Jack W. Adcock and Grand Lake High School. On the left side is the McCain estate; right side Mr. Dan Nunez. Next is Mr. Tan Demarets home, which is about 70 years old. Next are the Clophas Millers, Durphy Demarest and Nathan Demarest. The two homes being constructed on the left are J. M. Crador and Olphy Crador homes. On your right are Mr. Emile LaBove, John Thomas, Richard Hebert, Weldon Vincent and C. W. Platt; on your right Mrs. Caroline Agen; on your left Bouie McCain; on your right Max Johnston, L. M. Sullivan, Robert Hebert, Boone Hebert's Store, John Hebert, Gladys Hebert, Guy Humphry; on your left Mike Pierson Camp; on your right J. O. Hebert, Mrs. Rose Demary, Clifford Lannin, Jr., George Hebert, Lawrence Faulk, Raymond Blanchard, Robert M. Hebert home and trailer park.

Also on your right is the Ed Cormier home; on the left is the Cormier Store which has been operating over fifty years. On your right are Johnnie Farque, Mrs. Melia Farque, the late
Alvin Hebert's estate, Rufus Lavergne, Arthur Hebert, Mrs. Amar Ellender, Dewey Hebert. On your left is the Grand Lake Catholic Church. On your right is Junius Daigle. Next, Vincent B. Compton, Abra Savoie, Alex Young, Pete Young, Albert Broussard, Horace Rozas, Jasper Ogea, Earl Ogea - Jasper Ogea Fishing Camp, Carmelian Farque - Stephen and Robert Farque in trailer houses. On your right is Wilfred Ogea; on your left Pierre Thibodeaux; on your right the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Free. Mrs. Free taught Home Economics in the Grand Lake schools and was Home Demonstration Agent until she retired to grow beautiful flowers. No one visits their home without leaving with a car full of flower plants, fruit and vegetables that are in season. Next, Big Lake Gospel Tabernacle, Ernest DeVall, Simmie DeVall, Vidrine, Frank Poole. Walter LeBleu, Earl Manning, Charlie Manning. On the left is Ted Askew. Next is Nesia Hebert, U. E. Hackett, R. L. Cline.

On the big pasture road we have Junius Thomas, Amos Thomas, Ivan Fontenot; on your right George Duhon. Also Dr. DiGiglia, Junius Granger. Mr. Granger has worked for the parish for many years. Heberts Fishing Camp.

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After we leave the Alfred Duhon Poultry Farm the first house on the right is the Clement Demarets home. Mr. Demarest has had a saddle shop since his retirement from the Pure Oil Company 13 years ago. On your left is Joe LeBouef, Severan Dupree and Perry's Grocery. Back of grocery store is J. C. Perry's home, George Nunez, Jack Hinton, Jimmie Newton. Next on the list on the left is Mrs. Lovie Dupry and Mr. and Mrs. Dupree Guidry; next is Wilford (Dubbie) LaBove. Next on your right is the Steve Taylor and Mervyn Taylor Poultry Farms. Next two houses are tenant houses of the Cox Brothers, James and Howard. Carrodine Cox; next Mrs. Pauline Landry Hackett home, R. O. Hackett and Jim Young's Store. On your right is Dulva Babineaux.
The Sweet Lake Community derived its name from Sweet Lake, the lake so named because the water was sweet. In those early days salt water had not as yet seeped into the lake as it sometimes did in later years, after the opening of new waterways.

There is an old saying, "If you drink Sweet Lake water for any length of time, you become Sweet Lake bound."

The very first settler in the Sweet Lake Community, originally known as "The Bottom", was Bellonie Granger. He and his family moved here in 1875, in what was then a vast prairie.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Granger's adventurous nature was like unto his wife's grandfather's, Charles Sallier, who was the first settler in what is now known as the city of Lake Charles, which bears his name.

In the early days of Southwest Louisiana it was a common custom among the natives to ignore a man's surname and call him by his christened name only. Sallier was known among his neighbors as "Mr. Charles" and the lake near his home was first named "Charles Lake." In time the lake and the town became Lake Charles. (Noteworthy is the fact that Charles Sallier was a native of Spain whose real name was Carlos Salia.)

Mr. Granger owned 1200 acres of land, a part of which he homesteaded and the rest of it he purchased from the state for the sum of $12.50 per acre. He also owned several hundred head of cattle.

The Granger's first neighbor was a Mrs. Kayouche who lived about three miles north of the Grangers. Oldtimers say she lived near the corral and did the cooking for the cowhands. Coalee Kayouche bears this family name.

Soon after came another settler in the area, Batiste Broussard. He built his home about five miles west of the Grangers. The old Broussard home place is easily detectable by oak grove which is located about one mile west of the Precht and Hebert farm.

In 1883 two more settlers moved in - Eraste Hebert and John Hayes. They built their homes a short distance west of the Grangers. Mr. Hayes and Mr. Hebert were double brothers-in-law, Mr. Hayes having married Mr. Hebert's sister Rosa, and Mr. Hebert having married Mr. Hayes' sister Martha. Mr. Hebert was police juror of Ward 4 for many years.

Life was very simple, and in some ways very hard in those pioneer days. Travel was by boat, buggy or wagons. A few times wagons were drawn by yoke of oxen.
Farming was carried in a crude manner. While food was simple, it was plentiful. They raised crops of sweet potatoes, corn, rice and had a good year-round garden.

In those early days there were many types of wild life such as deer, wolves, wild cats, etc. There was an abundance of wild ducks, geese and prairie chickens.

Eraste (Tumpy) Hebert, retired police jury president, (Mr. Hebert served in this capacity 28 years) now owns and lives on his father's old place. Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company is the present owner of the Hayes' place, now occupied by the Ferinand Garys.

Mr. Granger sold most of his land before he died. The old home is no longer there, but large oak grove is mute evidence of its site. Some of Mr. Granger's grandchildren and great-grandchildren now live on the old place. For several years this area remained sparsely settled.

The Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company's predecessors, The North American Land & Timber Company, who purchased vast acreage in this area, played a dominant role in the development of the community, agricultural and otherwise, under the leadership of H. G. Chalkley, Sr., who was president and manager of the company.

Their irrigation system conceived and placed in use in the early 1900's is still serving and with added refinements can now take care of 5,000 acres of rice.

H. G. Chalkley, Jr., President and Manager of Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company, with his foresight and sound judgment, has kept pace with progress. The Company's rice and cattle industry keep a large number of employees on their payroll.

The cattle industry is headed by J. C. Barman, Livestock Manager, assisted by Sharkey Guidry, Foreman. Elias Breaux is farm manager with Sam LeDoux and Alton Ewing as foremen. Isaac LeDoux, former canal foreman for many years, is presently on sick list.

The company, besides a vast commercial enterprise of irrigation and cattle raising, commands substantial rental and oil revenues from their land.

Some of the land purchased by the Company was sold to the farmers who cultivated the land. Among purchasers, to name a few, were: Lalzie (Man) Hebert, F. H. Helms and the Shultz family. The Shultz moved here from the state of Iowa. Some of the descendants of these families still own and reside on these farms.
The Company built a large number of homes for their farmers and employees. Many of these houses have been re-modeled and new ones built in recent years. A crew headed by O. C. Tubbs, carpenter foreman, keeps busy repairing and remodeling houses.

In the early 1900’s the Company established a Commissary near their relief pumping station to accommodate their tenant farmers and employees. Walter Helms remembers as a young man their farm hand going to Commissary by wagon drawn by yoke of oxen to purchase needed commodities.

These supplies were hauled in by barges and tug boat. The first tug boat was named "Hannah", so named by Mr. Chalkley, Sr. for his daughter, Hannah. The last tug boat was named "Freida" and piloted by Captain Ford of Lake Charles.

The Commissary was later moved near a railroad station at Holmwood, an advantageous point in transportation, also more centrally located for the area’s need.

The "Freida" continued its operation for several years after Commissary was moved. Its outgoing cargo being rice, and on return trip, firewood, which was furnished by the company to their employees. No electricity or butane was available in those early days and very few oil stoves.

GAYLE PLANTATION

The Gayle Plantation, as it was known in earlier days, was purchased in 1917 or 1918 by Mr. Leon Devers. This land was farmed by Mr. Devers with most of the land being used to raise corn and cotton. He sold this land in about 1923 to a company called Berdon and Campbell, whose main crops on it was rice and cattle. On this farm there were 15 tenants and families who farmed corn and cotton on a 1/2 share basis. Former Sheriff Charles Eagleson was manager of this plantation from 1925 to 1937. The plantation was then sold to Mr. Edwin F. Gayle in about the year of 1932 and rice and cattle and also cotton was the main source of income. In later years the plantation was then sold to William Gayle and Sons who are the present owners. Rice is the main crop now being farmed, and cattle are being raised.

EAGLESON FARM

The Eagleson family moved to the present farm site in 1943. At this time there were no houses around. A house was purchased from one of the workers of Humble Oil Company when the company closed down its Sweet Lake operations. The house was moved to its present location. In order to acquire more land to raise
rice an effort to reclaim unused marsh land came into being. In 1949 with the help of Soil Conservation Service, a huge protection levee was built around approximately 400 acres of marsh land. A pumping system was installed to either pump water on or to pump it off, and the water in the marsh was pumped off so that the land could dry out and then they were able to get in there with tractors and bulldozers to work the land. The first rice crop farmed was in 1950 with an overwhelming yield of 20 barrels. In this day and time this was really a tremendous amount of rice since the yields were running between 9 and 10 barrels per acre.

In 1957, for Hurricane Audrey, rice was planted here. The water was so high that the cattle were swimming around, that you could only see their heads sticking out of the water. The loss to the rice crop was some, but fortunately was able to salvage most of it. In 1957, a land leveling practice was started on the farm and 1100 acres were leveled. In fact, all the land on this farm is leveled. This farm is being leased from the Trahan Land Company of Lake Charles and Sulphur. Some of the owners are old pioneers of Cameron Parish. At the present time, Sheriff Eagleson still raises his cattle on the farm while the rice farming operation is carried out by his son, Larry Eagleson, and his son-in-law, Mervin Chesson.

FIRST RICE CROP IN BIG LAKE

The first known rice crop that was raised in the Big Lake area was farmed just southeast of Boones Corner. Oxen were used to plow the land and a very unusual method of diskng as we would call it today was used. The owner and other men would round up some cattle and would just drive them round and round until they would tramp the land and have it smooth enough to put the rice in. The farmer would then depend on the weather for moisture to water the rice, since they did not know what irrigation was then. This farming of the crop was done by a Mr. Blanchard.

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

Rural electrification, major step in the progress of the Sweet Lake - Grand Lake area, was realized in the year 1943.

For the citizens of these communities who lived here prior to the advent of rural electrification, there are many happy memories of the great electrical shock that swept the area when finally the Jeff Davis Electric Co-Op, Inc. turned darkness to light into the homes of these communities in 1943.

Prior to the joy and comfort of electric living, life was a struggle and turmoil unknown to the youth of today who cannot fully appreciate it.
Among the few in this area who owned Delco plants were: The Charles Precht, Sr., Tumpy Heberts, Walter Helms, T. H. Helms, and the George McCains. Prior to having Delco plants these families used gas lamps and lanterns. Among other families of the area who owned gas lamps and lanterns and the kerosene burning Aladdin lamps and lanterns were: The Charles Hebert - Tom Taylors - Joe Fruges.

Residents of this area who gave much of their time and effort on this project were: R. O. Hackett, Mrs. Clem Demarest, Webster Todd and the late Clayton LeDoux. Mrs. Demarest circulated a petition in her area, and Mr. Hackett kept a petition in his store for signatures. The results were very rewarding.

When homes first became flooded with electric lights, a feeling of exhilaration predominated, much like the magic lamp in myth of "The Arabian Nights" must have affected the boy Aladdin.

TELEPHONE

On a Saturday night October 30, 1955, at the Sweet Lake Community Center, the first long distance phone call ever put through in Sweet Lake was made by Mr. Eraste (Tumpy) Hebert, president of the Cameron Parish Police Jury, to Commissioner Wade O. Martin, Sr., of St. Martinsville, Louisiana.

This exciting event highlighted a living drama of historic importance to the 300 intently watching residents of Sweet Lake and Grand Lake Communities, assembled at the Community Center.

On that memorable night, Southern Bell Telephone Company cut in its ultra-modern rural exchange at Grand Lake, connecting more than 200 farm homes with the outside world.

The first local call over the system from plug-in at Community Center was made by Charles Hebert to his nephew, Herman Precht.

Mr. Tumpy said that the communities had been working to get telephone service since 1949. Among those who gave time and effort to program, citing among others, Charles Hebert, Clayton LeDoux and Sonney DeLaney.

SWEET LAKE HUNTING CLUBS

The oldest club in our area is "The Coastal Club, Inc." It was organized June 22, 1928.

The object and purpose for which this corporation was formed was for the acquisition and maintenance of a game and fish
preserve and hunting and fishing grounds in the State of Louisiana; to promote skill in marksmanship and gun practice; to afford recreation and opportunity for hunting and fishing and the exercise of athletic and outdoor sports to its members and guests.


Caretaker and ground supervisor - Levodie Conner. Mr. Conner has served in this capacity since 1954.

The Sweet Lake Hunting Club (A private club), known as the Charles Hebert Hunting Camp in this area, was organized in 1952 with 10 members.

Their hunting ground covers 10 sections of land. It is located about seven miles south of the Sweet Lake Union Oil Camp, which is referred to as the Pure Oil Camp.

This hunting camp can be reached by boat only. From the dock at the Union Oil Camp, boat launches out through Sweet Lake, crosses Intracoastal Canal, then enters private canal.

The largest camp is owned by Charles Hebert. It can accommodate as many as 22 hunters. Charles Precht, Jr. also owns a camp. Herman Precht plans on having his camp completed by hunting season. These camps are also used by the Hebert and Precht families during trapping season. Their only means of communication with the mainland is by C. B. radio.

John Duhon opened his hunting camp in 1953, at which time he was sole owner and operator. About four years ago he formed a private club composed of twelve members. The club is located a short distance from his home. His hunting ground is one mile due west of Lake Mesire. Mr. Duhon provides room and board for hunters - also transportation and guides.

AIRPORTS

There are several landing or air strips in the area. Among these are: Walter Guidrys (one of the first) - Clyde Robinsons - Clyde LeDoux - Tumpy Heberts - Hebert & Precht - (Billy Precht, son of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Precht, who is a commercial flyer, occasionally lands his plane there for a short visit with his parents.) Jerald Helms owns his plane. His landing strip is on his father's land. Both he and his father, Walter Helms, are
licensed pilots. The last air strip to be built was for Mr. Chalkley's nephew, Henry Alexander. Mr. Alexander is Maintenance Superintendent for Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company. He owns his plane and does much of his traveling by plane. His landing strip is located near the company's headquarters.

POULTRY INDUSTRY

The local egg industry got its start in 1957 when rice acreage control was begun, leaving several tenants on the Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company land without enough rice acreage to provide them with adequate income.

H. G. Chalkley, president of the company, came up with the idea of going into the poultry business as a sideline for his tenants.

The first two Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company farmers to get poultry houses were Mervyn Taylor and Lyons Breaux, each getting a 40 X 100 foot building. The following year two more houses of the same size were built for Steve Taylor and Albert Guidry, and later an additional 100 feet was added to all four houses.

Later Mervyn Taylor and Lyons Breaux were each given another laying house of the same size as the first ones.

The Company's processing plant known as the Cajun Egg Plant was located at Holmwood. (It has since been discontinued.)

While in operation, the egg plant alone had 25 employees, 12 delivery trucks on the road, selling better than 2,000 cases of eggs a week, as far east as New Orleans, as far north as Alexandria, going as far west as Beaumont, and south covering all of lower Cameron Parish.

Neal Hungerford was and is present Manager of the egg industry. Curtis (Pete) Taylor was plant manager, Jim Young, assistant manager. There were six licensed egg condlers. They were: Mrs. Olita Boullion, Mrs. Lula LeBleu, Mrs. Joe Fruge, Mrs. J. D. Fruge, Mrs. Jim Young, all of Sweet Lake, and Mrs. Eva LaVergne, of Lake Charles. The two licensed packers were Mrs. Isaac LeDoux and Mrs. Mabel Primeaux. There were several helpers including the janitor, Austin Bourgeois. Oddley Trahan was one of the truck drivers and Mrs. Lena Guidry was the U.S.D.A. Egg Inspector.

Recently Lyons Breaux gave up his poultry house to give full time to rice farming and raising cattle.

Albert Guidry quit farming rice and is giving full time to the poultry business. He is now in charge of Mr. Breaux's poultry houses, bringing the total of 15,000 laying hens under
his care including 5,000 he formerly had. He is assisted in this project by his wife.

With Mervyn Taylor’s 10,000 layers and Steve B. Taylor’s 5,000 brings the egg industry on the Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company farms to a total of 30,000 laying hens.

MAIL SERVICE

The Sweet Lake Post Office was established April 14, 1908, adjacent to Mr. Chalkley’s commissary. It was discontinued December 31, 1919. Postmasters and date of appointments were as follows: Percival A. Oliver---April 14, 1908
Charles D. Kretz-----March 3, 1909
Harry G. Bergland-----March 9, 1910
John Fuch-------------May 31, 1912, who served in the capacity until December 31, 1919.

Next post office established in the area was located at Holmwood with Mr. Durbridge, postmaster. When it was discontinued, mail was delivered in this area first, from the Iowa Post Office then the Bell City Post Office with Andrew (Sonny) DeLauey as mail carrier. Mr. DeLauey retired on July 30, 1964, after serving the Sweet Lake Area (Rt. 1, Bell City) 33 years.

During these years Mr. DeLauey used 33 automobiles in serving his route. Present mail carrier is Bruce Spears.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

There are many prominent farmers in this area; too numerous to mention, however, Donald Todd is one in particular who has been outstanding. He was named outstanding Louisiana Farmer of the Year by "Louisiana Farmer Magazine" in 1967.

With tractor, crawler and dragline he turned wasted marsh-land into a profitable 3,200 acres rice farm with 160 acres in levees and ditches, a project begun in 1953.

When Hurricane Audrey pounded the Cameron Coast and pushed (backwater) six-feet high across the low lands, Todd’s 36 miles of ditches and levees withstood the test. Mother nature had lost her marsh child; Mr. Todd had gained vast acreage of rice land.

Following his successful venture of 1953, in this area, Mr. Todd started a second reclamation project of 4,600 acres in the Big Lake area, which project is still under construction.

Among other farmers turning marsh land into profitable rice land were: Edmund (Bully) Helms and Sheriff Eagleson. Mr.
Helms working on the Helms and Hebert land; Sheriff Eagleson on the Trahan Land Company. Sheriff Eagleson has now retired and turned his farm over to his son Larry and son-in-law, Mervin Chesson.

Agriculture leaders residing in this area are: Charles H. Hackett, A.S.C.S. County Executive Director of Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes, Herman Precht, A.S.C.S. County Committeeman. The Community Committeemen are: Larry Eagleson, Howard Cox and George Greathouse.

Farm Bureau President - Alex Beard, Jr. Among those on the Board of Directors are Albert Guidry and Perrin Arceneaux. Cattlemen's Association President - James Cox. Board members - Alex Beard, Jr., Albert Guidry and Mervyn Taylor.

Among other leaders of the community are Civil Defense Director of Sweet Lake Community - Mervyn Taylor. Among those on Civil Defense Police Force are Alexander Beard, Jr., Dwight LeDoux, Levodee Conner, Albert Guidry, Jim Young and Clyde LeDoux. We cannot omit adding to the list the name of the Cliff Robinson who was a faithful and loyal Civil Defense Police.

Board members of the West Cameron Harbor Terminal District are Howard Cox and Vernon McCain.

MARSH IS CONQUERED

The first big step in the improvement and development of the Sweet Lake Community was the completion of the Highway 42 to cross the marsh connecting the Sweet Lake area with the Creole area. This came about as the result of a vision many years before of a number of men. Up until the highway opened through to Creole, Highway 42 came to a dead end at Hackett's Corner.

Foremost among these men were the late H. G. Chalkley, Sr., Thomas Cox and Charles Eagleson, former sheriff of Cameron Parish and father of our present sheriff, Claude Eagleson.

The circulation of a petition was spearheaded by Mr. Cox. In these days many citizens could not speak English. Mr. Cox and Mr. Chalkley, both natives of England, had not learned French. Mr. Eagleson, a native of the parish, could speak French fluently. The trio traveled the highways and byways of the parish, going by boat or horseback through the marsh.

Their efforts were rewarded - 482 signatures graced their petition. The signature of our former representative, John Meaux, headed the list. He too contributed much of his time and effort in the project.
Mr. Cox lost no time in sending the petition to Governor Oscar K. Allen, along with letter:

"We your petitioners, residents of the Parish of Cameron, State of Louisiana, and landowners of said parish, respectfully petition your Excellency to give the necessary orders and construction for the completion of the extension of Highway number 42 to cross the marsh connecting the Sweet Lake area of Cameron Parish with the Creole area.

"At the present time, distance from this area to the county seat at Cameron is 100 miles. The completion of this road herein petitioned for would enable the residents of the Sweet Lake area to reach the parish seat by traveling not in excess of 30 miles.

"The highway petitioned for has been projected by the state engineer's office for more than 10 years. The completion of this project would accrue the great benefit and convenience of all residents of eastern part of Cameron Parish."

It was in the fall of 1935 that construction on the highway began. Landowners contributing to right-of-way were as follows: Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company, Trahan Land Company, Miami Corporation, Hebert & Helms, Thomas Cox and R. O. Hackett.

W. T. Burton had the contract to build the dump and do the shelling from the Creole Post Office to the Hackett Corner. On July 1, 1954, contract was let to T. L. James for blacktopping. A contract was let in June, 1955, under the administration of our former representative, Alvin Dyson, for replacing the ferry with a pontoon bridge.

Thus the hope of the citizens of Cameron Parish were realized.

TREE PLANTING IN THE SWEET LAKE AREA

Many of the area citizens can remember when the Sweet Lake Community was just a vast prairie, bare of trees, with the exception of oak groves planted by the early settlers. In 1938 the practice of tree planting was begun by H. G. Chalkley, Jr., President of Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company, and a few of the land owners.

Most of the beautiful groves to be seen in the Sweet Lake Community are on the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company property. In a sense, it could very nearly be called a cash crop due to the fine protection afforded by these wind breaks to the cattle
during freezing weather, thereby saving many cattle which otherwise would be lost. They also provide shade for cattle during summer months.

These pine seedlings were planted in rows 6 feet apart, rows alternating or staggered, so as to have trees 3 feet apart each way, thus making the even-break more impenetrable against the cold winter winds and rain.

Trees conserve the soil and afford profitable use of poor land, and also beautify surroundings.
GRAND LAKE HISTORY

There were several stores in Grand Lake Community in these early days, and especially at what was then called "Spanish Point".

To avoid confusion it should be explained that Big Lake and Grand Lake are used interchangeably for the same community, which is located 15 miles south of Lake Charles.

At one time the "Spanish Point" was the center of activity between Lake Charles and Cameron. A stern-wheeled steamer named the Rex was responsible for this activity. The boat was owned by A. B. McCain of Lake Charles. It carried passengers, freight, mail, etc.

Mrs. Holson (Joe) LeBlu operated a hotel on lake front. Jim Manning from Mineral Wells, Texas, was the doctor. He practiced in his home and made house calls.

Among other early settlers in Big Lake Community were the Guidry, Duhon, Hebert, Granger, Farque and Daigle families. These people were for the most part from Bayou LaFourche, Bayou Chein and Mermentau areas. They were French-Canadians.

The Hebert families were among the first to settle in the area. They settled around what is now the Hebert Camp and the vicinity of the Catholic Church. The Heberts came from East Louisiana in the mid 1800's.

Arthur Hebert, up until the time of his death very recently, was the oldest living pioneer of the area. He was 95. His home which is over 80 years old still stands. It is a two story house built of cypress logs which were cut and split from trees grown along the Mermentau River.

The oldest house still standing in the Big Lake Community is the old home of Alizon Hebert, Sr., great-grandfather of Arthur Hebert. It is located behind Arthur Hebert's old place. This house was built before the Civil War. The house is built along the design of the midwestern type of architecture. Huge oak trees are still in existence.

Tarzille Hebert, grandfather of Mrs. George (Mima) McCain, was another early settler. His son, Bud Hebert, was Mrs. McCain's father. His home was located under grove of oak trees behind Robert Hebert. Bud Hebert married Ezora Andrus of Irish descent. He died at an early age, only 35.

The parents of Ezeb Hebert (deceased) settled what is now Hebert's Camp. His heirs still own the property. This camp is a popular recreation area for many people in surrounding areas.
Among the older living residents of this community is J. O. Hebert. Mr. Hebert is 87. His home is located East of the Catholic Church. East of his home are large oak groves, sites of his father, Homer, and his grandfather’s home place. His grandfather’s name was Sestane Hebert. Mr. J. O. Hebert served as deputy sheriff 12 years. His son, Dewey, is present deputy sheriff and his nephew, Wilson Hebert, is Justice of the Peace.

The Grangers also settled near the lake around the Hebert Camp. The construction of the old home of Odelon Duhon was under the supervision of P. H. Granger. Instead of using nails, wooden pegs were used throughout the building. This is one of the few houses which stood unmoved for the 1918 hurricane. (Mr. P. H. Granger was the grandfather of Patsy Ann Granger, Home Demonstration Agent.)

Joseph A. Farque was another of the early settlers. He homesteaded 160 acres, the patent of which he received February 6, 1848. The grove of beautiful trees marks the site, which today makes the home of Mr. and Mrs. Free so attractive. They are now the owners to enjoy the labor of those long since gone.

This area could well have been named "Sportsmen’s Paradise". Wildlife was in abundance in those early days, and even today with the hunting and fishing camp of the area, including the Hebert and McCain Camps, it is still a wonderful recreational area.

Telephone service came into the Big Lake Community same time as in the Sweet Lake Community in 1955. Same can be said about electrification which they realized at same time as Sweet Lake in the year 1943.

Highways (blacktop) came through the communities about the same time. It was in April of 1964 that Dedication Ceremonies were held on the $365,759 new pontoon bridge at Grand Lake. Bridge was constructed under the administration of Representative Alvin Dyson. The cutting of the ribbon was done by Mrs. Dyson.

Between the neighboring communities there exists a fine cooperation. The Sweet Lake Community Center, a unique institution, is being shared with the Grand Lake Community. Plans are underway for the repairing of the Center and transforming it into a beauty spot in the area.

Present officers are: Donald Todd - President; Lyons Breaux - Vice-President; Mrs. Clem Demarest - Secretary (recently retired); Mrs. Tom Taylor - Treasurer; Gilfred Richard - Alternate. These officers are also board members. Other board members are: Jerald Helms, Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Foster, Mrs. Lena Guidry and Vernon McCain.
Residents of the Sweet Lake and Grand Lake Communities have access to the Cameron Parish Library (gold mine of knowledge) through the bookmobile service. First stop is at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe LeBeouf, and there everyone is graciously received by being served hot coffee and cake. Noon stop is the C. J. Farque home where they are welcome to share in the family meal.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MEMOIRS OF SIMMIE DEVALL (DECEASED)

The shores of Grand Lake were first inhabited by Indian tribe believed to be the Attakapas Indians. (Artifices of this tribe were found on lake shore by Jimmy Manning, Sr., now residing in Lake Charles. Mr. Manning said these were uncovered in shell mounds. He found clay pots, arrowheads, etc.)

The first white settlers to land on Grand Lake shores were Domingo Oliver and his wife, in the year 1860. It was called "Spanish Point" at that time because of the shape of the island where they landed; Spanish because Mr. Oliver was a native of Spain (Barsolina, Spain).

Mr. Oliver was married to a French-Canadian girl. To this union was born four children - Carmine, Theresa, Josephine and Savoie. Josephine married Capt. Jim Pujol. They had four children - Katherine, Sedonia, Miguel and Josephine. Josephine married Calvin K. Devall. Children born to this marriage were Dolsie, Hyman, Roy and Simmie. Josephine's second marriage was to Holson LeBleu. To this union were born two sons, Arsan and Walter, well known in this area.

One of our Home Demonstration Club members, Mrs. Ted Askew, is a daughter of Mr. Simmie Devall.

Capt. Jim Pujol was second settler to land on the shores of Grand Lake. He came by schooner from Barsolina, Spain, when he was 18 years old.

He bought about 800 acres of land at $1.00 per acre. He owned several hundred head of sheep and had a large herd of cattle.

Capt. Pujol opened the first Post Office at Grand Lake, connected with first grocery store about 1885.

Up until 1908, no roads had been built. Traveling was done by boat, wagon drawn by oxen on trails through brush and marsh. Later the main road going to Lake Charles passed in front of the lake front. There was also a toll road to Lake Charles; the J. A. Bels built this road going north to meet Calcasieu Road.

Mr. Devall served as Dy. Sheriff - also as Justice of the Peace.
The Sweet Lake Methodist Church was organized in the year 1908, on December the 20th., with the Rev. Willie Hebert as its first pastor and Mr. H. G. Chalkley, financial supporter.

Brother Willie, as he was affectionally known, was the son of Martha Hayes and Eraste Hebert, Sr. Mr. Chalkley, a native of England, was a prominent figure in Southwest Louisiana's agricultural, financial, political and civic circles.

Brother Willie entered the ministry at an early age. He did most of his traveling by horseback, somewhat of a circuit rider, covering a large area, which entailed many hardships, but wherever he went he blazed a trail of righteousness into the hearts and homes of the people.

Mr. Chalkley, Sr., President of the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company, built the first parsonage, well built six rooms which stands to this day. It is located east of the Sweet Lake Community Center. Worship services were held in a one room school house which was also a gift from Mr. Chalkley, who also aided the pastor's income by furnishing the pastor's family with groceries from the Company Commissary for about 20 years.

The Church history was written and dedicated in grateful memory to those two great men. Among those who were pillars of the church in its infancy were: Mr. & Mrs. T. H. Helms, the Cox and Hackett families, the Hebert and Broussard families and the Wright and Krum families.

The Sweet Lake Memorial Methodist Church, which is today a relatively new and beautiful buff brick edifice, is not only a symbol of diligence to the present congregation, but also stands in mute dedication to all those, who down through the years, so faithfully served their God, their Church and their community. The new church plant consists of a sanctuary, seating 175 persons, a fellowship hall, three classrooms, a study, kitchen, nursery and restrooms.

The church got its building program underway in 1958 when the Rev. Garland Dean was the pastor. During the pastorate of the Rev. W. L. Howell, a building committee composed of the following persons was appointed: Hardy Stone, Chairman - Charles W. Hebert - Mervin Taylor - Charles S. Hackett - Jerald Helms. The church building program was completed under the leadership of the Rev. Hubert Gibbs, who was the pastor at that time. Other members added to the construction and grounds committee under the leadership of the Rev. Gibbs were: Donald Todd, Herman Precht, Walter Helms, Billy Wayne Precht, Edmond Helms, Jr., Glenn Hebert and R. O. Hackett.
The church was officially opened with ceremonies conducted by Bishop Waltou, June 21, 1964. Present pastor is the Rev. Charles Giessen.

The second church to be established in Sweet Lake was the Catholic Church in 1933, named the St. Patrick Chapel, a mission to the St. Mary of the Lake Church, which is the Mother church with a rich heritage. The acre of land on which this sanctuary stands was donated by Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company. The bell in the belfry of the chapel was presented to the church in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton LeDoux by their son and daughter and in-laws, Mr. & Mrs. Clyde LeDoux and Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred Hanks.

The last church to be established in Sweet Lake Community was the Sweet Lake Gospel Tabernacle. The one acre site on which sanctuary stands was also donated by Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company. The church was organized in 1945, with the Rev. Meerdock as pastor, who was also pastor of the Grand Lake Gospel Tabernacle, the nucleus church with a rich heritage, dating back to the early 1900's.

The new church building was erected on old site in 1961. It consists of a sanctuary seating about 60 persons, and two classrooms. All of the labor for the construction was on a voluntary basis. Among volunteers were the late Cliff Robinson and the late Norman Guidry, Buch Taylor, the three Robinson brothers, Leon (Mach), Preston and Clyde, John Taylor and son, Curtis, and the Guidry brothers, Sharkey and Corbit.

The church piano, butane heater and butane tank were donated by John Taylor, member of the church.

The new building was erected under the leadership of the present pastor, the Rev. Rene Saltzman.

METHODOIST CHURCH (GRAND LAKE)

One of the very first Methodist churches to be established in the Grand Lake Community was sometime before 1885. Mrs. Ella Fontenot remembers seeing the building (no longer in use) and cemetery in back of church. It was located east of the H. C. Free home. The oak grove marks site where church once stood.

This Methodist group came from a northern state. Two of the girls taught at the Grand Lake School. It was then a two room school located across the highway from the Grand Lake Catholic Church.

Very little is known about these people. It is believed that after a few years they returned home, possibly due to the severe hurricane of 1895, which did so much damage in the area.
NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHURCH (GRAND LAKE)

This church originated in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Melia Farque sometime in the 1920's. Location - West of Pontoon Bridge.

There was a witnessing ministry. A deep concern, one for another. They realized that faith in Christ and concern for others could not be separated, Mrs. Farque said. At first it was just the laity assembling for prayer meetings. The group increased to such an extent they had a tent put up in the corner of their yard.

There were only dirt roads those days and traveling was done by horseback, wagons, buggy and occasionally Model T Ford, and still the group grew increasingly larger; sometimes as many as 125 persons were present.

By now ministers had been coming to minister to the people. A church was established to accommodate the people. It was erected in Mr. Farque's yard; later it was moved across the highway and enlarged.


Among those who were strong supporters of the early church, besides Mr. & Mrs. Melia Farque, were: The Felix Guillory's, Willie Mannings, Mr. and Mrs. Fenelie Romine, Mayo Guidry, Arthur Hebert, Batiste Broussard and the Tellismar Guidry's. Present song leader is C. J. Farque. Young people's leader is Ernest Devall.

TOUR OF ST. MARY OF THE LAKE

This is the Rectory which was completed in 1939, and remodeled in 1969. The beautiful grounds which are so well kept by Father Hebert were re-landscaped in 1962. It is contemporary in design, but yet with a theme of the Old French Gardens. Semitropical materials were used with varigated plants and more shrubs of different shades of green, balancing the whole landscape.

The cross that towers the church was donated by the Hebert family in memory of Euzebe Hebert. This marble tomb was installed in 1969 in accordance with Father LaVasseur's wishes that when he dies his body will be buried here.
This magnificent building is St. Mary of the Lake, the Mother Church of this parish. It was erected in 1953, dedicated in 1964.

The crucifix hanging behind the altar was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Abra Savoy and was imported from France.

The tabernacle that holds our Blessed Sacrament was donated by Father LaVasseur's family.

To the rear of the grounds you will find the parish hall, which was relocated in 1963 and was remodeled in 1970 by Father Hebert.

ST. MARY OF THE LAKE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The first Catholic Missionaries ministering at Big Lake came from Texas in the early 1850's. Prior visits were made by the priest from East Texas, Grand Coteau, Opelousas and Lafayette.

Rev. P. F. Parisot, a missionary from the Texas mission at Galveston, made a tour of Calcasieu and Big Lake in 1852. He made three trips, and on the third trip introduced Rev. A. Borior. Father Borior became pastor of Beaumont, Texas, and visited Big Lake in 1854 and 1855. May, 1855, marked the end of the Texas Mission to Calcasieu and Big Lake.

Then, the priest from Opelousas took over the missionary work in Southwest Louisiana with Rev. Francis Raymond in August, 1856, then Rev. J. M. LaFrance from early 1859 to July 4, 1859.

During the Civil War, the Opelousas priest continued to care for this section once or twice a year.

Rev. Nicholas Simon was appointed pastor at Lake Charles in February of 1866. At the end of the year he was leaving Lake Charles. Then the boundaries of Abbeville were extended to the Texas border.

Rev. Theodore Lamy of Abbeville continued the work of his predecessors. His last tour of Calcasieu and Cameron began in June of 1869, the year which saw the end to the Catholic Missionary era in Lake Charles.

The work of the Missionaries was extremely difficult. Horses were the major means of travel.

Late in 1869, Rev. Francois Maginmy was appointed pastor of Lake Charles with Rev. Etienne Badoil as assistant. Big Lake was becoming a station Mission of Lake Charles, and experienced a turnover of priests. From 1875 to 1892 there were 7 priests.
In 1892, Rev. Corelius Van de Ven became pastor of Lake Charles, assisted by Rev. Peter Van Alfen, who was in charge of the Missionary work at Big Lake.

In 1896, Rev. Van de Ven started a Catholic Newspaper called the "Catholic Calendar." Ethel M. Doucet now has in her possession twenty-four of these Catholic Calendars, which were published in 1897 to 1902. They were subscribed by Narcisse Reon, her great-grandfather. They have been kept in the family by her grandmother, Mrs. Celevenia Miller, later by her mother, Mrs. J. C. Miller, who was fortunate enough to salvage these papers after Hurricane Audrey, even though she lost most of her personal belongings.

Before January of the year 1894, the Missionaries were traveling to Big Lake on horseback or on the old steamer "Romeo" once or twice a year, spending a few days and having their headquarters at the "Hebcl", the Honore Hebert's, the Raymond LeBleu's. Masses were celebrated under the oak trees or in the homes. The families would take benches with them to where Mass was celebrated, so there would be seats for all.

One year before the church was built, five ladies organized a society and paid dues to help buy linen to cover the tables so the priest could celebrate Mass. Also, they bought wine and other necessary items. The ladies were Mrs. Lauren Blanchard, Mrs. Clopha Hebert, Mrs. Renee Broussard, Mrs. Deseree Daigle and Mrs. Adolph Hebert, Sr.

Presidents of the Society were Mrs. Renee Broussard, Mrs. Raymond LeBleu, Amanda LeBleu, Martha Hebert, Mrs. Abra Savoy. While Mrs. Savoy was president in the year 1938, St. Mary of the Lake became the Mother Church of Big Lake Area. In 1940, Mrs. Raymond Blanchard became president of the society. In 1968 she resigned. The society re-organized with Mrs. Polus Doucet as president, Mrs. Wasey Granger as Vice-President, Mrs. Ernest Q. Hebert as Secretary-Treasurer. In 1969 Mrs. Hebert resigned and Mrs. Jasper Ogea was elected.

In previous years the membership ranged from 8 to 15 members. We now have 64 members.

The members belonging to this Altar Society receive spiritual benefits. The members care for the altar, inside of church and help with furnishings of the rectory.

On the 27th. day of April, 1894, the Most Rev. Francis Jansens, the 5th. Archbishop of New Orleans, conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation at Big Lake. This took place at Raymond LeBleu's residence. The same day he acquired 4 acres of land, donated by John B. Broussard.
Then the parishioners built a church. Father Alfen of Lake Charles traveled on the old steamer "Romeo" or on horseback to supervise the construction. The altar, statues and furnishings in the church were donated by people from Germany, who had settled in what is now called Big Pasture.

The bell was ordered later by Narcisse Reon, brought to Big Lake by the "Borealis Rex."

In 1898 Father Alfen asked the parishioners to erect a steeple. This was the landmark of the Big Lake area.

Parishioners recall that about 1913 the Bishop of New Orleans came by steamer to Big Lake. He was met at the "Rex" by the men of the parish. He rode with Honore Hebert in his fringed top buggy and was escorted to church by horseback riders. On arriving at church he was given a gun salute.

After conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation, the ladies of the parish had food ready for all, so the Bishop enjoyed a meal with the people out in the open on the ground. It is remembered that when the Bishop gave the blessing he said, "Let the sky and Heaven be our roof."

On August 6, 1918, the Big Blow of the unnamed hurricane hit this area and demolished the church.

Under the supervision of Rev. Odilon Brise the second church was built. T. J. Granger, Joe Demarest and other parishioners helped. The altar in this church was donated by Mrs. J. A. Bell. Later, statues were donated by John Issac.

Around the turn of the century the Big Lake area was transferred to the Creole Church.

Coming from Cameron on the steamer "Romeo", later on the "Borealis Rex", the following priests have ministered to the catholics of this section twice a month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev.</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hubert Cramers</td>
<td>1900-1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Schmitt</td>
<td>1902-1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. C. Chabrier</td>
<td>1903-1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Hoes</td>
<td>1906-1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. A. Heil</td>
<td>1913-1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. J. Bussink</td>
<td>1914-1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odilon Briske</td>
<td>1917-1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Rousseau</td>
<td>1921-1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Perronet</td>
<td>1922-1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. J. Meuinboer</td>
<td>1927-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Bishop</td>
<td>1930-1931</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In 1932, Big Lake was transferred to Lake Charles. The following priests came from Lake Charles to celebrate Mass: Rev. Hubert Cramers, Pastor, his assistants, Fathers Nellis,
Perrault, Nillian, Frantzen, Bert. Then Msgr. John A. Vigliero was pastor in 1936, assisted by Father Aurele Robichaud, Clifford Gaudin.

In 1936, Msgr. John A. Vigliero acquired one acre of land which was donated through H. G. Chalkley, president of the Sweet Lake Land & Oil Company. With two thousand dollars from Extension and the generous help of the Sweet Lake people, he was able to build a Chapel. It was dedicated on Sunday, April 4, 1937. It was named St. Patrick Chapel when the Big Lake Chapel became St. Mary of the Lake, a parish church and the Mother Church.

On June 11, 1938, Rev. Aurele Robichaud was appointed the first pastor of St. Mary of the Lake and its Mission, St. Patrick's Chapel, by the Most Rev. Bishop J. B. Jeanmard.

In 1938, while the rectory was under construction, Father Robichaud lived with Mr. and Mrs. Firmin Pellerin. The rectory was completed in 1939.

Father was very active in organizing the societies of the National Council of Catholic Women, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Holy Name Society, the Altar Boys and Boy Scouts.

In February, 1942, Father was transferred to St. Philip Neri Church in Kinder, Louisiana.

On February 25, 1942, Rev. Charles LeVasseur was appointed pastor. Like his predecessor, he was born in Canada. Father stayed in this parish for 26 years. He worked hard for and with his parishioners, with religious education for the children, with adult education and also with all the societies.

St. Joseph Society was established May 31, 1942, with 77 members. Alverd Duhon was secretary. The primary purpose is to spread the devotion to St. Joseph, Patron of Workmen; also to provide funds for the maintenance of the church grounds.

All was very successful with his leadership. He was truly a great teacher and a loving Father.

Improvements continued. On October 12, 1950, the outdoor shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary was blessed by the Right Rev. Msgr. J. A. Vigliero, Chancellor. The shrine was erected through a donation from Mrs. Thomas E. LeVasseur, Clair N.B. Canada, in memory of her husband, Thomas E. LeVasseur. A crowd of approximately 500 was in attendance.

The landscape of the church grounds began in 1914. Bamboos had been planted. When Hurricane Audrey hit in 1957, it destroyed the 300 rose bushes, shrubs and trees. Rose bushes
"Victorian" in design with a pronounced accent of the Old French Gardens, "Parterre de Fleurs de Jadis." In 1962, Father began a new landscape, this time contemporary in design, but yet with a theme of the Old French Gardens. He used more semitropical materials, more variegated plants and more shrubs of different shades of green, balancing the whole landscape. This was truly a beautiful scenery and still is today under the care of our present pastor, Father Hebert.

Over a period of years Father knew the need for a new and larger church. With his initiative, zeal and enthusiasm, his generosity, that of his family in Canada and of his parishioners, the beautiful church was completed in 1963. The cost of this church was $66,592.17.

A big project in Big Lake had been completed. It was indeed a big day on May 3, 1964, when this magnificent church was dedicated to The Greater Glory of God and the Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and was solemnly blessed by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. L. H. Boudreaux, P.A. The dedication was attended by a huge crowd.

On November 19, 1967, a tribute was given to a dedicated pastor by a grateful people, now that he was retiring. When he dies his body will be buried in the marble tomb here.

From November, 1967, until June, 1968, Msgr. J. M. Bernard was administrator. Father Anthony Genna was caring for the parishioners. During this time the rectory was remodeled.

On June 15, 1968, Rev. Donald Theriot was appointed pastor for one year. While he was pastor he continued all the good works; organizing the C. Y. O., completing the office and the kitchen in the rectory, re-roofed and painted the St. Patrick’s Chapel.

On June 18, 1969, Rev. Lloyd P. Hebert was appointed pastor. On June 24, 1969, he was installed as pastor by Msgr. Louis Boudreaux, P.A. Those attending the installation were Msgr. Alexander Larroque, Msgr. Richard Mouton and Rev. Donald Theriot, former pastor, who read the letter of appointment to the congregation. There was a crowd of about one hundred attending.

Before construction was started on the new church, the old building was re-located on the church grounds to be used as the Parish Hall.

Besides keeping up the beautiful church grounds, he also remodeled the hall. A kitchen, rest rooms and tables were built. For the highlight of the hall, beautiful fixtures were installed. It was truly a needed project for this area.

To the rear of the grounds Father has planted a variety of trees. In St. Patrick’s Chapel he enlarged the Sacristy, put
rest rooms, installed central air, heat and carpet.

Father takes care of 650 parishioners, including St. Mary of the Lake and St. Patrick's Chapel.

The parishioners are indeed grateful to have had and continue to have dedicated pastors.

May God Bless and Keep Them.
The beginning of the twentieth century found six small schools in the Grand Lake - Sweet Lake Community. The Granger School in the Granger Community called "The Cove" near the Calcasieu-Cameron Line, operated from about 1915 to 1918 when it was destroyed by the 1918 storm.

The original Big Lake School, located across the road from St. Mary of the Catholic Church, is the oldest of the six schools, having operated before 1900. It became a high school in 1934. The Duhon School, located in Big Pasture, was destroyed by fire in 1926; the students were sent to the Grand Lake School.

The Demarets School, located just a few yards from our present school site, was destroyed in the 1918 storm.

The Liberty Farm School opened in 1922. It was located where Mr. Dupree Guidry now has his orange grove; this area was better known as "pan core", a French word meaning short bread. In 1927 this school consolidated with Sweet Lake Elementary School.

The Sweet Lake School was erected in 1913 on a two acre site privately owned by Mr. H. G. Chalkley. At this time there were only six grades and thirty-three pupils enrolled.

The first bus drivers in this area were Mr. Lazime LeBoueuf, Alcea Hebert, Camile Demary, Mochjan Guidry and Marion Marcantel.

In the 1936-1937 school session, transportation by bus was provided for the graduates of the Sweet Lake Elementary School to Grand Lake High School.

By mid-term of the 1954-1955 session the new Grand Lake High School was completed and became a consolidated school for the Sweet Lake and Grand Lake area.

Mr. J. D. (Tan) Demarest served as School Board Member from 1913 to 1917. Mr. Arthur Hebert succeeded Mr. Demarest in 1917, but resigned in 1918. Mr. Joe Demarest was appointed to fill the vacancy. He remained in office until 1964, at which time he resigned and Mervyn Taylor was elected. He is our school board member of Ward 4.


Teachers who taught over 10 years in Ward 4: U. E. Hackett, Lena Sweeney, Eula Holder, Rene Guidry, Adam Thibodeaux, Mrs. R. W. Fessin, Mrs. Pauline LeBeouf Hackett, Mrs. Element Demarest, Mrs. Edna Helms and Florence Rosfeld.