The TRUE FACTS

After weeks (o.k., a couple of days) of painstaking research (a bunch of phone calls) The Times authoritatively presents the answers to everything you always wanted to know about Acadiana (or at least cared enough to ask us about),

By Richard Baudouin

A QUESTION OF GEOGRAPHY
Where exactly is Acadiana?

Ernstfried Schmidt

What are the official boundaries of Acadiana?

C. Broussard, 100 Ridgewood, Lafayette

In 1970, the Louisiana Legislature designated 22 parishes in the southern part of the state as Acadiana because of their common French heritage and culture. They are: Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jeff Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Pointe Coupee, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Vermilion and West Baton Rouge. The capital of the region, by legislative decree, is the city of Lafayette.

The region got its name as a result of a typographical error contained in an invoice sent to KATC-TV3 in 1963, which was owned at the time by Acadian Television Corp. The correspondent mistakenly added an "a" on the end of Acadian. The owners of the station began using the newly created word on the air to characterize the attitude of the area that they served. They did not favor, however, the actual designation of a specific region as Acadiana.

What is the highest point in the Lafayette area?

According to Herbert Juneau, area engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, that would be a spot on the Mississippi Valley ridge south of Opelousas around Doctor's Hospital. The elevation? A lofty 50 feet above sea level. The highest point in Lafayette Parish is at the airport, which is about 35-38 feet above sea level.

STREET NAMES
Who (what) were Ambassador Caffery and Kaliste Saloom?

Danny Izzo, P.O. Box 30222, Lafayette

Two of Lafayette's major arteries are named for two of its most distinguished citizens. Formerly known as New Flanders Road, Ambassador Caffery Parkway (or, as it is increasingly called, Ambassador-Caffery Raceway) bears the name of Jefferson Caffery, who worked for 44 years with the U.S. State Department as a personal representative and ambassador for five presidents. Among his assignments were France, Egypt and various countries in South America. Local historian Mario Mamalakis says Caffery told her that his knowledge of French was a major boost to his diplomatic career. Caffery died in 1974 at the age of 88.

The namesake of Kaliste Saloom Road was a Lafayette businessman who was born in Lebanon and came to this country in 1897. Saloom owned a dry goods and general merchandise store (which still bears his name) located on Jefferson Street. He also opened a beer distributorship and

FIRST OF TWO PARTS

It's possible to live in a community for decades and never really know the details of its history, geography or social customs. How many times have you wondered about the origin of a particular street name, or questioned whether a commonly held bit of wisdom about the city is really true? But in the crush of day-to-day existence, picking up the laundry or finding out what's playing at the movies usually takes precedence over such concerns.

This story was designed as an outlet for all of those questions our readers have been hoarding for years without knowing where to find the answers. We tried to answer to the best of our ability any query we were sent. Some answers were fairly easy to determine. Others required a measure of historical research.

For that information, we are indebted to local historian Mario Mamalakis, Kathleen Toups of the Center for Louisiana Studies at USL, Amar Denais of the Lafayette Parish Clerk of Court's Office and longtime Lafayette resident Glynn Abel.

In a project of this scope, it is not possible to touch every base and confirm every detail of an answer. That's what we are hoping you can do—by providing additional insight into these questions, we invite you to write to us. We'll include good responses in a follow-up story.

And there are more of these questions to come. We received so many good ones from our readers that we are saving a number of them—including a few of the best—until next week. And that's when we'll announce the winners of the prizes for the best submissions.

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bought a large amount of property in and around Lafayette. He died of a heart attack in 1925 at the age of 39.

His widow, the late Asma Boustany Saloom, donated some of the family property to the Lafayette Parish Police Jury in the 1940s to build a road, with the understanding that it would be named in honor of her late husband. The Saloom family has enjoyed continued prominence in Lafayette; two of Kaliste’s sons are physicians and another, Kaliste Saloom Jr., is judge of Lafayette City Court.

Who was Johnston Street named after?

It is commonly thought that Johnston Street was named for a Confederate soldier; there were two generals in the Southern army by that name. That story is lent credence by the presence of streets named after Confederate Generals. Mouton and Garber.

But Carl Brasseaux, assistant director of the Center for Louisiana Studies, says that there is no conclusive evidence of the military origins of the street name. As far as he can tell (and this is borne out by old maps of the area) it was never called Gen. Johnston Street. So the name remains a mystery.

Perhaps it is all for the best: If this is borne out by old maps of the street from the 1960s and 1970s who was considering where to go to college heard the story is that, like most of their peers, he might have wanted to reject the honor.

THE PLAYBOY MYTH

What did Playboy really say about USL in the 1960s?

Any kid growing up in Louisiana in the 1960s and 1970s who was considering where to go to college heard the story: Supposedly, Playboy had done a survey of American universities and determined that USL was the second-best partying campus in the country. Not first, but second. For years, this myth helped characterize USL for many residents of the state. The problem with the story is that, like most myths, there is apparently no truth to it.

James Edmunds, former editor of The Times, did a story on the subject in Gris-Gris many years ago for which he interviewed Mark Robson, a former USL graduate student. Robson had undertaken the Herculean task of looking through every back issue of Playboy to read the story in question, and he told Edmunds that he could not find it. The existence of such a survey was pure myth.

How did such a tale come to be told? USL vice president Raymond Blanco, a former dean of men at the school, suggests that it grew out of the environment at the university in the late 1960s, when a large number of New Orleans natives started enrolling here. They found the local culture very amenable to their fun-loving ways, and soon the Strip became the scene of a nearly non-stop party. Blanco says that he suspects the story was perpetuated over the years by USL's adversaries, who used it to undermine the school's recruiting efforts.

Interestingly, Edmunds says he heard a similar version of the Playboy story in Illinois in connection with Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Similarly, it had no basis in fact.

OIL MYTH AND LEGEND

We all know Lafayette is the location of the oil center, therefore giving a great economic attraction to business and industry. My question: Is it a fact that Opelousas was the primary choice to locate the oil center. If so, why wasn't it located there?

Eddie Fontenet, Opelousas

This question is an oft-heard one in Acadiana, although it takes a number of different forms. Substitute USL for Oil Center and any of the towns surrounding Lafayette for Opelousas and you can produce other versions which are perennially repeated. This question seems to stem from an attitude that Lafayette's leadership was more aggressive in seeking out new opportunities than were other communities in Acadiana, thus its more rapid growth.

For the specifics of Fontenet's first question, the answer by all accounts is negative. Al Lamson, a native of Opelousas who has been active in the oil business in Lafayette for five decades, says that any of the communities in Acadiana would have been glad to have the Oil Center, but only Lafayette had the schools and transporational improvements that were attractive to the petroleum industry.

The Oil Center, 1978. It could have been the Crowley Oil Center.

On May 15, 1979, the Lafayette Oil Center announced the creation of the Crowley Oil Center. The answer was the Crowley Oil Center.

WHY DID OIL COMPANY MOVE TO LAFAYETTE?

In 1933, Sun Oil Co. became the first major oil company to locate a representative in Lafayette, according to Lafayette: Its Past, People and Progress, a publication of Guaranty Bank & Trust. J.W. Francisco, a lawyer, helped the company during the heyday of the Bosco oil field, northwest of the city. Sun Oil recently closed its headquarters in Lafayette, after over 50 years of presence here.

NOBODY, AND THAT'S THE WHOLE PROBLEM

Who designed the early downtown Lafayette?

Ernst Fred Schmidt, 310 Ella St., Lafayette

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Lamson said there was also some interest in setting up the oil center in Crowley, but that never got beyond the talking stage once Heymann took the initiative. Other than that Acadia Parish Community, nowhere else was seriously considered.

There is more truth to the question as it relates to USL. When the state legislature approved the creation of the school, then known as Southwestern Louisiana Industrial Institute, it specified only that it would be located in the 13th Senatorial District, which included Lafayette, St. Martin and Iberia parishes. The actual domicile of the school was to be determined by which community offered the best financial deal to the state. Lafayette, New Iberia, Scott, Jeanerette and St. Martinville expressed interest, but soon only the first three cities were still in the running. Ultimately, the package offered by Lafayette—which included 25 acres of land and a two-tax mill to support operations—was ruled the most advantageous, and the school was built here.

In the early 1960s, there was a move to develop a freshman campus for USL. When the state sold its property in Lafayette to the University of Louisiana System, it was sent here by the company "during the heyday of the Bosco oil field, northwest of the city. Sun Oil recently closed its headquarters in Lafayette, after over 50 years of presence here.

NOBODY, AND THAT'S THE WHOLE PROBLEM

Who designed the early downtown Lafayette?

Ernst Fred Schmidt, 310 Ella St., Lafayette

Perhaps there is an unspoken addendum to this question: And was he a madman? The street pattern of downtown Lafayette and, by extension, much of the central portion of the city, has long puzzled natives and newcomers alike. Is it true, as the story goes, that the early fathers of the city merely paved over the cowpaths when they began laying out the thoroughfairs? Or is there perhaps a logical reason for the confusing maze of twists and turns that local drivers must negotiate?

The answer to these questions is not a simple one, for there were many cooks presiding over this broth. And unfortunately, some of the truly guilty parties are unknown, so we cannot heap abuse on them, even posthumously.

But here is the story, as much as we were unearthy to record it in the Clerk of Court's office and other historical documentation.

As anyone who has studied the basic history of Lafayette knows, the true father of what is now downtown Lafayette was Jean Mouton, an enterprising landowner who donated a portion of his acreage in 1821 for the purposes of building a church. Several years later, he donated land in the same area to build a courthouse.

Quite naturally, this once unsettled area evolved into the center of the community. So Mouton began subdividing and selling the property around these two institutions. A plat of the community, called Vermilionville, was drawn in 1824 and the name of John Dinsmore, deputy surveyor of the Opelousas Land Office, appears on it. Mouton's layout was a nearly perfect grid, with Main Street (today's Main Street) with the courthouse and cathedral at either end. That con-
configuration survives to this day.

That street pattern was logical and geometric, as a look at a map of the area around the courthouse and cathedral reveals even today. As the town of Vermilionville continued to grow, that logical street pattern was retained. In 1956, a Dr. William Mills subdivided an area to the north of the courthouse which came to be called Mills Addition. He grafted the streets of his development onto the original settlement, preserving the grid-like system. The name which appears on the map of the Mills Addition was that of John Campbell, who was parish surveyor.

The problems started occurring after the Civil War, when the railroad was finally completed all the way from New Orleans to Lafayette. The rail line was located to the northeast of Vermilionville, so property owners began angling the streets of the settlement in that direction, where they assumed the center of commerce would lie. This shift in direction can be seen most dramatically today in front of the headquarters of Home Savings and Loan Association where Jefferson Street, originally conceived as a north-south route, inexplicably starts turning to the east.

Early maps of the city show that a subdivision was created to the northeast of the original Vermilionville incorporating this shift in direction, but unfortunately the original plat has been lost and there is no way to determine who deserves the blame for the abandonment of the original grid of downtown streets. The change in direction toward the northeast continued when the Southern Development Corp. developed the McComb Addition which encompasses the area around the current downtown depot. The plat for the subdivision, dated 1880, still exists, but there is no record of who the surveyor or engineer for the project was.

We do know who was responsible for laying out the area called the Mouton Addition, which is another contributing factor to the mixed-up street pattern downtown. The Mouton Addition was developed out of the plantation owned by Gov. Alexandre Mouton which was located slightly southeast to the center of the city. In 1881, a John Torrence designed this subdivision, creating a pattern of streets which were perpendicular and parallel to the Vermilion River on which Mouton's home, Ile Copal, sat. Unfortunately, those perfectly laid out streets met the existing streets of Vermilionville at 135 degree angles at what is now Lee Avenue. The effect of Torrence's layout can be witnessed at the statue of Gen. Mouton where Jefferson Street turns to the southeast.

The destruction of the original grid has had ramifications throughout the city—its effects can be seen along a number of thoroughfares. Who's at fault? Blame it on this city's never-failing drive to capitalize on every business opportunity. That's the spirit of Lafayette.
already there when Indians were still inhabiting the area.

The questions about the origins of the cathedral can be answered in two ways. That's because when this beautiful building was first conceived Lafayette was not yet a diocese, so it was only the parish church of St. John Parish. Construction on the building started in 1912 under the pastorate of Fr. William Teurlings and was finished about four years later. Presiding over the dedication of the church in July 1916 was Archbishop James Blenk of New Orleans. If the dedication

CATHOLIC CHURCHES
When was the Cathedral oak tree planted, and by whom? When was construction on the Cathedral begun? How long did construction last? Who celebrated the first mass in the Cathedral?

B.J. Doucet, 909 Myrtle Pl., Lafayette.
The age of the oak tree in front of St. John's Cathedral we know — a brochure published by the parish suggests that this local landmark is about 400 years old. That makes it one of the oldest oak trees in the country. We can only assume it grew from a naturally dropped acorn of a tree that was

Cookie and the Cupcakes
What was the name of the band that played pop music during 1954-56 at Landry's Paladium on either Wednesday night or Saturday night. They were real good. What happened to them, especially the lead singer?

Ann Cross, 141 Sandest Dr., Lafayette
Vann Landry, grandson of the club's late owner Alphee Landry, identifies the band as Cookie and the Cupcakes, although he says the dates when they played at Landry's Paladium were more likely 1958-60. Cookie and the Cupcakes were a very popular band throughout the Gulf Coast and achieved some national recognition with their hit song "Mathilda." According to John Broven's 1984 book South to Louisiana, the lead singer of the Cupcakes, Huey "Cookie" Thierry, is confined to a wheelchair after several automobile accidents.

Landry's Paladium, located halfway between Lafayette and Scott on what is now Cameron Street, was opened after World War II. It was named by Vann Landry's father, Luby Landry, who had visited nightclubs on the West Coast during the war which were called paladiums. Vann says that people would come into the club and ask his grandfather what a paladium was. "He would tell them, 'you are standing in one.'" The club was closed in the mid-1960s and the building is now used as a warehouse for Landry's janitorial supply business.
ceremony was the first mass said at the church, Blenk likely was the lead celebrant, assisted by Fr. Teurlings. However, Kathleen Toups of Acadiana Catholic suggests that Fr. Teurlings may have actually said mass in the church prior to the dedication.

It also seems likely that Fr. Teurlings, who was one of Lafayette’s greatest historical figures, said the first mass in the church after it became a cathedral. The documents proclaiming St. John the Evangelist as the seat of the newly formed diocese of Lafayette were read there at 3 p.m. on a Sunday in May (which one is not clear) in 1918. Since there were no afternoon masses in those days, according to Toups, the first mass in the cathedral was probably said the next morning by Fr. Teurlings.

A multiple question, if you will. Who was the architect of St. John’s Cathedral in Lafayette? Who was the architect of St. Mary Magdalen Church in Abbeville? Was it one and the same? The questions are prompted by a long-standing curiosity since

the two churches seem very similar to me. (An architect may disagree and I admit it may be an optical illusion, experienced by an untrained eye.)

_Erlene Stewart, Crowley._

Ms. Stewart’s eye may be untrained, but it is nevertheless keen. St. Mary Magdalen, the older of the two churches, was designed by George Honold of New Orleans and completed in 1911. One of the contractors of the church was a Eugene Guillot of New Iberia, according to a brochure published by the church.
What is the connection between the two churches? Several years later the same Guillot, who was apparently also an architect, assisted Fr. Teurlings in the design of St. John's, although the actual architect of record is A. Cousin, a European designer. We can only assume that Guillot’s work in Abbeville influenced the design of the Lafayette church. And certainly Fr. Teurlings was familiar with the church down the river.

By the way, the brochure on St. Mary Magdalen characterizes the church’s style as “Romanesque Revival,” while a similar publication of the cathedral describes its design as “Dutch Romanesque.” Fr. Teurlings himself was from the Netherlands.

AN EARLY FIRE
When did La Chalait Cafeteria burn down? It was located downtown where the Home Savings & Loan now has their drive-thru area?

Name withheld by request
Former Fire Chief L.F. Babin recalls a major fire in the late 1940s or early 1950 at the Morgan & Lindsay department store which was located on that site. He remembers that the fire, which occurred in the early hours of the morning, was so extensive that backup assistance from the Abbeville fire department was requested. The fire department does not have records going back that far which would indicate the exact date of the fire.

SCHOOL SPEECH
When did English become the required language in our local schools? Was French ever allowed to be spoken?

B.J. Doucet

Brasseaux traces the official edict requiring English in schools to the 1921 state Constitution which mandated compulsory education in English in Louisiana schools. That is also about the time that the much-talked-about spanking of Cajun-speaking kids began. Prior to that, French was often used in area schools, especially in Catholic schools.