Thousands Watched as 2
Hanged in City Long Ago

by Mario Mamaladze

"Never read yellow back novel or bad books," four thousand people gathered in Lafayette to witness the execution of two young Frenchmen about a half century ago and hear these words from the lips of one of the condemned men. Those still living have never forgotten that drama-packed moment.

The real culprit was one of the most sensational in the annals of the parish.

It all began when two young Frenchmen, Alexis and Ernest Blanc of Scott, finding they had many leisure hours to read as day laborers on the plantation of Col. A. D. Boudreaux, borrowed a book on the daring deeds of Jesse James.

Ernest, the elder of the two, later said, "Seeing how poor we were and how difficult to otherwise better our situation, we made up our minds to emulate the examples inscribed by the book."

The two selected Napoleon, a highly respected and well-to-do merchant of Scott, as their victim. For three weeks they planned their crime. They waited to attack their victim, but each time something intervened.

On the third night, Wednesday, April 22, 1896, they watched Boudreaux at the adjacent store of his brother and planned to overpower him when he left. Again they failed, for Boudreaux got back to his store before they could reach him. They then had to knock on the door and ask to purchase lard and bacon.

Once in the store their courage failed them. They walked away, apparently having abandoned the project. Finally Alexis picked up a monkey trap and asked how it worked. Then both pulled out the loaded revolver and gunned down Boudreaux, tied his hands, and then forced him to his bed. They left a note for the sheriff, saying that he did not resist, and that trouble would never come to the brothers.

On November 17, 1896 the Boudreaux family inserted an ad in the weekly paper, offering $1,000 reward for evidence leading to the arrest and conviction of the murderer or murderers of Martin Boudreaux. Aonedeadline of November 17, 1896 was thrown open for the earning of the reward.

Meanwhile the Blanc brothers,秘密ly made plans to leave the area, but two or three days prior to their departure they made a formal appointment with a Dr. Sallen stating that they wanted the want of work done. They never kept the appointment. After their disappearance, some suspicious things about them were aroused, but there was no way of tracing them.

Bain and Boudreaux had been in jail for nine months when on the night of Friday, January 19, 1897, 28 young men arrived at the jail in Scott and proceeded to the plantation of Col. Boudreaux. Ernest and Alexis Boudreaux had returned to the scene of their crime.

By Sunday they were under arrest and jailed separately. Sheriff Trahan Broussard, Ex-Sheriff Camblin and Simeon Boudreaux, brother of the victim, remained two men. Finally, Ernest confessed before his trial that he killed Martin Boudreaux and that when they left Scott they had gone to New Orleans, out West, Mexico, and back here.

When Alexis was told of his brother's confession, he also confessed, saying that he did not care to see the cleaners, that trouble would never come to the brothers and that they would have his only portion of the money he had taken Boudreaux's money. He said, however, that when they left here, they said, "We are going to Paris."

Following their arrest the boys were taken to prison in New Orleans for safe keeping.

Free Again

Bain and Boudreaux, meanwhile, had been held in prison for 3 months. Bain learned of his good fortune when he was handed a newspaper carrying the account of the condemnation and arrest of Blanc Brothers. It was not till then that he reached the part telling of his arrest that he realized he was free. He threw the paper into the air shouting for joy.

Two thousand people gathered in Lafayette on Wednesday, Feb. 17, 1897, for the trial scheduled for that day. It was postponed when the two attorneys appointed by the court to defend Blanc brothers asked that they be released from defending the men. Their request was granted and the court appointed C. H. McQuinn and Col. J. W. Austin A. Breaux as attorneys for the defense. The case was then set for February 25 to allow the attorneys time to prepare for the trial.

When the prisoners were convicted and sentenced by Judge Conrad Dehillion, attempts were made by French Consul J. B. D. Anglade at New Orleans to prevent their hanging on the basis of their extreme youth (one was 18, the other 19) and their ineptness as evidenced by their voluntary return to the scene of their crime. Fourteen French societies met in New Orleans to protest their hanging and to try to get clemency for the boys. Governor Foster declared himself against the punishment.

The galleries on which the boys were hanged had been originally erected in Lake Charles to hang Stanley Aubur, who killed a deputy sheriff. He was awaiting execution when he was granted commutation and sent to the penitentiary for life.

By Frank Wrecker

Later the galleries was used for the execution of Octave Thibodeaux, who wrecked a Southern Pacific train, killing a fireman. He was sentenced to hang, escaped from prison and when caught secured a new trial and was acquitted. He was arrested for perjury and sentenced to five years in the pen.

The galleries in Crowley and when Sheriff Broussard began hunting for a gallows, he learned of the fact and changed his mind. It was set up on the rail yards and a 26-foot fence built around it.

On the day of the execution, about 4,000 persons surrounded the jail trying to get a glimpse of the condemned brothers. From the time the boys were available the day before the execution, the jail was surrounded by about 2000 persons on the limbs of trees near the gallows waiting. "Here are some who will surely have their necks broken in advance of ours," Both brothers laughed.

For any last words just before the trap was sprung, Ernest said, "Tell the people, pardon us for what we've done. My friends, these are our dying words. Never depart from the teachings of God. We urge you to look after the precepts as taught you by your neighbors, never read novels or bad books, and may you ever succeed in your new life."