January 1, 1901, President Edwin L. Planted 40 Oak Seedlings on the Established Campus of Southwestern A. Industrial Institute (now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette). Today, January 1, 2001, President Ray P. Authement planted 40 more oaks on the South Campus.

The planting of the oaks concludes the University's Centennial Celebration, "Prepared for a New Century."

Program

Musical Selections from the Early 1900s, National Anthem, and Alma Mater performed by Musicians from UL Lafayette School of Music

Welcome

Master of Ceremonies - Dr. Steve P. Landry
Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

A Special Blessing

of the Second Century Oaks and of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in its second century of service

Reverend F. Hampton Davis, III
Director, Pastoral Field Education, Notre Dame Seminary

"Growing Tradition: Live Oaks Link Generations"

A Theatrical Performance by UL Lafayette Performing Arts

Special Presentations

Featuring "Century Oak" by Artist Floyd Sonnier

"One Hundred Years Ago and Today"

Dr. Ray P. Authement, President
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Ceremonial Planting of Second Century Oaks

Dr. Ray P. Authement, President
Century Oaks Committee

ronet, Chair  Traci Aucoin  Jim Bradshaw  John Broderick
Q. Brown  Glenn R. Conrad  Dr. Judith Gentry
Liz B. Landry  Pierce Meleton  Bera J. Smith
Thames  Frank Thibodeaux  Billy Welsh  Annie Wingate

Special Thanks to:

Oak Gardens  Floyd Sonnier Beau Cajun Gallery
Sodexo-Marriott  Sides & Associates
UL Lafayette's:
   School of Music (Dr. A.C. Himes, Dr. William Hochkeppel,
   Mark Melancon, Brandon Romero, and Scott Landry), Community Design
   yap (Tom Sammons, Brent Guilbeau and William Rieck), Toby Doolittle,
ent Services, Physical Plant, School of Architecture (Dr. Paulette Hebert),
lic Relations and News Services, Performing Arts (Amy Waguespack)

Stephens' Oaks become full members of the Live Oak Society today.
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF
THE LIVE OAKS AND OTHER MAJOR TREES ON THE
SOUTHWESTERN LOUISIANA INSTITUTE CAMPUS
by
Harry J. Chatterton

Anyone looking at the main campus of Southwestern Louisiana Institute today would find it difficult to realize that it was bare farm land in 1900. The campus is known for its beautiful oaks, pines and other trees and shrubs too numerous to mention. When one approaches from any direction, his eye is sure to be attracted by the live oaks which form a border around the outside of the main campus. Such a beautiful arrangement of trees did not "just happen", and so a short account of the planting and development of these trees might be of interest to the students, faculty, alumni and friends of Southwestern.

For those unfamiliar with the live oak, Quercus virginiana, it might be of interest to know that it is native to North America. It reached its highest development on a strip of land not much over sixty to eighty miles wide, paralleling the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from Virginia south to South Texas.

When Dr. Edwin Lewis Stephens took over the Presidency of Southwestern in 1900, the land on which the future college was to stand was bare. Dr. Stephens decided then to plant live oaks and water or laurel oaks on the north corner of the college property. He secured the voluntary aid of the late J. C. (Jack) Nickerson to find and plant small oak trees. Beginning with the Robert Martin Oak, five oaks were planted paralleling College Avenue, and another five along Johnston Street. Beside the live oaks on Johnson Street, Dr. Stephens had a row of water or laurel oaks planted to supply quick shade. All of these water oaks have now been removed, except for those north of Girard Hall. A gap existed in the row of live oaks between the Robert Martin Oak and the next along College Avenue, so in 1918 an additional oak was planted there and dedicated to the memory of Stanley Martin, a Southwestern student who lost his life in the First World War. A plaque or memorial stone may be observed near the base of this tree. When one walks around the north corner of the campus, the original oaks will be observed to be larger and somewhat older in appearance. When the circle was laid out in front of Martin Hall, Dr. Stephens
had more live oaks planted there in addition to the Robert Martin Oak.

In the fall of 1919, Dr. Stephens recommended to the Board that I be employed as Professor of Agriculture. My family and I were furnished living quarters in a portion of Foster Hall, and in return for these quarters I was to supervise a part of the labor force in caring for the campus. This was in addition to my teaching and looking after the Dairy Farm. As the faculty was small at that time, each member had several duties to perform in addition to his teaching duties.

Sometime that fall, my daughter Edith brought home a small sack of live oak acorns from the school grounds of the Old Southside School. I placed the acorns in a pasteboard box with the expectation of planting them in the spring. When I examined them in late February, I found that a root had grown from the small end of each acorn, and the food in the acorn had been transferred into a radish-shaped root before it had shriveled and died. From this lesson, I knew that the acorns would have to be planted as soon as they matured and fell from the trees in the fall.

During the summer and fall of 1920, the large oak at the north corner of the campus produced an unusually large crop of fine and healthy acorns. At this time Southwestern was providing educational training for a large number of disabled veterans of World War I. Quite a number of these veterans had been assigned to me for a part of their instruction. I decided that planting and raising a large number of live oak trees would be a worthwhile project. As a result, I had the veterans pick over a half bushel of the acorns and plant them in a row which extended from the Cypress Lake to the edge of the campus, somewhat east of Judice Hall. In early spring, as the acorns germinated and grew, the veterans weeded and cared for the oak seedlings. In the fall of 1921, another oak which grew on the back edge of the campus produced a very fine crop of acorns. Again a half bushel of the finest acorns were selected and planted in a row parallel to those which were planted the previous fall. With constant care from the veterans, both rows grew rapidly, and by the fall of 1923 they had reached the height of one to three feet, and needed to be transplanted and spaced in nursery rows.

About this time, Mr. L. E. White was employed as Superintendent of Grounds at Southwestern, and he took over the Live Oak Project. He transplanted the young trees and spaced them in rows in an area extending from Cypress Lake to the edge of the campus at what is now St. Mary's Boulevard. This nursery area contained several thousand live oak trees. As they grew
rapidly in size, Dr. Stephens became very much interested in them, and gave them wide publicity. The news of Southwestern’s live oaks spread far and wide, and with the consent of the Board, Dr. Stephens gave large numbers of them to schools all over South Louisiana for beautifying their campuses. To individuals, the trees were sold for one dollar per tree. At one time the city of Beaumont purchased a hundred trees for planting along their streets and in their parks.

From the standpoint of Southwestern, the greatest good derived from the Live Oak Project was in supplying a source of trees for the completion of the border of live oaks around the main Southwestern campus, and for many of the trees planted inside the campus. Dr. Stephens entrusted the planting and care of these trees to the late Mr. Claude Zimmerman, who was in charge of campus work at that time. Mr. Harland K. Riley, of our faculty, has told me that Dr. Stephens directed that the trees be planted or spaced sixty feet apart, and that he had hoped to have an even hundred live oaks to border the campus. Due to an accident or two, and other causes, the number is today a little less than a hundred.

 Appropriately, one of these campus-grown trees was named for Dr. Stephens. It was one of those live oaks which were allowed to stand where they were planted in the Live Oak Nursery. The late Claude Zimmerman drew a bucket of water and baptized this tree and named it the E. L. Stephens Live Oak Tree, as an evidence of his great admiration and esteem for Dr. Stephens. This tree stands in front of the Carpenter Shop Building and south of the Cypress Lake at the present time. It is hoped that Dr. Stephens’ name will be placed on this tree.

The Live Oak Project at Southwestern proved to be of value far beyond our expectations. The fruition of the Project is to be found in the thousands of live oak trees which are furnishing shade for people all over South Louisiana and Southeastern Texas. Who knows but what it may have stimulated a greater interest on the part of Dr. Stephens and caused him to visualize his famous “Live Oak Society.”

In addition to these trees which we grew ourselves, there are a number of trees on the campus which came from other sources. For instance, in the fall of 1921, at Dr. Stephens’ request, I secured three small live oaks from the late Mr. Malagaries’ farm near Broussard. These were planted south of Martin Hall, and for the occasion Dr. Stephens held an open air assembly of students and friends of the College. At this assembly, Mr. Walter Burk, a New Iberia attorney and a member of
the College Board, delivered an address commemorating the planting of the trees. When the south extension of Martin Hall was built in later years, the middle oak of these three had to be removed.

The large live oak which now stands in front of the Fine Arts Building was planted by me in the fall of 1921. During that summer a cottage had been built near this site, and I planted the tree, also obtained from Mr. Malagarie’s farm, about twenty-five feet south of the cottage. Later the cottage was removed to its present location as a home for the Dean of Women. When the Fine Arts Building was constructed the oak was fortunately allowed to remain. Two other live oaks were planted in the early days on the south border of the campus, but when St. Mary’s Boulevard was paved they had to be removed to allow for the widening of the street.

The pine trees in front of Girard, Martin and De Clouet Halls were planted by the late Mr. Harry Stahl. In front of these buildings, loblolly and slash or Cuban pines were intermixed in a row. The loblolly pines produce many small cones, and have somewhat crooked trunks and short needles. The slash pines produce longer needles, larger cones, and have straighter trunks. At two corners of Martin Hall, Mr. Stahl planted long leaf pines, secured from the State Pine Nurseries.

The Stewart pecan trees which border Hebrard Boulevard on the west were planted by the late Mr. George Beadle in memory of his son Gladston Beadle, and other local boys who lost their lives during the First World War. Dr. Stephens designated the location for these pecan trees. They have now grown into very large trees which supply the crop of pecans for the students who pass along Hebrard Boulevard.

Besides the trees which have had to be removed in the name of progress, several others have been destroyed or damaged accidentally. In the early 1940’s, I was looking out an east window of Girard Hall one day when I was surprised to hear a loud crashing sound and to see a gray object hurled across the Circle toward Martin Hall. When I went out a little later I found that the Robert Martin Oak had been struck by lightning and a large piece of bark had been stripped from the trunk and thrown a considerable distance. Since that date the Robert Martin Oak has been fighting for its life with the aid of the campus “tree doctors”, such as Mr. Riley and others.

All told, the trees on the Southwestern campus, especially the live oaks, are one of the college’s greatest assets, and they should be long appreciated by all who enjoy them.
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