Pleasant times helped to ease war-torn hearts

(Editor's Note: This is the final article in the series on Ken Dupuy's feature on the Veranda Hotel).

The war is ended past the Veranda Hotel to the courthouse where the soldiers were stored with refreshments. When this procession began, led by a hand, from the West Side at 10:30 a.m., "a dense throng of people filled the streets to suffocation from the heatющим to the courthouse." After refreshments were had, the crowds then headed for the avenue where several orators, including Mayor Hayes, and John Overton, entertained the audience.

For the Veranda, and for many citizens of the parish that day, these activities of having fun and looking forward to a future of bestowing honor, finally gave some closure to the terrible ordeal of that horrible war.

In keeping with the times, the African-Americans had their "own" exercises in the east end of town, in the church yard - probably at the Pleasant Baptist Church. It was a day in which the "restaurants, saloons, and those refreshment parlors, rousing business," according to the Meredith.

During the week of July 22, to July 29, 1922, according to the Meredith, the Veranda Hotel, most of Abbeville, were bombarded by noises from a variety of sources. Water main repairs, bridge, which had been built in the late 1890s, was in the process of being demolished and repaired, in and of themselves, are no big deal.

However, when we realize that this bridge had been considered "too unsafe for use" by the state, and such action becomes notable. It was about time! In fact, back as October 1921, a notice was published in the newspaper, "A bridge should not be so unsafe as to your risk," the warning emphasized. It was signed by Joe E. Brooks, President of the Police Jury.

Additional discordant sounds were heard in town, from Cotton Street to the Masonic Lodge. The wooden building that had been constructed in 1855 had been demolished to make room for a modern structure for the Masons.

On Thursday of that week, one of those summer thunder storms struck sending booming, thunder resonating over the skies of Abbeville. This too could hardly be ignored in our ancestors' buildings that were more modestly made, of those bolts of lightning struck and set afire the Methodist Church, which also "went down the street" from the Veranda Hotel.

Further chafe and noises were caused by those pouring put that week. Every one of those hundred dollars was done before the fire was put out. As if this drama and destruction during that same storm put out of commission the dynamo at the power plant, part of Abbeville was plunged into darkness for a few weeks. I don't know what part of Abbeville lost its electricity in all, that week in July 1922 created considerable noise that the Veranda Hotel could ignore.

This hotel was the setting for at least one special photograph, which appears to have been taken especially for this year. Though the identities are unknown to me, stood on the sidewalk, or stood on the benches, huddled next to and in front of the hotel, others sat and roamed, or rode by. These were automobiles, with some driving wheels on the right side of the cars. There is also a house drawn buggy in front of the hotel, but as put there, like the dirt-surfaced State Street, to remind us that we were still, literally, in the horse and buggy days of our history. The fence, with one of its sturdy posts visible, also stands in counterpoint to the "modern" automobiles in the picture. The fence in the foreground kept the livestock off of the courthouse square. It is almost as though the dirt street, with grass growing on the edges, and the crude wire fence symbolize the days of time that separate us forever from those individuals in this photograph.

Anyway, to return to the Veranda Hotel in the photo, it was in perfect repair. Not a single baluster had been missing or damaged in the railing along the upper veranda, and all of the pieces of the firework were still intact. The Veranda seems freshly painted and white washed for this special occasion. Deputy Traban must have felt especially proud of this hotel that day.

The gentlemen in the photograph are wearing long-sleeved, white shirts, and hats are part of the "grade," or "smart," dress of the time. This is the veranda's formal wear, and what's more, it's the veranda's special dress, a formal wear. At one end of the building is a "store" - one of our ancestors - wearing a sunbonnet. At the corner of the street are two young girls using an umbrella to protect themselves from the sun's unfriendly heat. Along Cotton Street, the candy-striped poles of the hotel's barber shop beckon customers to come in for a hair cut, perhaps a shave. And a periscope.

Well, there isn't much more to tell about this landmark the Veranda Hotel. It had stood on this corner for most of Abbeville's earliest history. It had served the local citizens as well as drummers, dentists, and so many other patrons for all of those years. Now, it was time to replace her. No longer could the Veranda Hotel play the role of the gracious southern belle, a younger player would have to take her place on Abbeville's commercial stage. As we know, that hotel would be the Audubon Hotel.

As far back as 1903, plans were mapped out to replace the Veranda with a more modern hotel. And for at least 10 years before this plan of action was taken, there had been an increasing demand on the part of the traveling public for a more commodious structure, fitted with the most modern conveniences. It was reported that the hotel was in such poor condition that salesmen would come to their business and would then travel to Lafayette or New Iberia for better accommodations.

The earliest taking of replacing the Veranda Hotel with another hotel appeared in an article in the Meredith, February 25, 1923. The proposed cost was to cost $100,000, which would be a four-story structure of "reinforced concrete, and was to have been constructed to have 46 guest rooms, with baths, while some adjoining homes would have to share a bath. There was also a mention of a dining room, laundry equipment, and the latest mode of electric elevators." A drug store (sic), barber shop, and the "Lafayette" Hotel were also included in the initial plans.

The Abbeville Progress presented the Veranda and intact... The Veranda Hotel. Alldrey Hotel.

This newspaper credited Messrs. E.P. Putnam, and John Nugier, Sr., as well as Putnam's in the Veranda and in the Mission Hotel, with the Veranda. I have not found confirmation of Nugier's connection, but that is not to say that they weren't involved. The Nugier family was owned by the Mission Hotel. I have not found confirmation of Putnam's data between the Mission and Abbeville.

It shows that the Veranda Hotel was in charge of V.L. Caldwell, and J.B. Miller, Miller, by the way, ran the "Rutland" between Lake Charles and Abbeville.

The paragraph appeared, "perfecting" the description for the construction of this hotel.

Before however, before we watch the Veranda Hotel, the construction of the new hotel, let's take a look briefly at what was occurring in 1928 in Abbeville and around the country. Let's be with political leaders. Huey P. Long was elected governor of Louisiana, while Herbet Hoover was elected, and won convincingly over New York Governor Al Smith, the first Catholic candidate for the presidency.

The $7,000,000 Ponchartrain Bridge was completed and opened that year, and it became the "longest concrete bridge over a river in the United States." To home, roads had become one of our parish's major concerns. A new scenic route between Lake Charles and New Orleans had established.

It was the Lafayette Cut-Off Highway, which became a state highway in 1928. It flowed through Lake Arthur, Gueydan, Abbeville, and on to New Iberia. It was opened to travel by car, and had reduced 20 miles of travel for the "Ponchartrain Cut-Off" between Lake Charles and New Orleans.

To facilitate driving within Abbeville, they were working on the "Lafayette Cut-Off Highway," which was to be completed and opened that year, and it became the "longest concrete bridge over a river in the United States." To home, roads had become one of our parish's major concerns. A new scenic route between Lake Charles and New Orleans had established.

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