Welcome To Abbeville
Heart Of French Speaking Louisiana
Abbeville as the parish seat is able to boast of the many fine buildings in and around the area. One of these is of course the Vermilion Parish Courthouse.

Though built in recent years, the white-brick structure is true to Greek Revival architectural standards.

Paintings in the hallway on the main floor by Harry Worthman depict typical South Louisiana scenes.

The Courthouse is located in the second town square of Abbeville.

In 1843, a Roman Catholic priest said “no” to the originator of the settlement of Perry’s Bridge. This reply resulted in the founding of the city of Abbeville, La.

The priest was Rev. Antoine Desire Megret, “exiled” pastor of the Catholic church in Vermilionville (now Lafayette). For many months, he had watched with interest the settling of the area towards the Gulf of Mexico.

The originator of the settlement was Robert Perry, who later was to engineer the creating of Vermilion parish out of the parish of Lafayette.

Rev. Megret resigned from his church in Vermilionville after a series of difficulties with the Marguilliers, a group of men who served as a board of directors of the church. He approached Robert Perry in an effort to obtain land for the establishment of a church in Perry’s Bridge.

For some reason—history does not tell us which—the priest was offered a tract of land which was flooded almost continuously by the waters of the Vermilion River. Pere Megret declined his (Perry) offer and vowed to establish a settlement of his own.

On his trips to Perry’s Bridge, the priest had noticed a high bluff about two and a half miles above Robert Perry’s settlement. The land was owned by Joseph LeBlanc, a devout Catholic.

For the sum of $900 Rev. Megret purchased the home of Mr. LeBlanc and the property it was situated on which consisted of four arpents on the Vermilion River extending forty arpents in depth.

On this plot of ground he erected a settlement which was to become Abbeville. It was his town, patterned after the villes of his native France. Property was also dedicated for a chapel. Then came narrow streets converging on two public squares.

To begin with, Pere Megret converted a part of the residence on the property into a chapel, the other part he lived in. By the end of 1843, he had fully paid the purchase price of the property by the sale of lots at “La Chapelle” as he called Abbeville at that time.

There is a town in France near Father Megret’s home called Abbeville and many believe that he chose that name. There are others however, who point out that an Abbe is a priest. The town, or ville, was the result of the labors of only one man, the priest. The common usage of Abbe (priest) and ville (town) combined the two words to form Abbeville.

When Vermilion parish was created in 1844, Perry’s Bridge was named parish seat. But by 1845, the population of “La Chapelle” (Abbeville) had increased to such an extent that it exceeded the population in and around the parish seat.

Pressure was brought against the legislature and, as a result, an election was held to allow the voters of the parish to determine the parish seat of government, Perry’s Bridge or La Chapelle.

At that time the priest went into action again. He appeared before the police jury meeting in Perry and offered to build streets, operate a ferry, erect a courthouse and provide other facilities if the seat of government were in Abbeville.

Through a flaw in the procedure, the legislature failed to pass an act making the results of the election official. Robert Perry’s rebuttal was to have another election.

Supporters of Abbeville did not recognize the legality of the election and Perry’s Bridge was the winner. The priest immediately filed suit against the parish contesting the election. It was not until 1854 that the case was decided. Abbeville was declared the winner.

Father Megret died before his city was chartered and before it became the parish seat. Father Antoine Desire Megret died on Dec. 5, 1853, in the town which he had founded. An epidemic of yellow fever was raging and he was called to administer the last rites of the church to the sufferers.

Into his primitive town of 1850 poured people of all races, colors and creeds. But it is the French culture of which he was so proud that is still predominant today in Abbeville.
MUNICIPAL

Abbeville being centrally located and the Parish seat offers qualified and diversified professional men, such as accountants, attorneys, dentists, optometrists, physicians and surgeons, veterinarians and the complete facilities for the practice of the professions.

The new modern three-story Abbeville General Hospital offers excellent hospital and surgical facilities to the entire area. The Vermilion Parish Health Units headquarters are located in Abbeville as well as numerous State and Federal agencies.

Also located in Abbeville is a modern water treatment facility capable of treating 3 million gallons of water per day and designed for easy expansion. This plant was built at a cost of $733,090. Also, a modern police headquarters and new city court building add to the looks of a progressive city. Three fire stations

are located strategically throughout the city to give modern and efficient service. Along with these modern facilities are qualified personnel to operate the service offered by our city.

Computerized billing and accounting methods have greatly increased the efficiency of the city. Improved methods in lighting are being adapted and new city streets have greatly enhanced the appearance of Abbeville. Construction projects are continuously improving underground drainage systems, sewer systems and water systems.

The Municipal Airport caters to private as well as several small commercial planes. These air facilities serve the oil related industries as well as many of the farming operations around.

A 50 acre industrial park is located at the municipal air field. Hard surface roads with modern lighting, sewerage, water and drainage are available.

RECREATION

For outdoor enthusiasts, Abbeville offers excellent recreational facilities which include a public swimming pool, two recreation centers, five neighborhood parks and a large park (Comeaux Park).

Several facilities at A. A. Comeaux Park lend themselves to all types of sports. Not only is there a recreation center but an all purpose municipal field which was constructed in 1974 for the Babe Ruth World Series Baseball event. At the present time, the field is utilized for local baseball events.

Also located on the park grounds is an adult softball park in addition to several other ball fields. Modern tennis courts with the latest surface improvements are also available for the avid tennis player.

Outdoor cooking facilities are another addition to the park.
The fishing in the Gulf is of the finest world wide. Fishermen can find an abundance of tarpon, white and blue marlin, dolphin, redfish, trout and snapper. The blue waters of the Gulf offer a variety of fish not only for the angler, but there are several places where divers can fulfill their dreams.

Each year, the Abbeville Kiwanis Club hosts the Annual Tarpon Fishing Rodeo on the Labor Day weekend. This event has become popular in the last ten years and draws hundreds each year. There are divisions for several varieties of salt water and fresh water fish.

An abundance of fresh water fish can be found in the marshes surrounding Abbeville. Perch, bass, sac-a-lait are just a few of the species found.

Completing the circle of recreational facilities is a newly opened Camper Trailer Park, which can accommodate 50 trailers. Water and electrical hook-ups and a sewerage dump station are also available. The wooded area near the camper trailer park gives the feeling of remoteness right in the city limits.

**EDUCATION**

Abbeville educational plants consist of two high schools, Abbeville Senior High and Vermilion Catholic High School (parochial). Both high schools are new facilities completed after 1968.

Abbeville also has a Junior High School which is centrally located for all the students.

Four elementary schools are located within the city. These elementary schools are staffed to bring the greatest possible benefits to the students.

The Vermilion Parish School Board is progressive and constantly looking to improve its school system. Along with the highest qualified teachers and the use of the latest teaching techniques, Abbeville has done much to advance its educational output.

Also located 20 miles away the University of Southwestern Louisiana affords residents of the Abbeville area a good University education.
INDUSTRY

The oil and gas industry, a leading source of income and employment in the Abbeville area, is supplemented by new and progressive enterprises, chemical concerns, construction contractors, dry docks, shipping, fish processing plants and allied petroleum services. The establishment of the Industrial Park has interested several manufacturing concerns.

Since the discovery of oil and gas in Vermilion Parish, the industry has been growing steadily. Today Vermilion ranks first in the State in the production of natural gas.

To supplement these growing concerns Abbeville has numerous means of transportation and communication. A network of fine roads lead to all points in the Parish. Railroad transportation facilities are furnished by the Texas and New Orleans Railroad and additional freight services are available. Abbeville provides its residents with a fine newspaper, the Abbeville Meridional, which is printed twice a week and additional coverage is furnished by radio station KROF.

Waterways play a vital role in the parish's transportation system. The Vermilion River, which runs through Abbeville, is one of the parish's major waterways. Plans are now underway for port facilities in the Abbeville area since the completion of the Fresh water Bayou Deepwater Channel to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Intracoastal Canal, the South's major east-west water route traverses the parish and intersects the Vermilion River. Waterborne commerce on this waterway in 1974 was a total of 39,238,381 tons on the segment between the Mississippi and Sabine Rivers.

Abbeville's forward thinking citizens created an effective and hard working Abbeville Harbor and Terminal District committee. The actions of these individuals have done much in the way of encouraging economic growth for our community. Long range planning and good legislation has helped to make Abbeville prosper.

Abbeville's close proximity to coastal areas makes it a leading center of the seafood industry in Louisiana. Seafood caught in coastal waters is transported to all parts of the world.

AGRICULTURE

Rice, sugar cane, cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, hay, truck crops, fruits, livestock and soybeans are some of the agricultural endeavors in the Abbeville area.

Steen's Syrup Mill, one of the largest open-kettle syrup mills in the nation, is located on the Vermilion River on the street which runs along St. Mary Magdaling to watch the raw sugar cane processing which begins in mid-October and lasts until Christmas. Visitors are welcome to see this process and the bottling operation, but call ahead--Telephone 318-893-1654.

The growing and processing of rice is an industry of major proportions in Vermilion Parish and the Abbeville area. Situated in the heart of the country's leading rice producing region, Vermilion Parish produces more rice than any other parish in the state. Numerous rice mills, dryers and storage warehouses are also located throughout the city.
EVENTS

Mardi-Gras — Every February the entire area celebrates this festive holiday. Parades in costume and elegant Balls are part of the festivities.

French Acadian Music Festival — Held the second Saturday after Easter. A large local event, drawing many competitors (mostly amateur musicians and singers). For Cajun music enthusiasts, this is the real thing. All types of music played. Usually in City Park.

Jaycee Fresh-water Fishing Rodeo — Includes categories in most freshwater divisions. Usually dance on the Saturday night.

May Festival — Held towards the end of May, includes fun and games and a Las Vegas night. Also includes assorted rides. Put on for the benefit of the local high school.

MacMillan Hybridized Gardens — Not a public garden. Described locally as a "botanical working garden" specializing in day lilies (in bloom in May and June) and Louisiana Irises.

Kiwaniis Tarpon Fishing Rodeo — Competition categories range from deepsea to freshwater fishing. Trophies presented in several divisions including scuba. Also includes dance. Held on Labor Day weekend. Promises and exciting time to all involved.

Louisiana Dairy Festival — One of the largest festivals held in the State of Louisiana. Held in October. Originated in 1949 to honor Louisiana's Dairymen. Includes parades, floats, street dancing, contests, cajun food and music.

Christmas Parade — Hosted by the Abbeville Jaycees with co-operation from the Chamber and City Administration. Presented on a local level to encourage the holiday atmosphere. Route travels through the heart of the city.

POINTS OF INTEREST IN THE ABBEVILLE AREA

Avery Island Jungle Gardens
Rip Van Winkle Gardens
Evangeline Downs Race Track
Paul J Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary
Russell Sage Refuge
Rockefeller Refuge
Abbeville is not only a colorful town with its squares but also boasts of having some of the finest food anywhere. It has some of the finest oyster bars and seafood restaurants in Acadiana, as well as one of the finest steak houses.

Simple in decor—the food eaten is unforgettable.

St. Mary Magdalen Church is one of the most beautiful church structures in Acadiana. The present church was built in 1910. It has been described as modified French Gothic. A modern German-style baroque pipe organ and beautifully finished interior lend to the French atmosphere of the surrounding area.

Abbeville is easily accessible from any part of the state. Interstate 10 intersects Lafayette and at that point U.S. 167 South takes you to Abbeville. Old Hwy. 90 or the Spanish Trail as it is commonly called will also afford easy accessibility to Abbeville. The Spanish Trail is one of the most popular and scenic routes in the United States. Antebellum homes and flower gardens are of particular interest along this route.

The Hug-the-Coast Highway is also a popular scenic route. It stretches from Brownsville, Texas to New Orleans and gives the motorist such sights as wildlife sanctuaries, gardens and white beaches.