Lockport Shipyard Workers

Five West Lake Churches Founded Before Parish Division in 1913

Five churches had organized prior to 1913 in the vicinity of West Lake.

Organization of the Catholics in West Lake began in 1812 when a number of Catholic women organized the Lockport Altar Society.

The priest from Immaculate Conception Church in Lake Charles began to hold one mass a month in the Lockport community church. The erection of a chapel was not begun until 1827 and was made possible through the generosity of Mrs. J. A. Landry of Lake Charles.

Methodist history in West Lake dates back to the turn of the century when worship was held in a church known as the Calcasieu Mission located on Bladon Road. The Sunday school was a union school comprising both Baptists and Methodists. In about 1885, the mission was moved to West Lake and meetings were held in the old school house.

In the early 1880s plans were begun to erect a Methodist Church at the site where Anderson Hardware stands now. The first service was held in the new building in 1894 with the Rev. Hocutt filling the pulpit. From its beginnings in a school house in 1885 has emerged the $60,000 church plant known today as the First Baptist Church of West Lake.

With the help of the Baptists in Lake Charles, the West Lake church was organized in September 1897. During the same year, A. J. Knegt was elected as the first deacon, and the Rev. W. M. Thompson accepted the call as the first pastor.

A wooden structure facing the corner of Perkins and Miller Streets was the first building. It was destroyed by the storm of 1918 and replaced with a brick structure in the same location the next year.

Good Hope Baptist Church was founded before the turn of the century, 1876. It is located near Sweaty Street being first conducted as a mission of the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Mossville with Rev. Henry Boy as a pastor.

Prior to this time Negroes had to go to Mossville to worship.

The first place of worship was built by Rev. Rice and was known as Rice's Temple. However, the building was sold in 1911 and the group reorganized and was given the name of St. Matthew Baptist Church.

The Rev. Matthew Simmons became the first pastor.

The first service was held in the same location the next year.

The greater portions of the deposits are in Calcasieu Parish, but deposits of unlimited value such as have been located in the southwestern part of Vernon Parish as well as in the northeastern section of Newton County, Tex., according to the Lake Charles Daily American Press, April 12 and 14, 1919.

Samples of the ores have been assayed by government officials, and have shown rich deposits of the minerals, as demonstrated by the following figures:

A stratum of ore assaying 48 per cent gold and 14 per cent silver underlies a tract of about 800 acres about three miles north of Merryville and is known to be 16 feet in thickness.

Several deposits immediately surrounding Merryville have assayed 80 per cent lead and 19 per cent silver.

Extensive beds within a quarter of a mile of Merryville deposits of lead and zinc alloyed, the valuation on this ore being placed at 857 per ton.

Rev. Mr. Tate is a practical mining man, says the 1919 reporter for the Lake Charles Daily American Press.

According to Tate's contemporaries he had had years of experience at the business, especially in Missouri lead and zinc country and could make his own analysis and assays, having fitted up a laboratory at his home in Merryville for doing much work for himself and others.

So far all his assyas and analyses have been proved correct by the government assayers.

The minister stated clearly and emphatically that he wanted no exaggerations about the value of the property. He had made no promises of great returns or enormous profits when he started this work, and the discoveries speak for themselves.

"If these deposits prove as rich and as large as I firmly believe they will, Calcasieu Parish and the entire state of Louisiana will be made immensely rich. My own opinion is that we have the richest field right here at home, anywhere south of Alaska."

"But this, I will admit is yet to be proved, and of the proving I have not the slightest doubt."

The announcement by Rev.