



LOUISIANA
PARISH
HISTORIES

ACADIA PARISH

ACADIA PARISH is located in southwest Louisiana and has an area of 634 square miles. **Crowley** is the parish seat. It was created in 1886, the fifty-ninth Louisiana parish, from St. Landry Parish. Its name was suggested by the Reverend Father Anthonioz in honor of his former home in Nova Scotia. The word *Acadia* was originally a Native American word meaning (according to one source) “a place of a fish.” (The Native American word for fish was *Aquoddie*.)

Natchez and Choctaw tribes roamed over the area for many years before the Europeans arrived. Hand-cut arrowheads and hatchets were often found by the early settlers. Most of the later settlers of the area were of French descent and were referred to as “Acadians” or “Cajuns,” and French was the spoken language. In 1871, German settlers moved to the area named Roberts Cove, and their descendants remain in the area today.

The first rice mill was built in 1893, and the growing, harvesting, and marketing of rice continues to be an important industry today. In 1901, the first oil well of commercial quantities in Louisiana was drilled near the community of Evangeline, and oil assumed an important part in the economy of the area.

ALLEN PARISH

ALLEN PARISH is located in southwest Louisiana. Originally part of old Calcasieu Parish, it was made a separate parish in 1912. The parish was named in honor of Henry Watkins Allen, Confederate governor of Louisiana from 1864 to 1865. It has a land area of 750 square miles.

Allen Parish was the hunting grounds of the Opelousa, a branch of the savage Atakapa. Little is known of the very early settlers of the region, and there was little settlement effort until after 1763. In 1769, the population was found to be 409 persons. Tracts of land were given to Spanish, French, and English grantees, and the population had increased to 1,986 persons by 1788.

Bisected by the Calcasieu River, the area was originally used only for grazing and timber. About 1885, rice production became important, and rice is now the major commercial farm product. The major towns in the parish are Oakdale, **Oberlin** (the parish seat), Kinder, Reeves, and Elizabeth.

ASCENSION PARISH

ASCENSION PARISH is located in southeast Louisiana along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. When La Salle explored the Mississippi River in April 1682, the area now known as Ascension Parish became the property of France. When French settlers began arriving, they found the Houma and Chitimacha living in the territory. During the years 1757 to 1770, several parties of Acadians arrived and settled in the area. In 1763, the area came under Spanish control. On August 15, 1772, the Ascension Catholic Church was established.

Very few people lived in Ascension Parish when it became a parish in 1807. By 1817, the population had increased only to 2,219. The village of Donaldson (later known as **Donaldsonville**, the parish

seat) was dedicated on April 17, 1806. In 1825, Donaldsonville was selected as the capital of Louisiana, and a state capitol was constructed. The state legislature met in the building in 1830 and 1831, but then the capital was later moved back to New Orleans. When the capitol building was demolished, the bricks were used to reinforce the banks of Bayou Lafourche.

Ascension Parish soon became part of a prosperous sugar economy that continues today. The river has brought about a rapid growth in plants and industries, bringing new families to settle in the area. Today, the petrochemical industry dominates the economy of the parish.

ASSUMPTION PARISH

IN 1807, THE PARISH OF ASSUMPTION was one of the nineteen parishes formed from the division of Lafourche Parish. It has an area of 369 square miles. Bayou Lafourche flows through the parish and is known as the “longest Main Street in the world,” because there are highways on both sides of the bayou.

The original inhabitants were the Chitimacha, Washa, and Chawasha tribes. Mounds found here are said to have been built many hundreds of years ago by these tribes. Iberville first came to the area in 1699, later followed by Bienville. There are also legends about Jean and Pierre Lafitte, who once roamed up and down the bayou.

The earliest settlers were French and Spanish; German and British settlers came later. Some of the oldest settlements along the bayou are **Napoleonville**, the parish seat (named for Napoleon Bonaparte and settled in 1750), Plattenville (home of the oldest Catholic church in the parish), Painscourtville (its name is of French origin and means “short of bread”), Belle Rose (meaning “beautiful rose”), Pierre Part (along Lake Verret), Supreme (home of a sugar refinery), and Labadieville (named for French settler Jean Louis Labadie).

During the Civil War, battles raged up and down Bayou Lafourche. On October 27, 1862, the Union army was defeated in a battle in the vicinity of Labadieville at Georgia Landing. Today, Assumption Parish is a beautiful area of sunny skies, green fields, evergreen cypress, Spanish moss, and bountiful rainfall.

AVOYELLES PARISH

AVOYELLES PARISH, located near the center of the state, has an area of 864 square miles. It was originally inhabited by the Avoyel, Tunica, Biloxi, and Choctaw tribes. Most of the early European settlers came from Pointe Coupee and Opelousas and had a French heritage. However, there were a few English-speaking settlers coming from states east and north of Louisiana on the march west. In 1780, the area became the Avoyelles Post. In 1807, the Territory of Orleans, of which Avoyelles Post was a part, was divided into nineteen parishes. Avoyelles Parish was the sixteenth of these. **Marks-ville** is the parish seat.

Avoyelles Parish has a variety of soils and grows a variety of crops. Early on, indigo was an important crop, followed later by tobacco, cotton, and sugar. The period of 1850 to 1860 is often called the “golden decade.” Today, major crops include rice, sugarcane, corn, soybeans, and sweet potatoes.

BEAUREGARD PARISH

BEAUREGARD PARISH, 1,160 square miles in size, was originally the northwest corner of Opelousas County, which had been created in 1806 as a division of the Territory of Orleans. Beauregard Parish came into existence in 1912, and **DeRidder** was selected as the parish seat on October 15, 1912.

Prior to the coming of European settlers, the area was inhabited by a few groups of Atakapa in four Native American villages. The recorded history of the region begins in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the land between the Rio Hondo (now known as the Calcasieu River) and the Sabine River was under Spanish jurisdiction. Settlers began to come to the region around 1815. The Sugartown community, established in 1825, was the first permanent settlement in the parish. The second community was that of Dry Creek. For a period of time, the territory became a notorious refuge for desperados.

The history of the area saw timber and livestock to be the more stable sources of income. Sheep were first brought into the area in 1830, and the area soon became the leading wool producer in the state. Today, the leading agricultural commodities are forestry, beef, cattle, rice, soybeans, and commercial vegetables.

BIENVILLE PARISH

BIENVILLE PARISH was created out of the original territory of Claiborne Parish in 1848 and was named in honor of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, “the Father of Louisiana.” It contains 858 square miles and is home to the highest elevation in the state—Driskill Mountain, with an elevation of 535 feet.

The early settlers were mostly from the South Carolina area. Among the earliest settlers were the Lesterjett women, Huguenots (French Protestants) who were skilled in the arts and crafts. Another early settler, a Dr. Gibbs, gave land for the Mt. Lebanon University site. The town of Gibsland is located on lands owned by Dr. Gibbs. Coleman College, the first institution of higher learning open to black students in North Louisiana, was located at Gibsland. Sparta was named the parish seat in 1849 because it was the geographical center of the parish. Today **Arcadia** is the parish seat.

The Bonnie and Clyde era is the most famous for this parish. On May 24, 1934, near Sailes in Bienville Parish, Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, two notorious outlaws, met their death. A monument has been erected on the site.

BOSSIER PARISH

BOSSIER PARISH, 866 square miles, was created out of Claiborne Parish in 1843. At that time, Bossier City was a small trading post known as Cane’s Landing. It grew steadily and was chartered as a town in 1923.

Bossier Parish was once the site of one of the most unique covered roadways in the South—a nine-mile stretch from Bossier City to Red Chute. Built to be an all-weather highway with a “shed” over the

dirt road, it became known as Shed Road. Eventually, the development of the railroad caused the road to be abandoned, but for many years it helped people conquer the wilderness.

In 1857, Bellevue was the parish seat. It was replaced by **Benton** in 1876. Plain Dealing grew up as a railroad town. Rocky Mount, known as the “birthplace of secession,” was once known as Keyersville. Confederate troops were once stationed at the present site of the Rocky Mount High School. During the Civil War, Bossier Parish furnished more Confederate troops than any other parish in the state.

A major factor in the growth of Bossier Parish and Bossier City has been the construction and development of Barksdale Air Force Base. The first newspaper in the parish was called the *Bossier Times* and was first issued in 1857. Bossier City and Bossier Parish are proud of the large number of beautiful churches of many denominations.

CADDO PARISH

CADDO PARISH, created in 1838, was originally part of Natchitoches Parish. Located in the northwest corner of Louisiana in the Red River valley, the area was originally inhabited by the Caddo tribe. The Caddo eventually sold their lands for \$80,000 in cash and goods in 1835, after white settlers began moving into the area following the Louisiana Purchase. The real growth of the area began when Captain Henry Miller Shreve removed the Red River Raft, opening the Red River to navigation. Shreve Town, founded in 1836 and named for Captain Shreve, eventually became Shreveport. It once served as the capital of Louisiana late in the Civil War. **Shreveport** is the third-largest city in the state and is the parish seat.

Caddo Parish boomed when cotton became king in Louisiana. In 1905, the first oil well was completed in Oil City, and the gas and oil industry grew rapidly after wells were drilled in Caddo Lake in 1910.

In Caddo Parish, you will find churches of many denominations. One of the oldest is Holy Trinity Catholic Church, whose cornerstone was laid in 1896. Another of the oldest churches was Antioch Baptist Church, organized in 1866 and first known as the “First Colored Baptist Church.”

CALCASIEU PARISH

CALCASIEU PARISH, at one time part of St. Landry Parish, was formed in 1840. **Lake Charles**, the parish seat, was named for Charles Sallier, a famous early settler and civic leader. In 1870 and again in 1912, parishes were carved from Calcasieu. The result was the present-day Calcasieu Parish of 1,086 square miles.

The water channel to the Gulf and Lake Charles was built in 1920. The channel encouraged the shipment of rice and the development of an industrial complex of chemical and petrochemical manufacturing plants. Calcasieu Parish has mineral deposits of brine, salt, sulfur, limestone, sand, natural gas, and petroleum. The area, known as a fishing and hunting paradise, is the home of Sam Houston State Park, which occupies 1,220 acres on the Calcasieu River.

CALDWELL PARISH

CALDWELL PARISH has an area of 531 square miles and is located in the north-central part of Louisiana. It became a parish in 1838, from land taken from Ouachita and Catahoula parishes. The first two major communities were **Columbia** (the parish seat) and Copenhagen.

Columbia achieved its greatest importance during the steamboat era. It became a shipping point rivaled only by Monroe and Old Trenton to the north. During the Civil War, two federal gunboats stopped in Columbia on their way to Monroe and seized two steamers laden with cotton. After the war, cotton was again grown, and the timber resources in the area began to develop. Staves, used to make barrels, became an important product. Many beautiful plantation homes survive and are located along the Ouachita River.

In 1865, a yellow fever epidemic hit Columbia and almost wiped out the population. In 1876, fire destroyed every business building in the town except one.

CAMERON PARISH

CAMERON PARISH, located in the extreme southwest corner of Louisiana, remained virtually isolated for almost a century. It was accessible only by boat from the Gulf of Mexico or by one of three rivers that flow into the parish. A few tall shell mounds and an assortment of relics bear testimony to the presence of the original inhabitants—the Atakapa. Early Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century may have landed on Cameron shores. Many say that Jean and Pierre Lafitte regularly sailed in and out of its rivers and bayous.

It was not until the early part of the nineteenth century that the first permanent white settlers, many of them from the older eastern states, came into what is now Cameron Parish. French settlers also arrived from St. Martin, Vermilion, and Jefferson Davis parishes.

Cameron became a parish in 1870, being carved from the southern part of Calcasieu Parish and the southwestern corner of Vermilion Parish. Both Cameron Parish and its parish seat, **Cameron**, were named in honor of Robert Alexander Cameron, a soldier in the Confederate army. Cameron Parish is large in land area, but it is one of the most sparsely populated parishes. The many marshes are home to animals and birds and are a source of a great percentage of Louisiana's oil.

CATAHOULA PARISH

CATAHOULA PARISH was formed in 1808. The parish derived its name from the Tensas name *ca-toola*, which means “big, clear lake.” Today, however, Catahoula Lake is in LaSalle Parish, which was formed from the western half of Catahoula Parish. **Harrisonburg**, named after early surveyor John Harrison, was incorporated as a village in 1872, but records show that the site was selected as the parish seat in 1808. The town is situated on the beautiful Ouachita River with Old Fort Beauregard in the hills above. Steamboats brought goods and carried away the home-grown products.

Catahoula is rich in colorful history. In 1825, Jim Bowie, famous for the Bowie knife, lived on a plantation a few miles west of Harrisonburg. The Jones-Liddell feud, which started in the Harrisonburg area in 1852, lasted twenty years and cost the lives of several prominent citizens. During the Civil War, federal gunboats shelled the town but did little damage. Through the years, minie balls, grapeshot, and fragments of cannon balls have been found.

Oil was discovered in the parish in 1958, bringing prosperity to many of the old families. Considered a sportsman's paradise, Catahoula Parish is the home of a variety of wildlife. Its many lakes, bayous, and rivers furnish ample places for recreation.

CLAIBORNE PARISH

LOCATED IN NORTHWEST LOUISIANA, Claiborne Parish was originally part of the vast parish of Natchitoches. In 1828, the legislature incorporated the parish of Claiborne, named for Louisiana's first governor. At that time, Claiborne Parish included the present parishes of Bossier, Bienville, and Webster, as well as parts of Lincoln, Red River, Winn, and Jackson. The parish seat, moved several times in the early days, is now at **Homer**, noted for its magnificent Greek Revival courthouse.

Owing to its high elevation (the highest in Louisiana, averaging about 200 feet above sea level), Claiborne Parish has a well-drained land surface and good soil quality. The rolling hills were heavily timbered with a variety of trees. Cotton became an important crop. In fact, the first cotton factory in the state was built in the town of Arizona shortly after the Civil War. Around 1900, the production of livestock became increasingly important. The discovery of oil in the early 1900s brought prosperity to the parish.

Perhaps the most interesting town in the parish's history was that of Germantown, founded by Countess von Leon, who came from Germany. Together with about three hundred followers, she settled in the area that was then Claiborne Parish (now part of Webster Parish) in 1835. The colony flourished until 1871, and it eventually disbanded.

CONCORDIA PARISH

THE FIRST HISTORIC MENTION of any establishment in what is now Concordia Parish was in 1768 when a small post was set up opposite Natchez. In 1796, the governor-general of Louisiana granted to Louis Bringier land at the junction of the Black River and Bayou Tensas. It was many years before the grant was developed. Don Jose Vidal and his family settled on a land grant in an area known as the Post of Concordia in 1801, and the name of the settlement was eventually changed to Vidalia. Concordia Parish was formed in 1807, and **Vidalia** became the parish seat.

During the Civil War, federal forces occupied Natchez and Vidalia, but little damage was done. In 1903, the location of Ferriday was selected by the Texas & Pacific and "Iron Mountain" railways as a terminal point and site for the establishment of railroad shops. The completion of the Red River Back-Water Levee and the building of the Natchez-Vidalia Bridge were two events that helped the parish grow.

DESOTO PARISH

DESOTO PARISH was created by the legislature in 1843 from lands in Caddo and Natchitoches parishes and covers some 894 square miles. **Mansfield** is the parish seat. Its name honors Hernando de Soto, the Spanish explorer who discovered the Mississippi River in 1541. The Waterloo community seems to have existed when Louisiana became a state in 1812. By 1848, the town became known as Logansport. Settlers from Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee came to the area in the 1830s.

Historically, Mansfield is remembered as the scene of the Confederate victory over General Banks on April 8, 1864. This brought the Red River Campaign to a close and saved Shreveport and Texas from invasion.

The Toledo Bend Reservoir project has had a major impact in the area, furnishing both power and recreation. Until recently the economy was primarily agricultural. Beef cattle production and the dairy industry are still important, and timber production is a significant contributor to the economy, but industrial development is proceeding at a rapid pace.

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH

THE RECORDED HISTORY of the area begins around 1699 when French explorers discovered the area where Baton Rouge is now located. Iberville's writing refers to the area as Istrouma or Baton Rouge, which means "red stick." In 1762, France ceded Louisiana to Spain, but the territory east of the Mississippi, including Baton Rouge, was ceded to Great Britain after the French and Indian War. During the American Revolution, the Spanish defeated the British in Baton Rouge and took control of the area. Baton Rouge remained a Spanish possession until 1810 when Governor Claiborne took possession of it in the name of the United States.

East Baton Rouge was designated a parish in 1810, shortly before Louisiana became a state on April 30, 1812. **Baton Rouge** is its parish seat. Baton Rouge was selected as the state capital in 1847. The city suffered heavy damage during the Civil War, and the State Capitol building was destroyed by fire. Port Hudson, which once had a population larger than Baton Rouge, was a Confederate stronghold during the Civil War and endured a long and painful siege.

Baton Rouge was the home of General Zachary Taylor, twelfth president of the United States. It is also the home of Louisiana State University and Southern University. Other towns in the parish include Zachary, Baker, Central, Greenwell Springs, and Pride.

East Baton Rouge Parish, having served under many flags, has become a melting pot for many races, creeds, and religions. Its booming growth is a contrast to its colorful history.

EAST CARROLL PARISH

SOME SAY THAT, when De Soto discovered and crossed the Mississippi River in 1541, he was near what is now East Carroll Parish. La Salle, in 1682, likely spent the night on the banks of what is now Lake Providence. East Carroll remained a part of New France until 1762, when most of the western Mississippi valley passed to Spain. It briefly returned to the French on March 26, 1803; but this was soon followed by acquisition by the United States through the Louisiana Purchase.

Providence appeared as a community around 1835. War, Reconstruction, and yellow fever slowed progress of the area, but by the turn of the century, expansion resumed. In 1832, the legislature carved Carroll Parish from northeast Ouachita and north Concordia parishes. It was named in honor of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, signer of the Declaration of Independence. In 1877, the Parish of Carroll was divided into two parishes—East and West Carroll. **Lake Providence** became the parish seat of East Carroll Parish. Bayou Macon is the dividing line between East Carroll and West Carroll. East Carroll Parish has 452 square miles.

President Theodore Roosevelt visited the area in October 1907 while on a bear hunt and described the area in glowing terms. He said, “This is the heart of the great alluvial bottomland created during the countless ages through which the mighty Mississippi has poured out the heart of the continent There is no richer soil in all the earth.”

EAST FELICIANA PARISH

EAST FELICIANA PARISH is located in the hill section of Louisiana and is one of the Florida Parishes. *Feliciana* is a Spanish word that means “happy land.” In December 1810, the Parish of Feliciana was created from the West Florida Territory, and in 1824, the Parish of Feliciana was divided into the two parishes of East and West Feliciana.

The area that is now East Feliciana was occupied by the Tunica tribe until it was settled by the British and other settlers of European origin. The settlers were mainly of Irish, Scottish, English, and sometimes of Huguenot (French Protestant) descent.

East Feliciana grew and prospered from 1824 until the Civil War. It was a vast cotton-growing region. The boll weevil and government restrictions on cotton acreage brought about a decline in cotton production. Diversified farming and cattle were introduced to the area in the 1930s and 1940s.

East Feliciana has many beautiful homes and public buildings. The towns of **Clinton** (the parish seat) and Jackson became known for their cultured, aristocratic, and social life. Several important institutions of higher learning started in East Feliciana Parish, including the Clinton Female Academy, the College of Louisiana, the Feliciana Female Institute, and the Millwood Female Institute.

EVANGELINE PARISH

WHAT IS TODAY EVANGELINE PARISH was originally the northern part of St. Landry Parish. The residents complained about the distance they had to travel to Opelousas to conduct business. One of the greatest hindrances to early settlers and to progress was the lack of good roads. No public roads were established anywhere in Louisiana until 1875, and travel was difficult. Finally, in 1910, the new Evangeline Parish was established. The parish seat was located in **Ville Platte**.

Bayou Chicot is claimed to be the oldest English-speaking settlement west of the Mississippi River. The people had come from the colonies before the Revolutionary War. There were settlers from Ireland and from Virginia, Tennessee, Delaware, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and North and South Carolina. A post office was established there in 1823. The town of Ville Platte was incorporated on March 16, 1858.

Evangeline Parish has produced many doctors, perhaps more than any other place in Louisiana. The Calvary Baptist Church in Bayou Chicot was established in 1812, but many residents claimed the Methodist Church had been established earlier and was, in fact, the oldest church west of the Mississippi.

FRANKLIN PARISH

AN EXAMINATION OF AN EARLY MAP shows that one of Hernando de Soto's campsites was on Deer Creek, at or near where Gilbert now stands. De Soto was probably the first white man to view that part of Louisiana now known as Franklin Parish.

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, Native Americans abounded in the area. There is much evidence remaining from their habitation, including mounds, spear and arrow heads, human bones, and bits of pottery. About 1800, the Natchez were defeated by the French and offered no further resistance to white settlement.

Early French settlers founded Columbia, then known as Prairie de Lait. But until 1811, there were no sustained efforts to settle the area. After that time, many well-equipped families came to settle in the area with slaves, household furnishings, and considerable money. After the Louisiana Purchase, what is now Franklin Parish continued to be part of the Ouachita and Catahoula districts until 1843, when it became a parish in its own right. A deadlock arose as to where the parish seat would be located until John Willis donated 160 acres of land for a parish seat to be named Winnsborough in honor of Senator John Winn. The parish seat remains in **Winnsboro** today, although the current courthouse is the third to have been constructed.

GRANT PARISH

NATIVE AMERICANS had lived in the area now known as Grant Parish for many years before European settlers came. The Red River country was inhabited by the Caddo tribe while the Natchez lived to the east in the Catahoula Lake and Little River area. About 1700, Bienville and a number of men visited the area. After the purchase of Louisiana by the United States, settlers began to move into the area.

Grant Parish, with an area of 700 square miles, was established in 1869, and was named in honor of Ulysses S. Grant, then president of the United States. The southern part of Winn and the northern part of Rapides parishes were taken to form Grant Parish. **Colfax** was made the parish seat. One of the oldest towns in the parish is Montgomery, formerly known as Buffalo Crossing. Other towns include Ada, Black Creek, Cottonburg, Fairmount, Latt, Pollock, Fishville, Georgetown, and Dry Prong. Each has an interesting history.

Cotton, sugarcane, and other products of the area were once transported to market by the planters of the area. The construction of the Red River Valley Railroad in 1899 brought about the cutting of the immense stands of virgin pine timber in the area. Saw milling played an important part in the history of the parish for many years.

IBERIA PARISH

THE EARLIEST WHITE SETTLERS in what is now Iberia Parish were the French who came at first to trade with the Native Americans. There is mention of Acadians who came here to settle in 1765 or even earlier. Many Spaniards came to the district after the Spanish government acquired Louisiana, and Nueva Iberia was founded by them in 1799. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, settlers from the other colonies began to arrive as well as groups from Germany, Italy, Syria, Scotland, and other countries.

The area that would become Iberia Parish was hotly contested by Union and Confederate forces during the Civil War. Their battle lines moved back and forth through the area. Union troops seized the Weeks family mansion, now called Shadows-on-the-Teche, and used it as a command post.

In 1868, Iberia Parish was formed from parts of St. Martin and St. Mary parishes with **New Iberia** as the parish seat. Iberia Parish covers an area of 575 square miles.

Today, Iberia Parish thrives as a center of sugar, oil, and salt production. Weeks Island, Avery Island, and Jefferson Island are famous for their rock salt mines and plants. Many oil wells are also found there.

IBERVILLE PARISH

IN THE SPRING OF 1699, Iberville began ascending the Mississippi River, eventually exploring the area now known as Iberville Parish. A census of the area ordered by Governor O'Reilly in 1769 showed that the district had 376 residents. Records show that the town of Plaquemine existed in 1775. When the parish was formed in 1807, Point Pleasant became the seat of government and remained such until 1835 when the parish seat was moved to **Plaquemine**.

Many flags have flown over the parish—French, Spanish, Confederate, Union Jack, and American. Spanish and French names outnumber all others. There are still traces of two Native American tribes. Towns in the parish include Bayou Goula (the oldest and smallest town), White Castle, Wheelock, and Carville. It was in Carville that the only leper colony in the continental United States was established.

Iberville Parish is rich in natural resources. Although its virgin timber lands are about cut out, oil, gas, and brine wells are frequently found. Farming of sugarcane, corn, and soybeans continues, as well as cattle raising. Fishing and trapping have been part of the economy. Because of its closeness to the Mississippi River, many chemical and industrial companies have established plants in the parish.

JACKSON PARISH

IN 1845, JACKSON PARISH was established from portions of Ouachita, Claiborne, and Union parishes. The first known settler in the parish was Jessie Wyatt, who made his way from Catahoula Parish in 1815. Today, a small town in the parish is named for him. The first parish seat was at Vernon, where it remained until 1873. **Jonesboro** is the present parish seat.

The light and loamy soil intermixed with sand is perfect for growing grain products, vegetables, sweet potatoes, and fruit. Cattle and dairy farms are plentiful. Hunting and fishing opportunities abound, and recreation of all kinds is available. From its rural frontier background, Jackson Parish has developed into a modern business community.

JEFFERSON PARISH

IN 1699, IBERVILLE AND BIENVILLE were navigating the Mississippi River with an eye toward selecting a site upon which to found the future city of New Orleans. Several leagues upriver from the site later chosen lay a tangled wilderness that, 126 years later, would become the parish of Jefferson. Native Americans dwelled along the stream courses in the area. This was the territory, rich in resources but largely inhospitable, that greeted French settlers when they arrived less than twenty years after the early exploration by Iberville and Bienville.

More settlers gradually began to appear in the area after the Louisiana Purchase. In 1825, Jefferson Parish came into being, named after Thomas Jefferson. The parish originally extended from present-day Felicite Street in New Orleans to the St. Charles Parish line. The present boundary was set in 1874, and the parish seat was transferred to **Gretna**, where it has remained.

In its infant stages, Jefferson Parish was little more than a thin scattering of farms, pastures, and fishing villages, with several large plantations along the river. With the New Orleans population overflowing into Jefferson, however, industry began to develop.

Several municipalities are in the parish, including Gretna, Kenner, Lafitte, Westwego, Harahan, and Grand Isle. In the 2010 U.S. Census, Jefferson Parish was second only to East Baton Rouge Parish in population, and the parish is vibrant and growing.

JEFFERSON DAVIS PARISH

IN 1912, JEFFERSON DAVIS PARISH, named for the president of the Confederacy, was created from what was then Imperial Calcasieu Parish. Jefferson Davis Parish has quite a mixed population, consisting of Creoles, Acadians, and Americans from many different states, as well as a few Native Americans. In early days, French was the prevailing language, and many were unable to understand or speak English. As late as 1916, it was not at all unusual for a teacher to have many pupils, especially in the first grade, who knew no English.

Jennings, named for the builder of the railroad, was settled by enterprising people. It is known as the birthplace of Louisiana oil, and it serves as the parish seat. The town of Welsh was platted in 1884 and incorporated in 1888. Two other villages were in existence around the turn of the century, Lacasine and Lake Arthur. One area of special interest is the Koasati Reservation near Elton.

Recreation abounds with waterfowl hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, golfing, tennis, and water skiing. Jefferson Davis Parish ranks as one of the major agricultural parishes in the state, providing rice, soybeans, and cattle.

LAFAYETTE PARISH

THE SPANISH AND THE FRENCH moved into the Lafayette area in the eighteenth century, and some intermarried. The French-speaking exiles from Nova Scotia found a home here and became Louisiana Acadians, or Cajuns. The early Acadians were ambitious, energetic, and religious people. Immigrants of many other nationalities also settled in the territory now known as Lafayette Parish.

Lafayette Parish was formed in 1823. The heart of the parish is its parish seat, the city of **Lafayette**—first known as Vermilionville. It was renamed to honor the Marquis de Lafayette, who served as a French volunteer in the American Revolution. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is located here.

Agriculture and cattle raising boosted the economy, and the community prospered until the region was nearly destroyed by yellow fever and the Civil War. In 1881, when the railroad was extended from New Orleans to Houston, the area again prospered. In 1940, oil companies began to establish offices in Lafayette because of its central location to oil activities. Today, Lafayette is a center of the gulf oil and gas industry.

LAFOURCHE PARISH

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI, in its journey in time to the Gulf of Mexico, formed a silt-rich bayou that split as the tines of a fork, and Lafourche came into existence. *Lafourche* is French for “the fork.”

The area of Lafourche Parish was originally inhabited by the Washa, Chawasha, and Chitimacha tribes. The French, Spanish, and later the Acadians settled the 1,157-square-mile heart of the present sugarcane industry in the middle 1700s. The area was first named Lafourche Settlement and included the present parishes of Assumption, Lafourche, and Terrebonne. In 1807, the legislature created nineteen parishes, including Lafourche Parish. The parish was further divided in 1822 with the southern part being named Terrebonne Parish.

A history of Lafourche would not be complete without mentioning its famous sons. Edward Douglass White was governor of Louisiana and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. His son, Edward Douglass White Jr., was a U.S. senator and an associate justice, then chief justice, of the U.S. Supreme Court. Francis Tillou Nicholls, a general of the Confederate army, was twice governor of Louisiana and finally chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. Henry Schuyler Thibodaux, for whom the parish seat, **Thibodaux**, is named, was also governor of Louisiana.

LASALLE PARISH

LASALLE PARISH was created from the western half of Catahoula Parish in 1908. It was named LaSalle in honor of the great French explorer. Its parish seat is **Jena**. Flags of five nations have flown over the area of LaSalle Parish—France (on two different occasions), Spain, the Confederate States of America, and the United States. The first settlers made their homes on the western shore of Catahoula Lake and Little River. An early trail through the area was later known as the “Three-Notch Road” because of three notches placed on trees to identify it.

Steady growth in wealth, population, transportation, and culture characterized the half century between the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the Civil War in 1861. Reconstruction days stripped the South of its wealth and started a decline of the area. While most of the LaSalle Parish settlements had slow and humble beginnings, White Sulphur Springs was an exception. It was developed by Joseph P. Ward into a popular resort area.

LaSalle has remained a mostly rural parish with much of the land devoted to forestry. Prospecting for oil was begun in and around Urania in 1920, and oil and gas were discovered in 1924. Several companies are located in the area representing a variety of industries.

LINCOLN PARISH

LINCOLN PARISH, one of the northern hill parishes, was created out of parts of Bienville, Jackson, Claiborne, and Union parishes in 1873. It was named in memory of Abraham Lincoln. In 1812, a great forest covered this section of Louisiana. The first settlement was made by Daniel Colvin and his family about 1807 around what was later Vienna. Redvine and Choudrant settlements were established in the 1820s. The city of **Ruston** was founded in 1884, and it is today the parish seat.

In 1894, the General Assembly created the Louisiana Industrial Institute and College to be located in Ruston. It later became Louisiana Tech University. Grambling was the first incorporated black community in the state. Grambling State University was founded in 1900. It is second to Notre Dame in the number of professional football players any school has produced.

After World War II, Lincoln Parish took on a new look. Woodlands were created, cattle production was begun in earnest, and the rolling hills were found to be excellent for producing peaches. Lincoln Parish has been called the “Peach Capital.” In addition, a variety of industries now make their homes in Lincoln Parish.

LIVINGSTON PARISH

EARLY FRENCH, SPANISH, AND ENGLISH SETTLERS chose land along the rivers, streams, and bayous of the area. From the 1750s to the early 1800s, settlements were established at Denson, Maurepas, Whitehall, Port Vincent, and French Settlement. The old Spanish Trail from Mobile to Baton Rouge and Natchez passed this way. Land was cleared in the vicinity of the present city of Denham Springs in 1804.

Livingston Parish came into being in 1832. The parish seat has moved at various times from Van Buren to Port Vincent, to Centerville, and to its present position in **Livingston**. The boundaries of Livingston Parish have remained stable since 1869. It covers an area of 658 square miles.

During the Civil War, some fourteen engagements were fought in the parish. Federal troops were quartered in the area that is now Denham Springs. By 1880, corn, cotton, sweet potatoes, rice, sugarcane, oats, and peas were grown in the area. Strawberries became an important crop after having been introduced into the parish in the vicinity of the Tickfaw River. Eventually, timber became king, bringing with it new settlers, new settlements, and the railroad. Doyle, Holden, and Livingston were established as logging and sawmill towns. Live Oak and Albany were formed as communities.

The Great Depression, followed by World War II, caused a change in the outlook of the people. The subsistence farms are now gone. Many commute to jobs in neighboring parishes. Livestock and poultry became more important.

MADISON PARISH

MADISON PARISH had its beginning in 1838 when its location started at “Shipp’s Bayou on the Mississippi and extended north to the Carroll line and west to Big Creek.” In 1851, all the lands lying south of Bayou Vidal were taken from Madison and given to Tensas Parish. This left the present dimensions of Madison Parish, named for former president James Madison.

Richmond was the first parish seat. The present parish seat is **Tallulah**. In early times, the area was plagued with frequent floods, the Flood of 1927 being a good example. It has been said that wealth, population, and land values reached their peak in 1861, the zenith of Madison prosperity. Then came the destructive Civil War, followed by the demoralizing Reconstruction period. A new era came, only to be checked momentarily by the Flood of 1927. Since then, drainage canals have been dug, good roads constructed, fine schools erected, herds of improved livestock accumulated, and progressive farming methods adopted.

Today, one can visit the parish and see landmarks such as the lovely old Crescent Plantation Home, the old post office at Waverly, or the Native American mounds. As one resident said, Madison Parish “seems to have managed somehow to have weathered floods, boll weevils, low-cost cotton, and wars.”

MOREHOUSE PARISH

IN 1796, BARON DE BASTROP, a Spanish citizen, obtained a contract for a large amount of land in the area from Spain. He worked with Abraham Morehouse, for whom the parish was named, to bring settlers to the land as required by the contract. During the first ten years of settlement, arriving families made their homes at Prairie Jefferson (now called Oak Ridge), Point Pleasant on Bartholomew Bayou, Prairie Mer Rouge, and other settlements. As farming increased, cotton became a principal crop. Several plantations were established along the rivers and bayous and worked by slaves.

Around 1830, Bastrop, named for Baron de Bastrop, was the first town developed. When Morehouse Parish separated from Ouachita Parish in 1844, the first courthouse was located at **Bastrop**, which is still the parish seat. The tide of immigration continued to flow steadily until the Civil War put a stop to the influx. The war took its toll on the men in the parish, not to mention the problems of Reconstruction common to all parishes in the region.

The economy of the parish is equally balanced between agriculture and industry. The economy started booming with the discovery of natural gas in 1916. Another important event for the parish was the power plant built on the Ouachita River. The parish continues to grow and prosper today.

NATCHITOCHE PARISH

NATCHITOCHE is the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. Its name has been translated to various meanings such as “chinquapin eaters,” “chestnut eaters,” and “paw-paw eaters.” The Natchitoches tribe that occupied the area were members of the Caddo Confederacy. On November 27, 1714, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, directed by Governor Cadillac, ascended the Red River as far as the Red River Raft. Here, with the help of the friendly Natchitoches tribe, he founded Natchitoches—the first white settlement in the vast Louisiana Purchase Territory. Natchitoches became a parish in 1807, and the city of **Natchitoches** is its parish seat.

During the Red River Campaign of the Civil War, Natchitoches, together with Alexandria, Grand Ecore, Pleasant Hill, and Mansfield, opposed General Banks’s army in its unsuccessful march against Shreveport. Fortunately, Natchitoches was not burned during the war, as was Grand Ecore, so the colony continued to develop.

Natchitoches Parish has many unusual qualities. It is noted for its people, its beautiful plantation homes, and its attachment to the arts. Natchitoches is famous for its historical tour held annually during which many of the historic homes are opened to the public. It is said that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* depicted life on Little Eva Plantation in southern Natchitoches Parish. Natchitoches is also the home of Northwestern State University.

ORLEANS PARISH

NEW ORLEANS was founded by Bienville in 1718 on the great Mississippi River. The city is eight feet below sea level, and the river is held back by earthen banks called levees, ten to fifty feet high. New Orleans was the capital of the Louisiana Territory in 1722, and it was because of the port of New Orleans that the Louisiana Purchase was made in 1803. Orleans became a parish in 1807.

New Orleans, the parish seat of Orleans Parish, is noted for its historic buildings. On Jackson Square is the city's greatest heritage, the St. Louis Cathedral. To its right is the Cabildo, which displays artifacts like the Iberville Stone that marked the founding of the colony (1699) and the death mask of Napoleon. Chalmette Park is where General Andrew Jackson defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. The Vieux Carré is noted for its wrought-iron railings and its many famous restaurants. Many other historic buildings and areas of the city attract visitors from all over the world.

Orleanians are very proud of the “greatest free show on Earth,” the Mardi Gras. It had its beginning even before the founding of New Orleans. On March 3, 1699, Iberville and his party of Frenchmen celebrated Mardi Gras, the day before Ash Wednesday, at their first camp on the Mississippi River, which they named Point Mardi Gras. It has been a favorite celebration of the city since its early days.

OUACHITA PARISH

OUACHITA PARISH, founded in 1807, was named for the Ouachita tribe, who had held this portion of the territory when it was discovered by the French. The present site of Monroe was an established trade center in the early eighteenth century. The settlement was originally called “Prairie de Canots” (Prairie of the Canoes) by the French. One morning in May 1819, the first steamboat ever to ply the Ouachita River as far north as the settlement startled residents with its tall smoking stack and shrill whistle. They renamed the town in joint honor of the steamboat and the president of the United States, James Monroe.

West Monroe came into existence in the early 1880s when a railroad bridge was constructed over the Ouachita River. The Monroe area is known as the “Crossroads of Pipelines,” a point where more major pipelines converge than at any other spot in the nation.

Monroe is the parish seat and the home of the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Major industries are located here, including those in the chemical, furniture, fertilizer, lumber, and paper fields. Ouachita Parish ranks high in the production of vegetable crops, cotton, and soybeans, and in oil and gas production.

PLAQUEMINES PARISH

IN THE PLAQUEMINES REGION, the earliest culture was Tchefuncte. Artifacts of the Coles Creek, Marksville, Troyville, Plaquemine, and Pontchartrain cultures can be found. The European generally recorded by historians as being the first to traverse this area of the Mississippi River was René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle. In 1682, at about where Venice is now, La Salle placed a cross with the coat of arms of France, claiming the area for France.

Before the Parish of Plaquemines was organized, there was the Post of Plaquemines, which encompassed most of the territory within its present boundaries. The parish was named for this post when the Orleans area was subdivided. After being under control of the French, the Spanish, and the French again, the area was part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, at which time it came under control of the United States. It became a parish in 1807, and **Point a la Hache** is its parish seat.

Plaquemines Parish history includes the story of riverboats and plantations and railroads. It even includes stories about Jean Lafitte, who once sold contraband and slaves to the sugar planters. Today, the parish is blessed with bountiful resources, productive citizens, and a rich heritage.

POINTE COUPEE PARISH

POINTE COUPEE was born in 1699 when Iberville investigated an oxbow curve in the Mississippi River and cleared an overgrown channel extending from heel to heel of the oxbow. This was to become the main channel of the Mississippi, giving Pointe Coupee its name (“cut point”) and divorcing the oxbow (False River) from the Mississippi. French Canadian trappers had earlier come to the area. During the eighteenth century, Acadian refugees were to settle there.

Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the Legislative Council created the Parish of Pointe Coupee in 1807. Until 1848, the parish seat was at the old trading post of Pointe Coupee. It was then moved to **New Roads**, a community settled early in the nineteenth century. One of Pointe Coupee’s most famous citizens was a Frenchman, Julien de Lalande Poydras, who made a fortune as a merchant. He was the first elector to cast Louisiana’s vote for a president of the United States, he presided over the state’s first constitutional convention, and he was a noted philanthropist.

Pointe Coupee is noted for its beautiful homes, its good food, and its recreational areas. It is typical of the picture most held of South Louisiana, a place of moss-hung great oaks, magnolias, plantations, and the joy of living.

RAPIDES PARISH

RAPIDES PARISH, located practically in the center of the state, has 1,372 square miles of land. The name Rapides came from the rapids just above the present city of Alexandria, rapids that for practically half of the year impeded navigation on the Red River. During the eighteenth century, a post was located at the rapids by the French, and it was referred to as the Poste du Rapides. Later, under

Spanish control, it was referred to as El Rapid. In 1807, the legislature formed a parish and named it Rapides Parish.

Tradition holds that the Avoyel tribe settled at the rapids on the Red River. Many of the stories of colonial days are based largely on tradition, because most of the records were destroyed in a fire set by the Union army during the Civil War. The period between 1800 and 1830 was a time of great development, a boom in immigration of farmers. The first railroad in the parish was started in 1837. The town of **Alexandria**, the parish seat, was burned by Union forces on May 13, 1864. The only building to survive was the Catholic Church. Father J. G. Bellier had stood in the doorway of the church and threatened death to any soldier who should attempt to apply a torch.

Today, Rapides Parish is the home of Louisiana College, Louisiana State University at Alexandria, and numerous other private schools and colleges.

RED RIVER PARISH

ON JANUARY 1871, a legislative act was passed creating the “carpetbag” parish of Red River, largely by the efforts of men who had drifted down from the North following the Civil War. The end of carpetbag rule in the parish was marked by the Coushatta Riot in August 1874. **Coushatta** is the parish seat. Springville is considered the original town site and was a thriving village years before Red River became a parish. Gradually the town moved to an area between the river and Coushatta Bayou, known as Coushatta Chute, a Native American name meaning “white reed brake.” Eventually, the word “Chute” was dropped and the town became known as Coushatta. One of the oldest river settlements in the parish is known today as Grappes Bluff.

Red River is almost totally an agricultural parish, with primary emphasis on the production of cotton, soybeans, and cattle. Forest products and lumber industries are also important in the parish economy. There is also some oil and gas and some industrial development.

RICHLAND PARISH

RICHLAND PARISH was created in 1868, with the town of **Rayville** as the parish seat. Rayville was named for James Ray, one of three brothers who made great contributions to the area. The name of the parish was derived from Don Juan Filhiol, who wrote that east of the Ouachita River there was “rich land.”

Until well into the nineteenth century, access to Richland Parish was largely limited to the Boeuf River. Girard, the oldest settlement in Richland Parish, was settled by Henry Bry in 1821. In the late 1800s, Richland Parish, with its many swamps and heavily wooded areas, provided a refuge for many outlaws, including the notorious James brothers, Jesse and Frank. A charter was granted in 1836 for a railroad across northeast Louisiana, and it reached Delhi in 1859. About 1840, a road was cut through the canebrake and swamps of Richland Parish but was usable only during the dry season.

Richland Parish farmers produce cotton, corn, soybeans, and various grains. There is also some industry present.

SABINE PARISH

SABINE PARISH was organized in 1843, and **Many** was named as the parish seat in 1844. **Many** was named in honor of Colonel John B. Many, the commander at Fort Jesup, a federal military reservation in the area. Probably the first settler in the vicinity of Many was William Mains, who moved his family to this area in 1830. Native Americans still roamed the woods, and wild animals were numerous.

The area was largely agricultural until the building of the Kansas City Southern Railroad through the parish in 1896-1897. The railroad brought lumbermen, who set up sawmills to convert the trees that blanketed the area into lumber to satisfy the worldwide demand for longleaf virgin pine. By 1936, the forest acres were barren, and the sawmills moved on. Reforestation in the 1940s brought the paper and plywood industries.

Reforestation lagniappe was the creation of Hodges Gardens, Louisiana's famed "Garden in the Forest," a family resort in the 1950s and today a state park. This opened up a brand new industry—tourism—which was augmented with the completion of the Toledo Bend Dam Reservoir in 1968.

ST. BERNARD PARISH

ST. BERNARD PARISH is closely connected with New Orleans, both historically and economically. It was in St. Bernard that the British in 1699 were turned back in their first attempt to colonize the Mississippi valley, and 116 years later met their defeat in the Battle of New Orleans. Under French ownership based on La Salle's voyages and Bienville's exploration, colonization of the area was confined mainly to individual plantations along the natural levee bordering the river.

This region became known as the Terre aux Boeufs ("land of the oxen") from the large numbers of wild oxen or buffalo found there. Following the cession to Spain, Spanish colonization of the area continued under Bernardo de Gálvez in 1778. The center of the colony was called New Gálvez at first and later San Bernardo. The descendants of these and other Spanish colonists are still spoken of as Isleños or Islanders. The French population was increased by Acadian refugees.

The parish was created in 1807 and underwent several border changes until 1875 when its present boundaries were finally established. The parish seat was first established at St. Bernard. In 1839, it was moved to **Chalmette**, where it is currently located. St. Bernard Parish was the first parish in the state to construct a paved highway.

If Louisiana has been called a sportsman's paradise, St. Bernard Parish is a showcase because of the abundance of many types of game and fish. The area abounds with bayous, lagoons, rivers, and lakes.

ST. CHARLES PARISH

ST. CHARLES was one of the original nineteen civil parishes in the Territory of Orleans. The current parish was created in 1807 from the County of the German Coast, but it dates back to 1700 when small settlements were made along Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. In 1721, as the result of a land speculation failure, German immigrants were given land in the area by Governor Bienville. These were soon joined by French, Spanish, Italian, and other nationalities. In 1776, the French Acadians joined those already in the parish. In 1808, the colony was named St. Charles, after the old church parish that had existed under the French rule. In 1872, the town of **Hahnville**, named for Michael Hahn, a plantation owner in the area, was established as the parish seat.

In earlier years, flooding limited development of the parish and necessitated an elevated type of building structure to prevent extensive flooding damage. Reminders of early plantation life exist in several outstanding plantation homes.

Springing from agricultural beginnings, St. Charles Parish is now one of the major industrial areas of the state with many plants located along the Mississippi River. Sugarcane continues to be an important crop. Commercial fishing and cattle raising are also important.

ST. HELENA PARISH

OUT OF A MARSHY LAND overgrown with palms and entangled with vines and undergrowth and even inhabited by wild beasts, the parish of St. Helena was formed in the year 1810. Prior to this time, it was part of West Florida held by Spain. In 1810, the inhabitants defeated the Spaniards and declared their holdings a free state and asked to be admitted to the Union. When West Florida became a part of the United States in 1810, the territory was divided into parishes, of which St. Helena was one.

The earliest settlers were the French and Spanish. Acadians, expelled from Canada by the English, settled in the parish sometime in 1760. After the Revolutionary War, immigrants from North and South Carolina and Georgia arrived. A courthouse was built in Montpelier, but when a portion of the parish was taken off, the parish seat was moved to **Greensburg**.

In the early days of the parish, cotton was the principal crop. Farmers later turned to strawberries, beans, cucumbers, and so on. Today, dairy and beef cattle are important to the economy.

ST. JAMES PARISH

ST. JAMES PARISH is midway between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, divided by the Mississippi River. Originally inhabited by the Houma and Chitimacha tribes, it is one of the original nineteen parishes created in 1807. Before its creation as a civil parish, St. James Parish formed a part of the “Comte D’Acadie” or County of Acadia. The original parish seat was on the west bank at St. James. In 1869, it was moved to the east bank. The site is known as **Convent** and is presently the parish seat.

St. James can boast of many prominent citizens, including André Bienvenu Roman, twice governor of Louisiana. There are many beautiful churches and other structures in the parish, including St. Michael's Catholic Church in Convent, Jefferson College, and Oak Alley. Built in 1836, Oak Alley was originally called Bon Sejour. The name was later changed because of the magnificent double row of oaks leading up to the home. During the Civil War, it was used as a barracks by the Union forces.

St. James Parish is the bonfire capital of the world. Lighting bonfires along the river is a custom carried on since the days of the early French and German settlers. On Christmas Eve, miles of bonfires on the levees appear as a prelude to Midnight Mass. It is a glowing tribute to the Spirit of Christmas and, according to folklore, a light for Papa Noel.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH is located in the heart of the sugar-producing parishes, thirty-five miles up the Mississippi River from New Orleans. It is the second permanent settlement in Louisiana, established in 1724 and often called "La Côte des Allemands," or the German Coast. In June 1721, a band of some three hundred Germans under the command of Karl Frederick D'Arensbourg landed on the west bank of the river in the area now known as Lucy. Jacques Villeré, D'Arensbourg's grandson, was born at Lucy and became the second governor of the state of Louisiana and the first Creole (Louisiana-born person of pure European descent) to hold that office.

In 1771, the first church in St. John the Baptist Parish was built by descendants of the German immigrants in what is now called Edgard on the west bank of the river. The church was dedicated to St. John the Baptist and gives the parish its civil name.

In 1764, bands of Acadians arrived in the area and settled at a place now known as Wallace. Spanish people arrived in 1768. The early settlers saved the New Orleans population from famine when their supply ships failed to arrive. Every Saturday, they rowed downriver with boats filled with produce to sell on Sunday mornings in front of what is now Jackson Square. In 1807, the Territory of Orleans was divided into twelve counties. Later the County of the German Coast was divided into nineteen parishes, of which St. John the Baptist was one. The first parish seat was in Lucy; in 1848, it was moved to **Edgard**.

The growing, harvesting, and refining of sugarcane, vegetable farming, and fishing were the main sources of income for families living in St. John the Baptist Parish through the mid-1900s. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the petroleum-refining industry brought new growth and change.

Many antebellum homes are found in the area, including the Evergreen and Reserve Plantation Houses. The people of St. John the Baptist have retained many old customs, including country fairs and the burning of bonfires on the levee on Christmas Eve.

ST. LANDRY PARISH

THE AREA OF ST. LANDRY PARISH was originally inhabited by the Atakapa tribe. After Louisiana was transferred from France to Spain in 1762, the Spaniards built a military and trade post at Opelousas in 1765. It became the governing center of the entire southwestern part of Louisiana. Early settlers of the area were joined by French Acadians. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, many English-speaking persons moved into the area.

St. Landry Parish, named for the Saint Landry Catholic Church, was established as a parish in 1807. Since then, six other parishes have been formed from the territory. **Opelousas**, the parish seat, was always an important trading center. It served as the location of the State Land Office for many years, and the Supreme Court once sat here. The towns of Washington and Port Barre became important shipping points through the Atchafalaya and Courtableau Rivers.

During the early days, stock raising was a major activity. Later, parish farmers grew cotton and sweet potatoes. Many other crops are also produced.

ST. MARTIN PARISH

THE ATAKAPA TRIBE lived in St. Martin Parish before Europeans settled in the territory. In 1760, Gabriel Fuselier de Clair purchased a tract of land from the Atakapa, a tract located west of the present town of St. Martinville. Acadians began to arrive in the area about 1755. One group, led by Joseph Broussard, settled along the Teche and other streams in the parish. In 1765, the Acadian migration to the area began in earnest. In 1788, it was estimated that there were 4,000 Acadians in the section. The Acadians greatly influenced the history and culture of the area.

In 1807, when Louisiana was divided into nineteen parishes, St. Martin formed the nineteenth and included what would later become several other parishes. It was not until 1868, after several new parishes were created, that St. Martin comprised the territory that it is today. **St. Martinville** is its parish seat.

One of the best-known stories of the Acadians' exile is that of Evangeline, which has been immortalized in poetry. Though many years have passed since the fictional Evangeline walked the shores of Bayou Teche in Longfellow's poem, much remains the same in St. Martin Parish.

ST. MARY PARISH

THE PARISH OF ST. MARY was founded in 1811 when the legislature of Orleans Territory passed an act to divide the County of Attakapas (named after that tribe) into two parishes. The southern part was called St. Mary while the northern part was designated as St. Martin. **Franklin** became the parish seat of St. Mary Parish in 1811.

Morgan City had its beginning in 1797 with a grant of land to Joseph and Elinor Berwick. It was first called Tiger Island. It was later changed to Brashear and still later to Morgan City. It was settled by

Acadians first, and later by English, Scottish, Polish, Corsican, Genoese, Spanish, and American-born immigrants. The navigable waterways branching out in every direction from Morgan City have gained in importance through the years since the days of the pioneer settlers.

Glencoe, a small community in the western part of the parish, can claim the distinction of having built the first community-owned schoolhouse in Louisiana. Franklin, the parish seat, has many beautiful antebellum homes and is famous for producing carbon black. On the west bank of Bayou Teche near Clarenton live the descendants of the only surviving Native American tribe in this section, the Chitimacha.

ST. TAMMANY PARISH

ST. TAMMANY PARISH was named after a Delaware chief, Tamanend. Archaeologists say that Tchefuncte, a village site on the northeastern shores of Lake Pontchartrain, was inhabited by the Acolappissa tribes between 1000 BC and AD 1000. The Tangipahoa, the Acolappissa, and the Choctaw tribes all were in the area at one time or another. In June 1699, Bienville explored the Pearl River on a peace mission to the Acolappissa tribe near Honey Island. In 1762, St. Tammany, as part of the Biloxi District of Louisiana, was ceded to Spain by the French. It became part of British West Florida at the close of the Seven Years' War in 1763.

Beginning in 1785, settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas joined earlier British settlers along the Tchefuncte, Pearl, and Bogue Chitto Rivers. In 1810, the settlers of the Florida Parishes drove the Spaniards out. Governor W. C. C. Claiborne divided Feliciana into four parishes, one of them being St. Tammany Parish. In 1819, the northern part was made into Washington Parish. **Covington** was founded as Wharton on July 4, 1813, and became the parish seat in 1829. In 1828, the Covington Academy was established, and in 1837, the Covington Female Academy was started. The first Baptist church in Louisiana, the Half Moon Baptist Church on Bogue Chitto River, was built in 1811. Also in 1811, Coquille, known today as Madisonville, was founded. Mandeville was founded in 1834 and Slidell in 1882. Abita Springs and Folsom have founding dates back to the early days of the parish.

The citizens of St. Tammany have recognized that its natural advantages—mild healthful climate, medicinal spring water, fresh and salt water fishing, and recreational facilities—have made it a vacationer's Eden.

TANGIPAHOA PARISH

THE MEANING OF *TANGIPAHOA* is Native American in origin and is associated with corn, which was and is grown here in abundance. West Florida, of which Tangipahoa Parish was a part, was claimed by the British in 1763-1783. Settlers of English, South European, Scottish, and Irish descent began arriving in the Florida Parishes at different times. Tangipahoa Parish was created in 1869 and has approximately 823 square miles. The parish seat is **Amite**.

A famous event of the parish was the coming of the railroad in 1854. Today, the line is the Illinois Central, which calls itself the "Main Line of Mid-America." Transportation was the factor that brought to this area the establishment of Camp Moore, a principal training point during the Civil War.

Tangipahoa Parish has long been famous for its beautiful flowers and magnificent gardens. With adaptable climate and rich soil, flowers can be grown year round. In their season, nowhere are azaleas and camellias more beautiful in their astonishing variety. Roses and many kinds of lilies, even orchids, thrive in the area.

TENSAS PARISH

TENSAS PARISH was formed from the upper part of Concordia Parish in 1843. It was increased in size to 623 square miles in 1861 when a part of Madison Parish was annexed. The parish was named for the Tensas tribe who originally lived in the area, as recorded by the French explorer La Salle. Iberville, in his explorations, also had contact with the tribe.

The parish seat is **St. Joseph**, originally known as Densmore's Landing, for John Densmore, the first permanent settler. The name of the town of Waterproof, settled around 1830, is truly a misnomer, because on several occasions the entire town has been covered with two to three feet of water.

The town of Newellton, founded in 1875, was named for the Newell family, early settlers. Tensas Parish is one of the most fertile parishes in the state. Agriculture has been important in the parish, and cotton is the most important crop. Oil was first discovered in 1942. The lumber business has also assumed more importance in recent years.

TERREBONNE PARISH

TERREBONNE PARISH was created in 1822, at the insistence of Henry Schuyler Thibodaux, who was then president pro tempore of the state Senate. The parish seat is **Houma**, the principal city in the parish, founded in 1834.

The earliest inhabitants of Terrebonne were the Chitimacha, the Washa, and the Chawasha. Later, the Houma people were driven down from the Baton Rouge area. The French and some Spanish were among the earliest settlers, bringing with them European and Acadian customs, the Catholic religion, and predominantly the French language.

Early on, the planting and harvesting of indigo played an important role in the development of the area. Later, sugarcane and timber replaced indigo. The oil boom of the 1940s had an important part in the history of Terrebonne and still plays a major part in the economy of the parish.

Terrebonne has its share of plantation homes. Many customs from the past are still popular today. One of those is the "fais-do-do," or all-night dance. Another old custom is a "charivari." On a person's second marriage, friends and relatives would go to the married couple's home about bedtime beating on pots and pans. This was referred to as "beating them out," and it went on until the newlyweds invited the revelers in to a party.

UNION PARISH

FEW AREAS OF THE STATE have had such a colorful history as Union Parish. In the spring of 1700, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis and seventeen French Canadians explored the length of the stream that would be named for one of his men, Derbanneor D'Arbonne, and the area that would eventually be Union Parish. In 1790, John Honeycutt was granted the tract of land that is now Union Parish. Following close behind Honeycutt were settlers from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee.

In 1839, Union Parish was created out of the northern part of Ouachita Parish, and **Farmerville** was made the parish seat. From the 1830s to the 1850s, settlers from Alabama and Tennessee entered the area.

A broken romance in 1855 was responsible for the song "In the Gloaming." It was in Marion, a small town in the northeastern part of the parish, that the tragic romance occurred that prompted Anna Portesque Harrison to write the beloved melody. Union Parish is also the birthplace of four governors of two states.

VERMILION PARISH

VERMILION PARISH was created in 1844 from a part of the Attakapas County. It was named Vermilion for the Vermilion Bayou. The French colonists used the word *vermilion* to describe the bayou's dark cinnamon-red waters.

Most of the early historical facts about Vermilion Parish were lost in a fire that destroyed the courthouse and records in 1885. The parish seat at that time was Perry; the present parish seat is **Abbeville**.

Before the arrival of the Acadians, the area was mostly populated by the Atakapa. The Atakapa were almost eliminated in a tribal war a few years before the arrival of the French and Spanish settlers.

Rice is the main crop in Vermilion Parish. Abbeville, Kaplan, and Gueydan have rice mills and driers from which rice is exported to many parts of the world. Sugarcane is also an important crop. Oil production has recently become an important part of the economy.

VERNON PARISH

THE PRESENT BOUNDARIES OF LOUISIANA were established in 1819 when Spain relinquished its claim to the territory east of the Sabine River, territory that had previously been a neutral territory frequently inhabited by outlaws. In 1835, the Caddo tribe sold their lands in the northwestern part of the state for \$80,000, and this resulted in rapid settlement of the territory. Vernon Parish was created in 1871 from portions of Natchitoches, Rapides, and Sabine parishes. **Leesville** is the parish seat. No authentic records have been found as to the reason the parish was given the name Vernon, but several stories have been told, including one that claims it was named for George Washington's home, Mount Vernon.

Most of the early settlers in Vernon Parish were en route to Texas. Some stopped to rest animals; others were stopped by rain-swollen streams. Whatever the reason, some stayed to become the first settlers. Watermills sprang up along the creeks, where they ground corn, ginned cotton, and sawed lumber. There were such mills on Sandy Creek, Mill Creek, Bird's Creek, Whisky Chitto Creek, and

Bayou Quorie. Cotton and cattle were the main sources of income. Timber, cut from the virgin forests, was also a source of income. Churches were scattered over the Vernon Parish area long before the Civil War, some as early as 1835.

The Naval Stores of New Orleans moved its operation into Vernon Parish about 1915 and established turpentine camps at Hutton, Hornbeck, Slagle, and Old Groves Field. Transportation, slow and difficult in the early days, improved with the completion first of gravel, then of paved roads. When World War II loomed on the horizon, Camp Polk was started south of Leesville in January 1941, and the military post continues today.

WASHINGTON PARISH

IN THE HEART OF A REGION that was originally one of the finest longleaf yellow pine sections of the South is located Washington Parish and the “Magic City of Bogalusa.” This border parish, named for George Washington, was established in 1819. The parish was part of the Florida Parishes since they were part of the territory called West Florida. The region has been under the flags of France, Great Britain, Spain, the Florida Republic, the Confederate States of America, and the United States.

Most of the settlers came from North and South Carolina and Virginia via Kentucky and Tennessee. The area was originally inhabited by the Choctaw. There were boundary changes in 1826, in 1869, and in 1912 when the present boundaries were established. Franklinton was made the temporary parish seat on February 10, 1821. But because of location and boundary disputes, it was not until July 4, 1826, that **Franklinton** became the permanent parish seat.

Travel in the parish was difficult at first. During the War of 1812, General Jackson led his army along the famous “Military Road” through Washington Parish to the site of Covington. Some signs of the old crossings remain even today. The original Choctaw Trail was made a parish road, later becoming the Hackley Road. A Choctaw School was located on this road prior to and after 1893.

WEBSTER PARISH

IN 1811, ISAAC ALDREN established the first home in what is now Webster Parish, just east of what is now Minden. Shongaloo is one of the oldest settlements in the parish, being occupied first by the Caddo. About 1835, a religious communal settlement called Germantown was established near Minden. Most of the followers were of German descent.

Webster Parish was officially established by the legislature in 1871 from territory taken from Bossier, Claiborne, and Bienville parishes. It was named for Daniel Webster. The temporary parish seat, Overton, became a ghost town as a result of yellow fever, so **Minden** was chosen as the first official parish seat.

In the early years of Webster Parish, Minden became known as a marketing and educational center. Springhill, thirty-five miles north of Minden, had its beginning in 1896. Other major towns in the parish include Cullen, Cotton Valley, Sarepta, Sibley, Doyline, Dubberly, and Heflin.

The climate is mild and very pleasant for most of the year. Recreational areas such as Caney Lake, Lake Bistineau, and Ivan Lake are found in the area.

WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH

WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH, one of the smallest parishes in the state, was established in 1807 as one of the nineteen parishes into which the Orleans Territory was divided. The early settlers found the area to be inhabited by Native Americans, and mounds still exist today. The oldest parish settlement, Brusly Landing, was incorporated in 1901 and was the largest settlement until 1910 when Port Allen outgrew it. The parish seat of **Port Allen** was laid out in 1854 as the town of West Baton Rouge, but was renamed Port Allen in 1878 to honor Governor Henry W. Allen.

Just as the river offered its many advantages to the settlers, it also took its toll of lives, property, and produce. One of the most disastrous floods occurred in 1826 when the levee, such as it was, broke.

Produce of the parish has been varied and bountiful through the years, but sugar is still a very important crop. Sugar refineries still operate along the River Road. These “sugar houses” are remnants of very large plantations that once graced the water’s edge, and some are still operating as they did in the past.

WEST CARROLL PARISH

WEST CARROLL PARISH was originally part of a land grant given in the 1790s by the King of Spain to Baron de Bastrop. General John Adair purchased from Baron de Bastrop the part of the grant that is now West Carroll Parish. In 1832, Carroll Parish was formed out of the eastern portion of Ouachita Parish and the northern portion of Concordia Parish. Carroll Parish was named in honor of Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In 1877, Carroll Parish was divided into two portions, with West Carroll Parish being that part west of Bayou Macon. The parish seat was located in Floyd until 1917, when it was moved to **Oak Grove**. Long before exploration of the area by Bienville, the first white man to enter the parish, it was inhabited by Native Americans, as evidenced by mounds located at Poverty Point near Epps.

The main street of Oak Grove, the current parish seat, is the same trail blazed by Bienville and his company. The first schools in the area were at Floyd before the Civil War, Forrest in 1865, Oak Grove in 1870, and Motley Place in the 1890s. In 1807, a traveling minister, Moses Floyd, came to the west bank of the Macon River and built a church. West Carroll Parish has nine towns and villages, including Epps, Darnell, Pioneer, Forest, Goodwill, Oak Grove, Terry, Chickasaw, and Kilbourne.

WEST FELICIANA PARISH

FELICIANA IS A SPANISH WORD MEANING “HAPPY LAND,” which aptly describes this parish. The area comprised a part of West Florida and was under Spanish rule until the Florida revolt in 1810. West Florida then became a part of the Orleans Territory. In December 1810, Feliciana Parish was formed. It was annexed to Louisiana in 1812. Feliciana Parish was divided to form East and West Feliciana parishes in 1824.

The St. Francisville area is the third-oldest settlement in Louisiana, behind Natchitoches and New Orleans. In 1700, the French established a post here called Ft. Ste. Reine (“Queen’s Fort”). The Houma tribe inhabited the area. It is recounted that Henri de Tonti, companion of La Salle, lived here for some time with them and was the first white man to live in the parish. **St. Francisville**, the parish seat, was not actually established until 1790.

When cotton was king, Bayou Sara was a great river port. Eventually, packet boats ceased their operations, and Bayou Sara lost its entity. The West Feliciana Railroad, chartered in 1831, was the third oldest in the United States and the first standard gauge railroad. The parish is recognized nationally for its beautiful antebellum homes, a great attraction for the many tourists who visit the area each year.

WINN PARISH

WINN PARISH, named after Walter O. Winn, was formed in 1852. Long before the French settlers founded colonies on Red River and Saline Bayou, three Native American tribes—the Pascagoula, Choctaw, and Tunica—inhabited the area. Henri de Tonti was the first white explorer from Europe to set foot in Winn Parish in 1690. He visited at Gansville and came to investigate the salt-making activities of the Natchitoches people at what is now Drakes Salt Licks on Saline.

Winnfield, incorporated in 1855, is the parish seat. It is appropriately called the “Forest Capital” of Louisiana because of its great timber products production. Winn Parish was the home of three governors, Huey P. Long, O. K. Allen, and Earl K. Long.

The Natchez Trace, called the Old Harrisonburg Road by many, is the oldest road in Louisiana. Waves of migration from the southeastern part of the United States came along this great midland route beginning in 1803, the year of the Louisiana Purchase. It continued until the 1830s and 1840s. The immigrants came mostly from Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. St. Maurice became one of the earliest settlements made by these people.

At St. Maurice, the old Prothro Mansion, built in 1824, has been restored. Sam Houston made his headquarters there while planning the campaign that gained Texas independence. During the Mexican War, General Zachary Taylor and his junior officers, Robert E. Lee, U. S. Grant, and Jefferson Davis, were guests of the Prothros.

Excerpts taken from *Bicentennial Louisiana: Historic Sketches and Regional Recipes from the Parishes*, sponsored by the Cultural Arts Committee, Louisiana Extension Homemakers Council.

Cover photograph: The East Feliciana Parish Courthouse in Clinton, built in 1840, is the oldest parish courthouse in Louisiana still in use.