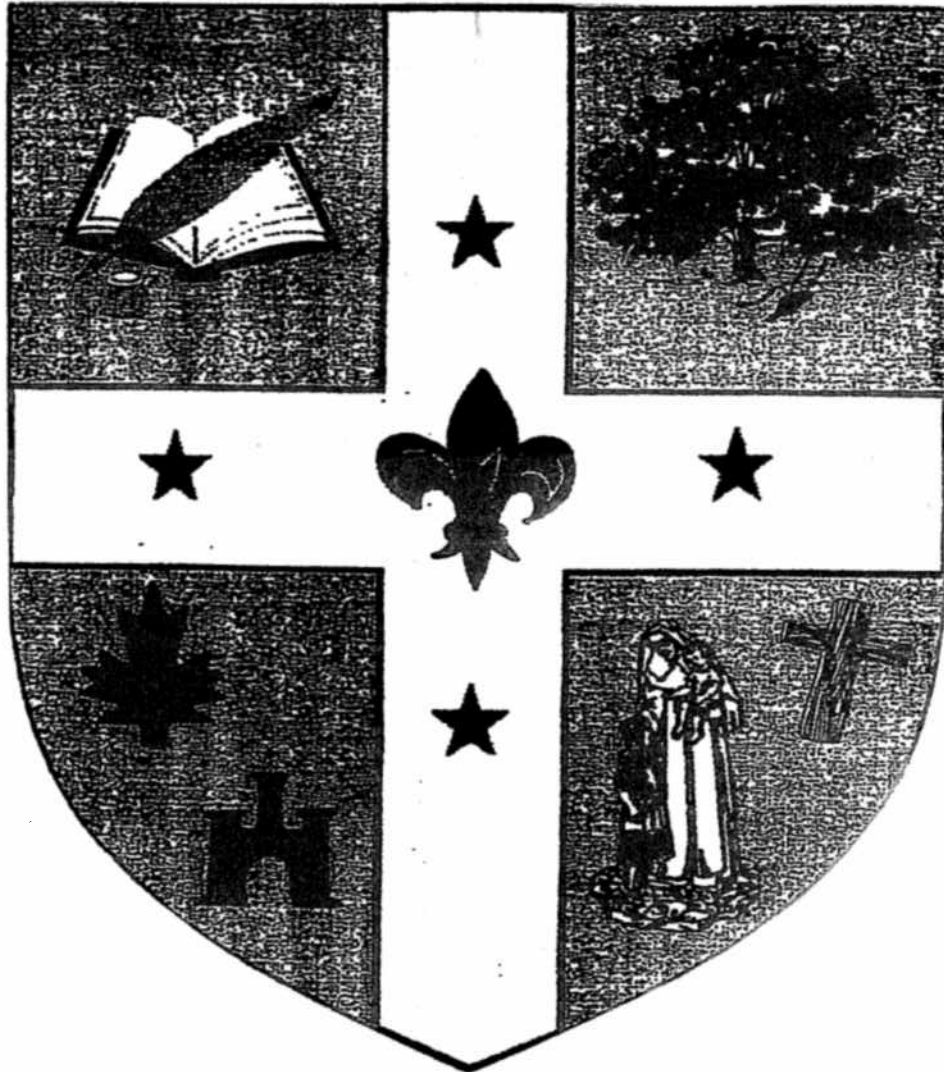


HISTORY OF CARENCRO

LAFAYETTE PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 3955 00713622 5



HISTOIRE DE CARENCRO

**A re-print from original by the
St. Pierre Genealogical Society**

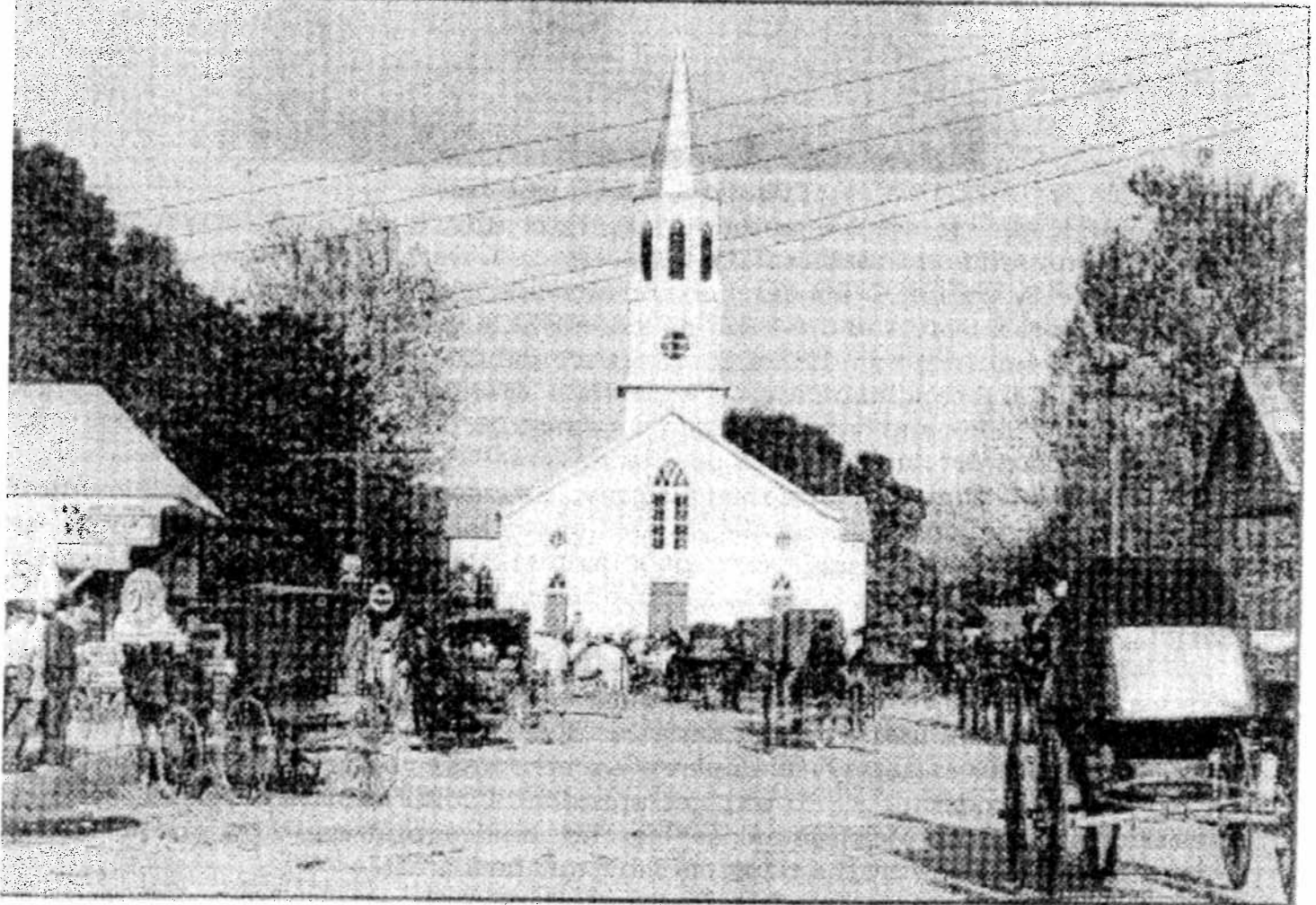
La
976.347
His

Chapter Six: From Village to Township

During the Civil War, Carencro was merely a settlement containing several houses and five stores. Then the 'big boom' occurred, and as was typical of most of the 'New South', the railroad was the driving force of change. At first it seemed that St. Pierre would be bypassed, for the railroad companies were concentrating on a route from New Orleans to Houston via Vermilionville, and no plans had been made to move northward.

A few years after the war, however, James G. Parkerson, agent for the Morgan Company, offered to extend a line from Vermilionville to Opelousas by way of St. Pierre. Two stipulations had to be met, that the right of way could be secured and a \$40,000 subscription could be raised from the business community, returnable in 10% deductions on freight and passenger fares when the line was complete. By October 23, 1880, the line was complete and passenger and freight trains were making regular trips through town. Dr. Francez spearheaded the venture and later donated land for the building of the Carencro Railroad Depot.

In the 1880s and 'Gay Nineties', Carencro became the largest shopping center in the area, trading with both Vermilionville and Opelousas, as well as Sunset and Grand Coteau. George Brown's hardware Store became a showcase for the area. ✓
Delhomme's Drygoods Store was equipped with the first telegraph connecting as far as Breaux Bridge and later installed the first telephone in the area.



St. Peter St. in 1910

With all the improvements being made around the turn of the century, one thing still was lacking, running water. Water for cooking had to be brought by bucket from the well and bathroom accommodations were very crude compared to today's standards. The outhouse in back was about as close as man could get to nature without being a bear in the woods.



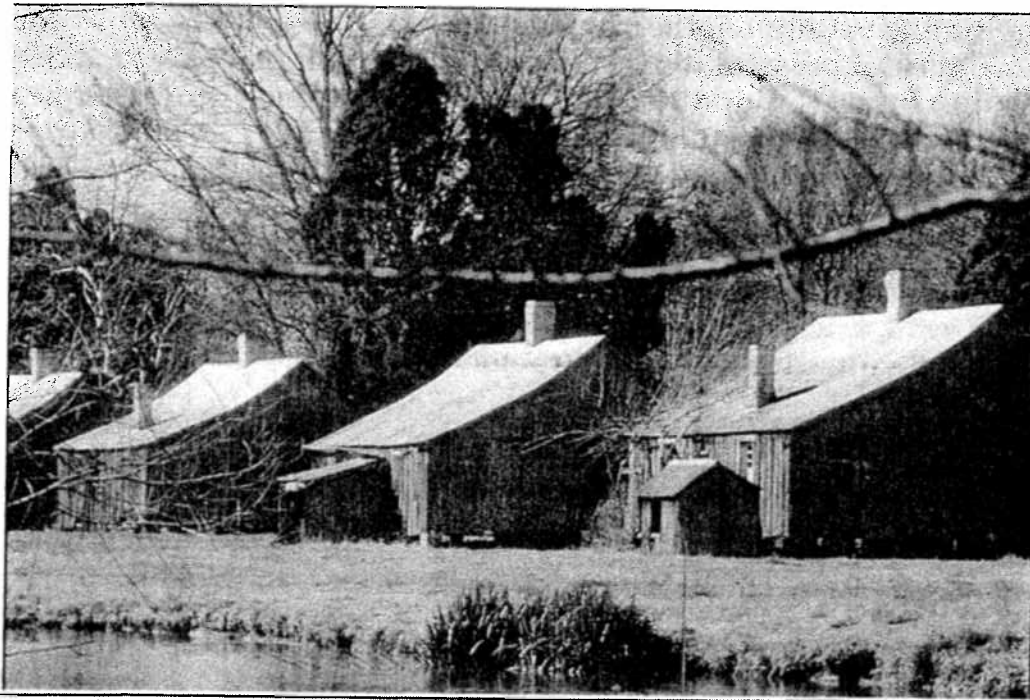
Typical family outhouse

Other leading merchants at the turn of the century included, Gaston Blot, A. Breaux, Broussard and Brothers, P.O. Couvillon, D. Daret, A.G. Guilbeau, G.H. Guilbeau, J.C. Martin, C. Michaud, Jacob Mitchell, and G. Schulen. Pierre Guchereau operated a brick factory and dry cleaning store; H. Kingham and Son had a broom factory; and John Brun had the Carencro Barrel and Cistern Factory.

By 1890, the population was 287 and the town had a 'good' hotel, town hall, two private schools, hook and ladder company. At the turn of the century, St. Pierre showed signs of development with a population of 445.

The construction of the railroad also gave a tremendous boost to the agricultural community as produce could now be shipped by rail meaning quicker return on investment for the farmers and ever expanding markets. Cattle and a variety of crops could now be shipped all over the south in a matter of days rather than weeks, bringing in more profits and a better standard of life for the St. Pierre Community.

With the rise in prosperity came the need for financial institutions to handle the increase in capital. In 1890, a branch of the Interstate Building and Loan was organized with D.A. Dimitry as president. In 1894, Carencro maintained a Wells Fargo & Co. with Dimitry as agent. The Bank of Carencro was established in 1906 with Odon Guidry as its president; S.P. Brown, vice-president; Louis Tapissier, second vice-president; and George Melchior as cashier. The bank continued to grow until 1920 when it was taken over by the Bank of Lafayette and Trust.



Typical slave quarters on a plantation

By the mid 1800s another industry was well developed in Carencro; sugar cane. Many farmers had their own cane patches and a small mill to produce their own sugar and syrup. The industry did well until the Civil War, when it suffered a setback and recovery was a slow process. By 1889, Carencro had two sugar factories: (1) mill owned by J.C. Couvillon and G.L. Singleton, (2) mill owned by Victor E. Dupuis. Mr. Dupuis was probably the most successful planter and manufacturer of sugar in Carencro. Through his efforts the Carencro Sugar Company, Limited, came into existence in 1894, with himself, Charles Brown, George Brown, and Jules Jeanmard each putting up \$4,000. ~~\$3,000~~ - ALSO VICTOR DUPUIS

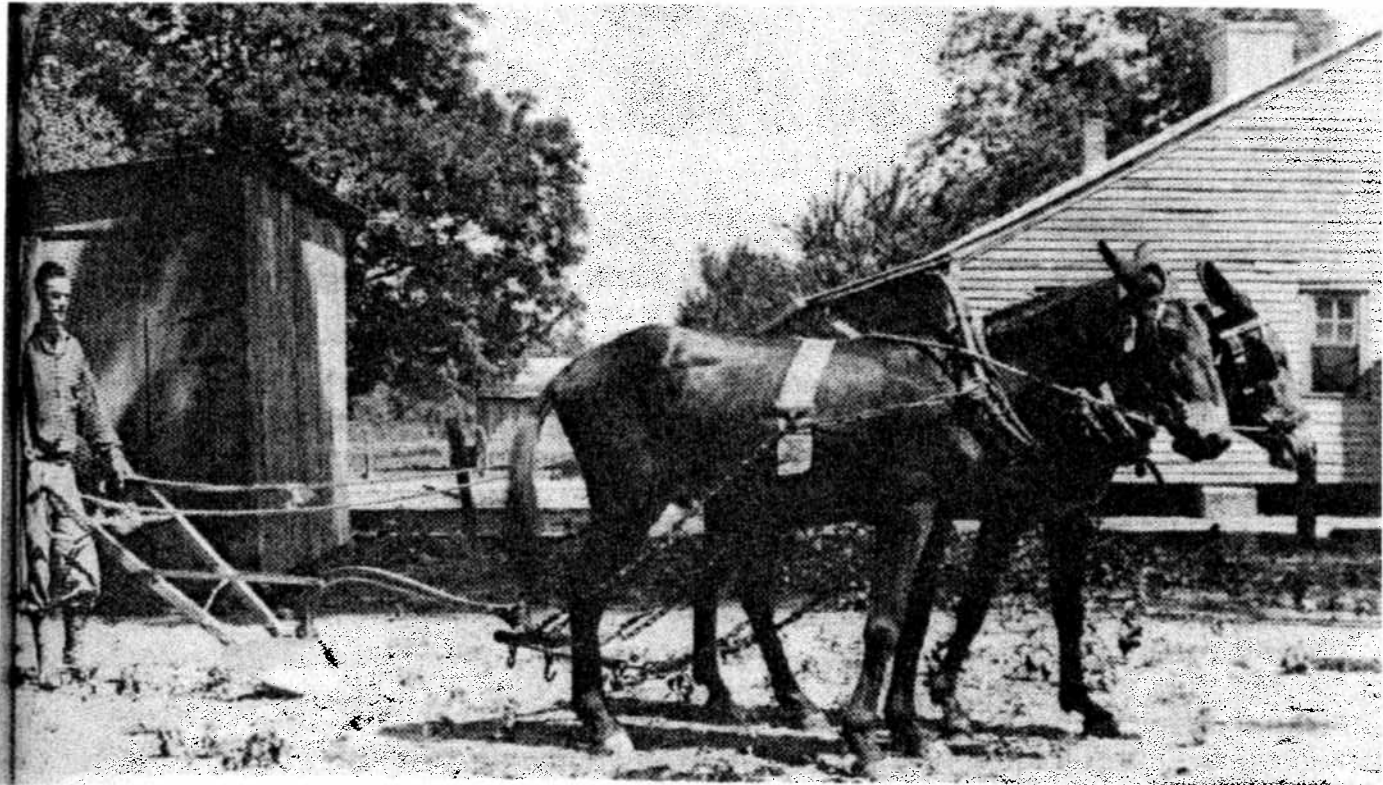
Several others like Onesime Breaux and the Conques brothers operated private mills and advertised that their syrup was "*made the old fashioned way without adulterants.*" Shortly after 1900, the growing of cane in the area dwindled, necessitating the closure of the refineries and private mills.



Sugar Cane going to the refinery

The planting of cotton, another big enterprise in Carencro, steadily increased after 1830. The most successful nineteenth century cotton planters included Pierre Bernard; Numa Breaux; Alce and Neuville Broussard; Charles Brown; Professor A.L. Guilbeau; J. Armas Guilbeau; Aurelien Leblanc and others.

When the original settlers began tilling the soil in the Carencro District, the only means of plowing was with a wooden plow made of oak stump drawn by oxen or steers. As ranchers began to raise horses, they were adopted to take the place of the cattle. A few mules were brought to the area and farmers took a liking to them and many made the switch. Eventually the Melancon brothers brought the age of machines to Carencro with the introduction of the tractor.



Arceneaux and his prize pair of mules return from the fields for lunch

Prior to 1876 cotton gins were operated by horsepower; Clemille and Ursin Cormier owning the first one. Carencro also had the first steam-powered gin built by Ovignac Arceneaux. It had the capacity to mill five bales of cotton per day. In 1887, Alphonse Chapman Guilbeau and J. Armas Guilbeau opened a gin and C.C. Brown and Alcide Broussard opened another. In 1891, the Carencro Union Ginnery, Limited, was chartered as the first electric cotton gin. The corporation was established by Numa Breaux, Charles Brown, Clemille Cormier, Victor Dupuis, Jean P. Francez, J. Armas Guilbeau, Valery Guilbeau, Constant Leger, Louis G. Stelly, and Henry Toll.

In 1889, 1,800 bales of cotton was shipped from Carencro Station; in 1891, the shipment included 10,335 pounds of cotton valued at \$85, 081.25; 12,230 pounds of seed cotton worth \$29,767.50; and 5,880 pounds of cotton seed, used for cattle feed, valued at \$1,470.

In 1945 Carencro had four cotton gins operating: Cotton Products Company Gin; Farmer's Gin; Esteve Martin Gin Co.; and People's Gin. In 1965, only two were still operating: Cotton Products Company Gin and Farmer's Gin. By 1975 these too had closed and all but put an end to the cotton era in Carencro.

City Officials:

Mayors:

A.C. 'Chap' Guilbeau	1874-1882
Dr. Romain Francez	1882-1904
George J. Melchior	1904-1914
Dr. Andre Prejean	1914-1920
George J. Melchior	1920-1928
R. A. Richard	1928-1934
L.L. Breaux	1934-1947
Dr. Andre Prejean	1947-1970
Robley A. Richard, Jr.	1970-1978
Tommie Angelle	1978-Present

*A BOARD SYSTEM
Prior to 1905*

Councilmen: (1905-1966)

Jules Jeanmard ✓	1905-1908 ✓	
A.C. 'Chap' Guilbeau	1905-1906	1908-1912
C.J. Richard	1905-1908	1912-1914
Dr. W.W. Lessley	1905-1908	
S.J. Breaux	1905-1908	
Ed. Miller	1905-1908	
Edgar Kilchrist	1905-1908	1912-1914
J.C. Martin	1906-1907	
E.J. Breaux	1906-1912	
Dr. Ursin Prejean	1908-1910	1914-1915
D. A. Dugal	1911-1912	
Odon Guidry	1912-1914	
George Martin	1914-1930	
Jules J. Guilbeau	1914-1926	
Henry J. Francez	1915-1926	
Clarence Bernard	1926-1942	
L.L. Breaux	1927-1934	
Martin F. Breaux	1930-1938	
R.A. Richard	1934-1952	
John B. Benoit	1938-1966	
Edgar Guilbeau	1942-1952	
Burton Andrus	1950-1961	
Leo Mary	1950-1953	
O.G. Richard	1952-1966	
Joseph P. Arceneaux	1952-1966	1974-1978
Riolan Coussan	1953-1966	
Freddie Mouton	1954-1966	
Robley Richard, Jr.	1962-1966	
Arnold Bernard	1966-1974	
Tommy Angelle	1974-1978	
Hillary Burleigh	1970-1978	
Nelson Quebedeaux	1974-1978	
Johnny Dugas	1974-1978	
J. L. Richard	1977-1998	

Again the task of rebuilding was undertaken by a new priest, Reverend A.B. Laforest. Before its completion, once more the church met a similar fate, being leveled by a tornado. The Lafayette Gazette of April 3, 1897, carried the tragic story:

"The destruction of the Catholic Church at Carencro on the night of March 28 can only be regarded in the light of calamity. Although not yet completed, it was one of the most handsome Structures of its kind to be found in the state and was the result of years of labor on the part of Father Laforest liberally assisted by the citizens of Carencro. Very little lumber can be utilized and the loss is a very heavy one as nearly \$9,000 had been expended in the construction of the building."

Although disheartened, the courageous priest and the people of Carencro once again set to the task of rebuilding the church. In 1899 the dearly loved Father Laforest was transferred to Abbeville and his departure was described in a local newspaper in this way:

"A large crowd of ladies and gentlemen assembled at the Southern Pacific depot last Wednesday to make their adieu to Rev. Fabien Laforest who left for his new parish, Abbeville, La. The Carencro Brass Band was in attendance and discoursed sweet music up to the time of the train's departure. There were sad faces and many tearful eyes in the throng, for all present had come to pay a parting tribute of respect and affection to the good pastor who had for nearly seven years, by his model life, energy, and hard work in their interest, proven himself a true friend and guide to his flock. The people of St. Peter's Parish while rejoicing in father Laforest's Promotion, part with him with heartfelt regret and is safe to say that untiring efforts for the good of his people, will live long in their memory."

The Reverend F.J. Grimeaux took over the parish in 1899 but only to see tragedy strike again in 1904. An altar boy who was lighting candles accidentally set the church on fire and it burnt to the ground. A young carpenter by the name of Hector Connolly set about the task of building a new church under the guidance of Father Grimeaux. The young artisan worked tirelessly at \$2.50 a day to eventually complete the 100 foot steeple.

Father Grimeaux served for nearly twenty five years until 1920 when he was replaced by Father Sarrazin, who served until 1923. The Reverend J.P. Ferret served from 1923 until his death in 1936; the Reverend Auguste Canon Viel was appointed new pastor and stayed until his retirement in 1947.

The new pastor Reverend August M. Wassler, an Alsatian, brought art and improvements which marked the beauty of the church and were a reflection of his administration. In 1950 he began the facelift by importing from France, beautiful stain glass windows, twelve of which depict the life of St. Peter. He also oversaw the placement of hand carved coats-of-arms on the pews, representing the ancestry and history of the people of St. Pierre. St. Peter's also has two altars designed and built in Belgium, displayed at the Chicago World Fair, purchased by St. John's Cathedral of Lafayette, and later donated by Bishop Jeanmard in 1936.

THERE IS THE
BISHOP'S/SEANMARD
COA ON THE 1ST
PEW

The Grand Jury and Ogel Roger, charged with killing Duplessin, was discharged.

Carencro, La., April 25, 1904

Next Saturday and Sunday a fair will be given here for the benefit of the new Catholic Church. Music and theatrical performances will furnish amusement, and refreshments will be provided in abundance.

Lafayette, La., July 17, 1904

The Hon. M. Billeaud, Jr. and brothers bought Huron Plantation containing 6,000 acres for \$51,000. The property belonged to an English syndicate for some time, that erected a large refinery and ginnery, but finally failed, and the whole outlay, including a short line of railway to Carencro, was sold at auction to P.J. Trezevant of Shreveport, from whom the Billeaud heirs bought it. It is the intention of the present owners to subdivide the tract and sell in small lots.

Carencro, La., Sept 26, 1904

Last night as a result of a Negro Ball in Carencro, Villamond Guidry shot and killed John Rubin, with Guidry himself being wounded in the affray. Sheriff LaCoste arrested Guidry.

Lafayette, La., Oct. 18, 1904

Deputy Sheriff Peck arrested today Frank O. Snelly, a negro, for committing a number of thefts in Carencro last Sunday. The negro stole a valuable gold watch from Father Grim and \$20 in cash, besides other articles, consisting of jewelry and clothing from different persons in the town; a part of the money and the watch were recovered.

Lafayette La., Oct. 16, 1904 ✓

Miss Lula Beauvais, of Thibodeaux, and Miss Anna Jeanmard, of Carencro, are guests of Mrs. J.R. Jeanmard of Lafayette. ✓

Carencro, La., Oct. 22, 1904

Highwaymen last night held up Marshal Louis Conques, of Carencro, and relieved him of \$600 in cash and a pistol. The officer was returning from the country when two negroes, or men disguised as such, sprang upon him and overpowered him in the streets of Carencro. Sheriff Lacoste and Deputy Peck have descriptions of the robbers and are endeavoring to run them down.

Lafayette, La., Oct. 30, 1904

Dr. and Mrs. Zack Francez, of Carencro, enjoyed the play at the Opera House last Thursday.

Carencro, La., Nov. 12, 1904

This morning, at an early hour, the residence of Dr. F.W. Courtney, at Carencro, was destroyed by fire. The loss, including furniture, will amount to over \$3,000, with no insurance.

Carencro, La., Nov. 20, 1904

Miss A. Patrie, who has been visiting in Breau Bridge for several weeks, has returned to her home in Carencro.

Lafayette, La., Nov. 27, 1904

Mr. Ned Brown, of Carencro, was in town Sunday.

Lafayette, La., Dec. 11, 1904

Mrs. W.G. Parker and Miss Josie Courtney, of Carencro, were in town today.

Lafayette, La., Dec. 25, 1904

WE NOW KNOW THAT
ANNA WAS PRESIDENT
OF CARENCRO IN 1904