1965

The Non-Professional Theatre in Louisiana, 1900-1925.

George Craft Brian
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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THE NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE IN LOUISIANA, 1900-1925.

Louisiana State University, Ph. D., 1965
Speech-Theater

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE IN LOUISIANA

1900 - 1925

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech

by

George Craft Brian
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1947
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1951
January, 1965
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XI. SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA, THE FLORIDA PARISHES

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Kentwood
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ABSTRACT

This treatise surveys non-professional theatrical activities in Louisiana from 1900 through 1925, by examining thirty-six communities for locally staged productions. Microfilmed and uncopied newspapers, printed programs, theses and dissertations, theatre histories, personal interviews and correspondence make up the sources of information from which this work is taken. It embraces a chronological tracing of the presentations including the promotion, development, and the objectives of organized amateur groups associated with them. The study identifies individuals who made contributions to the field of theatre in various localities. School and college productions also hold a prominent position, and this work focuses attention upon teachers who stimulated interest in dramatics at their respective institutions. The cities of Baton Rouge and New Orleans are excluded because they have been the subjects of study in similar investigations.

The writer has divided the dissertation into three time periods: the beginning of the twentieth century to the First World War, the war years, and the post war years up to 1926. During these periods Louisiana theatres went through a transformation from the lax type of dramatic club popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century to the well organized community little theatre groups formed in the second decade of the twentieth century. In the first two periods,
financial needs rather than entertainment motivated the domestic
players. Through 1913, stage activities were nearly always ini-
tiated to provide funds for various school, religious, and civic
causes. The war brought on a recession of activity in the amateur
theatre. After the armistice, the performers increased their
efforts and almost doubled the frequency of appearances. Although
philanthropic endeavors were not abandoned, and benefit performances
were still given, the actors began to see a value in placing some
of their profits in the promotion of the dramatic arts. They
hired directors, built theatres, and improved stage equipment to a
high degree by 1925. Educational institutions also made changes in
their theatrical activities. Moving from the stages of the opera
houses and community halls, the high schools began to give regular
productions in auditoriums of their own. Colleges began to acquire
teachers trained in performing arts to work with their students.
That most amateur groups and their coaches took the work and study
of the drama seriously is shown in the plays they selected, the
care they gave to the phases of their productions, and the overall
favorable responses from the audiences.

The investigation is divided into four major geographical
areas: Southwest Louisiana, the Bayou Country around Bayou Teche
and Bayou LaFourche, Southeastern Louisiana, and Northern Louisiana.
The areas have definite physical boundaries and their inhabitants
have specific backgrounds and temperaments. In general, South
Louisiana with its Latin influence represented a more active theatre picture than did the northern part of the state with its Anglo-Saxon foundations.

The study records special influences coming from outside Louisiana in the form of itinerant directors. These men and women represented dramatic production companies and used local people in the shows they presented.

By 1925, Little Theatres were springing up over the state. The senior class play was well established in high schools. College dramatic troupes were going on tour to present their plays. The interest in non-professional theatre in Louisiana was growing and the transition from the nineteenth century was leading into the modern, contemporary period.
INTRODUCTION

From the earliest times in this country, two principal divisions have existed in the theatre: the professional and the non-professional. Generally speaking the former has operated commercially and the latter has not. What the non-commercial theatre-worker lacks in financial support he usually compensates for with enthusiasm for the art. "After all, the amateur is the aristocrat of the theatre — for it was he who has frequently kept it alive when the professionals have so debauched the art that public denunciation or the law has closed the theatres."\(^1\) It is to the non-professional, or as it is frequently called, the amateur theatre, that this dissertation is devoted.

In part, the study is a chronological extension of the work accomplished by Clinton Bradford, The Non-Professional Theatre in Louisiana, which covered the beginning of native theatrical activities up to the year 1900. Bradford determined the extent of the activities in various communities of the state during the last century, the degree to which these performances were offered by local organizations, and some evaluation of the quality of the activities.

---

productions. The present investigation complements the earlier study as well as notes changes or transitions made in the objectives of the various acting groups. It includes the kinds and number of productions they presented, the development of native dramatic talent, and the audience reception of the non-professional theatre throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century.

During the opening decades of the twentieth century specific influences changed the non-professional theatre. For one thing, the domestic players became more conscious of their art and began doing plays and other forms of entertainment for the joy of performance rather than for the purpose of raising money for other organizations. According to Glenn Hughes, this artistic sense was influenced by the Free Theatre movement reaching this country from Europe. Little theatres began springing up in the United States as early as 1912 and first reached Louisiana in 1917 with the formation of Le Petit Theatre in New Orleans; college theatres and

---


3 In a letter dated April 30, 1963, Paul Nolan, Professor of English at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and the author of several articles on the subject of dramatic literature in Louisiana, stated, "I was pleased to receive your letter and to know that you are working on The Non-Professional Theatre in Louisiana from 1900 to 1925...and I think it is really a more important one that you are working with than the professional theatre studies. It should be most valuable in an understanding of the development of native talent."


public high schools began regularly organized theatrical activities by the beginning of the second decade. 6

The American playwright Augustus Thomas (1857-1934) advocated the promotion of amateur dramatic societies and little theatres in his autobiography entitled The Print of My Remembrances.

They may infer that the money side of the return is of the lesser worth; that the debating society, the dramatic club, the singing school, the art class, the pursuits that invite brain to the finger tips, and to become articulate, are the interests that make life eloquent. They may even come to have opinions and to believe that the amount of self-expression encouraged and protected in any country is the measure of liberty in that country. 7

Another cause for change in the non-professional theatre was the construction of new buildings which could be used by the performing arts. These new structures were school auditoriums, buildings for community activities, playhouses for little theatre groups, church educational buildings, and motion-picture houses with stage facilities. More places in which productions could be done with ease resulted in more activities by non-professionals.

This study, therefore, investigates and reports the amount and forms of theatrical activities, including the events—plays, musical programs, and other performances; the organized groups—


schools, churches, communities; and the individual contributors—school administrators, teachers, directors, workers, actors and other personalities—indigenous to Louisiana and responsible for the development of the non-professional theatre.

The dissertation excludes Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and part of the activities in Shreveport. Non-professional theatre in Baton Rouge during the period of this investigation is recorded in an earlier work.\(^8\) In the judgment of this writer, the extensity of similar activities in New Orleans during this time is worthy of an independent study. The Little Theatre in New Orleans from 1917 to 1923 has been previously studied.\(^9\) Two writers have investigated the Little Theatre and the dramatic productions of Centenary College in Shreveport.\(^10\)

The present research considers theatrical activities in thirty-six communities—plus those not previously covered in Shreveport—during the first twenty-six years of this century.

Although motion-pictures are not the subject of this writing


\(^9\)Baldwin, op. cit.


their influence upon the theatre cannot be overlooked. In his book The Living Theatre, Elmer Rice writes concerning the introduction of the films upon the national entertainment scene:

... An increasingly large section of theatre-goers was developing more sophisticated tastes, and the bald melodramas, simple-minded farce-comedy, and treacly romances that had occupied the stage for so long now seemed outmoded and artistically unsatisfying. However, this was exactly the sort of fare that was ideally suited to the movies, which catered to a mass audience composed largely of adolescents and children. Consequently the movies siphoned off from the theatre that part of the audience whose preference was for the trite, the obvious, and the conventional, making possible the development of a more adult drama.

The Louisiana amateurs did attempt to enter the field of motion-pictures and with the help of one or two professional cameramen and directors some communities (i.e. Crowley, Opelousas, and Shreveport) produced local pictures, but these efforts were never carried beyond a single endeavor.

Sources of materials for this work include original and micro-filmed newspapers, printed programs from libraries and private collections, theses and dissertations, books on the theatre, and personal interviews or correspondence with persons who were interested in amateur theatre during the period.

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11Daily and weekly newspapers published in Louisiana in the first part of the twentieth century provide a major source of information on the amateur theatre in the state from 1900 to 1925. The microfilm and newspaper departments of the Louisiana State University Library have the largest collection of newspapers in the state. The newspapers of Alexandria are kept on microfilm in that city at the office of the Daily Town Talk and at the Rapides Parish Library.
The dissertation is divided into three time periods: 1900 to World War I, the war years, and the post war years through 1925.

The geographical areas correspond to several cultural backgrounds which divide twentieth century Louisiana into four sections: Southwest Louisiana, the Bayou Country, the Florida Parishes, and North Louisiana. Southwest Louisiana on the prairies extending westward to Texas, and the Bayou Country in the south central part of the state are influenced by the French and Acadian culture. The Florida Parishes are located east of the Mississippi River with a culture somewhat influenced by the large cities of Baton Rouge and New Orleans. North Louisiana, above and including Alexandria, is dominated by its strong American pioneer foundations. South Louisiana is French and Catholic, while North Louisiana is Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. There is no general agreement among students, however, on just where to draw the line.12

The chapters are arranged chronologically by geographical divisions previously designated. Each community is examined individually in order to determine its contribution to local theatrical offerings and its importance in the developing picture of the state's theatrical accomplishments. A summary follows each of the three time periods with a final summary drawing conclusions from the entire investigation.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

TO WORLD WAR I

1900 TO 1914
CHAPTER I

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

1900 TO 1914
Southwest Louisiana, described by geographers as a lowland averaging about fifty feet above sea level, is composed of prairies extending roughly sixty miles north of Lake Charles to eighty miles above Lafayette. The people are mostly farmers dealing largely in rice. Lumber is an important industry, and after 1901, oil became a valuable natural resource. Abbeville, Crowley, Jennings, Lafayette, and Lake Charles are the towns considered in this chapter. South of these prairie towns are the swampland and the Gulf of Mexico.

Abbeville

Abbeville, established in 1845 by French speaking settlers and located in the midst of a rich agricultural section of Southwest Louisiana, is the seat of government for Vermilion Parish. Later, American immigrants gave the community a bilingual and bicultural atmosphere.

The population of Abbeville, according to the United States census of 1910, was 2,907. Although there were some Protestants, Catholicism was the prevailing religion, and there was a public as well as a parochial school system including Mt. Carmel, a large

---

convent erected in 1885,\textsuperscript{2} and the Abbeville High School. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, both of the educational institutions were presenting plays in the local opera house, and after 1913, in the Victor Theatre.

The number and variety of amusements such as carnivals, circuses, bazaars, plays, musicals, and motion pictures presented in the small community during the first years of the century indicated that the people of Abbeville were a fun-loving and a theatre-going folk.

The local newspaper carried no reports of amateur or professional theatrical performances in the year of 1900. During 1901, however, there was talk of organizing the Abbeville Concert Band.\textsuperscript{3} An occasional motion picture was shown at the courthouse, and some professional players trod the boards at French Hall, the opera house.

The French Benevolent Society built the opera house in 1880 and it was remodeled by F. F. Feray in 1887.\textsuperscript{4} Thus it was twenty years


\textsuperscript{3}Abbeville Meridional, February 17, 1901. By the following season (August, 1902) the Abbeville Band was giving weekly concerts under the leadership of Professor H. W. Pate.

old at the turn of the century. The editor of The Meridional, dis-
satisfied with French Hall as it stood in 1903, wrote:

Of course we already have a playhouse—one erected
at considerable expense—but we believe that everyone
will agree with us when we say that it is not a credit-
able one for our progressive and growing city, the
seating capacity is not large and likewise the stage.  

Even the town band did not often use the opera house. During
the warmer months, the musicians gave open-air concerts, and the
band boys offered some specialties which they called vaudeville.  

On June 19, 1903, the closing exercises of Abbeville High School,
which took place in the opera house, included dramatic performances
typical of the graduation programs at that time.

Closing Exercises of Abbeville High School

1. Chorus ........................................... Happy Greeting
2. Nymphs of the Elements
   Part I
   Chorus ........................................... Dawn
   Chorus ........................................... Hymn of the Sun
   The Sun ......................................... Master Nelson Theall
   Nymphs of the Sunbeams .................. 10 little girls
   Nymphs of the Showers .................... 10 boys
   Nymphs of the Rainbow ................... 10 girls
   Nymphs of the Breezes .................... 10 girls
   Nymphs of the Snowflakes ............... 10 boys
   Part II
   Chorus ........................................... Swedish Lullaby
   Nymphs of Starlight ....................... 18 small children
   Nymphs of Moonlight ..................... 8 young ladies tableau
3. Soldier Drill ................................ 16 boys

5 Abbeville Meridional, January 24, 1903.
6 Ibid., May 16, 1903.
4. Little Red Riding Hood
   a musical play in four acts
   Red Riding Hood ....................................................... Miss Annie Gordy
   Mother............................................................................ Miss Vivian Jolet
   Woodsman ........................................................................ Master Albert Steen
   Wolf ................................................................................ Master Ernest Erath
   Fairy Queen ........................................................................ Miss Ida Bourque
   Fairy attendants ......................................................... 8 small girls
   Scene 1 ................................................................. Little fairies waiting for their queen
   Scene 2 ................................................................. A Room
   Scene 3 ................................................................. A Wood
   Scene 4 ................................................................. Grandma's room

5. The Country School, a dialogue in one act
   Teacher ........................................................................ Master James McFarland
   Committee man ........................................................ Master Netley Young

6. Pantomime .................................................. Jesus, Lover of My Soul
   Misses Ouida Tabit, Idolie Trahan, Ester LeBlanc, Louis McFarland, Lizzie Stafford, Stella Jolet, Clara Darter, ETHEL Lyons, Zulma Davies, Amelina Dutel, Aline Abadie, Azelma Dunbon and Daisy Lovelance. 7

Later in 1903, a notice informed the public of a play, The Milk Maids' Convention, to take place on November 27 at French Hall. The announcement appeared, but no further report indicated whether or not the project succeeded. 8

Benefit fairs, bazaars, musicales, and concerts filled the season of 1904-1905. Professor H. W. Pate, director of the Abbeville Concert Band, presented The Elite Minstrels in November.

   The performance was put on by home talent exclusively under the auspices of the band boys. For nearly three hours did the audience remain in their seats, with a house crowded to overflowing capacity, which is evidence of their great enjoyment. From start to finish the

7Ibid., June 27, 1903.
8Ibid., November 21, 1903.
affair was highly entertaining, interspersed with sentimental and comic songs and jokes, with good orchestral music.9

The next amateur performance Hazel Kirke, written by Steele McKay in 1879, played at the opera house on April 19 and 20, 1906. The Ladies Aid Society of the Baptist Church sponsored the play, and Miss Jenny Holman Drause of New Iberia was the director.10

The students of Mt. Carmel Convent, who performed many of their programs at the opera house, gave three plays in 1906: Eugenia De Melfort, an English play, Les Deux Extremes, a French comedy, and L'Armoire Magique, a French drama.11

On May 28, 1908, the public school children presented The National Flower, a cantata, at French Hall, which, according to the newspaper was "a brilliant success."12

When H. W. Pate left the directorship of the Abbeville Concert Band, the entire community felt the loss, because he had promoted home talent in music and drama since 1898.13 To fill the vacancy the musicians secured the services of Ray E. Reeder,14 but the band was

9Ibid., November 25, 1905.
10Ibid., April 14, 1906.
11Ibid., April 28, 1906.
12Ibid., May 30, 1908.
13Bradford, op. cit., p. 444.
14Abbeville Meridional, June 6, 1908.
never again as active as it had been under Professor Pate.

An entertainment at French Hall for the benefit of the old Catholic Cemetery fence fund completed the non-professional stage activities of 1908. It consisted of vocal and instrumental music, recitations, pantomimes, and tableaux.15

The next three years, 1909 to 1912, were almost barren of amateur entertainments. In June, 1911, the graduating exercise of Abbeville High School included a night performance by the entire school in a cantata which "furnished an evening of pleasing entertainment of a concert nature."16

The Catholic Church presented A Woman's Honor, by Susan Glaspell, on November 1 at St. Ann's Hall, the educational building. The cast was as follows:

General Mark Lester . . . F. J. Samson
Oliver Glenn. . . . . Miss May Young
Robert Glenn) . . . . Henry S. Herbert
Dr. Garcia )
Maria . . . . . . . Mrs. F. Samson
Pedro . . . . . . . Raphael J. La Bauve
Gilbert Hall. . . . . Clifford Abshire
Ebenezer. . . . . . Paul Ecdier
Gregory Grimes. . . . Albert Nauek
Sally Glenn . . . . . Miss Roberta Young
Miss Willnie Bassick "presided at the piano and Mrs. Richard Dozier was the stage manager.17

15Ibid., December 6, 1908.
16Ibid., May 27, 1911.
17Ibid., November 4, 1911.
In May, 1912, the ladies in the church parish of St. Ann sponsored a two night performance of Because I Love You.  

Some months later Jacques Costello arrived in Abbeville to begin rehearsals for his production of The Royal Runaway to raise funds for the heating plant for the primary school building. The Royal Runaway, a comic opera written by Costello, was scheduled to be given at French Hall on December 6, but it was postponed for three days because of the illness of Roberta Young, a member of the cast.

In May, 1913, the Victor Theatre, which featured daily showings of motion pictures, opened in Abbeville. It possessed good stage facilities which accommodated that same month the closing exercises of Abbeville High School. The immediate use of the Victor Theatre for a school function emphasized the need for an auditorium at the high school.

The final note for the non-professionals in Abbeville in 1913 came in The Meridional on December 13.

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18 Ibid., May 25, 1912.

19 In all other newspapers of this period the name appeared as Jacques de Castillo. He was a traveling director from New Orleans who presented plays of his own composition in many of the high schools of Louisiana.

20 Abbeville Meridional, November 30, 1912.

21 Ibid., December 7, 1912.

22 Ibid., May 14, 1913.
The bazaar held last Saturday, Sunday and Monday at St. Ann's Hall for the benefit of the Catholic Church was very well patronized considering the hard times and the busy season. The plays and songs were excellent.

For several years after 1900, much of the entertainment in Abbeville was centered around the town band under the leadership of H. W. Pate and R. E. Reeder. The principal building used by performers from Abbeville Concert Band, Abbeville High School, and Mt. Carmel Convent was French Hall. St. Ann's Hall, an educational and recreational building, occasionally housed entertainments of the Catholic Church. Finally, in 1913, the Victor Theatre offered the Abbeville players the best place to perform since the turn of the century.

Crowley

Thirty miles to the north and west of Abbeville is located the town of Crowley which, in 1900, was twice the size of Abbeville. Crowley was founded on January 4, 1887, by two brothers, C. C. and W. W. Duson, and named after Pat Crowley, an Irish section foreman who ran the railroad line into the territory. It was known as "The Rice City of America," and as the seat of administration for Acadia Parish, grew rapidly, reaching a population of 4,214 by 1900.

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During the early years of the twentieth century, local entertainment took the form of concerts by the Crowley Citizens’ Band under the leadership of Professor Scarbrough, plays by the Crescent Dramatic Club and Crowley High School, and musical shows and minstrels by the Elks Club, performed at the Grand Opera House completed in 1901. The entertainers were busy early in the year 1900 as evidenced by the program given on the evening of January 23, at Simon’s Hall:

Piano Duet (sic) ................ Miss Wright, Mrs. Dr. Lyons
Vocal Solo ..................... Mrs. Foote (character song)

**EVANGELINE**

**cast of characters**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Actor</th>
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<td>Evangeline</td>
<td>Miss Lola Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangeline's father</td>
<td>W. E. Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Mr. Simons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel's father</td>
<td>Mr. Schultz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael, peddler</td>
<td>E. E. Foley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Felician</td>
<td>Mr. Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British soldiers and Acadians</td>
<td>Mrs. E. E. Foley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>Mrs. E. E. Foley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song, Annie Laurie, Acadia Quartette</td>
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The Breaux Bridge Musical and Dramatic Club came to Crowley and played at Duson's warehouse on August 17, giving recitations and musical numbers. The proceeds were divided with the Crowley Concert Band. 26

Until 1901, it had been difficult for amateur as well as professional entertainers to find a place to give a performance in


Crowley, but on November 19, a new opera house opened under the management of Dave Lyons, proprietor.\(^{27}\)

A year later the local performers made their first use of the new Grand Opera House when the Elks presented their *Crowley Mammoth Minstrel* on December 17. H. M. Bone was the interlocutor, and the end men were Dr. Steadman, Ben Goldsteirn, John Marshall, Dr. Ellison, Aaron Loeb, and Eddie Honley. The stage manager for the Elks' production was George S. Fergus.\(^{28}\)

As a means of raising money for the Christmas Fund, the local Crescent Dramatic Club, organized in 1902 for the purpose of promoting drama in Crowley, enacted the play, *The Lady of Lyons*, by Bulwer Lytton, at the opera house on December 19, 1902. So successful was the production that James L. Wright, the manager for the group, presented the show a second time, January 26, 1903, for the benefit of the Catholic Church. "Between the acts were no idle moments. The specialties of Mr. Alba Heywood (one time manager-actor of the Alba Heywood Peerless Musical and Specialty Company, but now head of the Heywood Oil interests in Louisiana) were even more than had been acclaimed by advanced press notices." The cast was as follows:

\(^{27}\)Ibid., November 20, 1901.

\(^{28}\)Ibid., December 18, 1902.
On the evening of April 27, the Crescent Dramatic Club presented Sheridan's *The Rivals* at the opera house in the interest of Crowley Military Company F. "The stage manager for the production was Mr. George H. Tinker, who deserves great credit for the staging and the general effectiveness of the 'business' in which he was coached by Mr. Joseph Jefferson himself." 30

Opelousas amateurs brought the comedy *Captain Racket* to the Crowley opera house on May 27, as a benefit for the Opelousas Military Company. The *Daily Signal* of May 30 reported that the play "was greeted by a small but select audience," and was "handled in a most pleasing manner and reflected great credit upon the entire cast."

The public schools of Crowley used the opera house for their closing exercises. On June 12, 1903, a large number of pupils took part in an operetta entitled *The Coronation of Flora, Queen of Flowers*. 31

29Ibid., January 27, 1903.
30Ibid., April 28, 1903.
31Ibid., June 13, 1903.
In the season 1904-1905, the non-professional performers presented a number of variety shows at the opera house, including two benefit performances by members of the Crescent Dramatic Club for Military Company F and for the Firemen, and a recital by students of Crowley High School at their commencement exercises on May 25, 1905.32

On November 10, 1905, talent from Crowley and the surrounding area gave the Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera, The Mikado, in the Grand Opera House. Alba Heywood, originally from Jennings, who was at that time living in Lake Charles, was the stage manager and also played the role of Koko. Miss Mary Greff of New Orleans was the musical director and also played Yum Yum. The Mikado was produced for the financial assistance of St. Michael's Catholic Church and Crowley Lodge No. 745 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks.33

In 1906, the Elks began the year with a minstrel at the opera house in which Hugh M. Bone, who had been the interlocutor in the 1902 minstrel, appeared again in the same role. Clint Draper and Harry Miller of New York directed the production. Fayette Carlton sang The Preacher and the Bear in such a manner that the writer for The Daily Signal wrote that he "did himself proud."34

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32 Ibid., May 26, 1905.
33 Ibid., November 11, 1905. Heywood appeared previously in Abbeville. See p. 16.
34 Ibid., January 2, 1906. The Miller and Draper Company produced minstrels throughout Louisiana during the years covered by this study.
J. S. Atkinson, "a New York stage director," came to Crowley to direct two hundred and fifty people, in only seven days, in a musical revue, *Echoes*. The show played at the opera house on January 24, 1906, for the benefit of the public school library.\(^{35}\)

The high school senior class night at the opera house on June 6, 1906, included a two-act farce, *A Box of Monkeys*, with Byron Thompson, Earl Gray, Hazel King, Ethel Nicholson, Celeste Riley, and Mabel Cornwall in the cast.\(^{36}\)

Miss Battail, a traveling theatrical producer, directed a local cast in *The Deestrick Skule* on April 5, 1907; an enthusiastic audience attended the performance.\(^{37}\)

At the end of the following month talent from Jennings, under the direction of Helen White, produced a musical comedy, *The Way of a Maid*, at the Lyon's Grand Opera House.\(^{38}\)

Nothing of consequence occurred in the Crowley theatrical circles for several seasons to come. In the meantime, the Grand Opera House was remodeled by adding four proscenium boxes and repainting and decorating the interior.\(^{39}\)

\(^{35}\)Ibid., January 25, 1906.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., June 7, 1906.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., April 6, 1907.

\(^{38}\)Ibid., June 1, 1907.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., September 7, 1907. The Grand Opera House had been erected six years earlier by Dave Lyon who continued at this time as its manager.
An occurrence in 1908, which was a combination of professional and non-professional theatre, was the arrival of the Sedgwick family. The family, composed of Edward Sedgwick, his wife, two daughters and a son, produced Indian dramas by filling the minor roles with talent from the communities in which they played. Kate Barry, Winnie White, Fleda Wynne, and a chorus of home talent assisted the professional actors in presenting *The Chief's Revenge.*

Assuming the role of director, Fleda Wynne produced *A Proposal Under Difficulties,* a comedy, at the Grand Opera House on February 24, 1909, with a cast including A. C. Chappius, J. D. Carlton, Sue Clark, and Emma Fremeaux.

A few weeks later, Karl L. May directed *Our Boys,* by H. J. Byron, at the opera house on April 23 for the benefit of the Odd Fellows Home.

Two plays made up the commencement program of the public school in 1909. On June 1, the senior class of Crowley High School enacted the comedy *The Heavenly Twins* at the opera house, and on the following evening, the younger pupils performed *Bibi, a Comedy of Toys.*

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Tulu Martin, Marcy Lyons, Ed Brooks, Millicent Landry, Ralph Lewis and Clinton Wikoff, members of the high school senior class, performed their annual play, Early Vows, at the opera house on May 28, 1910.44

Two days later another group of amateurs played to a crowded opera house in a society play called Kingdom of Hearts Content, written by Lindsey Barbee. The cast included Grady Martin, Charley Hoag, James Reynaud, Charley Kleiser, Fred Babin, Roy Roller, Sue Wilker, Ester Christman, Clara Mae Carter, Myrtle Snagg, Lois Mcfarland, Gladys Tumpkin, Fanny Wilker, Reva Kleiser, Lillian Lewis, Ruby Barr, Mamie Dorr, and Fannie Carter.45

Mrs. Mattie Kennedy, a teacher at Crowley High School, directed the senior class plays during the next three years: in 1911, Diamonds and Hearts;46 in 1912, The Daughter of the Desert;47 and in 1913, At the End of the Rainbow.48 All of these performances were given at the Grand Opera House.

During the latter years of the pre-war period, most of the adult Crowley performers had become inactive. Perhaps it was because of a crowded schedule of motion pictures and professional touring

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44Ibid., May 28, 1910.
46The Crowley Weekly Signal, June 3, 1911.
47The Daily Signal, May 29, 1912.
48Ibid., June 4, 1913.
troupes, that only the high school pupils were left to produce the non-professional theatrical performances for the community.

Jennings

Jennings is located in Jefferson Davis Parish and borders the Teche country of Louisiana, which was largely settled by Acadians. Early in its history the Jennings area was populated by wheat farmers of Anglo-Saxon stock from the midwestern states. Jennings McComb, for whom the town was named, was a contractor with the Southern Pacific Railroad and built the Jennings depot. The cultivation of rice and the development of the oil industry in 1901 attracted people to Jennings. The United States census of 1900 gave the population of the growing village as 1,539.49

During the early days in Jennings, the predominantly Anglo-Saxon inhabitants were somewhat reluctant to participate in theatrical activities. As late as 1920, the town government banned Sunday movies and theatricals. The Heywood brothers were exceptions to this reluctance to perform, however, and were often called upon to demonstrate their abilities. Scott played the cornet; Dewey, the flute, and Alba sang songs and gave impersonations.50 Alba, who later became a professional actor, never lost his enthusiasm for the amateur stage. After he retired from professional show business,

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50 Ibid., p. 42.
he appeared with the performers of Abbeville, Crowley, Jennings, and Lake Charles.

On August 31, 1905, *Queen Esther*, a cantata, played at the opera house. Alba Heywood was the stage manager-director with J. P. Haber conducting the music. The day after the cantata, Heywood had the following to say concerning the production:

"I was more than pleased with the way everything went off last night. It is the first time Jennings has attempted anything in this line either dramatic or musical. I am surprised and delighted at the outcome."52

In spite of the success of the *Queen Esther* cantata, the amateurs of Jennings were not heard from again until the middle of 1907. At the opera house, on June 14, the Ladies Aid of the Congregational Church presented an operetta, *The Princess Serenade*. Ione Duncan of Plaquemine directed the local children and young ladies in the production.53

A local group performed *The Third Troop Minstrel* for the benefit of the Jennings Military Detachment on November 8. The minstrel men were William Cockrell, Henry Taylor, and Frank Shattuck of Lake Charles.54

51 A new opera house had been built in Jennings, Louisiana, in 1903. *Abbeville Meridional*, May 9, 1903.

52 *The Jennings Daily Times*, September 1, 1905. The Knights of Pythias lent the lodge regalia for the cast of *Queen Esther*, when the costumers would not allow the costumes to come into Louisiana because of the yellow fever scare.

In 1908, the Order of the Red Men, Tribe No. 24, brought the Sedgwick family to town to give a performance at the opera house on January 9 and 10. The Chief's Revenge and The American Indian were the plays offered, and in both pieces the Sedgwicks were assisted by several young ladies of Jennings.55

Another minstrel show by and for the Military Company was presented on May 22, 1908. It was considered by the Times a more "complete success" than the one given during the previous year. Those townspeople who assisted the cavalry boys were Messrs. Freeman, Donohue, Johnson, Taylor, Wasey, Bliss, Norris, Gorham and Kleinsmith; also Miss Jeanette Craig.56

The local Elk's lodge presented their first annual minstrel at the Ardennes Theatre on March 19, 1909. There was "a well trained chorus with the old time minstrel men, such as Messrs. Wasey, Taylor, and Kleinsmith."57

The grades of all the public schools in Jennings prepared an operetta called Snow White, in which nearly three hundred voices were used. They presented the operetta to the public on May 14, at the Women's Christian Temperance Union Auditorium.58

56Ibid., May 23, 1908.
57Ibid., April 24, 1909.
58Ibid., May 22, 1909.
St. Henry Academy used the Ardennes Theatre for its commencement exercises in 1909 and again in 1912. On June 26, 1909, the school presented an operetta entitled *Fair of the Fountain*, and three years later the graduation program included a three-act play called *Wanted a Maid*.

On February 20, 1913, the pupils of the Jennings public schools conducted, at the high school auditorium, a program which included the play *Tommy's Wife*, and several musical numbers.

The people of Jennings were slow to start an amateur theatre in their community. Even though there was an opera house built in 1903, the local performers made little use of it until 1905 when they produced *Queen Esther*. Within a few years minstrel shows became popular, and several groups, including the Elks, presented one. The Ardennes Theatre, which opened in 1909, was used often by Jennings performers for a variety of entertainments. From 1910 through 1913 the public and parochial schools were the only amateur producers.

Lafayette

The city of Lafayette, in Lafayette Parish, is situated in a large prairie fifteen miles from St. Martinsville. The 1900 popula-

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59 Ibid., June 26, 1909.
60 Ibid., June 21, 1912.
61 Ibid., February 21, 1913.
tion, predominantly of French extraction, was three thousand. By 1910 the population had doubled, and in 1920 there were ten thousand individuals living there. 62

The French and Acadian cultural influence in Lafayette was revealed by a newspaper announcement, in French, of an amateur theatrical performance. The Lafayette Advertiser of February 10, 1900, carried the notice for L'association du Cimetiere Catholique:

Il a ete resolu qu'un grand bazaar et representation seraient donne le 17 et le 18 de Mars au benifice de L'association. La representation aura lieu a la salle d'Opera et le bazaar sur la place en face de l'Eglise catholique.

In 1901, the Greig Minstrel Company of St. Martinsville gave a non-professional show at Falk's Opera House on Sunday, July 28. The Theatre, an old one, having been in operation as early as 1887, 63 was located on Washington Street between West Vermilion and Main Streets. It was the chief gathering place for entertainments, traveling troupes, and public dances. 64

During the spring of 1902, Louisiana Industrial Institute and Lafayette High School held closing exercises which included some form of dramatic presentation on their programs. The 1902 commencement exercises for the Louisiana Industrial Institute were the first


63 Bradford, op. cit., p. 505.

64 Griffin, op. cit., p. 58.
to be held since the creation of the college in 1900. The English Department performed a scene from *The Merchant of Venice* with the following cast:

Duke of Venice................................. Willie Mills  
Antonio.............................................. P. Voorhies  
Bassanio............................................. H. Demanade  
Salario................................................ Sidney Delmonte  
Shylock............................................... Jefferson Caffery  
Portia.................................................. Miss Annie Bell  
Nerissa................................................. Miss Rhena Boudreaux

Also during 1902, students under the supervision of Edith Dupre and Beverly Randolph presented Booth Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire* in the auditorium of Louisiana Industrial Institute.

The Lafayette High School gave the second school closing exercise in the city on June 6, 1902, at Falk's Opera House. Selecting the jury, a burlesque, and a pantomime from *Hiawatha* were the dramatic pieces included on the program.

On April 20, 1904, the Industrial Institute in Lafayette held a field day of exhibits and contests in which Lake Charles, Leesville, and

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65 Margaret Stephens Jochem, "The Life of Edwin Lewis Stephens," *The Southwest Louisiana Journal*, Southwestern Louisiana Institute, Lafayette, Louisiana, January 1960, pp. 20-21. When Edwin Lewis Stephens was appointed president of the Louisiana Industrial Institute, on January 3, 1900, the college had no campus, no students, and no faculty. The site of the school was selected to be Lafayette. Ground was broken for the first building on May 28, 1900, and by June 15, 1901, the main building was completed.

66 *Lafayette Advertiser*, May 31, 1902.


68 *The Lafayette Advertiser*, June 7, 1902.
Franklin, and the Institute competed for honors. During the day Lake Charles favored the audience with a chorus; the Attakapas Literary Society gave a scene from She Stoops to Conquer, and the Avatar Literary Club added humorous pantomimes from Brother Goose Songs. 69

A crowd filled the Lafayette High School Auditorium on high school night in June, 1904, to witness a Hiawatha drill and a three-act play, The Kingdom of Mother Goose. Sixty-three pupils took part in the fantasy which introduced fairies, nymphs and various characters from Mother Goose rhymes. Daisy Louaillier, as Mother Goose, made "the biggest hit in the play." 70

By 1905, Lafayette had become a thriving community of 4,500 inhabitants, an educational center, and a theatrical focus point with the new Jefferson Opera House, which opened on Sunday, January 15, 1905. 71

The Vermilion, a student publication of Louisiana Industrial Institute, stated that an entertainment given for the Athletic Association "proved a grand success." Mary Dutsch, Annie Thibodaux, May Mahaffey, Robert Dutsch, and Willis Roy appeared in a short play entitled A Domestic Dilemma. 72

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69Ibid., April 20, 1904. The Attakapas Literary Society and the Avatar Library Club were two rival organizations at Louisiana Industrial Institute.

70Ibid., June 20, 1904. 71Ibid., January 18, 1905.

72The Vermilion, February 25, 1905.
In the summer of 1905, yellow fever invaded Louisiana and schools were late opening because of the quarantine. Lafayette was clear of the disease in September, but the Industrial Institute announced that it could not open until November 1, because the teachers who had gone home were not able to reach the campus until their quarantines had been lifted.

The first half of the year 1906 passed without having amateur theatrical performances; however, in June came the annual public school closing exercises. An audience, assembled at the Jefferson Theatre on June 5, saw two plays with the younger pupils performing *Aurora and the Nymph of Nature*, and the high school students presenting *Students' Vacation*.73

The Louisiana Industrial Institute held its commencement on June 20 and closed the day's activities with a play called *The Mouse Trap* with a cast including Mary Dutsch, Caroline Watthers, and Hugh Miller. On the following Monday evening the alumni and the class of 1906 entertained jointly. The students enacted three scenes from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.74

At the commencement exercises of Mt. Carmel Convent, the graduates performed a French drama in three acts, *La Chaumière Bretonne*.

On their class night, May 24, 1907, the students of the Industrial Institute

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Institute presented a three-act play, *A Scrap of Paper*, written by J. Palgrave Simpson.75

During its commencement season, Mount Carmel Convent gave several plays. The younger girls played a little drama called *The Gypsy Girl* while the boys romped through a comedy by the title of *Who Won the Prize?* The seniors gave *The Changed Cross*, in which Ruth Mouton played the part of "poverty" and received high praise in the *Lafayette Advertiser*.76

In the next six months, two plays for children were produced in Lafayette. Mrs. C. M. Parkerson, originator of the Push and Pull Dramatic Company, wrote and produced *Mary Jane and Buster Brown*. The play was given at the Jefferson Theatre on October 15, 1907, as a benefit for the town's public school fund.77 On the stage in March, 1908, one hundred and fifty youngsters performed in a fairy musical show, *Snow White*, under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Donohue. Helen Mouton played Snow White, Paola Mouton was the Queen Mother, and Gladys Cunningham portrayed the Prince.78

The 1908 closing concerts for the educational institutions of Lafayette began on May 7 when nine hundred people attended the

77 *Ibid.*, October 18, 1907. Mr. C. M. Parkerson was the owner and manager of the Jefferson Theatre.
78 *Ibid.*, March 6, 1908. Mr. and Mrs. Donohue produced *The Little Princess* in Lake Charles in 1906. See p. 41.
presentation of *Little Boy Blue* at the high school auditorium. The commencement exercises at Louisiana Industrial Institute included as a main feature the presentation in French of scenes from Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Sidney Voorhies, Inez Vander Cruysen, Edith Cormier, Moise Arauna, Orest Chiasson, Louise Martin, and Stella Roy took leading parts in these excerpts.

On May 24, 1909, at the class night program of the Industrial Institute, the students presented *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith. The cast consisted of the following people:

- Mr. Hardcastle: Mr. Herman Fiske
- Sir Charles Marlowe: Mr. L. L. Bourgeois
- Mr. Marlowe: Mr. Odo Blanchet
- Mr. Hastings: Mr. J. Surrey Breaux
- Tony Lumpkin: Mr. Andre Mouton
- Landlord: Mr. L. L. Bourgeois
- Servant: Mr. Joseph Grado
- Mrs. Hardcastle: Miss Stella Roy
- Miss Hardcastle: Miss Alice Parham
- Miss Neville: Miss Kate Robinson
- Maid: Miss Lucy Comeaux

The Jefferson Theatre had been showing motion pictures since 1905 and in the middle of the month of June, 1909, the Push and Pull Dramatic Company performed between the films. Each of the little folks presented a song and "won generous applause."  

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Mt. Carmel Convent held its closing exercises on Friday, June 18, 1909. Among the many performances given that evening were four dramatic presentations; Une Meprise, a French comedy in one act; May, or The Adopted Sister, a short drama; The Magic Shop, a comedy, and a cantata entitled Tiptoe. 83

Active again, the Push and Pull Dramatic Company presented a variety entertainment as a benefit given by the ladies of the Presbyterian Church on September 22, at the Sprole home. According to the reporter for the newspaper, the performances would have been a credit "to much larger children." 84

The ladies of the Northside School League gave an entertainment on September 23 to raise money for a pavilion at the primary school. There were songs, military drills, a play called Mother Goose as a Moralist, and a burlesque on the Parish Fair Baby Contest. 85

By the year 1910, the population of Lafayette had increased to 6,000 persons and the activities of the non-professional performers were growing with the town.

After Lent and the Easter season of 1910, the ladies of the Episcopal Guild engaged J. Pearl Rogers of Indiana to present her "original arrangement of minstrelsy," with a local cast consisting

83 Ibid., June 22, 1909.
84 Ibid., September 28, 1909.
85 Ibid., September 28, 1909.
of ladies who appeared incognito in roles of comedians, jig dancers, ballad and comic opera singers, and an interlocutor to head the minstrel circle. The Ladies' Minstrel was performed on April 7 at the Jefferson Theatre. 86

At the closing of the 1910 school year, Mt. Carmel Convent gave a trio of plays, including a one-act French comedy 200 Franks de Recompense: The Baron's Reception, also a one-act comedy, and Who is to Inherit?, a drama of a serious nature. 87

In September, 1910, a quasi-theatrical amusement came to Lafayette in the form of the Elks' Circus. A tent was set up on the Fair Grounds and the circus opened with a grand parade around the ring by all the participants. Mr. A. L. Preager was the ringmaster. There were clown acts, acrobatic numbers, and Dr. F. E. Girard as "Miss Ida," gave a fine equestrian demonstration. The Lafayette Concert Band furnished music for the performers. 88

"Tuesday night a large and delighted audience witnessed the presentation of In Dreamland, a beautiful spectacular fairy extravaganza written and arranged by John E. Owens and produced under his direction...." Thus began a review in the Lafayette Advertiser on April 21, 1911. Several hundred of Lafayette's young people took part in this outdoor pageant on the green by the Catholic Church.

86Ibid., April 7, 1910.
87Ibid., June 21, 1910.
88Ibid., September 6, 1910.
For its 1911 closing concert, Lafayette High School dramatized *Evangeline*, a play about Louisiana. The list of young people in the cast was as follows:

- **Evangeline**............. Florence Lester
- **Gabriel Lajuenesse**...... Harvey Hopkins
- **Benedict Belfontaine**.... Thomas Gilbeau
- **Basil Lajuenesse**........ John Balwin
- **Father Felician**......... Oscar Micaud
- **Rene LeBlanc**............ Henry Seadous
- **Madame LeBlanc**......... Edna Gravenberg
- **Babriste LeBlanc**........ Charles Kendricks
- **Captain Winslow**......... Wally Scott
- **Michael**.................. Lionel Jajou 89

During the next two years Mt. Carmel Convent presented several plays at its annual exercises. In 1911, the titles were *All Aboard Comedy*, *La Sorciere*, and *Queen of the Mystic Isles*. 90 The following year, on June 17, the academy held its closing exercise with a program made up of drills, songs, recitations, and two plays: *Young King Cole*, and *L'Ange et La Jeune Fille*, a French dialogue play. 91

The Elks put a minstrel show on the stage of the Jefferson Theatre on Sunday, October 20. An orchestra conducted by P. Gervac furnished music for the performance. There was much singing and humor, "not to mention buck-and-wing, clog, and other up-to-date dances." 92

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During the early part of May, 1913, the alumni of Louisiana Industrial Institute enacted a comedy, *The Two Dicks*, at the Jefferson Theatre. The *Lafayette Advertiser* made the following comments about the members of the cast:

Sidney Voorhies, as the husband, and Miss Paola Mouton, as Betty, his wife, were very good. Robert Mouton, as one of the twins, and Pat Mouton, as the other, did well, while Miss Martha Pellerin and Miss Runice Blanchet as the two sweethearts acted their jealous parts fine. Miss Hilda Rosenfield made a most acceptable maid.

According to available sources of information, Mount Carmel Academy, Louisiana Industrial Institute, and Lafayette High School were relatively inactive in the field of drama during 1913.

In the first thirteen years of the twentieth century, Louisiana Industrial Institute began to exert a strong influence on the educational and cultural development of southwest Louisiana particularly in Lafayette. Through its programs in literature, art, music, history and dramatics, the Institute provided a means of discovering and developing the interests and the abilities of the townspeople as well as those of the students.\(^{94}\)

Lake Charles

Lake Charles, the principal seat of government for Calcasieu Parish, was named for one of its settlers, Charles Sallier, whose


\(^{94}\) *Griffin, op. cit.*, p. 104.
farm was near the southeast end of the lake where Shell Beach Drive and Sallier Cemetery are today. Statistics from the United States Census Bureau show that the town grew fast, for in 1900, the population was only 6,680, and just twenty years later, there were 13,949 people living in Lake Charles. The development of rice and lumber is given credit for most of this growth. 95

At the turn of the century, the amateurs of Lake Charles were not very active. The first newspaper report appeared on January 10, 1901, when the Ladies Guild of the Episcopal Church, under the direction of Miss Aronsohn of New York, gave an entertainment called The Old Maid's Convention. Miss Aronsohn acted the role of the president of the "old maids"; Mrs. E. L. Riddick, the secretary, and Miss Mae Riddick, the treasurer. A number of ladies of Lake Charles represented the regular members of the "convention". 96

The Lake Charles Daily American, March 1, 1901, described the Elks' Circus which had taken place at the opera house on the previous night. "Ticket seller Harry Milligan opened his ticket wagon in front of the theatre at an early hour;" William E. Ramsey, manager of the side show, announced before the curtain, "the greatest side show under canvas;" a burlesque flying lady made a flight from the gallery by way of a trolley, and "the performance opened with a real thrill." The first act took place before the side show tents

95 Grace Ulmer. "Economic and Social Development of Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, from 1840 to 1912." Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXXII (1949), 575-578.
96 Lake Charles Daily American, January 11, 1901.
with W. L. Haskell as the Barker. The second curtain transferred the audience inside the tents of the side show. The third and main act was the Big Show itself with Charles Winterhaler as ringmaster introducing the acts of a complete amateur circus from the grand entree to the finale.

On April 15, 1903, local talent occupied the stage at the opera house with a two hour vaudeville performance for the book fund at Carnegie Library. Dr. Emile Stoessel was the coordinator of the show.97

The boys of the Holy Cross Sisters' School, on the corner of Bilbo and Kirby Streets, gave a concert on April 23. The older pupils performed a minstrel, and the smaller children presented an operetta called A Grand Surprise.98

The amateurs did not appear in 1904 until May 10, when the seniors of the Lake Charles High School presented their class play The Albany Depot, by William D. Howells. The following pupils were in the cast: Clara Epler, Merritt King, Bertha Kirkwood, Elie Kaufman, Mignonette Hawkins, Lillian Rachal, and Grace Mills.99

Blackfaced entertainers were popular in Lake Charles and within the next ten months the casts of three local minstrel shows had performed. George Taylor directed the first of these shows which

97Ibid., April 16, 1903.
98Ibid., April 24, 1903.
99Ibid., May 11, 1904. This is the earliest reference to a senior class play in this study.
played to an audience of five hundred people at Catholic Hall on May 24. Evanna Pujo, who acted as the interlocutor, was one of several women who appeared in the minstrel. 100 A second minstrel cast, consisting of thirty-five Lake Charles Elks, "sang, kicked and cavorted" at the opera house on December 29, 1904. Leon Locke was the interlocutor, and W. R. Jordan was the orchestra leader. The newspaper cited two of the performers as being "stars" of the minstrel:

The honors of the show were easily divided between Ivan Schwing's coon song and Frank Shattuck's dancing, and Frank was brought back time and again, each time coming up with a puzzled expression on his face. 101

Two months later, on February 20, 1905, Lake Charles Military Company K presented the third minstrel at the opera house. H. B. Lingham directed the show. The American Press complimented the performance of one of the minstrel men in the following manner:

Frank Shattuck, the man with the witty legs, was greeted with long continuous applause. His voice is good and his dancing is a never failing pleasure. 102

At the opera house, on May 18, the Lake Charles High School seniors performed Richard Sheridan's The Rivals. The newspaper reviewer gave "much credit" to Miss Zena Thompson, teacher of elocution

100 Ibid., May 25, 1904.


102 Ibid., February 21, 1905.
at the high school, for the successful way "in which the various parts were carried out." 103

The second Elks' Minstrel took place at the opera house in January, 1906. Most of the participants had been in the earlier 1904 show, and Frank Shattuck was mentioned again by the press for his outstanding performance. Harry Miller and Clint Draper, who had managed the 1904 presentation, also directed this minstrel. 104

In February, the Order of the Red Men gave a benefit performance of The American Indian on the opera house stage. The professional touring director, Edward Sedgwick, produced the pageantlike play. 105

A hundred boys and girls, attired in colorful tissue paper costumes, presented The Little Princess at Central School on March 9, 1906. Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Donohue trained the cast for the production, which was sponsored by the Lake Charles Enterprise Club. 106

During the week of June 10, the Convent School pupils presented two entertainments. On Thursday, June 14, they performed an operetta, Cinderella in Flower Land, and on Friday, June 15, they presented another operetta called 'Tis Examination Day. 107

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103 Ibid., May 19, 1905.
104 Ibid., January 25, 1906.
106 Ibid., March 10, 1906.
107 Ibid., June 11, 1906.
In the course of the school year 1906-1907, Lake Charles High School presented two plays. In December, 1906, the students performed in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Clyde Larue portrayed the role of Mr. Hardcastle. Robert Stone played Tony Lumpkin, and Myrtle Larue was Miss Hardcastle. Willie Myhand performed as Marlowe, and Tillie Green appeared in the character of Mrs. Hardcastle. The faculty-director of the production was Mrs. Terry. On May 3, the high school seniors gave their annual class play, *Mrs. Sutcliff's Seminary*.  

A new theatre opened at Pleasure Pier on November 19, 1906, but it was not until the following year that the amateurs took advantage of these additional stage facilities. The Chancel Guild of the Episcopal Church sponsored *The Way of the Maid* at the pier on April 17, 1907.  

On Thursday night, February 27, 1908, the new Lyric Theatre on Broad Street opened informally with *Slumberland*, a local musical play under the direction of Harry Foote. Thirteen names appeared in the principal roles of the production: Camile Schwing, Leon Locke, Nina Brown, Pearl Jacobs, Richard Fiske, Wilfred Collette, Ivan Schwing, Ward Anderson, Karl Kuttner, Willard McLeod, Allyne Cloud,  

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The Lake Charles High School graduates used the newly constructed Lyric Theatre for the presentation of their 1908 class play. It was *The Widow*, a three-act comedy; with Eleanor Cook and Shadler Richardson in the leading roles.\(^1\)

On April 5, 1909, Miller and Draper staged another of the Elks' Minstrels, this time at the Lyric Theatre. Again the *American Press* singled out Frank Shattuck as the outstanding performer on the show.\(^2\)

The children of the Lake Charles High School gave *The Queen of Beauty* on the school stage on April 13, 1909. On the following day, the *American Press* stated that "apart from the little delay in answering cues, the play went on surprisingly well, considering the short time the performers had to prepare." Mrs. H. H. Donohue was the coach and manager for the production.

On June 10, preceding the graduation exercises of 1909, the students of Lake Charles High School presented the play *Our Boys*, by H. J. Byron, at the Lyric Theatre. Principal E. S. Jenkins and Mr. Kaesman, classroom teacher, coached the young actors.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., February 28, 1908. The formal opening of the Lyric Theatre, under the management of Frank R. Flanigan, took place on March 7, with *Woodland*, a professional production promoted by Henry W. Savage.

\(^2\)Ibid., May 22, 1908.

\(^3\)Ibid., April 6, 1909.
Our Boys was the last amateur production at the Lyric Theatre to be reported by the American Press, because the structure was totally destroyed by fire early on the morning of November 22, 1909. The children of the Church of the Good Shepherd reproduced a medieval mystery play called The Little Pilgrim and the Book Beloved on the evening of December 10, 1909. The script was of ancient origin, "having been used in the churches of England for generations." In January of 1910, the playlet was repeated by the same cast at the same church.

In 1910, the Lake Charles High School gave a cantata entitled The Crystal Queen instead of the regular class play by the seniors. The American Press, June 2, had the following to say about the production:

Much of the credit for the success of the play is due to the efforts of Mrs. Ora Reams, who taught the music; Mr. Anderson, who selected the cast; Mr. Kaessman, who trained the "wooden soldiers;" Miss Richardson, who looked after the costumes; Miss Pomeroy, who trained the fairies, and Mr. Jenkins, who staged the operetta. The children deserve credit for the good honest effort they put in to make it a success.

Several theatrical demonstrations were exhibited by the Holy Cross Sisters' School at the 1910 closing exercises. The plays were The

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115 Lake Charles American Press, November 22, 1909. The Lyric Theatre had been built two years before at the initial cost of $10,000.
116 Ibid., December 11, 1909.
117 Ibid., January 7, 1910.
Quarrel of the Flowers, a fantasy; Diamonds and Toads, an operetta in two acts; A Lovely Afternoon, a short comedy; The Rose of Savoy, an operetta, and Medica, a farce in one act.  

On November 18 and 19, the faculty and pupils of the Lake Charles High School presented two performances of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. R. F. Cisco, of the Department of English and Literature, supervised the production. The title role of Romeo was divided between E. H. Hardy, of the high school faculty, and Cisco. The former played the first two acts in order to give the director an opportunity to start his play. The cast was made up of the following people:

Escalus..........................Viscot Schochet
Paris...............................Clifford Peters
Capulet............................Alfred Reid
Montague..........................Clifford Peters
Romeo..............................E. H. Hardy, R. F. Cisco
Mercutio............................Leo Daspit
Benvolio...........................William Bendel
Tybalt.............................Drew Gordham
Friar Lawrence....................Orville Mills
Lady Montague.....................Margarite Miller
Lady Capulet.......................Eva Brown
Juliet..............................Mabel Rogers
Nurse...............................Dora Bordelon

The Elks presented their 1910 minstrel show at the newly built Arcade Theatre on December 20. The two fun makers of the evening,

118 Ibid., June 20, 1910.
119 Ibid., November 19, 1910.
120 The announcement of the opening of the Arcade Theatre on Ryan Street was printed in the Lake Charles American Press on the day it took place, Tuesday, September 27, 1910. The first manager of the theatre was J. L. White who had been in charge of the old Lyric
Frank Shattuck and Ivan Schwing, were the hit of the show." This was
the first non-professional performance at the theatre, and the
American Press gave space to mention the new electrical effects
arranged for the show by L. C. Addison and Charles Coggins. 121

The first local performance reported by the newspapers in 1911
was the high school commencement play given at the Arcade Theatre on
May 31. R. F. Cisco directed the comedy, A Strenuous Life. 122 A
comment concerning the royalty for the use of the script appeared in
the American Press of May 23.

It is true that a $25.00, royalty will have to be
paid for the performance, but it is believed that people
had rather pay a little bit more and see a play that is
really first-class than pay less and see something worthless.

The commencement schedule for the Catholic School took place on
June 21, 1911, at the Arcade Theatre. The pupils enacted The Poet's
Perplexities, a comedy in one act; The Idle Girl, a dramatic sketch;
The Bell in the Forest, an operetta, and A Page from Colonial Times,
a four-act drama. 123

Theatre. Today (1963) the Arcade Theatre is occupied by the Lake Charles
Little Theatre which uses only the lower floor for seating its audi-
ences. The first balcony is reserved for special stage lighting, and
the second balcony is unoccupied. Originally, the Arcade auditorium
seated approximately twelve hundred people, according to an interview
with the director at the theatre, Woodie Williams, on Saturday,
December 1, 1962.

121 Lake Charles American Press, December 21, 1910.

122 Ibid., June 1, 1911. 123 Ibid., June 21, 1911.
In 1912, the high school senior class play was the only non-professional theatrical performance reported in Lake Charles. The students of the graduating class of Lake Charles High School acted in George Broadhurst's *Why Smith Left Home* on the evening of May 15, at the Arcade Theatre. Professor R. F. Cisco directed the play, and the *American Press* of May 16 had the following to say about two members of the cast:

... two of the cast above all deserve mention, Sam Quilty\(^ {124} \) and Florence Beatty, the former taking the part of John Smith, and the latter that of Lavania, the cook.

The *Lake Charles American Press* of November 22, 1912, reported that Miller and Draper staged another minstrel entertainment for the Elks. They presented *The Carnival of the Panama Exposition* with special scenery portraying the Exposition buildings as they would appear in 1915. Joe Malley acted as the interlocutor; Frank Shattuck was once again among the headliners, and Charles L. Adams of the Miller and Draper Company coached and directed the entire production.

On May 31, 1913, the *American Press* stated that on the preceding evening four hundred children performed on the high school stage in an operetta called *Fairyland*.

... Great credit is due Mrs. Reams and Mr. Wall for training and staging *Fairyland*. Miss Bain, Mrs. Westcott and Miss Block assisted in training the primary children. Moss Watkins was the electrician and Bess Lipscomb, pianist.

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\(^ {124}\) Sam Quilty later went to Hollywood, California, and appeared in silent films, according to his niece, Elizabeth Ann Quilty Smythe, of Lake Charles, in an interview on December 1, 1962.
Under the supervision of R. F. Cisco, the pupils of the Lake Charles High School performed in *Sowing Wild Oats* at the Arcade Theatre on June 5, 1913. Along with the comedy, the school presented *A Biplane Courtship*, an operetta composed by Professor Cisco and W. H. Moore. Cisco coached the pupils in both pieces, and *The American Press*, June 6, 1913, had the following to say about his contributions to the school.

... While training the youngsters, he (R. F. Cisco) has always carried on his full ticket of work at the high school and does not receive a cent of compensation for the extra work, but does it for the good of the school.

With many and varied activities on the non-professional stage from 1900 to 1914, Lake Charles was the most productive community among those of Southwest Louisiana. One of the reasons for this productivity was that Lake Charles had the largest population from which to draw its performers and audiences. Another explanation was that the entertainers and their viewers revealed exceptional enthusiasm for work in the theatre. The interest in minstrel shows was influenced by the devotion of such showmen as Frank Shattuck and Ivan Schwing. Lake Charles High School was advanced beyond other schools of the area regarding the types of productions presented. In 1904, the school offered *The Albany Depot* by William Dean Howells, the first senior class play recorded in this study. The school was ambitious in its dramatic undertakings and, in 1906, produced Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. R. F. Cisco, of Lake Charles High School faculty, directed the students in a 1910 presentation of
William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In general, it can be said that a favorable climate existed in Lake Charles during the pre-war days for the development of non-commercial theatre.

**Summary**

From 1900 to 1914, the inhabitants of Southwest Louisiana responded to the impulse of the performing arts and produced a variety of entertainments ranging from vaudeville appearances, many of which grew out of town band concerts, to the presentation of classic dramas of Shakespeare sponsored by educational institutions.

Looking at the theatrical offerings of the area, one sees that Lake Charles and Lafayette provided the majority of activities among the communities. Lake Charles, with approximately twelve thousand persons, had a substantial number of people interested in amateur theatre. From children's plays coached by Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Donohue, to minstrel shows starring Frank Shattuck, to school productions directed by R. F. Cisco and Zena Thompson, the people of Lake Charles were fortunate to have such capable and willing individuals associated with the non-commercial theatre.

Lafayette had half the population of Lake Charles. Nevertheless, the residents of the community produced a comparable number of performances under sponsorship of schools, church groups, and fraternal organizations. The presence of Louisiana Industrial Institute, founded in 1900, added impetus and encouragement to the theatrical efforts of Lafayette. The college staged such plays as
Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Monsieur Beaucaire*, by Booth Tarkington, and Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Mrs. C. M. Parkerson organized a children's theatre called The Push and Pull Dramatic Club and produced a series of plays and entertainments. Most of the local performances in Lafayette were given in the Jefferson Theatre which opened in 1905.

The natives of Abbeville, Crowley, and Jennings were interested in their amateur performers, but Abbeville, with the strongest French influence, was well ahead of the other two communities in the number of presentations given. Some of the plays such as *L'Armoire Magique* and *Les Deux Extremes* at Mt. Carmel Convent in Abbeville were given in the French language. Scripts written by well-known authors and produced by these communities were Steele McKaye's *Hazel Kirke* and Susan Glaspell's *A Woman's Honor* in Abbeville, and Bulwer-Lytton's *The Lady of Lyon* and Richard Sheridan's *The Rivals* in Crowley. Names which stood out for their contributions to theatrical endeavors in these towns were Professor H. W. Pate of Abbeville, Mrs. Mattie Kennedy of Crowley, and Alba Heywood of Jennings.
CHAPTER II

THE BAYOU COUNTRY

1900 TO 1914
THE BAYOU COUNTRY

The bayou lands of Louisiana comprise a little more than one-fourth of the area of the state, forming a kind of triangle which begins on the Gulf Coast, moves northeastwardly to the lowlands of the Atchafalaya, crosses the Mississippi River and turns southward toward the city of New Orleans.\(^1\) The region contains two principal streams from which it gets its name, Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche.

Bayou Teche begins in the middle of Louisiana and winds its way down through the heart of the state for a hundred and fifty miles until it widens and deepens into a river.\(^2\) Bayou Lafourche has its source near Donaldsonville, at a point about eighty miles to the west of New Orleans, running for a hundred and twenty mile stretch in a southeastwardly direction, almost parallel to the Mississippi, and terminates in the Gulf of Mexico some twenty-five miles west of Grand Isle.\(^3\)

This investigation involves ten communities around Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche. Those places along the Teche include Franklin,


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 223.

Morgan City, Berwick, New Iberia, Opelousas, and St. Martinville. The towns on and near Bayou Lafourche are Convent, Donaldsonville, Napoleonville, Plaquemine, and Thibodaux.

The inhabitants of the area are predominantly Gallic and Catholic with a romantic temperament. The theatre, both professional and non-professional, has always taken an important place in their lives.4

The Communities Along Bayou Teche

1900 to 1914

Franklin

Franklin, the parish seat of St. Mary Parish, was laid out as early as 1800 by Guinea Lewis, a quaker from Pennsylvania and a great admirer of Benjamin Franklin, in whose honor he named the town.5

After 1900, Franklin possessed several schools, St. John's Academy, Franklin High School, and St. Mary's Central High School, each with an auditorium where plays and entertainments were offered. Also, the Franklin Opera House permitted local talent to use its stage.

On June 29, 1901, The St. Mary's Banner reviewed Costanza, a

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4Kane, op. cit., pp. 9, 10.

drama performed by the girls at St. John's Academy. Alberta Lawless, who impersonated the leading character, received praise for her "fine delivery and elocution." Others who took part in the play were Rosie Eiscle, Inez Crask, Amelia Drury, Etienne Brunner, Alice Carson, Linda Breaux and Katie Smith.

In June of the following year, St. John's Academy staged Kathleen during the closing exercises. The title role was played by Inez Crask. According to the reviewer for the St. Mary's Banner, Namoi Faltomem, as the character of Topsy, was "a perfect gem."6

In May of 1903, an organization by the name of the Teche Club presented Bobbie Shaftoe, an operetta written by H. C. Brunner. The director, Mrs. D. N. Foster, rehearsed the cast for a period of three weeks. C. D. Kemper sang the leading role, and W. B. Kemper, Mrs. Lou Smardon, Miss Edna Walker, Paul Kramer, W. A. Moore, and Josie Lobdell took the other parts. A large chorus of boys and girls completed the cast.7

At the closing exercises in the school auditorium on June 28, 1904, the young ladies of St. John's Academy presented Dobb's Farm, or Rose Fairlee, an operetta in two acts.8

The St. Mary's Banner, April 14, 1906, promised a performance three days later at the opera house by the ladies of Franklin. The show was called The Spinster's Convention and was to be given for the

6St. Mary's Banner, June 29, 1902.
7Ibid., May 16, 1903.
8Ibid., July 2, 1904.
benefit of the Cemetery Association. The newspaper made no further comment concerning the "convention."

In 1907, the Red Men's Lodge, T'Chetimaches Tribe No. 57, brought to the Franklin Opera House a melodrama entitled The Chief's Revenge. The Sedgwick Dramatic Company presented the play with local talent taking the lesser roles.\(^9\)

Two out of town directors worked in Franklin during the year 1908. William Cockered, better known as "Billy Van the Minstrel Man," came from Lake Charles to direct a local minstrel cast at the opera house for the benefit of the Catholic Church.\(^10\) Ione Duncan of Plaquemine was the director of The Princess Serenade at Franklin High School on May 4, 1908.\(^11\)

On May 17, 1909, The Japanese Girl, an operetta, was performed by the school girls of the seventh through the tenth grades of the Franklin High School. Mary Montgomery of the school faculty staged the production.\(^12\)

St. Mary's Central High School presented a tableau, On Plymouth Rock, and an operetta, Nymphs of the Elements, on May 13, 1910. Two hundred and fifty pupils participated in the program.\(^13\)

\(^9\)Ibid., November 2, 1907. See Crowley, page 20.

\(^10\)Ibid., April 18, 1908.

\(^11\)Ibid., April 25, 1908. Miss Duncan had produced The Princess Serenade at Donaldsonville in November, 1906. See page 71.

\(^12\)Ibid., May 22, 1909.

\(^13\)Ibid., May 14, 1910.
The ladies of the Episcopal Church sponsored the Black and White Minstrel at Jackson Rink on the night of April 18, 1911. There were over sixty local men and women in the show.  

On April 10, 1912, the Franklin Council of the Knights of Columbus gave a benefit entertainment at the opera house with hometown and neighboring talent.  

The rise of the curtain was followed by a chorus consisting of a number of our town boys and girls and was graciously rendered. This was followed by a comedy in two acts, rendered by the boys and girls of Irish Bend entitled, A Case of Suspicion, under the direction of Mr. Arnauld Hildago.  

The pupils of St. Mary's Central High School presented the Mother Goose Operetta on May 13, 1912.  

The St. Mary's Banner of June 29, 1912, stated that a western play, The Ranchman, was staged in Franklin two weeks earlier for the purpose of raising funds to aid flood victims. The performance was under the management of Mrs. George Kramer. Several days later the cast repeated the drama at New Iberia.  

On May 20, 1913, the grades of St. Mary's Central High School produced an operetta, The Isle of Jewels. Teachers Bessie Stead and Agnes Blackman prepared the pupils for the presentation.  

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14 Ibid., April 22, 1911.  
15 Ibid., April 13, 1912.  
16 Ibid., May 18, 1912.  
17 Ibid., July 6, 1912.  
18 Ibid., May 24, 1913.
The Franklin inhabitants were interested enough in amateur theatre from 1900 to 1913 to produce local performances annually and to attract several out of town directors. The Sedgwick Dramatic Company presented an American Indian play in 1907, and in 1908, Billy Van from Lake Charles directed a minstrel show and Ione Duncan of Plaquemine produced *The Princess Serenade*.

Morgan City

Morgan City, one of the principal towns of St. Mary Parish, is situated on the Atchafalaya River about twenty miles east of Franklin. The town is noted for its sugar mills, oyster canning, and fishing industry. In 1910, the population of the community had reached well over five thousand people.\(^{19}\)

Unfortunately it is difficult to get a complete picture of the 1900 to 1914 period of amateur theatrical activities in Morgan City, due to the fact that existing issues of the local newspaper, *The Morgan City Review*, are scattered through the years until 1907. In December, 1908, however, there was mention of a minstrel being produced by the Elks at the Evangeline Theatre. The reviewer commented on some of the home town artists by saying that "the singing of Miss Emma Morse and Mr. John Millan, both favorites here, was excellent."\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) *The Morgan City Review*, December 5, 1908.
New Iberia

New Iberia, "The Queen City of the Teche," is the capital of Iberia Parish. The town is located on Bayou Teche in the center of a rich agricultural region, sugar and rice being the principal crops. Before 1914 the population reached close to eight thousand people.21

After the 1880's there were two opera houses in New Iberia: the Veasey Opera House, renamed the Verdome in 1901, and the Athenaeum, known later as the Iberia Opera House. In 1898, the Iberia Opera House burned, and the Verdome met the same fate in 1905. The Elks of New Iberia built their theatre in 1907.22

Through the year 1900 there was little mention of non-professional theatrical activity in the New Iberia newspapers. The Verdome Opera House was active with professional performances, and several of the schools presented graduating exercises on its stage, but the local actors were quiet.

The Weekly Iberian printed an article in 1901 in which the editor had the following to say about the opera house:

We had the pleasure of going through the Verdome Theatre this week and were agreeably surprised at the many improvements made in the building since last season, the auditorium has been repapered entirely and all woodwork re-oiled, all the old scenery has been repainted and three drops added. One parlor scene being of special beauty.


The dressing room facilities have been doubled there being now eight good sized rooms neatly furnished. The old piano has disappeared and a handsome rich toned instrument now rests in its place.

In face [sic] the whole theatre has undergone thorough repairs and to all appearances is a new building.23

In the same issue of The Weekly Iberian which carried the news of the opera house repairs, there was a report about the formation of an amateur acting group.

A Dramatic Club was recently organized on Wednesday evening at the Mathews home in East End.

It is the club's intention to secure at least twenty members and to produce plays from time to time within the city and neighboring towns.

The club which is to be known as the Jefferson Dramatic Club was organized with the following officers.

W. T. Grant .................... President
H. R. Mathews .................... Secretary
Mrs. A. B. Mathews .......... Treasurer
Lamson Chauvin ................. Business Manager
John Davenport ................. Property Man

The remodeled Verdome Theatre had its opening Sunday, September 8, 1901, with a Spring Festival of Children under the direction of Mrs. Oscar Dupre.

The first performance of the Jefferson Dramatic Company was on the night of November 15, 1901, when the club presented the dramatization of Ouida's novel, Under Two Flags, at the Verdome Opera House. Mrs. W. H. Mathews played the role of Princess Corona, and her daughters Pricilla and Annie portrayed the roles of Lord Rockingham's sister and Cigarette. David Davis appeared in the

23 The Weekly Iberian, August 31, 1901.

24 New Iberia Enterprise, August 31, 1901.
character of "Ranke, the Irish Knight of the Pig's Kin." Edna Hacker enacted the role of Guenevere. Harry Turner and Louis Pfister were cast as Captain Leroux and Lord Rockingham. Kate Migues was Nora McShane, and Albert D. Genres performed the part of the villain, Col. Chateauroy. The part of Bertie Cecil was played by Godfrey Templeton, and his brother Berkley Cecil was Samson Chauvin. The writer for The Weekly Iberian ended the review of the drama as follows:

Altogether the entertainment was thoroughly enjoyable, and New Iberia has reason to be proud of her new dramatic company, and the "Grand old man" for whom they are named would no doubt bow his acknowledgement of the compliment could he see them upon the boards. 25

The Weekly Iberian, November 16, 1901, announced a call meeting of the Jefferson Dramatic Company at the residence of Mrs. W. H. Mathews. Mr. Pfister was elected president, W. H. Mathews, secretary; Annie B. Mathews, treasurer, and A. D. Genres, business manager. W. C. Coleman was elected stage manager, and Godfrey Templeton was accepted as a new member. Whether or not a play was produced is unknown since there were no further reports concerning the Jefferson Dramatic Club.

Misfortune struck the Verdome Opera House on May 20, 1905, when the building burned along with several others at about two o'clock in the morning. 26

25 The Weekly Iberian, November 8, 1901.
26 Ibid., May 20, 1905.
After the fire, The Weekly Iberian expressed its concern in several editorials about the lack of facilities for theatrical productions in New Iberia. One of these articles appeared on November 25, 1905.

Every week accentuates the need of an opera house or theatre for this city. There is now no place for public entertainment in this city of nine thousand population. Our people are great lovers of the play and would patronize a well conducted theatre liberally, as they have done in the past.

The Iberia Lodge No. 554 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks purchased an opera house site on the corner of Main and Fisher Streets and erected a theatre building in 1907. The new Elks' Theatre, under the management of Julius Schariff, opened November 18, with a professional comic opera company. ²⁷

During the three years in which New Iberia was without a theatre, the amateurs of the community were inactive. Even with the new opera house it was 1911 before they produced anything. On September 19 of that year, The Twentieth Century Minstrels, an organization of local talent under the direction of Charles Byrne of Brookhaven, Mississippi, gave a performance at the Elks' Theatre. The show was presented under the auspices of the New Iberia Fire Company. According to a review of the minstrel written in The Weekly Iberian, September 23, the show was all but ruined by weather which prevented the "attendance of all save those of the stoutest courage."

²⁷Ibid., November 9, 1907.
Domestic talent from Franklin, Louisiana, came to New Iberia and enacted a play entitled *The Ranchman* at the opera house on June 21, 1912.

Over fifty pupils of the New Iberia High School produced a play, *Sylvia*, on the night of June 4, 1913. The performance was given on the Elks' stage for the purpose of raising money for the Athletic Club of the high school. Miss White, of the music department, was in charge of the music in the play, and Miss Bell, also of the faculty, coached the boys and girls in acting.

Opelousas

Opelousas, the St. Landry Parish seat located on Bayou Teche fifty-five miles west of Baton Rouge, was founded about 1750. The town was one of the first settlements in that section of the state and retained much of the atmosphere of an early French community.

Although Opelousas was hardly more than half the size of New Iberia, 4,632 people by the census of 1910, it was equal to the larger community in its interest and efforts in theatrical activities. Referring to the local stage, *The St. Landry Clarion* published the following notice on October 20, 1900:

The young men of Opelousas are organizing a minstrel troupe, their first performance to be for the High School

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28 *St. Mary's Banner*, June 29, 1912.
29 *The Weekly Iberian*, June 7, 1912.
annex which, it may be said, is the primary incentive of the organization.

This investigator takes for granted that a minstrel show was performed, but no further information was offered by the newspapers. It was not until 1903 that the non-professionals were encountered in the newspapers again. The Opelousas Courier of May 23 made the statement included below.

The local amateurs who so successfully played Charles Townsend's popular comedy Captain Racket here two weeks ago are going over to Crowley next Wednesday to play for the benefit of the militia company of that town.31

For several years the Opelousas Opera House had been in need of repairs. On January 20, 1906, The Clarion News made a statement concerning the condition of the building.

The old drop curtain, as dilapidated as the scene it represented, has been replaced by a new one which makes things look smartly more tidy at least.

Then in April, 1907, Leonce Sandoz, proprietor of the building, planned extensive repairs to be made upon the old playhouse. The structure was to be enlarged to 99' by 60' with a proscenium opening of 35'.32

The remodeled Sandoz Opera House began its first season on September 1, 1907, and by December 14, The Clarion News was promoting a semi-professional production to be put on the stage by the Sedgwick Dramatic Company.

31See Crowley, page 17.
32The Clarion News, April 6, 1907.
Mr. Sedgwick, his wife, two daughters and a son, are proficient histrionic artists and have been putting on Indian dramas in the leading cities and towns of the state and will put on The Chief's Revenge on December 17 and 18 at the opera house.

Eighteen people are engaged in the drama, the rest of the talent, besides the Sedgwicks', is drawn from the home city.

Miss Olympia Lass, who has an enviable reputation on the amateur stage, has been secured by Mr. Sedgwick.

The professional actors were very active at the opera house for the next few years, but the amateurs reported little. On June 7, 1910, a comedy-drama, A Girl from the West, was presented at the theatre by local talent under the direction of J. E. Hoffman. The play was given by the Immaculate Conception Convent of Opelousas in the interest of the Lake Charles Convent which had been destroyed by fire. 33

Later in the same month, the lower grades of the Immaculate Conception Convent included in their annual exercises the three-act comedy Rebecca's Triumph by G. M. Baker. 34

A cast made up of pupils from the St. Landry High School presented Jack and the Bean Stalk at the school building, on May 30, 1911, in order to raise money for the Catholic Church Bell Fund. 35

In June, 1911, the Academy of the Immaculate Conception offered two performances at the convent auditorium. The pupils performed a

33 Ibid., June 4, 1910.
34 Ibid., June 25, 1910.
drama, *The Two Beggars*, and an operetta, *The Bell in the Forest*.

In 1913, many individuals traveled ten miles south from Opelousas to Grand Coteau in order to attend the seventy-fifth anniversary of the beginning of St. Charles College. During the celebration the senior students staged the play *Fidentuis* with R. Voorhies acting the title role.

A variety of local dramas, school plays, and special programs including an Indian pageant by the Sedgwick Production Company, comprised the theatrical entertainments of Opelousas during the first thirteen years of the twentieth century.

**St. Martinville**

St. Martinville, situated on Bayou Teche, is the parish seat and principal community of St. Martin Parish. The refinement and culture of its early inhabitants earned for the town the sobriquet of "Little Paris of Louisiana."  

Something of the character of the people of St. Martinville was revealed in a letter signed with an X and printed in *The Weekly Messenger* on February 17, 1900:

Please kindly publish the following for the benefit of your many readers.

Programs are under press which will announce an enter-

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Entertainment to take place Saturday 24th; the proceeds to go in part to Mr. and Mrs. S. Judice who had the misfortune to see their home destroyed by fire, to Mrs. Clara Russel, and also to Mr. Charles Boyer, who is in dire need.

The managers desiring to make a success of this entertainment have secured the assistance of the favorite local amateurs in music, elocution and theatrical performances. There will be tableaux arranged by Mrs. S. W. Ramsey who has heretofore shown great artistic taste in grouping her subjects in the most effective manner.

Miss Lucy Hart will appear in a recitation entitled Hagar, a story from the old testament.

The comedy Aunt Susan from Pigeon Creek must be seen to be appreciated.

The outcome of the above entertainment was given no mention in the newspapers.

The Convent of Mercy held its closing exercises on June 28 at College Hall. A drama by the title of The Stolen Will was presented during the program.


The young ladies who took part some time ago in this famous drama, intend repeating it, adding the romantic part, and new songs. The bright winsome daughter of Dr. De Mahy of our town will appear as the lost child, Miss C. Greig takes the part of Dora, and Misses Beinvenu and Clements resume their old roles, which will add to the success of the entertainment.

The Weekly Messenger did not review Rebecca's Triumph.

The pupils of the Sister of Mercy Convent presented their closing exercises on Sunday, June 23, 1901, in College Hall. The program was a varied one, the foremost piece being a dramatic cantata, Jephthah

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39The Weekly Messenger, June 30, 1900.
and His Daughter. There was a farce, The Lady Barker; a French comedy, The Dejeuner du General; a recitation by little Tullie De Mahy, How My Grandmother Danced the Minuet, and songs, dances and tableaux.40

The Greig Minstrel Company, a local organization, gave its first public appearance on Sunday, July 7, 1901, at Duchamp's Hall with a program including songs, drills, and plays.

For the next two years the closing programs of the Sister's School of the Convent of Mercy took place at College Hall. On Sunday, June 22, 1902, "the programme was not too long and the selections, dances, drills and plays, etc. were new and well rendered."41 At the annual closing of the school on June 24, 1903, the senior girls produced the dramatic cantata Esther42

Part of the St. Martinville High School commencement program in June, 1904, was in the form of a two-act comedy And All About Nothing. The Weekly Messenger, June 4, 1904, listed the cast in the following manner:

Mrs. Filmer.......................... Miss Nita Telly
Miss Kallie............................. Miss Leonide Fournet
Miss Sack............................... Miss Lorenza Guirard
Charity.................................. Miss Paola Fuselier
Petey Filmer........................... Miss Cecil Durand
Wat Cole................................. Miss Helen Bienvenu
Jim Emmerson........................... Miss Cecile Gaiennec

40Ibid., June 22, 1901.
41Ibid., June 28, 1902.
42Ibid., June 27, 1903.
On Sunday, May 28, 1905, Bulwer-Lytton's The Lady of Lyon was given by local actors at Duchamp's Hall. The commentator for the newspaper was impressed by the performance and said that the hero and heroine, J. C. Daspit and Estelle Fournet, "held the audience spell-bound upon several occasions, and must have forced a lump up on many a listener's throat, if we are to judge from the way we felt during the real pathetic scenes of the performance." Others in the drama were Virginia Bassett, Jeanne Lacage, Paul Guerin, and E. B. Donnell, Principal of St. Martinville High School. The Book Lovers Club sponsored the production.43

The 1905 closing exercises of St. Martinville High School took place at Duchamp's Hall on June 13, 14, and 15. On the second day of the activities, the Magnolia Literary Club presented a debate followed by a play The Perplexing Situation.44

On July 1, 1905, The Weekly Messenger printed information that Mr. Duchamp, manager of Duchamp Hall, would begin extensive repairs on his building.

The stage will be built in the rear of the large hall, giving much more seating space, regular opera chairs will be put in, new scenery and new curtains, and a place will be made to accommodate the colored people. The main entrance will be made on Main Street through the passage now occupied as a barber shop.

43 Ibid., June 3, 1905. "The play had a French Revolutionary theme and was a great success on the stage, but the script was poor." John A. Conway, History of the Theatre. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1951, p. 180.

44 Ibid., June 17, 1905.
The young ladies of the Evangeline Literary Club gave The Spinsters' Convention in April, 1906. The program was a benefit to raise money for Evangeline Park.45

The students of the high school delivered a debate and performed a play at the 1908 closing exercises at Duchamp's Hall. The play, The Little Rebel, was sponsored by the Literary Society.46

On February 26, 1909, the pupils of the high school gave a minstrel in the interest of their Library Fund. Miss Johnston, Assistant Principal of the school, was the manager of the minstrel. The Weekly Messenger of the following day said that 'Miss Johnston as old mammy, in her church song, alone, was fully worth the price of admission.'

During the commencement exercises of St. Martinville High School in May, 1909, the young ladies presented a play, My Old Kentucky Home.47

In 1910, the closing exercises of St. Martinville High School took place at Duchamp's Opera House on May 26 and 27. The students performed Annie Laurie. Seniors Alphonse Guerin, Rosa Guidry, Cecilia Beslin, Eddie Bienvenu, Robert Marais, and Carol Simons acted in French La Fille de L'Avare.48

46Ibid., May 30, 1908.
48Ibid., May 28, 1910.
The last printed information about the non-professional actors before 1914 in St. Martinville appeared in The Weekly Messenger, January 27, 1912. In the new high school auditorium, finished in 1911, the students gave a debate, a piano solo, and two one-act plays, A Public Benefactor and Miss Tom Boy.

The Communities Around
Bayou Lafourche
1900 to 1914

Convent

Convent, the parish seat of St. James Parish, is located in the western part of the parish on the east bank of the Mississippi River. The original seat was situated on the west side of the river, nearly opposite the present courthouse, but in 1869 it was transferred to the east bank near the Convent of the Sacred Heart, from which the town receives its name. The Convent and Jefferson College are two points of historical interest in the township. Convent had a population of about six hundred people in the year 1914.49

Although Convent is not on Bayou Lafourche, the close proximity to the stream and the cultural background of the inhabitants give it a closer tie with the bayou area than with other settlements on the eastern side of the Mississippi River.

Among the existing copies of *L'Interim*, the weekly newspaper of Convent, written both in the French and the English languages, was an article about the fortieth annual commencement of Jefferson College. The ceremonies were on June 20, 1905, in Alumni Auditorium, and included a tragedy, *Foscari*, and a French comedy, *A Qui le Neveu*. In these performances "Mr. Nargassons and Mr. E. Lambremont especially distinguished themselves and showed proficiency as actors."\(^\text{50}\)

No further amateur performances were reported in the scattered issues of *L'Interim* until November 30, 1912, when the following announcement was printed.

Tomorrow evening at 8:00 o'clock, at the Alumni Hall, the Jefferson College Dramatic Association, under the able direction of Rev. Father C. A. Dougherty, will entertain the faculty and their friends to the interesting drama in three-acts *At Yale*, after which will follow the moving pictures.

Donaldsonville

Donaldsonville, the seat of justice for Ascension Parish, is located in the southwestern part of the parish, on the right bank of the Mississippi River, near the source of Bayou Lafourche, and about eighty miles by water above New Orleans. The town was founded in 1806 by William Donaldson. The population by 1914 was approaching five thousand.\(^\text{51}\)

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\(^\text{50}\) *L'Interim*, June 24, 1905.

Newspaper publications of The Donaldsonville Chief are scarce up to the year 1904. It is known from other sources, however, that in 1900, the Donaldsonville amateurs produced The Volunteer Minstrel and the Big Donaldsonville Minstrel, and that the local Jedediah Judkin Dramatic Company was active during that period of time.

The Donaldsonville Chief, August 27, 1904, announced a hometown entertainment for the following day. The Brothers of the Sacred Heart School were going to present two comedies at the Phoenix Opera House, Ma Grandmere et La Grammaire and A Quiet Night. The newspaper printed no word concerning the outcome of the performances.

On February 4, 1905, The Donaldsonville Chief published another announcement about a forthcoming stage production.

The Serio Stock Company, an organization composed of prominent New Orleans amateurs, will present A Debt of Honor, a four-act melodrama at the Phoenix Opera House Sunday February 19, matinee and night, for the benefit of St. Joseph Commercial Institute Alumni Association.

Part of the entertainment of the Ascension High School Commencement in May, 1905, featured a dialogue entitled Forget Me Not, with Pierre Blanchard and Chaffin Vega in the leading roles.

The dramatic section of the program for the closing of the St. Joseph Commercial Institute on June 24, 1905, was as follows:

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52 The Assumption Pioneer, February 10, 1900.
53 The Weekly Iberville South, March 17, 1900.
54 Ibid., April 28, 1900.
55 The Donaldsonville Chief, May 27, 1905.
David, the Shepherd Boy

Cast of Characters

Jesse, David's Father..... Paul Landry
Samuel, the prophet....... Morton Henderson
Abigail, Queen of Carmel.. Gilbert Cire
Wm. Blumenthal
Attendents to the Queen... Leonce Cire
Iban Dehon
David.................... Joseph Keating
Saul........................ Charles Maurin
Michol.................... Karl Leche
Jonathan.................. Charles Melancon

The Merchant of Venice

A drama in four acts

Presented by a cast from the classes

of 1906 and 1907

Dramatis Personae

Duke of Venice.......... Malcolm Barlowe
Tubal
Jailer..................... Robert Ambrose
Magnifico
Bassanio............... Wilfred Landry
Antonio................ Joseph Bordreaux
Portia.................... Lee Keating
Salanio.................... Leslie Israel
Lorenzo.................. George Gullatta
Nerissa................ Robert Higgason
Gratiano................. Edward Duepre
Shylock............... Lee Babin

The Quarrel

Karl Leche and Fulgence Crocket

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56Ibid., June 24, 1905.
The faculty and pupils of Ascension High School presented a children's play, The Princess Serenade, at the Phoenix Theatre on October 31, 1906, for the benefit of the school library. Ione Duncan of Plaquemine staged the production in which more than eighty children performed.57

The new Gondran Theatre, named after Attorney G. A. Gondran, opened in Donaldsonville on Sunday, November 4, 1906. The $30,000 brick structure, located at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Iberville Street, had a seating capacity for six hundred persons.58

The debut of the non-professional actors of Donaldsonville at the Gondran Theatre came on January 2, 1907. The students of Ascension High School presented The Way of the Maid for the gymnasium fund. 59

On February 3, The Dixie Dramatic Club of Thibodaux brought a drama, A Righted Wrong, to the Gondran Theatre. The club performed the play for the benefit of the Hubert Trellie Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy. The local high school students repeated their production of The Way of the Maid that Sunday evening after the matinee performance of A Righted Wrong. "Large audiences attended both shows."60

57Ibid., November 3, 1906.
58Ibid., November 10, 1906.
59Ibid., January 5, 1907.
60Ibid., February 9, 1907. See Thibodaux, page 87.
A year later, on February 26, the Donaldsonville Dramatic Club gave a four-act comedy-drama, *Esmeralda*, by William Gillette, at the Gondran Theatre. R. N. Stalor, Wilfred Landry, Richard Melancon, Hermine Nicaud, Maud Harding, Allen Lear, Hiram Proffitt, Bertha Green, and Laura Landry carried the roles in the play.\(^61\)

The closing concert of the new Donaldsonville High School, dedicated the previous year, took place in the auditorium on May 14, 1908. The building stood in the center of a square fronting on Railroad Avenue. "The second floor contained six school rooms and an assembly hall with a seating capacity of over six hundred."\(^62\) The program took place in the assembly room and included the senior class play, a four-act comedy, *In Cap and Gown*. The cast of characters were:

- **Class President**.............. Nonie Bradford
- **First Vice President**......... Rosa Gauthreaux
- **Class Secretary**.............. Eleanor Blowin
- **Class Treasurer**.............. Bertha Michel
- **Second Vice President**....... Rebecca Newman\(^63\)

St. Joseph Commercial Institute brought its 1907-1908 school session to a close on June 21 with exercises staged in the Gondran Theatre. The program included the following cast in *The Will*.

- **Brother Currie**.............. O'Neil Daigle
- **Brother Swipes**.............. Ed Tambert
- **Squire Drawl**............... W. Wagenspack
- **Frank Millington**......... Fulgence Crocket \(^64\)

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\(^61\) *Ibid.*., February 29, 1908.

\(^62\) *Ibid.*., August 17, 1907.

\(^63\) *Ibid.*., May 16, 1908.

\(^64\) *Ibid.*., June 27, 1908.
Not having an auditorium of its own, the 1909 graduating exercises of St. Joseph Commercial Institute were held again on the stage of the Gondran Theatre. During the program, Charles Melancon, Frank Beatrous, and Oscar Cire performed a short farce, *April Fools*. 65

The Catholic Schools gave a Thanksgiving entertainment at the Gondran Theatre, on November 22, 1910. The "piece de resistance" of the evening was a comedy called *Razor Jim*. D. C. Mattingly, Elmo Landry, Jorda Cive, and Edward Cox comprised the cast. 66

The final program of the 1910-1911 school year at Donaldsonville High School occurred on May 26, with the performance of *Endymion*, the dramatization of a Greek legend. 67

On December 23, 1911, St. Joseph Commercial Institute celebrated its Silver Jubilee. The students, assisted by the young ladies of St. Vincent's Institute, gave an entertainment at the Gondran Theatre. The program included dramatic activities, musical selections, motion pictures, and declamations. The principal play was *Our Future Senator*, with D. C. Mattingly as the senator. The celebration ended with a one-act farce, *You Will Find Out*. The comedians were D. C. Mattingly, Elmo Landry, Adam Leblance, and Jorda Cire. 68

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65Ibid., June 26, 1909.
66Ibid., November 26, 1910.
67Ibid., June 3, 1911.
68Ibid., December 30, 1911.
Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Park staged a "grand olio and dramatic presentation" at the Gondran Theatre on April 12, 1912, for the benefit of the Catholic Church. The program consisted of a cake walk by eleven little couples, several character and costume songs, vocal and instrumental solos, dialogues, a Virginia reel, a one-act play, an Indian tableau, a violin and piano duet, and chorus selections. 69

St. Joseph Commercial Institute ended the 1911-1912 term with exercises at the Gondran Theatre on June 19. A one-act comedy, Wanted, A Confidential Clerk, performed by the graduating class, was among the numbers on the program. 70

Local musicians and dramatic talent united to present a light opera, The Chimes of Normandy. The production was given at the Gondran Theatre, December 19, 1912, for the benefit of the Donaldsonville High School Library. Clara Stuart sang the leading feminine role. Annie Perry Dodd performed as Germaine, and "shared the honors of the evening with Miss Stuart." Frank Rieger portrayed the leading role of Gaspard, the miser. 71

Two non-local amateur groups appeared in Donaldsonville during 1913. On February 1, The Donaldsonville Chief reviewed a performance given the night before by the first of these troupes, the Louisiana State University Dramatic Club.

69 Ibid., April 13, 1912.
70 Ibid., June 22, 1912.
71 Ibid., December 21, 1912.
The presentation of *Trelewney of the Wells* at the Gondran Theatre last night by the L. S. U. Dramatic Club was witnessed by a large and appreciative audience. The audience was larger than the one which witnessed the initial presentation of the comedy in the club's hometown of Baton Rouge.

On April 25, the Progressive Thespians of Thibodaux High School played *The Outcast's Daughter* at the local high school. The newspaper noted that "inclement weather and the Baton Rouge State Rally interfered with the attendance." \(^{72}\)

The schools of Donaldsonville produced the majority of the stage activities in the community between 1900 and 1914. St. Joseph Commercial Institute and Donaldsonville High School usually presented plays at their annual closing exercises. Other groups such as the Jedediah Dramatic Club and the Donaldsonville Dramatic Club were active from time to time. Neighboring troupes, the Serio Stock Company of New Orleans, the Dixie Dramatic Club and the Progressive Thespians of Thibodaux, and the Louisiana State University Dramatic Club of Baton Rouge found audiences in Donaldsonville. After 1906, the Gondran Theatre was the scene for most of the performances given in Donaldsonville.

**Napoleonville**

Napoleonville, located on the west bank of Bayou Lafourche, was named by one of its early settlers who served under Napoleon and

\(^{72}\)Ibid., May 3, 1913. See Thibodaux, pages 89-90.
greatly admired the general. It is the capital and principal town of Assumption Parish. Some idea of the growth of the community can be shown through a comparison of the census reports. In 1890, the population was 172; in 1900, it was 945, and in 1910, it had reached 1,200.\textsuperscript{73} The local newspaper was \textit{The Assumption Pioneer}, also called \textit{Le Pionnier L'Assumption}, because it was printed in English and French. Following 1902, French all but disappeared from the newspapers of Napoleonville.

A group of performers came from Donaldsonville, ten miles to the northeast of Napoleonville, and presented \textit{The Voluntier Minstrels} at the Corde Opera House on January 21, 1900.\textsuperscript{74} Since no review of the show was printed, nothing more can be said of \textit{The Voluntier Minstrels}.

On April 12, 1901, over eighty children performed in an entertainment at the Corde Theatre. The local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy sponsored the production in the interest of the Circulating Library Fund.\textsuperscript{75}

The Napoleonville actors made a real contribution to amateur dramatics on December 18 and 19, 1905. They presented Bronson Howard's \textit{The Young Mrs. Winthrop} at the Corde Opera House. A professional actor, Percy Levin, and his wife acted the leading roles and

\textsuperscript{73}Fortier, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{74}\textit{The Assumption Pioneer}, February 10, 1900.

\textsuperscript{75}\textit{Ibid.}, April 13, 1901.
were supported by native performers. The Assumption Pioneer, December 23, stated that the play "surpassed in every way any play that was ever attempted by local talent."

On the subsequent Thursday evening, December 28, another hometown cast performed A Summer's Fancy on the Corde stage under the direction of Percy Levin. The newspaper said the following about the two plays.

These plays were both a success financially, despite the unfavorable weather.

To Mr. and Mrs. Levin, to the local people who took part in them, and to Major Phil H. Gilbert who managed them, is due the credit.76

The combined musical talent of Napoleonville and the surrounding vicinity performed Precioso, the opera by Carl Maria Weber, at the Corde Opera House on April 2, 1907.77

Posters and tickets for a comedy-drama, Saved, or A Wife's Peril, appeared in Napoleonville early in January of 1909. Local young people performed the play at Corde Playhouse on January 8, and the proceeds from the ticket sales went to the Fire Department. The cast was as follows:

George Fane............... R. A. Gehringer
Rafael di Rivola......... J. W. Rogers
Joseph Hawhins Luigi..... Sam LeBlanc
A. Cholomondeley........James Matherne
Beatrice Fane............Lilly Shepherd
Trixy......................Mary Louise Gehringer
Mrs. Merryweather........Clara Marquette 78

76Ibid., December 30, 1905
77Ibid., April 6, 1907.
78Ibid., January 9, 1909.
On December 23, 1910, the students of Napoleonville High School gave the operetta *Sylvia*, at the Corde Opera House, for the benefit of the school. 79

The *Old Maid's Convention* played at the opera on November 10, 1911, under the auspices of the Mother's Club. "Dr. Dugas, as Professor Alfred J. Dunningeau, with the wonderful machine, the magic transform(H)er, was perfect in make-up and acting." 80

In 1913, a cast composed of local children gave *Tom Thumb's Wedding*, on July 28, at the Corde Opera House. Isabel Folse and Katie Bigley of Donaldsonville supervised the "wedding." The money which was collected went to the Napoleonville Amusement Park. 81

The Corde Opera House was the center for all theatrical offerings in Napoleonville before World War I. Local companies sponsored by clubs and organizations of the town produced most of the performances. School groups did very little stage work compared to what was being done by those in surrounding communities.

Plaquemine

Even though Plaquemine is located some twenty miles north of Donaldsonville, and not directly on Bayou Lafourche, this writer feels that culturally the society is closely associated with those of the

Lafourche country. Plaquemine is the seat of government and the largest settlement in Iberville Parish. It is situated in the eastern section of the parish on the western bank of the Mississippi River. The population of the town in 1900 was 3,590.

There were exchanges of talent between Plaquemine and Donaldsonville during 1900. The Plaquemine Dramatic Club went to Donaldsonville on February 26 and presented The Noble Outcast at the Phoenix Theatre. Dr. J. A. Richard, Frank Hubbard, Alex Jeffries, Frank Tuxworth, Marx Kahn, Berdie Duncan, Belle Kahn, Iona Duncan, Iona Dardenne, and Sallie Kawalski made up the cast. The Jedediah Judkin Dramatic Company came to Plaquemine on April 22 and gave a performance in the Hope Opera House. Neither the name of the play, nor the members of the cast were mentioned by the newspaper.

The Plaquemine Public School conducted its annual entertainment in June, 1900. The program consisted of the following numbers:

Gossip Pantomime........... Primary School
Chicky-My-Crani-Crow....... Third Grade
Grandma's Dream............... First Grade
Rope Drill.................... Fourth Grade
Night (tableaux)............... High School
Recitation.................... Iona Duncan
Delivery of Diplomas
Dancing

83 The Weekly Iberville South, February 24, 1900. According to Bradford, op. cit., p. 187, the Plaquemine Dramatic Club was organized in 1870.
84 Ibid., April 28, 1900.
85 Ibid., June 2, 1900.
Local actors presented *Down in Dixie* at Hope Opera House in August of 1900. "After the performance, dancing was indulged in until a late hour." Later that month, the company went to Bayou Goula, a few miles south of Plaquemine, and repeated the play.

By 1904, and for some time thereafter, several acting groups existed in and around Plaquemine, playing at home as well as touring from town to town. In May, the Plaquemine Dramatic Company appeared on the stage in White Castle, a village about ten miles to the south. In the same month, the Bayou Goula amateurs presented *The Maniac Wife* in St. John's Hall in Bayou Goula. The players of Maringouin, a borough established thirty miles north of Plaquemine, prepared a play, *Out in the Street*, which they presented in July as a benefit for the public school.

In 1905, the Plaquemine Vaudeville Company, under the direction of Dr. J. A. Richard, went to Bayou Goula and performed for the benefit of St. Paul's Catholic Church. "The local footlight artists, especially Dr. Richard, made quite a hit in their vaudeville play." The newspaper writer also favorably mentioned Marx Kahn for his performance.

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On May 10, 1905, the Plaquemine Dramatic Club produced Charles Townsend's *Dr. Hopper of Wall Street* in the interest of the congregation of Ohavai Sholom. The reviewer for *The Weekly Iberville South*, May 13, had the following to say about the production:

The presentation of the play with Mr. Frank E. Hubbard in the leading role was simply a success of successes. Mr. Hubbard, as Dr. Hopper, was at his best and kept the audience on the qui vive throughout.

Dr. J. A. Richard and Mr. Marx Kahn, in their comic parts, kept the house in a good humor.

Mr. C. A. Barker, Jr. was splendid and Misses Ione Duncan, Belle Kahn and Mary Valega could not have been improved upon.

A few days later, the troupe took the play twenty-three miles north of Plaquemine to Grosse Tete and played there for the benefit of St. Joseph Catholic Church. The next month, they went to Bayou Goula and performed in Catholic Hall.

The Plaquemine High School students presented *Hiawatha*, at Hope Opera House, as part of their graduating exercises on June 9, 1905.

On Sunday, June 25, 1905, the inhabitants of Plaquemine held a fair to raise money for equipment for the fire department. "The Plaquemine Dramatic Club also assisted materially by rendering the drama, *The Parish Priest*."

Dr. J. A. Richard, Gervais Skelly, H. Erphraim, Sidney Levy, Alex

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Jeffries, and Kleime Wilbert were the leading comedians in The High School Minstrel given at Hope Theatre, on March 27, 1907. "Master J. A. Richard, Jr., a little tot of four years, brought the house down with his singing of "Gravy." 96

The Plaquemine Dramatic Club produced Between the Acts, on May 19, 1907, at St. Basil's Academy. Marx Kahn, Dr. J. A. Richard, Alvin Barker, Gervais Skelly, Belle Kahn, Burnadette Baurgeois, and Virginia Ellisaide were in the cast. 97

For the 1908 commencement exhibition of St. Basil's Academy, the students offered an operetta, Little Red Riding Hood. Miss G. Wilbert played the title role, Miss T. Collais acted the part of the wolf, Miss M. Reynolds was the mother, and Miss M. Marieaux, the Fairy Queen. Misses M. Barker and V. Landry were the attendants, and the junior pupils portrayed the fairies. 98

During a period of several years, the Plaquemine Dramatic Club was silent, then on May 7, 1910, The Weekly Iberville South informed the public that "the famous Plaquemine Dramatic Club will soon reorganize, and in the near future give the people of this parish one of its splendid productions." Whether or not the group re-formed and produced any plays is not certain because the newspapers of the years

96 Ibid., March 23, 1907.
97 Ibid., May 25, 1907.
98 Ibid., June 27, 1908.
1911, 1912, and 1913 have been lost.

The Louisiana State University Dramatic Club, on a three day tour through the bayou country, played Pinero's *Trelawney of the Wells* in Plaquemine, on January 29, 1913. 99

During the early years of the century, the activities of the Plaquemine Dramatic Club in and around the hometown helped to create interest in non-professional theatre. Talented and active members of the club such as Dr. J. A. Richard, Marx Kahn, and Iona Duncan had a stimulating effect upon local theatrical productions. Plaquemine actors traveled to neighboring towns and performed plays. Donaldsonville and Louisiana State University sent representatives to Plaquemine to demonstrate their histrionic abilities. The schools of Plaquemine were somewhat inactive for this period.

Thibodaux

Thibodaux, the parish seat of Lafourche Parish, was first planned and laid out by Henry Thibodaux. By 1900, the population of the community had reached 3,253. In addition to the public school, there were Mt. Carmel Convent and Thibodaux College. The town possessed an opera house which advertised its program each Thursday in the weekly

newspaper, The Lafourche Comet. 100

On July 11, 1901, The Lafourche Comet announced that the local actors were organizing a club.

The Thibodaux Dramatic Club was organized last Tuesday night with the following officers: President, Dr. H. S. Smith; Stage Manager, P. J. Aucoin, and Secretary, V. J. Knoblach.

The drama club made its debut on December 27, 1901, at the Thibodaux Opera House, with A Woman of Honor, a three-act play, given under the auspices of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. 101

At the opera house on March 30, 1902, the Dixie Dramatic Club, a group composed of the younger talent of Thibodaux, gave a play called Uncle Rube. "Mr. Charles A. Aucoin, a youth only sixteen years old, appeared in the role of Uncle Rube." Others in the cast were Eugene Coulon, Clara Bergeron, Beatrice Coulon, R. F. Badeaux, Guy J. Knoblock, George Webre, James Bourg, Emile J. Aucoin, and Gertrude Folse. The Actors were pleased with the results of their efforts and thanked those who helped them by publishing a letter in The Lafourche Comet on April 3, 1902.

We, the undersigned, heartily thank Prof. Joseph A. Trone for his kindness in having so zealously instructed the members of our club in so successfully producing the play of Uncle Rube. Thanks are extended to our chaperons and musical directress, Mrs. L. E. Meyer, Mr. E. N. Roth, Jr. and all the members belonging to his orchestra, and also to all who in any way helped to make the entertainment a social and financial success.

Dixie Dramatic Club


101 The Lafourche Comet, January 2, 1902.
For the next two years, until the death of Joseph A. Trone in November, 1903, the Dixie Dramatic Club was unusually busy producing plays at the Thibodaux Opera House. The troupe presented *The Man from Borneo*, on September 1, and *A Noble Outcast*, on October 16, 1902.

On Sunday, November 30, 1902, one hundred and fifty boys and girls under the direction of Mrs. Charles Badeaux gave *Alice in Wonderland* at the opera house. Marie Dansereau, the Queen of Hearts; Reginald Badeaux, the Mad Hatter; Emanuel Labit, the Dormouse; and Paul Legendre, the White Rabbit were some of the leading characters. The weather became so bad that it prevented a second showing of the play planned for Monday night.

The Thibodaux Dramatic Club, managed by May O. Flanagan, produced Charles Townsend's *Captain Racket* at the opera house on January 15, 1903. Some of the charter members of the company were in the cast which follows:

- Captain Robert Racket: Francis Knoblock
- Obadiah: Philip Aucoin
- Timothy Tolman: Dr. Joseph Dexter
- Mr. Dalroy: Guy Knoblock
- Hobson: Volney Knoblock
- Clarice: Pauline Dansereau
- Mrs. Tolman: Corinne Aycock
- Katy (maid): May O. Flanagan

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102 *Ibid.*, November 12, 1903. Professor Trone was Principal of the Webre School and director of the Dixie Dramatic Club.


The Dixie Dramatic Company presented a rural comedy, *The Corner Store*, at the Thibodaux Opera House in June. It was the last play directed by Professor Trone, who also appeared in the cast. The proceeds from the production purchased additional scenery for the opera house.

After the death of Joseph Trone, the Dixie Dramatic Company was inactive until April 7, 1904, when they staged *Little Heroine* at the opera house for the benefit of the Home Circle Orchestra. The play was not a financial success because of rain.107

Thibodaux College conducted its commencement exercises on June 29, 1904, at St. Joseph Hall. Among the musical selections, recitations, and speeches, the students performed a one-act play, *The New Squire*.108

On May 11, 1905, the Thibodaux Dramatic Club gave *Twixt Love and Money* at the opera house. The editor of *The Lafourche Comet* gave recognition to the director of the play.

We think that compliments are especially due to Mr. F. L. Knoblock, who conceived the idea of presenting the drama and who had the trouble and responsibility of drilling those who took part in the cast.109

By 1906, the Dixie Dramatic Club was the principal group producing

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106 Ibid., June 18, 1903.
107 Ibid., April 14, 1904.
108 Ibid., June 30, 1904.
109 Ibid., May 18, 1905.
plays in Thibodaux. On February 22, the club presented Better Than Gold, with a cast including Guy J. Knoblock, George Lambert, Oliver H. Eugerran, Claude Legarde, E. N. Roth, Maude Williams, Enola Molaison, and Gertrude Legendre. 110

The Dixie Dramatic Club toured to Donaldsonville with A Righted Wrong and performed it at the Gondran Theatre on Sunday, February 3, 1907. 111

The forty-eighth annual exercises of Thibodaux College, celebrated at St. Joseph's Hall in June of 1907, included a two-act drama, The Cross of St. John. 112

In June, 1908, the students of Mt. Carmel Academy presented The Train to Mauro, Les 200 Francs de Recompense, and Aunt Maxwell's Return as part of their commencement program. 113

The Thibodaux High School offered a closing day concert at the opera house in June, 1909. Bonny Tell, a play acted by the pupils, was part of the program. 114

The 1909 commencement recital for Mt. Carmel Convent occurred on June 24, with the presentation of an English drama, The Witch of Bramble Hollow, and a French comedy, Comme dans le Grande Monde. 115

110 Ibid., February 22, 1906.
111 Ibid., February 7, 1907. See Donaldsonville, page 71.
112 Ibid., June 20, 1907. 113 Ibid., June 25, 1908.
114 Ibid., June 17, 1909.
115 Ibid., June 24, 1909.
Thibodaux College prepared a play, *Morris, the Wood Cutter*, and performed it at the opera house on December 22, 1909.\(^{116}\)

In 1910 the young people of Thibodaux formed a new theatrical organization patterned after the earlier Dixie Dramatic Club (1902-1907).

The Junior Dramatic Club recently organized by some young men and girls of this town under the auspices of Professor and Mrs. William T. Luck, is the organization, which filled with the spirit of the art, intends to trod the same road as the one of a short period back, that left such glowing, "footprints on the sand of time," and doubtless encounter the same attitude of merit and distinction, of which due credit must be attributed to the young ladies for the organization of the club.

Genevieve Coulan, Mamie Lefort, Ione Rivers, Mabel Toups, Isabelle Lefort, Celesle Pension, Alice Lefort, Stephens Thiberville, Gaston Brand, Robert Legendre, Leonce Blanchard, and Lawrence Martin attended the first meeting of the Junior Dramatic Club.\(^{117}\)

The new club began functioning immediately and produced three plays in 1910. The initial effort, on February 4, was *Bread on the Water*.\(^{118}\) *The Squire's Daughter* was their next offering on May 1.\(^{119}\)

On Wednesday, June 1, the club presented *A Gilded Youth* and repeated the play the following Sunday.\(^{120}\) All three productions of the Junior Dramatic Club were staged at the Thibodaux Opera House.


\(^{120}\) *Ibid.*, June 9, 1910.

The 1912 seniors of Thibodaux High School gave their annual play, *Class Play* by Alice Gerstenberg, at the closing exercises in June.

The students of Thibodaux High School formed a dramatic club in 1912 and called it the Progressive Thespians. Members of the club (Teance Boudreaux, Henry Leblanc, O. Robichaux, Cody Wallace, Sadie Folse, and Bertha Picon) performed a one-act farce, *Slasher and Crasher*, as the main feature of a Christmas entertainment given at the school.

The Louisiana State University Dramatic Club brought its production of Pinero's *Trelawney of the Wells* to Thibodaux High School on January 30, 1913. The Progressive Thespians sponsored the visiting club.

In April, 1913, the Progressive Thespians, under the direction of Professor E. S. Carver, presented a four-act drama, *The Outcast's* 

123 *Ibid.*, December 19, 1912. This is the first record found in this study of a drama club in the high schools of Louisiana.  
Daughter, in the school auditorium. The cast performed the play a second time on April 25 in Donaldsonville.

Mr. P. J. Ducet took the thespians to Donaldsonville and back in a gasoline boat. They were accompanied by Miss Mamie Walsh and Miss Corine Steckler.

Thibodaux possessed the most active theatre groups in the bayou country from 1900 to 1914. The organizations and institutions responsible for the main portion of hometown theatre were the Thibodaux Dramatic Club, the Dixie Dramatic Club, the Junior Dramatic Club, Mt. Carmel Convent, Thibodaux High School, and Thibodaux College. With the interest which the people of the community had in such groups, it is not surprising to find that, in 1912, Thibodaux possessed one of the first public high school drama clubs in the state.

Summary

Throughout the first thirteen years of the twentieth century, the communities of Bayous Teche and Lafourche presented much the same picture of theatrical activities as did those of the southwestern part of the state. The considerable amount of theatrical entertainment in Donaldsonville, New Iberia, Opelousas, Plaquemine, and Thibodaux was due in part to the early settlement of the towns. The great Acadian migration to Louisiana began about 1755, and one of the chief areas

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125 Ibid., April 3, 1913.
126 Ibid., May 1, 1913. See Donaldsonville, page 75.
of settlement included the Opelousas, Attakapas, and Lafourche regions. Because of his romantic temperament, the Frenchman enjoyed entertaining as well as being entertained. Non-professional theatre came as a second nature to him and was part of his "joie de vivre" which he considered his birthright.

Every town possessed an opera house, and the citizens pointed to it with pride. Most of the local performances were given at the opera houses, including all kinds of dramas, musical plays, minstrels, and vaudeville shows. More plays were given than any other form of stage presentation, with the minstrel show coming second in popularity. Each town produced at least one minstrel show during this period of time. Some places such as St. Martinsville, with the Greig Minstrel Company, and New Iberia, with its Elks' Theatre, had well established groups of minstrel men.

The most active organizations in amateur theatre were the schools and the dramatic clubs. Many of the drama clubs had been active before 1900, and some, such as the Plaquemine and the Donaldsonville Dramatic Clubs, continued to function in the twentieth century. Thibodaux had several independent organizations of actors producing plays, and Thibodaux High School formed the Progressive Thespians, in 1912.

The non-commercial stage in the Teche and Lafourche districts before World War I revealed the interest and vitality possessed by the people associated with native theatrical activities. They set a standard of achievement, in quantity if not in quality, which other communities of the state could have afforded to emulate.
CHAPTER III

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA,

THE FLORIDA PARISHES

1900 TO 1914
SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA

THE FLORIDA PARISHES

The parishes of Louisiana east of the Mississippi River are known as the Florida Parishes because, until 1819 Spain claimed the territory as part of West Florida. The area is filled with pine forests, white sandy-bottom rivers, and health resorts. Truck gardening is a widespread occupation. North of Baton Rouge are the two Feliciana parishes which were settled by the British during the American Revolution.

Bogalusa, Covington, Franklinton, Greenburg, Kentwood, and St. Francisville have been selected for a study of their amateur theatrical offerings. Mention is made of some of the activities which took place in Amite, Clinton, Liverpool, and Slidell, but most of the information from these towns were lost or never recorded. Baton Rouge and New Orleans are a part of Southeast Louisiana, but separate studies have been made of the amateur performances given during the first quarter of the twentieth century in these two communities.


Covington

Covington, the seat of St. Tammany Parish, is situated north of Lake Pontchartrain, in the heart of a great pine forest, on the banks of the Bogue Falaya River. In 1900, the population had reached 3,060, but by 1910 it had dropped to 2,610.3

The Covington Dramatic Club gave the first theatrical entertainment after the beginning of the new century. On April 21, 1900, in Castle Hall, the members of the club performed A Husband to Order. The players were as follow:

Baron de Beaupre............. L. S. Smith
Pierre Marcheaux............. J. B. Lancaster
Anatol Lateur.................. Julian Smith
Philipeau...................... A. L. Strain
Servant......................... Deed Smith
Josephine...................... Emma Whelpley
Madame Philipeau............. Ruby Warren

Two church groups sponsored plays in the spring of 1901. The ladies of the Methodist Church presented Will You Marry Me?, on April 12, in a new building belonging to Roubion and Stroble. The following month the Episcopalians gave a drama, Conrad, at Castle Hall.6

In the Pavilion at the public park on Bogue Falaya River, the


4St. Tammany Farmer, April 28, 1900.

5Ibid., March 30, 1901.

6Ibid., April 6, 1901.
local drama society presented a play on April 26, 1902, for the benefit of the Covington Fire Department.

The feature of the evening was a charming drama, in two acts, entitled, The Chimney Corner, rendered by the Covington Dramatic Club. A neat stage had been erected for the occasion, the scenery and the beautiful drop curtain being the handiwork of our local artist, Mr. Silas L. Smith.

In 1903, the Enterprise Dramatic Club, composed of "thirty-six young ladies and gentlemen," made its appearance in Covington. On April 25, the group presented Off the Stage at the Pavilion.

The Enterprise Dramatic Club was busy again in June with a travesty of Romeo and Juliet given at the Pavilion. The piece was a six-act ragtime burlesque of the Shakespearean tragedy directed by Deeden Williams.

Members of the St. Tammany Tribe of the Red Men presented tableaux at the Covington Pavilion on August 15, 1903. The program contained scenes such as "Cain and Able," "Indian Scenes," "Pocahontas and Captain John Smith," and "Columbia in her Glory" (with fireworks). Professor H. Duvalle of New Orleans staged the tableaux; N. J. Duplantis erected a 50' by 50' platform for the exhibition, and W. P. Minckler superintended the entire entertainment.

7 Ibid., May 3, 1902.
8 Ibid., April 18, 1903.
9 Ibid., June 6, 1903.
10 Ibid., August 22, 1903.
Indigenous actors produced three plays at the Covington Pavilion during 1904. They played Wide Enough for Two, on April 16, as a benefit for the Covington Base Ball Uniform Fund; In the Fog, on May 6, for the benefit of the library, and on June 6 and 11, Echoes from Childhood, a two-act comedy written by Deeden Williams for the benefit of the Presbyterian Manse.\(^\text{11}\)

In 1905, the Pavilion remained the popular place to give theatrical performances. On May 12, Mrs. Charles Wascom directed Maidens All Forlorn for the Methodist Ladies Aid.\(^\text{12}\)

John Puderer, F. J. Keller, F. Roehl, F. Boubousquie, Alice Lafaye, Mrs. L. Hayden, and Mary Reid performed Between the Acts, at the Pavilion, on September 14 and 15, 1905, for the purpose of aiding the library fund.\(^\text{13}\)

In June, 1906, "Miss M. Lafaye and Frank Weller held the attention of the audience for fully half an hour" in a one-act play, The Reformer Reformed.\(^\text{14}\)

The Covington Dramatic Club presented Charles Townsend's Captain Racket, with Edmund Stern in the title role, at Cantrell Hall on August 30 and 31, 1907.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{11}\)Ibid., April 23, June 11, 1904.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., May 13, 1905.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., September 23, 1905.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., June 13, 1906.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., August 31, 1907.
The St. Tammany Farmer reported five dramatic performances produced in Covington during 1908. The first of these was Arabella's Poor Relations, given on May 26, at Cantrell Hall, in connection with the commencement exercises for Covington High School. The Dixon Academy of Covington celebrated its 1908 commencement by including a play, Lend Me Five Shillings. The young men of the academy played all the roles, both male and female. Carroll Bobb, as Mr. Colightly, and Arthur McQuirk, as Captain Phobbs, were "deserving of special mention." G. M. Baker's Above the Clouds played on August 7, 1908, with the following people in the cast: Mrs. Elener Lyons, Mrs. C. M. Poole, Miss Edna Champagene, E. E. Lyons, J. B. Lancaster, L. L. Morgan, Edmund Stern, John F. Dundorf, Julian Smith, and Fred Poehl. Mrs. E. E. Lyons directed the play in the interest of raising money for the public library. The last of the plays of 1908 occurred at Cantrell Hall, on November 5, when Down by the Sea played with many of the same actors from Above the Clouds. Fred Poehl was in charge of the production.

16 Ibid., May 30, 1908.
17 Who's Who in the Theatre, a biographical record of the contemporary stage, compiled and edited by John Parker, mentions Lend Me Five Shillings as being a farce written by J. Maddison Mortone and produced for the first time at the Haymarket Theatre in London, in 1846.
18 St. Tammany Farmer, June 20, 1908.
19 Ibid., August 8, 1908.
20 Ibid., November 14, 1908.
Miss Alma Adis directed *The Squire's Daughter* as part of the entertainment for the thirteenth annual session of the Louisiana Press Association which met in Covington during April of 1909.\(^{21}\)

In May, 1910, Mrs. George C. Bullen, formerly Miss Deeden Williams, staged *The Mikado* at Cantrell Hall with a cast of thirty-two local amateurs.

The costumes for *The Mikado* were very expensive, and the expense was borne by the individual members of the company:

- Frank Boudousquie.............. Koko
- Mrs. C. L. Smith................. Katsiha
- Irving Clark..................... Pish Tish
- George Carpenter................. Mikado
- Lucy Carlin...................... Petti Sing
- Ellen Clark........................ Peep Boo
- John Dundorf..................... Pooh-bah
- Ellen Ratto....................... Yum Yum
- Carl Kohnke...................... Nanki Poo \(^{22}\)

In the "Slidell Department"\(^{23}\) of The *St. Tammany Farmer*, on March 4, 1911, was the report that *A Lesson to Lovers*, a three-act play, was presented there on February 23 in the Knights of Pythias Hall.

At the Scholastica Academy closing in June of 1912, a cantata entitled *Midsummer Night* was performed by a large student cast.\(^{24}\)


\(^{23}\) Slidell, Louisiana, is located about thirty miles southeast of Covington in St. Tammany Parish.

\(^{24}\) *Ibid.*, June 29, 1912. Scholastica Academy at Covington was a boarding and day school for girls.
The Spinsters' Convention was performed by a group in Covington, on June 5, 1913. Harold Zerginger, who played the part of Professor Makeover, took the only male role in the performance.  

The groups producing drama in Covington from 1900 to 1914 were the Covington Dramatic Club, The Enterprise Dramatic Club, The Dixie Academy, The Covington High School, and Scholastica Academy. Most of the productions were given at Cantrell Hall or in the Pavilion at Bogue Falaya Park.

Franklinton

Franklinton is the seat of justice in Washington Parish. The town is located in the western part of the parish, ten miles south of the Mississippi boundary line and eight miles east of the Tchefuncte River. The population of Franklinton in 1900 was 236, increasing to 814 by 1910.  

The only recorded theatrical performance by non-professional actors in Franklinton during 1900 to 1914 discovered by this writer, was in The Era Leader, January 19, 1911. Slidell talent presented Valley Farm at the Franklinton Central Institute.

Greensburg

Located in the eastern part of St. Helena Parish, Greensburg,

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25Ibid., June 7, 1913.

the parish seat of government, had a population of 268 persons in 1910. The Norvilla Collegiate Institute was founded there about 1877. 27

The Amite Dramatic Club 28 went to Greensburg on January 13, 1900, and presented The Social Glass, a temperance play, at the Norvilla Collegiate Institute. The cast included George Lotette, George Dees, Bennie Stern, Egberts Stuart, Stella Stuart, and Ella Hitt. 29

The students of the Greensburg Fitting School, a Baptist boarding school, gave a concert in their auditorium on the evening of December 6, 1901. There were songs, instrumental music and a one-act farce, Popping the Question. 30

In 1902, the Greensburg Fitting School presented two entertainments under the direction of C. C. Cline, principal of the school. In May, the students produced Ten Nights in a Bar Room for the commencement exercises. 31 The other program, given in December, consisted of a drill by all the students, a Hoop-Drill by the young ladies, and a Negro farce called The Hearaphone. 32

Closing exercises at the Fitting School on May 25, 1903, included

28Amite, Louisiana, is found in Tangipahoa Parish about twenty miles from Greensburg.
29St. Helena Echo, January 19, 1900.
30Ibid., December 13, 1901.
31Ibid., May 16, 1902.
32Ibid., December 26, 1902.
a Negro minstrel show.

From the very appearance of the "coons" the crowd became merry and were kept in good humor throughout the entire exercise. Professor Cline acted as master of ceremony and P. C. Fillery and W. S. Holland, the end men, poked fun at everybody and "jarred" a great number of boys.33

The Greensburg High School gave a variety entertainment filled with songs and recitations in Chapel Hall on November 24, 1904.34

In 1907, the high school in Greensburg burned on New Year's Day. The school was moved to the old Novilla Collegiate Institute, then known as Womack Hall.35 The Womack Building was also destroyed by fire in March of the same year.36

Liverpool School37 offered the following program in connection with the commencement in June, 1907.

Chorus............... Welcome Song
Dialogue............... Prologue
Dialogue............... Recitation and Chorus
Recitation............... "Nobody's Child"
Dialogue............... "Our Follies"
Reading.................. "Thame's Letter"
Play...................... "No Peddlers Wanted"
Drill..................... Mother Goose
Tableau Dialogue............. "The Burglar"

Intermission

33Ibid., May 29, 1903.
34Ibid., November 18, 1904.
35Ibid., January 4, 1907.
36Ibid., March 8, 1907.
37Liverpool, Louisiana, is about seven miles north of Greensburg.
Pantomime ..................................... America
Reading ........................................ "The Last Hymn"
Farce ........................................... "The Darky Wood-dealer"
Dialogue ....................................... "Playing Pranks on a Negro Boy"
Chorus ......................................... "Steal Away"
Play .............................................. "Mind Your Own Business" 38

With the loss of Greensburg High School and Womack Hall, and the inactivity of the Fitting School, there was no further record of activity from 1908 to 1914.

Kentwood

Kentwood, found in the northwestern corner of Tangipahoa Parish, had a population of 2,000 at the beginning of the century. 39

Most of the Kentwood newspapers between 1900 and 1914 are available, but no local productions have been discovered by this writer other than those which follow.

On June 23, 1900, the closing concert of St. Mary's Institute included a comedy, Imps of the Trunk, and a three-act play, Dolores, or Through the Fires of Sorrow, written by Charles James Cannon. 40

In the spring of 1909, the ladies of the Presbyterian Church organized a company of children and girls to present The Princess Serenade at the Atherton Theatre.

Miss Ione Duncan of Plaquemine, Louisiana, who is here for the purpose of training the performers, has

38 Ibid., June 7, 1907.
39 Kentwood Commercial, April 7, 1900.
40 Ibid., June 23, 1900.
superintended the entertainment a number of times. 41

St. Francisville

St. Francisville, the parish seat of West Feliciana, is near the Mississippi River. By 1900 the town had 1,059 inhabitants, which in 1910 had decreased to 966. 42

The ladies of Grace Episcopal Church gave an entertainment at Pythian Hall on May 11, 1900, which "proved to be no exception to the long roll of such successes they have chronicled in the past." The following review by the editor of The True Democrat, the weekly newspaper of St. Francisville, appeared on May 12, 1900.

The musical program was not lengthy, but its every number was pleasing. The sunflower chorus, which had been trained by Mrs. R. A. Harrison, was a pretty novelty. A curtain had been stretched and on it had been arranged sunflowers with stalks and foliage. But instead of golden brown centers of the flowers, a charming child, or girl face appeared in each one. These sang the pretty chorus while a little girl (Amelia Barrow) gravely plied her watering-pot upon the flowers so that they could sing better.

George Stern, dressed irreproachably as a negro dude, sang the solo assisted in chorus by the sunflowers.

Miss Ethel Carter of Jackson, Louisiana, recited in sweet voice, "The Peasant Heroine."

Another amusing chorus, which had been instructed by Miss Sadie Ellis, was the chorus of street rats. The boys composing it were dressed in character, and were a motley throng, something on the order of Falstaff's recruits.

The "Frog Chorus" was sung by Misses Lela Golson and Mary Hamison in duet.

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Miss Irma Mattingly, a dear little maid of nine years, next played a violin solo sweetly.

Miss Mable Carter of Jackson gave a recitation, "Naughty Zell," with certain local hints that brought down the house.

Mrs. C. Jeff Miller of New Orleans rendered "Invocation," a vocal solo.

Little Lily Carter, another of the gifted Carter children, recited "Daisy's Faith."

Irma Mattingly next rendered a cute little selection in verse, followed by Mrs. Miller who sang "Calvary."

Miss Ella Montgomery played the accompaniments.

An entertainment performed at Pythian Hall on the evening of September 26, 1901, was a benefit for the St. Francisville Synagogue Fund. The first part of the program consisted of an overture and recitations, and the second part was a farce entitled Ice on Parle Francaise, by T. J. Williams. Gus Friend was the director of the play.43

The 1908 closing exercises of the Julius Freyhan High School took place at Pythian Hall on May 21 and 22, with a play, Bill Poster's Dream, as a part of the ceremony.44

The Julius Freyhan High School gave a school operetta entitled The Rose and Pearl on May 23, 1912, at Pythian Hall. Miss Ruby S. Phillips, the teacher in music and art, trained the pupils.45

The following year, Ruby Phillips and her pupils presented Princess Chrysanthemum, an operetta, on May 24. The cast appeared on

43 The True Democrat, September 28, 1901.
44 Ibid., May 23, 1908.
the program in the following order:

Princess Chrysanthemum........ Mary Hamilton
Toto................................. Lintot Williams
Yum Yum............................. Josie Binning
Du Du................................ Magie Gore
Tu Lip................................. Helen Johnson
Fairy Moonbeam..................... Amy Leake
Empero What-for-Whi.............. Mr. Breidenback
Princess So-Tru..................... Robert Bannow (sic)
Prince So-Sli....................... James Sterling
Top Not.............................. Anna May Cornell
Saucer Eyes......................... Maud Harelson
Almond Eyes........................ Felix Braud

During this time all theatre entertainments given in St. Francisville took place in Pythian Hall. The Julian Freyhan High School, Grace Episcopal Church, and the St. Francisville Synagogue were the groups which produced those stage performances.

Summary

Prior to World War I, Southeastern Louisiana revealed a different picture in its relationship to the local stage from that of the Bayou Country and Southwest Louisiana. The towns of the Florida Parishes had fewer theatres in which their people could perform, smaller acting groups from which to draw talent, and not as many inhabitants from which to attract audiences. These communities did attempt to present the same types of productions, though fewer in number, as did the towns located westward across the Mississippi River. They gave minstrel shows, dramas, musical reviews, and variety

46 Ibid., May 24, 1913.
entertainments, usually in a hall or a pavilion, because of the lack of opera houses. Of course Baton Rouge and New Orleans had fine theatres at this time, but both these communities have been omitted from this study.

Protestant groups in Southeast Louisiana were actively producing plays and stage amusements. The Methodists of Covington presented a comedy, *Will You Marry Me?*; the Presbyterians of Kentwood sponsored *The Princess Serenade*, and the St. Francisville Episcopalians offered variety shows.

Of the towns investigated, Covington proved to be the most productive. The Covington Dramatic Club was active early in the century and presented *A Husband to Order* in 1900. Two years later the Enterprise Dramatic Club was formed and became active under the leadership of Deeden Williams.

Both private and public schools presented senior class plays and commencement programs annually. The Dixon Academy and St. Scholastica Academy were private schools in Covington. The Greensburg Fitting School was a Baptist Institute in Greensburg. St. Mary's Institute was a parochial school in Kentwood. The public schools of this section were Covington High School, Greensburg High School, and Julian Freyhan High School in St. Francisville.

Bogalusa, soon to be one of the most active communities in the southeast, was founded during this period, but was not incorporated as a town until 1914; thus it is not included in this early section of the work on Southeast Louisiana.
CHAPTER IV

NORTH LOUISIANA

1900 TO 1914
NORTH LOUISIANA

To the north of Alexandria, in central Louisiana, one leaves the lowlands and swamps and moves into the uplands and pine hills. The middle and northern sections of the state were populated by persons of English, Scottish, and Irish descent, whose ancestors came to Louisiana during the westward movement of the latter half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Typical American pioneers, the immigrants came mainly from Alabama, Georgia, and other Atlantic states. Most of the people were industrious and prosperous farmers. Instead of large plantations, as were found in southern Louisiana at the opening of the twentieth century, North Louisiana was filled with small farms and numerous towns and villages.¹

The writer has studied ten communities for their contributions to the non-professional theatre in the geographical area designated by this work as North Louisiana. The communities are Alexandria, Farmerville, Homer, Lake Providence, Monroe, Nachitoches, Rayville, Shreveport, St. Joseph, and Tallulah. Other towns are mentioned in the writing, but they do not offer the investigator material enough to merit complete yearly coverage.

Alexandria

Alexandria, the capital of Rapides Parish and one of the principal cities of Louisiana, is on the right bank of Red River in the northeastern part of the parish. The population, according to the United States Census Bureau report of 1910, was 11,213, twice the number given by the census of 1900.

In his thesis, *A Historical Study of Professional Dramatic Activities in Alexandria, Louisiana, from the Beginning to 1920*, Wallace A. Gray states that the first three years of the century were necessarily quiet, especially for the professional actors, as the town was without an opera house. The amateurs used various places in which to present their performances. On New Year's Day, 1900, an operetta, *Little Red Riding Hood*, was produced under the direction of Mrs. H. Huson at West Alexandria School.

The seventh annual commencement of St. Francis Xavier Commercial College took place on June 17, 1900, in the school hall. The program consisted of recitations, vocal music, a patriotic operetta, a drama entitled *A Family of Martyrs*, and a farce called *Gentlemen of the Jury*.

During the first month of 1901 local players gave two performances of *The Old Maid's Convention* at the courthouse for the benefit of...
of the Alexandria Public Library. "Mayor Welch carried out his role as transform-her to the delight of everyone."\(^5\)

The Knights of Columbus presented an "operatic extravaganza,"\(^6\) in June, 1901, at Catholic Hall on Fourth Street. R. A. Burnet wrote the libretto and Carl Pflueger composed the music.\(^6\)

The St. Francis Xavier Commercial College celebrated its 1902 commencement in June. The students performed Richard Brinsley Sheridan's five-act drama, Pizarro, and a comedy, Wanted, A Confidential Clerk.\(^7\)

The Pineville Dramatic Company enacted Diamonds and Hearts on October 7, 1902, at the public school.\(^8\) Pineville is located in Rapides Parish directly across Red River from Alexandria.

At the end of the 1902-1903 school year, the pupils of several schools performed in a number of dramatic and musical shows. The closing program of St. James Episcopal Church School in May offered a scene from Shakespeare's King John and a cantata, The Dairy Maid's Supper.\(^9\) Alexandria High School held its annual concert in the latter part of the same month including a cantata, The Cadet's Picnic.\(^10\) In June the graduating exercises of St. Francis Xavier College contained

\(^5\)Ibid., January 22, 1901.

\(^6\)Ibid., June 12, 1901.

\(^7\)Ibid., June 27, 1902.

\(^8\)Ibid., October 18, 1902.

\(^9\)Ibid., May 30, 1903.

\(^10\)Ibid., June 1, 1903.
an allegory, *Erin's Vision*.\(^{11}\)

By the spring of 1903 plans for a new opera house had been completed. The Rapides Opera House, on the corner of Third and Washington Streets, was a structure 62' by 60' with an orchestra seating five hundred people, a proscenium arch 30' wide and 26' high, and a gallery seating 300 people. The official opening of the theatre was on the night of October 21, 1903.\(^{12}\)

The first amateur show appeared at the Rapides Opera House about a month after its opening. It was an *Old Folks' Concert*, a revue filled with drills, songs, and comedy performed by the older citizens of the city. Mrs. Waller Johnson directed the entertainment.\(^{13}\)

In the spring of 1904, another set of school closing exercises contained programs with dramatic productions. In the hall at St. James School on Third and Fulton Streets, the pupils presented a cantata, *The Festival of the Rose*.\(^{14}\) St. Francis Xavier College closed its session with the presentation of a three-act drama, *The Young Captives*.\(^ {15}\)

The following June, St. James School presented a dialogue, *All's Well That Ends Well*, with the men's roles being taken by the young

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\(^{11}\)Ibid., June 24, 1903.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., October 21, 1903.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., November 27, 1903.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., June 1, 1904.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., June 25, 1904.
ladies of the senior class, and St. Francis Xavier College performed an operetta, *Old Glory*, or *The Boys of '76*.¹⁶

In the fall of 1905, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Donohue directed some of the local children in Frances A. Barnett's *The Little Princess*. They performed the play at the Rapides Opera House with Ellen Grogan playing the role of the princess.¹⁷

J. S. Atkinson, a past stage director with Charles Frohman, came to Alexandria with all the costumes and paraphernalia necessary for the production of an operetta, *Echoes from the Operas*. A local cast performed the musical drama at the Rapides Theatre on January 15, 1906. Ben Wiel, Mrs. Dr. Randolph, Mrs. Nachman, Mrs. Blackman, Mrs. Hochendel, Charles Lawless, Mr. Hochendel, and Roy Albert sang the leading parts.¹⁸

Harry Miller and Clint Draper, itinerant showmen from New York, directed and performed in *The Elks' Minstrel* at the Rapides Opera House on January 18, 1906. J. Norman Kramer presided over the first-part as the interlocutor.¹⁹

In June, 1906, the students of St. Francis Xavier's Academy gave a play at the closing exercises.

¹⁶Ibid., July 1, 1905.

¹⁷Ibid., October 28, 1905. Mr. and Mrs. Donohue also directed *The Little Princess* in Lake Charles in 1906. See page 39.

¹⁸The *Weekly Town Talk*, January 20, 1906.

¹⁹The *Daily Town Talk*, January 19, 1906.
The drama, *The School of Sorrow*, was the leading feature of the evening and was greatly enjoyed, the pupils showing careful and thorough training in their parts. This same drama under the name of *The Two Orphans* was presented in this city some weeks ago by a professional company, but it is thought by those who saw the play last night that the young ladies of the Academy in many ways surpassed the performance. 20

The next year Harry Miller and Clint Draper returned to Alexandria during the first week in January and began rehearsals for the second annual *Elks' Minstrel*. They gave the show at the Rapides Theatre on January 16. 21


Mrs. John Gray directed a children's operetta, *The Land of Nod*, as a benefit for St. James Church in April, 1908. Mrs. Ira W. Sylvester introduced the play with her poem *The Land of Nod*. 23

The 1907-1908 school year at St. Francis Xavier Academy closed in June with the students giving a variety of theatrical performances. The activities comprised a one-act comedy, *Knives and Fools*; a miniature minstrel, *Our Merry Making Minstrels*, and a farce, *First Class Hotel, Not the Bentley Hotel*. 24

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24 *Ibid.* June 23, 1908. The Bentley Hotel was built in Alexandria in 1907.
In February 1909 Miss L. Hereux was the interlocutor for *The Ladies' Minstrel* given at the Rapides Theatre as a benefit for the Jewish Temple. The Murphy family offered special music for the show.25

The graduating exercises of St. Francis Xavier Commercial College took place at the Rapides Theatre on June 30, 1909.

The crowning act of the evening was the presentation of the four-act drama, *Family of Martyrs*, or *Rome of the Catacombs*. The cast was composed of Ewin L. Sall, Joseph Stack, John H. Ball, Al Blossat, Ely Richey, Elwood Hearne, and James Andrews.26

Three schools presented four dramatic productions during 1910: Alexandria High School, St. James School, and St. Francis Xavier College. In June the senior class play at Alexandria High School was a one-act farce, *The Day Before the Wedding*.27 The pupils at St. James School produced *The Jolly Picnic Party* on the night of June 3. St. Francis Xavier Commercial College celebrated its seventeenth annual commencement at the Rapides Opera House in June with a three-act drama, *Young Captives*.28 The Alexandria High School students prepared an operetta, *A Rehearsal of Cinderella*, and presented it at the school auditorium in December.29


26 Ibid., July 3, 1909. The *Family of Martyrs* was the same script used by the school at the 1900 commencement. See page 107.

27 Ibid., June 4, 1910.

28 Ibid., June 24, 1910.

29 Ibid., December 16, 1910.
Mrs. Daisy Johnston and Miss Gussie Pincus were the directors for a Ladies' Minstrel performed at the Rapides Theatre on June 5, 1911. Mrs. L. M. Wade acted as interlocutor.\textsuperscript{30}

The Rapides Theatre was the scene for the conclusion of the 1910-1911 school year at St. Francis Xavier's Academy. The pupils enacted two plays, The Fairy Governess and Double Throne.\textsuperscript{31}

Alexandria talent presented a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado at the Rapides Theatre on February 23, 1912. Al Baker from Chicago directed the comic opera, and Fred Chanelle's orchestra produced the music. The presentation was a benefit for the Christ Church organ fund.\textsuperscript{32}

On May 28, 1912, the pupils of St. James School gave their senior play, The Minister's Wife.\textsuperscript{33}

The St. Francis Xavier Academy's commencement at the Rapides Theatre in June, 1912, included a one-act play, Luncheon Under Difficulties.\textsuperscript{34}

J. Norman Kramer was the interlocutor for the 1912 Elks' Minstrel at the Rapides Theatre in November. J. E. Keefe, Jr., a member of the Miller and Draper Production Company, directed the "Grand First

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., June 6, 1911.

\textsuperscript{31}The Weekly Town Talk, June 10, 1911.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., February 24, 1912.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., June 1, 1912.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., June 15, 1912.
Part" of the show. The Second Part was a one-act farce, *The Gay Deceivers*, acted by Clint Draper, W. C. Simpson, and Mr. and Mrs. B. D. Vance. The Murphy Family Orchestra furnished music for the minstrel.35

In 1913, the Alexandria High School students presented two productions in the school auditorium. They performed a patriotic cantata, *Our Flag*, in May, and in June, the senior class produced *Galliger* under the direction of Mrs. E. L. Aaron.36

On June 6, 1913, the St. James School Dramatic Club presented a play, *The Betty Wales Girls and Mister Kidd*, in the school auditorium. Merrill Flower played the role of Betty Wales.37


In the Alexandria area from 1900 to 1914, the Pineville Dramatic Club, St. James School, St. Francis Xavier Academy, St. Francis Xavier Commercial College, and Alexandria High School were the groups concerned with regular productions for the local stage. Under the direction of members of the Miller and Draper Production Company, the Elks' Club presented several minstrels at the Rapides Opera House where

36Ibid., June 7, 1913.
37Ibid., June 7, 1913.
38Ibid., July 5, 1913.
many of the non-commercial performances took place.

Louisiana College was founded in Pineville in 1906, and in 1912 the school produced its first dramatic presentation. The students performed Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* in the chapel auditorium of Martin Fine Arts Building. Mrs. H. M. Weathersby was the directress of the play. Further information concerning this college dramatic group is found in the thesis by James Larry Ball.*

**Farmerville**

Farmerville, the capital of Union Parish, is in the south central part of the parish and is situated in the timber belt. Lumbering is therefore an important industry to the community. The population was only 600 in 1910, but for its size the town was one of the busiest and most enterprising in the state.*

After the beginning of the twentieth century, the first theatrical production in Farmerville was on December 22, 1905.

The play Friday night, *The Old Maids' Convention*, given by the school at the Knights of Pythias Hall was quite a success.*

In December, 1906, home talent of Farmerville presented *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, the temperance play by T. S. Arthur, at the Knights of Pythias Hall as a benefit for the school library.*

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*The Gazette*, December 27, 1905.

The pupils and faculty of Farmerville High School performed a "musical extravaganza," National Flower, on January 7, 1909. Approximately eighty people participated in the production. Miss Maude Selig was stage manager, and Mrs. Duke Selig was musical director.

On May 18, 1910, The Gazette notified its readers that Farmerville High School was to present Al Martin's Country Store, a five-act comedy-drama written by Archibald Humbolt and Martelle Everett. No further information was printed concerning the play.

The Little Princess, or The Prince of Silver Hearts was played by fifty first and second grade children of the public school in May of 1913. The pupils were coached by Mrs. J. O. Hodnett.

On the night following The Little Princess, the high school students enacted two plays, Scenes in a Union Station and A Case of Suspension.

The theatrical productions in Farmerville were connected in one way or another with the school. The pupils gave performances at the school building. Local people performed several plays at the Knights of Pythias Hall as benefits for the school.

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43Ibid., January 12, 1910.
44Ibid., May 7, 1913.
Homer

Homer, the parish seat and principal town in Claiborne Parish, is in the center of a large cotton growing district. In 1910 the population was 1,855, seven hundred more than the United States Census listed in 1900. The center for local performances was the Kinnebrew Opera House which seated an audience of three hundred.

A children's operetta, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, played at the Kinnebrew Opera House in Homer on the night of Friday, January 30, 1903.

The music by Miss Sherwood, Mr. Darden Ford, and Miss Ethel Nelson was most excellent and while the operetta was fairly well presented, several parts showed evidence of insufficient rehearsals.

The public school entertained at the Kinnebrew Opera House on the evening of March 20, 1903, with a chorus by the pupils, readings, music, and the operetta, The Frog Who Would a Wooing Go. Professor Reid played the role of the frog, Miss Reid portrayed the part of Miss Mouse, and Mr. Thornberg was Uncle Rat.

A column in The Guardian Journal, April 27, 1904, under the caption "School Items," contained the following announcement signed by Dora Fortson.

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48 Ibid., March 25, 1903.
The Avonian Literary Society will give a program Friday evening; the entire time will be devoted to a farce entitled, My Lord in Livery. In as much as the doors will have to be used as exits for those in the play, visitors are requested to arrive promptly at 2 o'clock. After two the high school room will not be opened for visitors.

The following December the pupils and teachers of the high school gave a comical operetta, Penelope, at Kinnebrew's Opera House.

On March 8, 1905, the "School Items" column by Dora Fortson announced a forty minute play entitled The Irish Linen Peddler to be given at the high school on March 17. No further mention of the play was made in the newspapers.

In order to raise money for the town clock, the ladies of the Minerva Club and the Up-to-date Fiction Club put on a comedy, Confusion, at the opera house, on May 27, 1908.50

The Claiborne Brass Band of Homer presented The Majestic Minstrels at the Kinnebrew Theatre on the evening of July 7, 1908, "to a crowded house of three hundred people." The end men were Sherwood, Johnson, Williams and Ford.51

A cast of fifty ladies in black faces produced a Peter Pan Minstrel directed by Miss J. Pearl Rogers of New Castle, Indiana, at the opera house on January 19, 1909.52 The ladies of the Civic

49 Ibid., December 14, 1904.
50 Ibid., May 27, 1908.
51 Ibid., July 8, 1908. 52 Ibid., January 27, 1909.
League gave the minstrel show as a benefit for the cemetery fund. In October of that year, local talent from Homer presented a comedy, *The Country Minister*, for the benefit of the Methodist Orphanage at Ruston.53

Coached by Miss Eaton of the high school faculty, the students performed scenes from *The Merchant of Venice* at the opera house in February of 1910.54

*The Woman Hater* by Roland Reed was played at the opera house by home talent on March 15, 1911. The cast consisted of C. O. Ferguson, Mrs. J. J. Baker, W. D. Goff, Herbert Ford, Leonard Palmer, Theran Ford, Mrs. A. McCranie, Moreland Meadows, William Shipley, Harold Baker, and Mrs. Oscar Taylor.55

Darden Ford and his music pupils performed an operetta in five acts, *Golden Hair and the Three Bears*, at the opera house on March 22, 1912.56

In the year of 1913 the only report of amateur theatrical activity was in the *Gazette Journal* of May 7, 1913. The notice appeared as follows:

The graduating class will give a play at the Opera House Thursday, May 15, at 8 p.m.

Neither the name of the above play nor the results of the performance

53Ibid., November 3, 1909.
54Ibid., February 23, 1910.
55Ibid., March 22, 1911.
56Ibid., March 27, 1912.
was given in any of the subsequent news items.

Homer was active in amateur theatrical entertainment and, according to this study, produced seven plays, four operettas, and two minstrels from 1900 to 1914. The majority of the productions were given at the Kinnebrew Theatre.

Lake Providence

Lake Providence, the chief town in East Carroll Parish, is in the eastern part of the parish at the foot of the lake from which it derives its name. The population of the community in 1910 was 1,568.\(^{57}\)

A local group enacted George M. Baker's temperance drama, The Last Loaf, at the Lake Providence Opera House in November of 1900. The cast included J. L. Kennedy, Prof. Robert Roberts, R. P. Kennedy, S. B. Kennedy, E. F. Guernard, May Breard, Eva Davis and Eddie Bass.\(^{58}\)

The 1901 commencement exercises of the Lake Providence High School occurred during the month of May at the opera house. Otto Hall took the title role in the whitewash scene from Tom Sawyer. Charles Whittington played Jim and Anna Brown represented Aunt Polly.\(^{59}\)

Home town actors presented The Queen of the South, a play written by Mary Duvol of Mississippi and dedicated to the Daughters of the

\(^{57}\)Fortier, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 32.

\(^{58}\)The Banner Democrat, November 10, 1900.

\(^{59}\)The Lake Providence Sentry, May 9, 1901.
Confederacy, at Lake Providence Opera House on June 14, 1901.  

E. F. Guernard, J. L. Kennedy, Martin Haley, S. B. Kennedy, Carol Breard, Royal Powell, Nimmo White, C. F. Lipmann, Kate Sitton, Eva Davis, and Pearl Burney appeared in the Lake Providence cast of Nevada, at the opera house on January 23, 1902.

Domestic talent staged a drama, In Honor Bound, by Sidney Grundy during November, 1904. The following cast gave the performance: W. A. Hanway, Virginia Marks, Narcisse Kennedy, and Sam Kennedy.

Lake Providence actors were occupied with the production of dramas at the opera house during this period of time. Some of the same family names appear more than once in the local casts: Breard, Davis, and Kennedy. The schools of Lake Providence were not as active in the production of dramatic works as were the townspeople.

Monroe

Monroe, the seat of government for the Parish of Ouachita, is situated in the valley of the river from which the parish gets its name. By 1910 the population of the town had exceeded ten thousand persons, twice the number (5,428) the United States census had reported in 1900.

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60 The Banner Democrat, June 15, 1901.
61 Ibid., January 23, 1902.
62 The Lake Providence Sentry, November 18, 1904.
John Humble, long-time resident of Monroe, stated in an interview on January 21, 1964, that his earliest recollection of an amateur production being staged in the community was in 1904. Tom Stuart wrote and directed a melodrama, The House Divided, and a local cast performed the play at Sugar's Opera House on the corner of DeSiard and Third Streets where the Paramount Theatre stands today.

In 1910, Anthony Blanks, faculty member of the City School, began the policy of producing plays at the school. The first script was The Coed, or One Yard to Go, in which Henry Parker and Betty Haas took the leading parts. 64

In the summer of 1910, Tom Stuart, then custodian of the City School and interested in home-talent theatre, directed a Monroe cast in The Broadway Minstrels at the Lyceum Theatre on DeSiard St. 65

An attempt to organize The Monroe Dramatic Club in 1910 resulted in the performance of only one play by the group. Director Tom Stuart staged Too Much Married in the Lockwood building, an annex to the City School. 66

Mrs. Minnie Ruffin, a history teacher, and Anthony Blanks combined efforts to produce Hicks at College, at City School in the spring of 1911. Hamilton Goodgame and Emmie Garmon acted the leading

64 Interview with Frank Breese of Monroe on February 1, 1964.
66 Ibid., September 10, 1910.
roles in the production.67

Mrs. Ruffin directed The College Widow by George Ade for the City School in the spring of 1912. Jessie Goldman performed the leading part, and John Humble also appeared in the production.68

Herbert Dickard and Pat Whittington wrote an original musical show, Billy, which they produced with home-talent at Sugar's Opera House in the spring of 1912. Lillie McCormick was the piano accompanist for the show.69

In May of 1913, George Ade's Just Out of College was the senior play at City School. Austin Prophit acted the leading role; John Humble was in the cast, and Mrs. Minnie Ruffin directed the production.70

Tom Stuart, Anthony Blanks, and Mrs. Minnie Ruffin were responsible for most of the Monroe theatrical productions from 1900 to 1914. All three directors were interested in the school dramatic programs as well as those put on by citizens of the community. The Monroe Dramatic Club was formed in 1910, but did not become a permanent organization. Performers used either the opera house or the school building for their presentations.

67Interview, Frank Breese.

68Interview, John Humble.

69Interview with Herbert Dickard, Consulting Engineer, Monroe, Louisiana, January 30, 1964.

70Interview, John Humble.
Natchitoches

Natchitoches stands on the banks of the Cane River seventy-five miles southeast of Shreveport. The town was incorporated in 1819, and became the seat of Natchitoches Parish. In 1900 the population was 2,398. The people of the community staged many of their theatrical productions at the Grand Opera House, built in 1895.

The fifteenth annual commencement of Louisiana State Normal School took place in June, 1900. The program featured a cantata, The Happy Family of Father Time. Children from the third and fourth grades of the model schools comprised the cast.

In the same month, the Convant of St. Mary's Academy closed its school term. The girls offered a pantomime, Old Folks at Home; a burlesque, Keeping Bad Company; a two-act comedy, A White Lie; a sketch, A Family Not to Pattern After, and a farce, Discontented Sisters.

The Doraflora Comedy Company of Natchitoches presented a burlesque of the musical show Floradora on June 26, 1902. Rena and Violet Phillips staged Doraflora at the Grand Opera House as a benefit to build a public fountain.


73 The Natchitoches Enterprise, June 7, 1900.

74 Ibid., June 28, 1900.

75 Ibid., July 3, 1902.
In order to help the Natchitoches Brass Band obtain equipment, thirty men performed in a home talent minstrel on October 26. A. E. Bath, manager of the Grand Opera House, directed the minstrel. 76

The members of the Methodist Church gave a program at the opera house on May 4, 1906. They performed choral numbers, songs, recitations, and a farce, A Parliament of Servants. Mrs. L. Wycoff, Roda Selick, Mrs. Edward Suddath, Frances Nelken, Mrs. James Johnson, May Lee, Elise DeVoe, and Edna Connel were in the cast of the play. 77

A troupe made up of the alumni from St. John's College in Shreveport traveled to Natchitoches and played His Private Secretary, at the opera house, on April 13, as a benefit for the Catholic Church. 78

On April 26, the ladies of the Methodist Church sponsored a group of thirty children in an operetta, Queen Flora's Day Dream, and a play, The Courting of Mother Goose, at the opera house. 79

During the State Normal School commencement week, the pupils of the Model School gave an operetta, Message in Many Voices. Three days later, on May 15, the college students presented Wooing O'it; The Old and the New, an original burlesque of The Taming of the Shrew and Romeo and Juliet. 80

76 The Natchitoches Times, October 27, 1905.
77 Ibid., May 4, 1906.
78 Ibid., April 12, 1907.
79 Ibid., April 26, 1907.
80 Ibid., May 15, 1908.
St. Mary's Academy held its 1909 graduating exercises at the Olympic Theatre on June 15. The pupils presented a program including a play, A Joke on the Toymaker and Christopher Columbus in tableaux.81

Lucille Gibson directed a minstrel for the Memorial Cemetery Association and presented it at the opera house on February 14.82

Forty-five Methodist children and adults performed A Burlesque of Mother Goose at the Olympic Opera House on November 25, for the benefit of the Methodist Parsonage Fund.83

The Model School and High School of State Normal College gave a cantata The Lay of the Bell on May 3, during the annual commencement exercises.84

The Convent of St. Mary's Academy offered its 1911 closing concert at the Olympic Theatre in June. The program included recitations, musical numbers, and an operetta.85

On February 20, 1912, the boys from St. Mary's Academy acted in a one-act farce, Medica, and gave recitations, songs, and drills at the school.86

81Ibid., June 18, 1909.
82Ibid., February 18, 1910.
83Ibid., December 2, 1910.
84Ibid., May 5, 1911.
85Ibid., June 16, 1911.
86Ibid., February 23, 1912.
On May 4, 1912, the pupils at the Model Schools of State Normal College presented historical tableaux based upon the development of Louisiana. They gave the celebration in honor of the centennial of Louisiana's statehood.  

In March, 1913, the Louisiana State Normal football team gave a play, Thompson of the Varsity, in the school auditorium. The school orchestra conducted by Professor Browne Martin furnished music for the production. The proceeds went to purchase football sweaters for the team.  

Local talent under the direction of C. Byrne produced The Married Bachelor at the opera house on September 8, 1913. The cast was Jo Porter, Alma Kile, W. Aymond, Frank Emmerson, and C. Byrne.  

Stopher's Greater Minstrels played at the opera house on December 26, 1913. Professor H. W. Stopher directed the show to raise money for new band instruments at Louisiana State Normal School.  

According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of Natchitoches in 1913 was about three thousand. Louisiana State Normal School added another thousand to the community during the school year. Along with the college, the Model Elementary School and

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87 Ibid., May 10, 1912.  
88 The Natchitoches Enterprise, March 20, 1913.  
89 Ibid., September 11, 1913.  
90 Ibid., January 1, 1914. H. W. Stopher became head of the Louisiana State University School of Music in 1915 and held that position until 1940.
the Model High School furnished the largest number of non-professional theatrical productions. Other groups contributing from time to time with stage activities were St. Mary's Academy and the Methodist Church. Most of the above organizations played at the Grand Opera House, called the Olympic Opera House after 1905.

St. Joseph

St. Joseph is in the east central part of Tensas Parish on the Mississippi River. In 1900, the town had a population of 740.  

The members of the St. Joseph Dramatic Association offered their version of The Old Maid's Club at Masonic Hall on February 25, 1908. Mrs. B. F. Young, Kate Watson, Burnette Lewis, Edith McDonald, Henrietta Watson, Eula Kidd, Elizabeth Whitney, Effie Moore, Joseph Curry, Jane Wilcox, Cecile Losey, Hyacinth French, Mrs. B. F. Bonney, Almeda Van Hoose, Mrs. Annie Snodgrass, J. T. Moseley, James Mobley, and J. E. Quarles appeared in the entertainment.  

At the closing exercises of the Newellton High School, twelve miles north of St. Joseph, The Tensas Gazette reported that the students performed a "comedietta" in two acts, Young Doctor Divine.  

The senior students of St. Joseph High School gave Taking Father's Place at the Masonic Hall during their 1910 commencement.

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92 The Tensas Gazette, February 28, 1908.
93 Ibid., May 20, 1910.
On April 14, after the 1911 school rally at St. Joseph, the St. Joseph Dramatic Association presented a one-act comedy, *The Dress Rehearsal*. 94

In May, 1911, the commencement exercises of St. Joseph High School at Masonic Hall included a short play, *A Box of Monkeys*. 95

The "St. Joseph High School Notes" in *The Tensas Gazette*, May 9, 1913, notified the public that the students would present a play on May 15 at Masonic Hall, but the newspaper gave no name to the piece and no review followed the performance.

From 1900 to 1914, the St. Joseph Dramatic Association and St. Joseph High School furnished the local theatrical productions. The performers used the stage of the Masonic Hall because of the lack of a theatre or a school auditorium.

Shreveport

Shreveport, in the northwest corner of the state on the banks of the Red River, is the seat of government for Caddo Parish. The population of Shreveport in 1900 was 16,013, but by 1910 it had more than doubled. 96

Shreveport always has been a theatre-conscious community with numerous professional and non-professional troupes appearing each

94 Ibid., April 14, 1911.
95 Ibid., May 12, 1911.
month. Many of the performances were staged at the Grand Opera House constructed in 1889.  


The Catholic Dramatic Club made use of the Grand Opera House in February of 1900. They performed the play *Foiled* under the supervision of Cyril Dadswell.  

On March 16, 1900, F. L. Pooley, L. Gideon, John Ford, Mat Stone, Sara Davis, Miss Ector, and Vinnie Zeigler acted in *Snowball* by Sidney Grundy at the Grand Theatre.  

Sixty performers and an eleven piece orchestra produced the *Elks' Minstrel* at the Grand Opera House on September 14, 1900.  

In May of 1901, the pupils of the public schools concluded their

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98 *The Evening Journal*, February 9, 1900.


closing exercises with a cantata, *Awakening of Spring*. 101

The older children of the public schools presented an operetta, *A Musical Picnic*, and the primary grades offered a musical play, *The Queen's Surprise*, at commencement time in May, 1902. 102

B'Nai Brith entertained on January 19, 1903, with a program at Columbia Hall. The beginning of the event consisted of musical selections, and the second part was a one-act play, *Mistakes*. 103

R. Jefferson Hall, "a professional director from Memphis, Tennessee," was stage manager for a production of the comic opera *Dorothy* by C. B. Stephenson and Alfred Cellier at the Grand Theatre on June 3 and 4, 1904. Bebee Brown sang the role of Dorothy and headed a cast of eighty people. 104

At the thirty-sixth annual commencement of St. Vincent Academy, in June of 1905, the students enacted three plays, a French operetta in one-act, *Le Moulin des Oiseaux*; a one-act farce, *The Champion of Her Sex*; and a cantata in three acts, *The Enchanted Bower*. 105

Sponsored by the Redmen and assisted by several local actors, the Sedgwick Dramatic Company came to Shreveport in July, 1906, and performed *The American Indian* at the Park Theatre, which opened in

1904. The large pavilion, used mostly for summer productions, accommodated an audience of over a thousand people.

The 1907 commencement celebrations included a cantata, The Enchanted Wood, by the students of Shreveport High School, a classical play, Ceres, and an operetta, The Rebellion of the Daisies, by the girls of St. Vincent's Academy.

A cast of sixty performers in The Elks' Minstrel held the stage of the Grand Theatre on March 8, 1909. "Harry Ehrlich, the popular manager of the Grand, played his part to perfection and drew rounds of applause." Bobbie Burgess and Joe Schendel were the stage managers for the minstrel.

The Texas Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church offered a miniature marriage, The Tom Thumb Wedding, on September 23, 1910. A number of children trained by Mrs. Dr. Selber and Mrs. Frank Hutchens acted as members of the wedding. The entertainment was a fund raising project to remove the debt from the parsonage.

Twenty young ladies participated in the production of The Old

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106 The Shreveport Journal, July 2, 1906. The writer found this to be the only reference to the Sedgwick Company in North Louisiana. They did play, however, in several towns in the southern part of the state. See pages 20, 24, 39, and 61.

107 The Evening Journal, April 17, 1904.

108 The Shreveport Journal, May 27, 1907.

109 Ibid., June 17, 1907.

110 Ibid., March 9, 1909.

111 Ibid., September 24, 1910.
Maids' Convention at the Grand Theatre on April 21, 1911. The Young Ladies Missionary Society of Shreveport sponsored the show. Mrs. P. M. Welsh directed and appeared as one of the characters in the show.112

The 1911 graduation program at St. Vincent's Academy included a French operetta, Les Bohemianes; a pantomime by the elocution class, and a five-act drama, Cornelia.113

Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Flood directed a musical spectacle, Princess Bonnie, at the Grand Opera House on April 12, 1912. The company included F. L. Hunt, Earnest Hawkins, Harold Sour, Hugh McCann, Ernest Spike, Gordon Collins, M. E. Edwards, Mrs. William Roberson, Eleanor Ricketts, Beulah Meyer, Julian Doster, and fifty singers and dancers. The costumes for the production were rented from a costumer in New Orleans.114

Students at St. Mary's Convent presented Jeanne D'Arc a Rowen; a collection of dramatic scenes by Julie J. Dubos; and a three-act farce, Nancy, at Trinity Hall on June 20, 1912.115

The first non-professional production to be recorded by the newspapers of 1913 came on April 24, when Louisiana State University Dramatic Club gave a matinee and evening performance at the Grand Opera

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112 Ibid., April 22, 1911.
113 Ibid., June 14, 1911.
114 Ibid., April 12, 1912.
115 Ibid., June 14, 1912.
House. The troupe presented *The Earl of Pawtucket*, a comedy by Augustus Thomas. As a courtesy to the club, the Shreveport High School declared a holiday on the day of the presentation.\(^{116}\)

A home-talent cast enacted Gilbert Doyle's comedy-drama *What Would a Gentleman Do?* at the Travis Street Auditorium on April 25, 1913. The newspaper review of the play gave special mention to the acting done by Lola Mae Tharpe, H. A. Peterman, Jr., and Fayrinne Finnegan. The production was directed by H. A. Peterman, Jr.\(^{117}\)

The graduating class of St. Mary's Convent held its exercises in June of 1913 at Holy Trinity Hall. The program included a drama, *Through Fires of Sorrow*; a pantomime, *A Memory and A Hope*; and a tableau, *At the Parting of the Ways*.\(^{118}\)

The annual commencement of St. John's College was celebrated at the Grand Opera House on June 20, 1913. A comedy, *All the Comforts of Home*, was the feature entertainment.\(^{119}\)

The newly formed Shreveport Dramatic Club acted a play written by R. D. Carton entitled *The Return of Mark Denzil* at the Grand Theatre in August of 1913. Herman Arthur Peterman, Jr., directed and acted in the show along with Oswald Simmons, Clifford Deal, Murray Wemer, Margery Land May, Emily Hunt, and Fayrinne Finnegan.\(^{120}\)

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\(^{116}\)Ibid., April 25, 1913. \(^{117}\)Ibid., May 8, 1913.

\(^{118}\)Ibid., June 6, 1913.

\(^{119}\)Ibid., June 20, 1913.

\(^{120}\)Ibid., August 9, 1913.
The Catholic Dramatic Club, the Shreveport Order of the Elks, the Shreveport High School, St. Vincent's Academy, St. Mary's Convent, St. John's College, and the Shreveport Dramatic Club were the groups which were actively engaged in the production of theatrical entertainment in Shreveport from 1900 to 1914.

Tallulah

Tallulah, the parish seat of Madison Parish, is in the central part of the parish. The town had a population of 847 in the year of 1914.\(^\text{121}\)

Scattered issues of the Tallulah weekly newspaper, The Madison Journal, from 1900 to November, 1912, revealed no activities of local dramatic groups.

In November of 1912, an amateur troupe from Rayville, Louisiana, went to Tallulah, a distance of thirty-six miles, and performed the play Captain Racket at the local opera house.\(^\text{122}\)

The students of the Tallulah High School presented the play Moses at the opera house on February 7, 1913. Elizabeth Johnson in the role of Eleanor Thornhill, and Mertie Bloom playing the part of Moses headed the cast.\(^\text{123}\)

\(^{121}\)Fortier, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 520.

\(^{122}\)Madison Journal, November 23, 1912.

\(^{123}\)Ibid., February 8, 1913.
The survey of dramatic offerings in North Louisiana prior to 1914 discloses the existence of theatrical productions in each community of this stronghold of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. Certainly, the larger cities of Alexandria, Monroe, and Shreveport gave the greatest number of stage presentations, but the smaller communities also made contributions to the total picture.

There were not, however, as many permanent theatre groups in North Louisiana as in the rest of the state. More often the people got together in order to produce one show at a time without concern for organizing clubs. Usually, the reason for giving the plays was as a benefit. Nevertheless, several groups such as the Pineville Dramatic Club and the Catholic Dramatic Club of Shreveport did exist on a more lasting basis.

The high school senior play began in North Louisiana about 1910. Plays had been performed for many years, particularly at commencement times, but the special class play was just making its appearance. In Newellton High School, the seniors presented a play called *Taking Father's Place* in May, 1910. The Alexandria High School seniors performed a month later in *The Day Before the Wedding*.

Many of the producers of public and parochial school performances were fortunate to find a hall or a theatre in which to work. The theatres which existed in North Louisiana and were used by the local actors were the Grand Opera House in Shreveport, the Kinnebrew Opera House in Homer, the Lake Providence Opera House, the Natchitoches Opera...
House, the Rapides Theatre in Alexandria, Sugar's Theatre in Monroe, and the Tallulah Opera House.

Some of the names most frequently seen in connection with the domestic theatre of North Louisiana were S. B. Kennedy of Lake Providence, Mrs. Minnie Ruffin of Monroe, and H. A. Peterman, Jr., of Shreveport.

Minstrel troupes were popular and played annually in the cities of Alexandria and Shreveport where they were usually sponsored by the Fraternal Order of the Elks.

Summary of the Years 1900 to 1914

In the years prior to the First World War, the people of Louisiana were as prosperous and contented as they had ever been during their history. The situation was a favorable one to the growth and development of the entertainment field, since leisure time and good fortune tend to bless the efforts of the performing artist.

Most of the communities of the state supported a town band which played concerts for the public and accompanied shows presented by both professional and domestic groups. Professor H. W. Pate, leader of the Abbeville Concert Band, was a prominent name in this area because of his interest in developing local talent.

Numerous dramatic clubs existed in the early 1900's with some of them reaching back in origin to the nineteenth century as did the Crescent Dramatic Club of Crowley and the Plaquemine Dramatic Club. Others such as the Jefferson Dramatic Club of New Iberia and the
Shreveport Dramatic Club, were newly formed.

Minstrel shows which had been a favorite amusement through the previous century were still popular. Usually the home town minstrel was sponsored and performed by members of a fraternal order such as the Elks or the Knights of Columbus. The Lake Charles Elks gave an annual minstrel show beginning in 1905.

Stage productions with children were prevalent throughout the state. Of course, most of these plays came from the lower grades of the public and private schools, but there were some special groups which produced children's theatre. Mrs. C. M. Parkerson of Lafayette formed the Push and Pull Dramatic Company in 1907, and gave juvenile plays and entertainments in that city for several years.

Most of the communities in Louisiana possessed an opera house early in the century. Many of the structures were built before 1900. Falk's Opera House in Lafayette, Sugar's Opera House in Monroe, the Grand Opera House in Shreveport, and Sandoz Opera House in Opelousas were some of the older theatre buildings in the state. Other playhouses were constructed during the 1900 to 1914 period. The Jefferson Theatre was built in Lafayette in 1905. The Arcade Theatre, which is still in use today in Lake Charles, started in 1910. The Rapides Opera House of Alexandria opened its doors in 1903. The theatres were owned and operated by an individual or manager hired by the owner.

A different kind of theatre began springing up over the state by the end of the first decade. The Victor Theatre in Abbeville, the Chrystal Theatre in Shreveport, and the Parkview Theatre in Covington
were moving picture houses. They were furnished not only with projectors, but with stages for the purpose of holding on to the established way of performing legitimate drama and vaudeville. The film was not yet well enough accepted to stand on its own. The older styles of opera houses eventually added motion picture projectors to their equipment.

Through the early years of the century the dramatic clubs, schools, and the other producing organizations made use of the professional stages which were willingly offered by the opera houses and motion picture theatres.

After 1900, school productions began to make up a large portion of the non-professional theatre in the state. High Schools, which many times housed both elementary and secondary grades, presented programs using children of school ages. More schools with stages and auditoriums began to appear. Bogalusa High School, constructed in 1912, offered stage facilities for the performers. St. Vincent Academy in Shreveport added a new auditorium in 1907.

The amateur groups in Louisiana were drawn from nearly every kind of organization: schools, churches, fraternal orders, and clubs.

The productions put on by these groups were presented for various reasons, but the majority of the groups performed in order to raise money, usually for some philanthropic cause. Producing a play merely as a form of art or as a social or recreational activity was seldom done.

Very few of these Louisianians engaged in non-commercial theatri-
cals had any aspirations for the professional stage. They seemed to be satisfied with what they accomplished at home; for, time and again, the same names appear in announcements, programs, and reviews of local performances. Professor R. F. Cisco and Frank Shattuck of Lake Charles, Professor J. A. Trone of Thibodaux, Mrs. Mattie Kennedy of Crowley, Mrs. C. M. Parkerson of Lafayette, Miss Ione Duncan of Plaquemine, and Mrs. Minnie Ruffin of Monroe, are some of the people who made real contributions to the theatre of Louisiana from 1900 to 1914.

As far as the geographical sections of this study are concerned, North Louisiana and Southeast Louisiana together produced only one third the number of theatrical performances that Southwest Louisiana produced. One of the reasons for such a difference is that many of the communities examined by this writer in the North Louisiana Parishes and the Florida Parishes were newer and smaller in size than the towns of Southwest Louisiana. It must be remembered, however, that Baton Rouge and New Orleans have not been included in this work. Another reason for the difference is that the temperament and the cultural pattern of the people living in the southern part of the state west of the Mississippi River seem to have made them more receptive to theatrical entertainment. Harnett T. Kane explains the distinction in the following manner.

As South Louisiana is a place apart, the South Louisianian is an American apart. He is apart from other Americans, from other Southerners, from other Louisianians as well. He is bound on one side by the Gulf, and on the other three sides by men as different from him as are their territories from his.
He is normally calm, intermittently excitable, and romantic in temperament. His northern brother is tight lipped and drawling. The one is quixotic, understanding, with laughter in his eye, a joke on his tongue. The other is a man whose strength may be that he makes few allowances, one to whom the lowlander's simple joie de vivre is as foreign as are the words.  

CHAPTER V

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

1914 TO 1919
THE WAR YEARS
1914 TO 1919

In no other part of the United States did the initial years of the war in Europe have the effect it did in Louisiana. In his book, *Louisiana, the Pelican State*, Edward Adams Davis writes that "Louisianians were eager to assist France, for many of them were descendants of French Creoles." Motion pictures of conditions in France were shown and well attended, especially in the southern areas of the state. Collections were taken up to aid the people of Europe; many of these contributions came from performances given by native talent. In 1917, when America entered the war, the effort on the part of local entertainers to help this country was emphasized throughout the state. Because some of the amateur groups changed the purpose of their benefit performances from local to national and international interests, and because fewer presentations were given during the war years than in previous time, this 1914 to 1919 section has its being.

Abbeville

By the year 1914, motion pictures were very popular throughout the country, and were not overlooked in Abbeville, where oftentimes the amateur performers shared their audiences with the current films being shown at the local theatre. *The Abbeville Meridional*, January
31, 1914, reported a school entertainment given at the Victor Theatre on February 5, by the children from the primary to the seventh grades of the Abbeville High School. The moving pictures were shown first, and then the audience saw an hour long entertainment of a Tom Thumb Wedding by the primary grades and Plantation Scenes with songs and drills by the older pupils.

That same year, on June 11 and 12, the Abbeville High School held its graduating exercises at the Victor Theatre. The seniors presented a play, Kentucky Belle, under the direction of Mrs. Felix J. Samson.\(^1\)

With the aid of Jacques de Castillo, a number of young ladies in Abbeville offered a Ladies Minstrel on the night of July 3, 1914. The show played at the Victor Theatre for the benefit of the Catholic Cemetery Association.\(^2\)

The school used the Victor Theatre again in lieu of an auditorium for its 1914 commencement exercises on May 26 and 27, 1915. The program for each of the dates was different. On the first night an entertainment composed of four events took place. The primary group performed Little Red Riding Hood; the intermediates did a colonial drill, and the seniors, under the direction of Mrs. Lequenec, acted a one-act play, A Case of Suspicion.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Abbeville Progress, June 14, 1914.

\(^2\) Abbeville Meridional, June 27, 1914.

\(^3\) Ibid., May 22, 1915.
From the reports found in *The Meridional*, the final amateur theatrical performance for 1915 was a *Tom Thumb Wedding*, presented on September 3, at St. Ann's Hall. Miss Hune directed the cast of children who gave the program as a benefit for the Catholic graveyard. 4

The 1916 high school commencement exercises took place at the Victor Theatre on May 24 and 25. On the first night of the exercises, F. J. de Castillo staged the senior play, *The Whirl of the World*, a musical comedy which included, aside from the principal cast, a chorus of twenty-five girls. 5

*The Meridional* of June 17, 1916, pointed out that on the previous Saturday and Sunday nights, at the Victor Theatre, the pupils of Mt. Carmel Convent had given three plays: *Nancy, the Sick Dolly, A Cup of Coffee*, and *Lost Among the Fairies*.

On July 15, 1916, *The Meridional* carried the story that a group of amateur actors had presented *The Broken Rosary* at the Victor Theatre in the interest of the organ fund of the Catholic Church. The cast included the following people:

| Mrs. Proctor               | Miss Kate Young
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<tr>
<td>Princess Lombary</td>
<td>Miss Rosa Lyons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father O'Day</td>
<td>Floyd Broussard</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Vixton</td>
<td>Ferdinand Mouton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eunice</td>
<td>Miss Camille Broussard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lanty Bellair</td>
<td>Vern Douglas</td>
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The Meridional chose to comment specifically about only one of the actors in the drama:

....Floyd was quite Irish in his speech and the cassock becomes him so well that we feel it would be a capital idea for him to study for orders.

The fund for the organ at the Catholic Church received another collection from a special dramatic entertainment produced by Robert E. Downs. The newspaper described Mr. Downs as being an actor, playwright, author and lecturer. The script for the performance in Abbeville was one of Mr. Down's own compositions, The Outcasts, a three-act rural comedy-drama. It was announced that the cast would be selected from the talent of the community, with the exception of Mr. Downs and a Miss Theresa Nelson. In the program, presented on Sunday, September 24, at St. Ann's Hall, Miss Nelson's name does not appear in the cast list, and no explanation for the change was given.

The cast was:

Jim, tramp, lead.............. Mr. R. E. Downs
Phillip Gray, villain........ Floyd Edwards
Amos Hunter, character..... Chester Derveloy
Mose, negro.................... Louis Thibodiaux (sic)
Betty, character lead....... Miss Kate Young
Bertha, "The Outcast"....... Miss Lawrence Derveloy

On the evening of May 23, the Victor Theatre was crowded for a performance by the pupils of the primary and intermediate grades of the public school. By way of advertising the entertainment, The Meridional, May 19, 1917, published the following:

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6 Ibid., September 16, 1916.

7 Ibid., September 23, 1916.
PROGRAMME

Overture..."Poet and the Peasant"...Suppe
Wanda Broussard
Operetta..."The Quest of the Pink Parasol"
Primary and first grades
"Polka de Concert"...Sherwood...Irene
Brasseaux (sic)
"The Minuet"...a colonial dance...Second grades
"Timid Little Maids from Japan"...Third grades
"Galop Militaire"...Bohm...Irene Brousseaux (sic)
and Wanda Broussard
Motion Songs..."The Little Trade-Ladies," "The
Little Soldiers and the Red Cross Maids"

The 1917 commencement of Mount Carmel Convent on June 19 and 20
was filled with theatrical activities. The complete program for the
two days was in The Meridional on June 16. Among the plays and musical
performances included in the exercises was a French script, L'Amour
Magique. The other plays on the program were an English playlet,
Trouble of the Little Folks, acted by the younger children; My Aunt's
Heiress, a comedy in one act; and Patricia, the Unknown Martyr, a
religious drama of ancient Rome. The latter piece was "a large and
impressive production."

The Olympian Society, a high school literary club, celebrated
George Washington's Birthday with a program at the Victor Theatre on
February 22, in which all of the numbers were of "a patriotic nature."8

Of particular interest concerning the Victor Theatre is that
carpenters, painters, and other workmen completed a "new" Victor
Theatre in the spring of 1918, which was formally opened with the
graduating exercises of the Abbeville High School. There was no report

8 Ibid., March 2, 1918.
of a play being done by this class of seniors. The Meridional of June 1, 1918, mentioned that the Victor was at that time one of the largest theatres in southwest Louisiana, having a seating capacity of one thousand.

The sisters of Mt. Carmel Convent held the closing exercises of their school on June 17 and 18 at the Victor Theatre. The program opened with a cantata, Florinda. Other plays on the first date of the exercises were Little Carrie Lee's Quarter, The Humors of the Strike, and a French monologue, Madame Proverb. The grand feature of the following evening was the presentation of the historical drama, Joan of Arc, with music and dancing.9

Crowley

The year 1914 was the most productive for amateur theatre in Crowley during the next five years. The Crowley Dramatic Club aroused interest in domestic theatre when it organized during March of 1914.10 The group produced its first play, Jumbo Jum, at the Grand Opera House, on March 27, for the benefit of the public school. The cast, directed by Mrs. Mattie Kennedy, was composed of the following:

Lawer Cheatum............... W. L. Grice
Mr. Gobbleton............... J. W. Oxford
Mrs. Gobbleton............... Miss Mary Hester
Adelaide.................... Miss Emma Sue Bryant

9Ibid., June 22, 1918.
10The Daily Signal, March 10, 1914.
Henrie Melville............... A. A. Smith
Hannah.............................. Miss Ethel Harves
Jumbo Tiger......................... J. M. Baker

A large cast performed a temperance play at the Christian Church on the night of March 26. The Endeavor Society of the church sponsored the play, A Cunning Conspiracy.\textsuperscript{12}

The weekly newspaper, The Crowley Signal, April 11, 1914, announced the first Cotton Blossom Minstrel in the following manner:

L. D. Israel will leave tonight for New Orleans to get costumes for the Firemen's benefit minstrel, which will be pulled off at the opera house Thursday, April 23, 1918 . . .

The senior class of Crowley High School presented a play, The College Ball, at the Grand Opera House on June 4, 1914. Again the play was directed by Mrs. M. A. Kennedy.\textsuperscript{13}

For the purpose of helping to reduce the St. Michael Church debt, a four-act comedy-drama was given by the St. Michael Drama Club on December 10, 1914. The play was Uncle Rube, and Rudolph Keller, George O'Rillian, L. B. De Bellevue, M. L. Belton, Walter Simeon, Lawrence Martin, Gertrude Delahaye, Mercedes Belton, and Beatrice Delahaye were in the cast.\textsuperscript{14}

On Friday night, April 23, 1915, the second Cotton Blossom

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, March 25, 1914.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, March 27, 1914.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, June 4, 1914.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, December 10, 1914.
Minstrel was presented at the Grand Opera House under the auspices of the Crowley Concert Band.\textsuperscript{15} The show was so well received, said The Daily Signal of April 30, that managers Israel and Singleton decided to give another performance at the Grand on May 4, at which time Rudolph Boudreaux scored a tremendous hit with his ragtime song, \textit{At the Rag Time Ball}.\textsuperscript{16}

At the Grand Theatre on April 28, the high school boys enacted \textit{The Editor in Chief}, for the benefit of the athletic team. Mrs. Mattie Kennedy was the coach for the play.\textsuperscript{17}

The 1915 graduating class of the Crowley High School presented a three-act comedy drama, \textit{The Sorrel Ridge Dramatic Club}, at the opera house on June 2. Again Mrs. Kennedy occupied the position of director.\textsuperscript{18}

The members of St. Michael's Dramatic Club were active early in 1916. For the benefit of the new altar at St. Michael's Church, the group produced \textit{Captain Racket}, at the Grand Opera House on February 1. L. B. De Bellevue played the title role of Captain Robert Racket. Rudolph Keller, George O'Rillion, Fred Babin, Miss C. Boudreaux, Miss F. Jumonville, and Miss Louise Lapleau were the others in the cast.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., April 23, 1915.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., May 5, 1915.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., April 28, 1915.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., June 2, 1915.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., February 2, 1916.
The Crowley High School senior class play of 1916 was *The Girl From Upper 7*, given on May 31, at the Grand Opera House. "Six or seven hundred people packed the theatre" to see the three-act western play. The importance attached to the high school senior play in those days is indicated by the fact that the headline across the front page of *The Daily Signal* for June 1 read, "Senior Class Play Was Great Success."

The local theatre groups in Crowley became less active by 1917 as only two productions by the non-professional performers were staged. One was given by the high school seniors and the other by the Knights of Columbus. On May 25, the seniors performed a play called *The Hoodoo*, which received a complimentary review on the front page of the newspaper. "The young actors covered themselves and their coach, Mrs. Kennedy, with Glory."\(^{20}\) *The Daily Signal* of October 10, 1917, headlined *The Knights of Columbus Minstrels*, which had been before an audience at the Grand Theatre on the previous night. The show was divided into two parts: the olio program, consisting of character and novelty numbers, and the second part entitled "A Night In Bohemia," with Boyd Milton acting as toastmaster. Frank Shattuck of Lake Charles was a visiting minstrel performer, and it is interesting to note what the Crowley reviewer said about him:

\[\ldots\] I have purposely left the dance by Frank Shattuck till the last, because I did not know how to describe it.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., May 26, 1917.
besides if I had mentioned it before it would have
copped the write-up as it did the show. Mr. Shattuck
is one of the best eccentric dancers that ever de­
corated the Opera House stage, a natural comedian and "a
gift with the feet" made him a most pleasing enter­
tainer. He graciously responded to several recalls . . .

The newspapers of 1918 recorded only one amateur performance,
that of the Crowley High School graduating class, which produced the
play Patsy from Dakota, at the opera house on May 28. Merle Smith
impersonated the title role, and the production was once again under
the supervision of Mrs. James Kennedy. 21

Jennings

The Jennings Dramatic Club began producing plays around the
year of 1914 with The Bachelor's Romance and The Doctor's Wife as
their first offerings. 22 The third piece, performed by the club for
the benefit of the Elks, was What's in a Name?, presented at the
Ardennes Theatre on December 11, 1914. The cast was made up from
the membership of the dramatic troupe:

Miss Katherine Veid.......... Lady Bracknell
Miss Marion McDowell....... Gwendoline
Miss Sophie Lee............. Cecily Cardew
Miss Blanche Coffin.......... Miss Prism
Lewis Krielow............... Algemon Moncrief
Wallace H. Adams........... Rev. Canon Charuble (sic)
J. S. Mallett ............. John Worthing 23

21 Ibid., May 29, 1918.

22 There is no record of the exact dates of these two plays,
possibly because of missing issues of the Jennings Weekly Times.

23 Jennings Weekly Times, December 18, 1914. The cast of charac­
ters in What's in a Name? is the same as that of Oscar Wilde's
Importance of Being Earnest.
The Jennings newspaper in 1915 recorded only one non-professional theatrical offering. The senior class of the high school gave its annual play, The College Chap, on May 26, at the Woman's Christian Temperance Union Auditorium.

On March 20, 1916, the senior class of Jennings High School gave The XYZ Affair. Two members of the class, Frances Gill and Camille Hunter, wrote the script. Mrs. Gautier of the high school faculty trained the cast. The Jennings Weekly Times of March 24 had the following comments to make about the production:

The play was an attractive little composition, up-to-date, and with catchy music. Some of the selections were original, some just popular songs rendered as solos, duets and choruses among them.

About fifteen hundred people attended the original Humbug Circus exhibited in Jennings on May 18, 1916, by J. J. Jennings, a professional humbug circus man. The amusement was put on under the auspices of the local civic league using some townspeople.

Lafayette

The French class of the Agricultural High School at Carencro invited the public, by means of an announcement in the Daily Advertiser, February 17, 1914, to attend a French play, Les Caprices de Gizelle, on the following Saturday.

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24Ibid., June 3, 1915.

25Ibid., May 19, 1916. The Humbug Circus performed in Opelousas on May 6, and in New Iberia on May 21, 1916.

26Carencro is a community six miles north of Lafayette, Louisiana.
In Lafayette, during the early months of 1914, the amateurs were performing stage shows consisting of specialty acts. On Monday night, May 4, the Jefferson Theatre was crowded for a variety extravaganza, The Cabaret, arranged and staged by Mrs. C. M. Parkerson. Tommy Gilbeau acted as master of ceremony and introduced the performers.27

President E. L. Stephens of Louisiana Industrial Institute wrote a letter to the editor of the Daily Advertiser in connection with the production of an historical pageant. The letter as it appeared in the newspaper on May 14, 1914, is reproduced here in part:

Dear Sir:

It has been seriously proposed to produce an Acadian Pageant on a large scale, to be presented to as many as five thousand or more people in the year 1915, which will be the 160th anniversary of the exile of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755.28

An organized group was formed to work on the production with Dr. Stephens as president; Mayor De Clouet, vice president; and J. J. Tournet, secretary-treasurer. The pageant did not materialize and there was no further mention of it in the newspapers.

In the Spring a Young Man's Fancy, as produced by Mt. Carmel


28The last word about the Acadian Pageant was printed in the Lafayette Daily Advertiser on May 25, 1914. The article stated that a number of citizens gathered at the City Hall to organize a body corporate for the purpose of presenting a dramatic presentation of the Acadian exiles.
Convent on May 16, 1914, was repeated two weeks later at the Jefferson Theatre for a benefit to St. Joseph Catholic Church. The following names appeared in the cast: Ruth Mouton, Eunice Blanchet, Adette Burquiere, Helen Sandoz, Lucile Comeaux, Hattie Mouton, Anne Labbs, and Robert Mouton.29

By the end of 1914, the influence of the war in Europe was being felt in Lafayette. In the December 21 issue of the Daily Advertiser the editor wrote:

The entertainment Saturday night given by local talent under the auspices of the Societe Francaise de Attakapas for the benefit of the women and children and noncombatants made destitute by the war, to be turned over to the Prince of Wales Relief Fund, proved very entertaining. The attendance was very good considering the bad weather and the audience showed their appreciation of the different numbers by frequent applause and encores.

On February 12, 1915, the people of Lafayette saw the presentation of the Elks' Burlesque at the Jefferson Theatre.

The great amusing feature of the evening was the take off of several candidates for mayor by Fred and Pothier Voorhies and Patrick Mouton. Odo Blanchet, Abe Plonsky and C. Colomb in their parts were good and the whole performance caused lots of fun and enjoyment. The makeups were fine and the hits evoked lots of laughs.30

The Olympia Opera Company presented "one of the most impressive musical shows to be staged in Lafayette." The group was a local organization using native talent under the management of Professor M. F.

29 Ibid., May 16, 1914.
30 Ibid., February 13, 1915.
Sontag of Southwestern Institute. After six weeks of rehearsals with the chorus trained by Mrs. Alfred Mouton and the interpretation of lines and stage business in the hands of Mr. E. P. Gilchrist, a cast of forty-five people presented the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, *The Mikado*, at the Jefferson Theatre, on May 5, 1915. The leading members of the cast were printed in the *Daily Advertiser* of February 15.

**Dramatis Personae**

- **Mikado of Japan** ............... James P. Caffery
- **Nanki Poo, his son** ........... P. J. Voorhies
- **Pooh Bah** ...................... E. P. Gilchrist
- **Pish Tush** ..................... Fred I. Cairns
- **Yum Yum** ...................... Miss Aurore Lafoe
- **Pitti Sing** ..................... Miss Gertrude Mouton
- **Peep Bo** ....................... Miss Martha Pellerin
- **Katisha** ....................... Mrs. H. V. Mielly

James P. Caffery was the assistant stage manager for *The Mikado*, and Eva Mouton was the piano accompanist. The Reverend Father Teuling was in charge of selecting and procuring the necessary costumes from New Orleans. Mrs. Charles M. Parkerson designed the stage decorations. The services of Eppie Moss, as dancing director, were secured, and she gave regular lessons "to the chorus in the terpsichorean art."³¹

If the accounts of the journal of the day can be relied upon, *The Mikado*, by the Olympia Opera Company, was a "big success" in Lafayette.³² The company also went on tour and played the Sandoz Opera House in Opelousas on Thursday, May 11.³³

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³¹Ibid., March 18, 1915.
³²Ibid., May 6, 1915.
³³Ibid., May 10, 1915.
The Jefferson Theatre was filled to capacity on May 18, 1915, for the commencement exercises of the city schools. The program contained several dramatic productions. The first of these was a play, *Rose Fairies*, by the pupils from the first and second grades; then, *Fairies in Spring* was presented by the primary department, and the last production was a musical play, *The Fairy Shoemaker Operetta*, done by a large number of school children. 34

The students of the Louisiana Industrial Institute performed *A Cinderella Pageant* on the athletic field for one of the largest crowds ever to witness an event at the Institute up to that time. Miss Hugh Laurin's gymnastic class, assisted by some of the men students, gave the presentation. Professor E. P. Gilchrist furnished the band for the performance from his department of music. Wm. D. Campbell was the piano accompanist, and the sewing class made the costumes. A few of the leading characters and the roles they carried were:

- Gertrude McConnell........... Prince Charming
- Edna Aucoin.................. Cinderella
- Marie Burleigh................. Stepmother
- Anne Labbe.................... Ugly Sister
- Ella Poche........................ Ugly Sister
- Mable Guidry.................... Fairy Godmother 35

St. Cecilia's Parochial School closing exercises took place on June 2, at which time two plays were performed: *The School of*

34Ibid., May 19, 1915.
Sorrow*, a drama in four acts, and *La Carte Postale*, a short French play. 36

For their final drama of the year, the pupils of Mt. Carmel Convent staged *Joan of Arc*, at the Jefferson Theatre on June 17, with Jeanne Jeanmard playing the title role. 37

Existing newspapers and information are scarce for the year 1916 in Lafayette, and those which were found yielded no record of non-professional theatrical activities.

In 1917, on November 27, the *Daily Advertiser* reported that a few nights earlier the American Red Cross received proceeds from a vaudeville by local artists at the Jefferson Theatre.

"One of the social events of the season" was the *Wedding of Tom Thumb* given by sixty children under the guidance of Miss Dora Barnard. The "wedding" took place at the high school under the auspices of the primary school of which Mrs. A. A. Kittridge was principal. The net proceeds of the entertainment were divided between the high school and the primary school for their Red Cross work. 38

The high school students made another Red Cross contribution on March 8, 1918. Clay Dalferes acted as master of ceremonies to

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36Ibid., June 7, 1915.
37Ibid., June 18, 1915.
38Ibid., December 15, 1917.
introduce various songs, dances, recitations and tableaux. The stage decorations consisted of the stars and stripes and flags of our allied nations along with the Red Cross banners. The Red Cross continued to benefit from performances at the Jefferson Theatre when Mrs. Charles M. Parkerson organized a vaudeville performance to accompany a motion picture film on April 23, and Southwestern Institute gave a program on May 17, composed of musical numbers, recitations and dances. Professor Sontag, Miss Mabel Leftwich, and Miss Hugh McLaurin, the dance and gymnastic instructor at the college, were in charge of the program.

Miss Paola Mouton coached and rehearsed the Lafayette High School pupils for a presentation of the operetta The Windmills of Holland, at the Jefferson Theatre on May 20. The members of the cast were William Breaux, Cleava Guchereau, Eleanor Allerman, Martha Broussard, Vincent Patureau, Frank Rickey, Randolph Cantrell and Ethel Broussard.

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42 Interview with Mrs. Annie Lee West Stahl of Monroe, Louisiana, October 20, 1962. Mrs. Stahl participated in the program as a student performer from Southwestern Institute.
43 *Lafayette Advertiser*, May 21, 1918.
When the United States entered World War I, in 1917, the people of Lafayette and the surrounding parish gave prompt and enthusiastic support to the cause. Many, including students at Southwestern Institute, volunteered without waiting for the draft, and some of the young men who could speak French well were sent to France as interpreters.44

At home everyone did his part for the war effort including the non-professional performers who gave one benefit show after another for the purpose of raising money to help win the war.

Toward the latter part of 1918, an epidemic of Spanish Influenza gripped the country. There were so many cases in Lafayette that all public gatherings were postponed and the schools and churches were closed.45 During the last half of this year of victory in war and catastrophe in disease, the amateur theatre of Lafayette was inactive.

Lake Charles

By the year 1914, the population of Lake Charles was approaching 16,000, and the town was stretching almost the entire length of the east side of the lake which shares its name.46


45Lafayette Advertiser, October 16, 1918.

46Lake Charles Daily American, July 25, 1913.
The only amateur performance recorded for the year 1914 was the entertainment given on June 2, in the Central School Auditorium, as a substitute for the annual class play. The program consisted of several parts including a chorus with illustrated songs, directed by Mrs. Ora Reams; a medley of selections from operas, coached by R. F. Cisco; The War Correspondent, a farce comedy on the Mexican situation; and a minstrel show by the high school boys.47

On May 26, 1915, the students gave a play and an operetta at the Central School Auditorium. The High School Literary Society enacted the play L'Enfant Vote or The Stolen Child, in French, and the girls of the high school presented the operetta The College Girl and the Milk Maid.48

The first and second grades at Central School were hosts to the public on May 27, when they gave two plays, Mistress Mary's Garden Party and The House in the Woods, and an operetta, The Toy Shop.49

The seniors presented their class play, The Magic Chest, a musical drama based upon the Greek legend of Pandora, on June 3, at the high school. Rosa Hart delivered the prologue.50 Emilie

47 Ibid., June 3, 1914.
48 Ibid., May 27, 1915.
49 Ibid., May 28, 1915.
50 Interview with Rosa Hart of Lake Charles on December 1, 1962. This is the first mention in print of Miss Hart appearing
Spaulding and Robert Leake played the roles of Pandora and Epithus. R. F. Cisco, the director, played piano with the orchestra.51

The Tuxedo Minstrel, by Draper and Miller, was the 1915 production put on by the Lake Charles Elks. The interlocutor was U. A. Bell and many of the old timers appeared once again in their blackfaced roles. The Daily American praised the work of Frank Shattuck by saying that he was "a local minstrel man of the first magnitude and an Elk's minstrel would hardly be complete without him."52

Under the guidance of their teachers, Misses Wemp and Moore, the fourth grades gave an entertainment at Central School on May 12, 1916. The first part of the program was a play, Mother Goose Up-to-Date, which was followed by a fantasy called The Fairy Minstrel of Glenmature.53

Five days later, the senior class at Central School enacted Master Will of Stratford, a story of William Shakespeare as a boy.54

in an amateur production in Lake Charles. Later, in 1927, she became the first president of the Lake Charles Little Theatre.

51Daily American, June 4, 1915.

52Ibid., December 22, 1915. See Monroe, November, 1915.

53Ibid., May 13, 1916.

54Ibid., May 18, 1916. The play dealt with the boyhood dreams of Shakespeare, having been written for the Drama League in honor of the tercentenary observation of the death of the playwright.
The *Daily American* stated that "Dewey Switzer, as Filch, the pedlar, was easily the star of the evening." Marian North played the role of Queen Elizabeth; Rudolph Krausse portrayed Shakespeare; and Annabel Williamson was Titiana, The Fairy Queen.

Two productions, staged at the 1916 closing exercises of St. Charles Academy and the Convent School, on June 19, were: a fantasy, *A Forest Carnival*, and a three-act comedy, *Down You Go*.55

Early in the year 1917, the Calcasieu Council, No. 1207, Knights of Columbus, planned to put on a minstrel show and secured a director.

... Orill O'Reilly, a member of Dallas Council, Knights of Columbus, who makes a specialty of putting on home-talent performances for various orders and organizations, arrived in Lake Charles yesterday.56

On February 17, the *Daily American Press* pronounced the Knights of Columbus Minstrel, which had been given at the Arcade Theatre the night before, "an entire success." The end men, upon whom the success of any minstrel show depends, were Frank Shattuck, Ed Hochendel, George Hebert, Homer Kirkwood, Wilfred Collette, J. J. Dubourge, P. D. LeBleu and Orill O'Reilly.

A womanless wedding, *Who's Who in Matrimony*, held the boards at the Arcade Theatre on December 17, 1917, for the benefit of

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the Red Cross. Ethel Mae Barremore had charge of the arrangements for the program. The cast was made up of the following men:

Preacher .................. Charles Cline  
Singer .................. Judge W. C. Braden  
Pianist .................. Percy Jones  
Bride .................. Dr. D. C. Iles  
Groom .................. C. D. Kimball  
Best Man .................. J. P. Barremore  
and others

The boys from Gerstner Field gave a variety show at the Arcade on February 15, 1918, for the benefit of the Navy Knitting League. Sergeant Lawler, of the United States Air Force, was chairman of the program. The Daily American Press commented that it was "the largest audience perhaps ever assembled in Lake Charles."59

A second show by the Gerstner Field men came on November 18, 1918, when they gave another vaudeville. The newspaper had these comments to make concerning the performance:

The benefit production at the Arcade on Monday evening by the boys from Gerstner Field for the United War Works Fund netted $1,625. This performance was given by the Southern Amusement Company....60

Much of the amateur performing done in Lake Charles during the war years, especially after the United States entered the conflict,

57 Ibid., December 18, 1917.  
58 An airbase at Lake Charles during World War I.  
59 The Lake Charles Daily American Press, February 16, 1918.  
60 Ibid., November 20, 1918.
was for the purpose of raising funds for war work.

In the last few months of 1918, the Spanish Influenza visited Lake Charles, as it had many other communities throughout the state and country. All social activities ceased, and in the month of December, Gerstner Field was put under quarantine.
CHAPTER VI

THE BAYOU COUNTRY

1914 TO 1919
The Communities Along
Bayou Teche
1914 to 1919

Professional theatrical engagements flourished in the southern part of Louisiana during the early years of World War I, and continued to make appearances after the United States became involved. Added to the regular touring troupes which visited the Bayou Country, the showboats, the tented dramatic companies, and the chautauquas, kept the professional actors busy. As for the amateurs, they appeared less frequently with the wearing on of the war years.

Franklin

A cast of approximately three hundred children from the grade school of St. Mary's Central High School performed *Voices of Nature*, at the Opera House in May of 1914. The operetta was given under the direction of Leota Jones and Agnes Blackman, members of the faculty, assisted by Pearl Silverman, accompanist.  

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1 The chautauqua institution grew out of an annually conducted camp meeting held by the Methodist Episcopal Church at Chautauqua, New York. Subjects of instruction were offered in the whole field of education along with popular entertainment and sometimes drama. In 1904 a circuit plan was inaugurated by which the speakers and entertainers appeared successively at different chautauquas throughout the country.

2 *St. Mary's Banner*, May 16, 1914.
A year later, on June 4, the people of the community produced *Fi Fi of the Toy Shop* at the Franklin Opera House. The one hundred members of the cast, under the direction and management of Roy D. Whitman, were complimented by *The St. Mary's Banner* of June 12, 1915. The reviewer wrote that "never before in Franklin has a play been staged by amateurs to equal it." The principal actors in *Fi Fi of the Toy Shop* are listed below.

Bonnie (the toy girl)..... Miss Lucile Naylor  
*Fi Fi* (the Parisian Doll). Miss Leota Jones,  
(musical directress of St. Mary's High School)  
Inkspot (comic).......... Miss Clara Alpha  
Lt. Lineheart............. Hon. L. O. Pecot  
Prince Lolly Pop.......... Mr. Joseph J. Schwartz  
Capt. Barnacle........... Mr. L. A. Loustalot  
A Doll's Barnacle....... Miss Annie Smith  
Man in the Moon.......... Mr. Earl Veeder  
Bo Peep.................. Miss Fanny O'Neill  
Loosy (rag doll)......... Miss Agnes Blackman  
Aurelia (Fairy).......... Mrs. L. A. Loustalot  
Jack Hammer............. Mr. Eugene Buhler  
Clowns................... Mr. Wallace Pugh  
Sandman.................. Hon. Charles Kramer  
Japanese Doll............... Miss Louise Bigler

Between the years of 1916 and 1919, the Red Path Chautauqua appeared annually in Franklin; the Hilda Morgan Stock Company played there upon several occasions; and the Franklin Eagle Band held concerts through the summer months, but there is no further indication of amateur performances in the newspapers of the community.

Morgan City

No amateur theatrical activities were noted by the newspapers in and around Morgan City until July 17, 1916. *The Review Bulletin*,
a publication printed in Berwick, Louisiana, mentioned that their home talent had produced *The Broken Rosary*, the night before, at the Evangeline Theatre in Morgan City. Leon Gilson directed the play and also played the role of Father O'Day. Mrs. Amelia Ryan took the leading part in the drama.

The *Morgan City Review* of August 24, 1916, commented upon the large crowd which attended the *Merry Minstrels* of the previous evening. V. W. Nunez, representative of the Standard Oil Company and sometime minstrel man, was both the director and the interlocutor of the show. Miss Genevieve Grevemberg was in charge of the musical numbers in the minstrel.

The *Elks War Relief Minstrel*, staged at the Opera House on the night of December 5, 1917, consisted of musical specialties, white and black face artists in ragtime, ballads, and jokes.

In 1918 the Knights of Columbus presented a minstrel at the Opera House under the direction of Jack McConniff; Julius Hebert, Eddie Arceneaux, Louis Kihmeman, Raymond Crawford, John Mac Mahon and Jim Drury were the endmen.

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3 Berwick is a town situated across the Atchafalaya River from Morgan City.

4 *The Morgan City Review*, December 6, 1917.

5 Ibid., June 14, 1918.
New Iberia

From a study of the annals of the period, it is noted that very little was accomplished by the amateur performers of New Iberia during the war years.\(^6\)

On May 21, 1916, prominent New Iberians appeared in The Humbug Circus in specialty and clown acts. The circus was sponsored by the Elk's Lodge.\(^7\)

The New Iberian Enterprise of February 10, 1917, announced that the commencement exercises of Mount Carmel Convent were to take place two days later with an operetta, Saint Elizabeth's Roses as part of the celebration.

In the fall and winter of 1918, the New Iberian newspaper reported the schools and other public places closed because of the number of influenza cases.

Opelousas

If the non-professional actors had been inactive in the town of New Iberia during the 1914 to 1919 period, they were even less active

\(^6\)The Parish Players, a professional touring troupe, appeared in New Iberia in the spring of 1916 along with the first chautauqua to be presented in the community. The group enacted three one-act plays representative of the types of drama done with the little theatre movement which was becoming popular in the United States. Mr. Harold Heaton headed the players and gave lectures concerning the new theatre movement. The Weekly Iberian, April 22, 1916.

\(^7\)The Weekly Iberian, May 27, 1916.
In Opelousas covering the same length of time; however, imported amateurs from Lafayette presented *The Mikado* at the Sandoz Theatre, on May 11, 1915.  


The last amateur presentation in the area, and the only one given within the limits of Opelousas during the years of the war, was *The Humbug Circus*. The two ring, one platform, tented show made use of the people of the town in the roles of circus artists.

**St. Martinville**

The domestic talent of St. Martinville kept reasonably busy during the war years in Europe. In October of 1914, a benefit was given at the theatre for a maintenance fund for the cemetery. Songs, music, sketches, and a one-act play entitled *Le Pate* made up the program. Misses Jeanne Bertrand, Lucie Martin, Camile Bienvenu were actresses in the drama, and the actors were J. F. Hote, I. F. Power, and Reuben Bienvenu.

The students of the St. Martinville High School and the St.

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Martinville Concert Band gave an Easter Fete. Because of the cold weather, Hiawatha, a play directed by Principal W. S. Edwards, was moved from the high school grounds to the stage of the Opera House.12

In February of 1916, J. C. Bienvenu fitted the St. Martinville Theatre with new chairs and added a second moving picture machine permitting the films to be shown without interruption. The theatre improvements also included a new player piano.13

The pupils of the Jeanerette High School traveled to the renovated Bienvenu Theatre in the early days of March, 1916, and presented their version of the play Mrs. Haywood's Help.14

The closing exercises of the Sisters of Mercy took place at College Hall on June 22, 1916. Three dramatic productions were included on the program: The Magician, an original humorous operetta; Through Darkness to Light, a drama in three acts; and Le Judgement de Mme. Salomon, a play in the French language.15

The commencement exercises for St. Martinville High School featured a school ground performance of Hiawatha, a script which had been done by the school two years earlier.16

Among the 1917 speeches, music, and recitations, which constituted the closing exercises of Mt. Carmel Convent, at the Bienvenu

16Ibid., June 2, 1917.
Opera House, the students performed a play in French, L'Election of Madame Robineau, and a pantomime, The Song of the Mystic.\(^{17}\)

On September 28, 1917, the pupils of the high school, coached by Miss Genevieve Hinks, gave The Pageant, a dancing performance staged at the Bienvenu Theatre.\(^{18}\)

In November 1918, the schools of the community were closed because influenza was sweeping across the state. People did not wish to meet in groups for fear of spreading the disease; therefore, no amateur performances were given in the latter part of 1918 and the early part of 1919. In the meantime, the inhabitants of St. Martinville, like those in other towns in the state, were keenly aware of the raging war across the Atlantic, and entertainment was not the foremost thought in their minds.

The Communities Around
Bayou Lafourche
1914 to 1919

In the Lafourche area the people continued about their everyday business without the realization that the world was on the verge of a calamity. However, when America entered the war in 1917, the daily tasks of the inhabitants were interspersed with efforts for the cause of their country. The non-professional theatrical groups of the

\(^{17}\)Ibid., June 23, 1917.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., November 3, 1917.
Lafourche region became less and less active as the European conflict came closer and closer to the American people. The local performances which were given during the 1917-1918 period were usually done in the spirit of service to the country.

Convent

"The La Place Dramatic Club\textsuperscript{19} was the recipient of a royal reception on their [sic] first visit to St. James Parish." On Sunday, July 5, 1914, the visitors brought the three-act comedy-drama, The Squire's Daughter, and performed the play in the Holy Name Opera House at St. James\textsuperscript{20} for the benefit of the St. James Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1914, two plays were performed by the Jefferson College Dramatic Club for the benefit of the Jefferson Athletic Association. Mr. and Mrs. P. M. Lambremont directed The Kingdom of Heart's Content at Alumni Hall on September 27.\textsuperscript{22} On December 19, at the same place, the club produced a three-act farce, Turned Up.\textsuperscript{23}

It was not until March of 1918 that the amateur performers of

\textsuperscript{19}La Place, Louisiana, is situated some thirty miles to the east of Convent.

\textsuperscript{20}St. James, Louisiana, is located across the Mississippi River from Convent.

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{L'Interim}, July 11, 1914.

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, October 3, 1914.

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, December 19, 1914.
the Convent community were heard from again. At that time they performed for the war needs of the American Red Cross.

Rehearsals are in progress for a Soiree Musicales to be given at Jefferson College Hall, during the third week of April, by Miss Lillian C. Bourgeois, for the benefit of the American Red Cross. An entertainment, with forty in the cast, promises to be very interesting. A Lilliputian Wedding and Spanish Dance are two of the main attractive features of the program. 24

Donaldsonville

Domestic talent presented Uncle Ephraim's Summer Boarders, a three-act comedy depicting rural life, on April 17, 1914, at the Grand Theatre. Professor M. J. Durand and Miss Elizabeth Bott directed the play in the interest of the public high school. 25

An item concerning renovations being made upon the Grand Theatre appeared in the December 4 issue of the 1915 Donaldsonville Chief.

August Barbay, of Plaquemine, has been awarded the contract for reconstruction of the rear wall and scenery loft and for remodeling the auditorium of the Grand Theatre. The work was commenced this morning and the house will be in shape for the presentation of moving pictures by Christmas week. The finishing touches will not be completed until about the 15th of January.

As a fund raising project for their school library, the pupils of the seventh and eighth grades of St. Vincent's Institute enacted the comedy-drama, Rebecca's Triumph, at the Grand Theatre on May 3,

24Ibid., March 30, 1918.

25The Donaldsonville Chief, April 25, 1914.
Pierre V. Blanchard supervised a presentation of the *Merry Widow* at the Grand Theatre on June 7, 1916. Mildred Buquoi, Ethel Werner, Inez Greenwood, Roland Binnings, Otto Mestayer, Elmo Rodrigue, and Walter Lallande of Napoleonville took the principal roles. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored the production for the purpose of acquiring money to purchase equipment for a public playground.\(^{27}\)

The amateurs of Donaldsonville were quiet during 1917-1918. World War I and the influenza epidemic were factors in reducing their activities.

Napoleonville

In January of 1914, the Civic League of Labadieville\(^{28}\) sponsored a home talent minstrel in order to obtain money to purchase chairs for their high school auditorium.\(^{29}\)

The elementary grades of the Napoleonville High School performed an operetta, *The Fairy Crowning*, for the commencement exercises in May of 1914.\(^{30}\)

\(^{26}\)Ibid., May 6, 1916. \(^{27}\)Ibid., June 10, 1916.

\(^{28}\)Labadieville, Louisiana, lies ten miles to the south of Napoleonville on Bayou Lafourche.

\(^{29}\)The Assumption Pioneer, January 24, 1914.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., May 16, 1914.
The 1915 senior play of the Napoleonville High School was The Freshmen, enacted by the students during the commencement celebration in May. The members of the cast were Leo Guillot, H. Alives, K. Baker, H. Lanier, E. Fallon, Simon Vitale, Henry Dugas, Bessie Weil, Cecil Diaz, Delta Robertson, and Florence Guillot. 31

Sponsored by the teachers and the Mothers Club of the high school, a two day entertainment took place in the school auditorium on December 20 and 21. The first and second grades presented their version of Christmas Is Coming, and the high school pupils offered A Perplexing Situation. The program was given for the benefit of the school library fund. 32

On June 1, 1916, the high school students presented a play, The Finer Shades of Honor, in the auditorium of the school. 33

Miss Pugh coached the pupils of the primary grades of the Napoleonville High School in a play called Boy Blue by C. M. Wise. 34 The production was given at the school during commencement week of May, 1916, "for the purpose of raising some money with which to purchase a library for Miss Pugh's classroom." 35

31 Ibid., May 29, 1915.
32 Ibid., December 18, 1915.
33 Ibid., June 3, 1916.
34 Interview with the author, Dr. Claude Merton Wise of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, retired head of the Department of Speech at Louisiana State University from 1924 to 1958, May 21, 1963.
Because of the lack of space, the high school auditorium was taken to make two extra classrooms in the summer of 1917. This, along with the tensions aroused by the war and the fear brought on by the influenza epidemic throughout the area, gave the performers of Napoleonville little incentive to produce theatrical entertainments.

Plaquemine

Missing publications of The Weekly Iberville South, during the years of 1914 to December of 1917, hamper research concerning the activities of the non-professional actors in Plaquemine at that time. It is known, however, that all theatre-minded people of the community anxiously watched the construction of a new playhouse. The local newspaper of February 2, 1918, printed the announcement of the opening of the Wilbert Theatre on Sunday, February 3.

Within a few weeks time the home talent performers were making use of the new stage. On April 6, a minstrel show at the Wilbert Theatre benefited the Knights of Columbus War Camp Fund. The troupe was composed of the "best local talent" from Baton Rouge and Plaquemine and included "fifty ugly men and twenty-five pretty girls."  

The featured part of the 1918 closing exercise of St. Basil Academy was a three-act drama, The Ring Remembered, presented at the

36Ibid., June 1, 1918.

37The Weekly Iberville South, April 6, 1918.
school on Sunday, June 23.\textsuperscript{38}

Thibodaux

A variety program consisting of music, songs, and vaudeville was given in the high school auditorium by the students of Thibodaux College on April 23, 1915.\textsuperscript{39}

The closing exercises of Lafourche Crossing\textsuperscript{40} school were celebrated in May of 1916 with the following program.

Welcome
The Quarrel................. 12 tiny tots
The Vestal Virgins........ Spectacular--nine virgins and a Sybil
Boys Horn Drill............ 12 boys
Vacation song.............. All
Parasol Maidens............ Intermediate girls
Dandelion Frolic........... A score of maids
Goodbye...................... 6 primary boys\textsuperscript{41}

In 1916, the fifty-seventh annual graduating exercises of Thibodaux College terminated with a drama, \textit{Guilty Without Cause}.\textsuperscript{42}

The Christmas entertainment of Mt. Carmel Academy on December 21, 1917, included a French play, \textit{Vieux Jouets et Jouets Neufs}, and an English play, \textit{A Christmas Guest}.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, June 29, 1918.

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{The La Fourche Comet}, April 23, 1915.

\textsuperscript{40}Lafourche Crossing is situated four miles down the bayou from Thibodaux.

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, May 4, 1916.

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Ibid.}, June 22, 1916.

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, December 22, 1917.
Organized in September of 1917, the Thibodaux College Band played its first concert in January, 1918, coupled with a one-act farce, *Razor Jim*, played by the following actors:

- **Razor Jim**.............. J. Clifford Taylor
- **Freddie Wards**........... Leonard Toups
- **De Fake**................ Justin Toups
- **Campinini**.............. Charlton Folsé

The *La Fourche Comet* was anxious to do something about an opera house for Thibodaux and published an editorial on June 13, 1918, in order to attract public attention to the situation.

Thibodaux will soon be without an opera house the structure that was erected along in the 80's by the Thibodaux Fire Company No. I, being almost demolished. We remember distinctly when the people of this town were appealed to for funds to erect the opera house . . . . We bet that it is possible now, with the right people at the head of a move, to raise enough money here within a week, to build an opera house that would be entirely out of debt, and yet the times here are not considered as "good" in a financial way as they were between 1880 and 1890.

The final amateur production in Thibodaux during 1914 to 1919 was the Thibodaux College commencement play, *A Strenuous Life*, in June, 1918.45

The non-commercial performers of the Bayou Country presented several entertainments during the war years for the aid of those in the European conflict. The Societie Francaise de Attakapas of Lafayette presented a program in 1915 for the benefit of the Prince

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44Ibid., January 24, 1918.

45Ibid., June 20, 1918.
of Wales War Relief Fund. The Elks of Morgan City offered their War Relief Minstrel in 1917. At Jefferson College Hall in Convent, the students participated in an American Red Cross War Relief Fund Minstrel in 1918. The Knights of Columbus War Relief Fund Minstrel of 1918 was a production in Plaquemine. Other less pretentious programs in school assemblies here and there raised money for the war effort.

Players were active in dramatic groups during 1914 to 1916, but the clubs and schools began to produce fewer plays after 1917. The influenza epidemic struck the area in 1918 and all public meetings were discouraged. At the same time, the minds of the people were on the war. Even after Germany signed the armistice, on November 11, 1918, and the fighting ceased, the memory of the war lingered on and amateur performances of any kind were all but forgotten in the communities along the Bayous.
CHAPTER VII

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA

THE FLORIDA PARISHES

1914 TO 1919
The newest town in the state was Bogalusa, founded in 1907. Situated in the eastern section of Washington Parish, the site was named after Bogue Lusa, a stream which runs through the area. Bogalusa was incorporated into a town on July 4, 1914.  

After eight years of colorful existence as a mill town with no political status whatever other than as part of Ward Four of Washington Parish, the people of Bogalusa decided to organize a government of their own. A private census complete April 1, 1913, showed that the population of unincorporated Bogalusa was 10,000 of which 6,500 were white. This population seemed to justify such a move.

The first record of a non-professional dramatic performance appearing in The Bogalusa Enterprise was a high school presentation. The Bogalusa High School Literary Society meeting, on March 4, 1915, in the school auditorium, included on its program a dramatization of Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island by the freshmen boys.

I. T. S. Astory directed a three-act farce, The Elopement of Ellen, at the Magic City Theatre on April 6, 1915, under the auspices of the Ladies of the Episcopal Guild.

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3The Bogalusa Enterprise, March 11, 1915.

4Ibid., April 8, 1915.
Ten days later, at the Y.M.C.A. of Bogalusa, the Ladies Aid Society of the Methodist Church presented an amateur amusement, The Desetrick Skule. J. K. Johnson was the "skulemaster" and the "skule" committee was composed of Governor J. Y. Sanders, C. J. Wade, W. H. Sullivan, H. E. Hopper, and J. A. Spekenhier. Some of the "stewdents" in the frolic were James Canada, Hardy Poole, Roy Pierce, and Walter Lonnergan.

The Bogalusa Y.M.C.A. became a popular place for presenting amateur performances. In May, the high school offered its Senior Dramatic Club play, At the End of the Rainbow, in that building, and in October the Chaminade Music and Drama Club gave a cantata, Pan on a Summer Day.

Nineteen-sixteen was a busy year for the domestic performers. H. E. Hopper proved to be the "star of the evening," when a show called The Hal G. Feels Minstrels was done at the Y.M.C.A. on April 25. The Chaminade Music and Drama Club played Every Youth on the Y.M.C.A. stage on May 4. Miss A. O. Jackson directed the 1916 class.

5Mr. Jared Young Sanders was governor of Louisiana from 1908 to 1912.
6The Bogalusa Enterprise, April 15, 1915.
7Ibid., May 6, 1915.
8Ibid., October 14, 1915.
9Ibid., April 27, 1916.
10Ibid., May 4, 1916.
play, Dan Cupid, Head Coach, for Bogalusa High School in the Y auditorium on May 29. The Girls' Athletic Club of Bogalusa presented a musical revue, A La Follies, as a benefit for the athletic team of the high school. Elizabeth Sullivan supervised the production.

The cast of the second annual Hal G. Feale Minstrel performed at the Y on April 17, 1917. In May, the high school seniors presented The Arrival of Kitty at the Y.M.C.A. Elizabeth Sullivan was in charge.

A group of young ladies known as the Joan of Arc Girls entertained their friends on March 18, 1919, in the gymnasium of the Y.M.C.A. by acting a playlet, Mrs. Blaney's Boarders. Miss R. Bell was the director and Miss Lena May Mackie took care of the music for the play.

In June of the same year, The Business Girls' Club of Bogalusa offered its version of The Old Maids' Convention. The performance was staged at the Y.M.C.A.

Bogalusa was created and developed during a period of world stress. Even though the United States was finally drawn into World

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11Ibid., June 1, 1916.
12Ibid., October 12, 1916.
13Ibid., April 19, 1917.
14Ibid., May 31, 1917.
15Ibid., March 20, 1919.
16Ibid., June 26, 1919.
War I, the people of Bogalusa continued to work hard for their local growth and cultural activities. Only in the latter years of the war was there any slack in the number of amateur performances given in the community. The year of the Armistice, for instance, produced no records of non-professional theatrical activities.

Covington

The domestic theatre in Covington during the year of 1914 was occupied with several productions which were representative of the kind and number of performances to be given in that community through the coming years. Adult acting groups presented two plays, The Deastrick Skule,\(^{17}\) and The Teaser\(^{18}\) at the Bogue Falaya Park Pavilion; a two-act play, Sweethearts,\(^{19}\) shared the bill with a three-reel motion picture at the Parkview Theatre; the commencement program for St. Paul College (the old Dixon Academy building) included a three-act drama, The Proscribed Heir;\(^{20}\) Miss Anne Morrell directed The Elopement of Ellen\(^{21}\) at the pavilion for the benefit of the Jefferson Number One Fire Company; and the pupils of the Garden

\(^{17}\) The St. Tammany Farmer, February 14, 1914.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., December 26, 1914.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., March 7, 1914.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., June 20, 1914.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., July 4, 1914.
District School gave *The Lost Prince* in the same month of the previously mentioned show, *The Teaser*.

*The Teaser* took place a second time in January of the following year. Under the sponsorship of the King's Daughters, the cast, Mrs. D. I. Addison, A. C. McCormack, Mrs. A. C. McCormack, C. S. A. Fuhrmann, Holgar Kohnke, Lucile Smith, and Lola Christoffer, appeared at the Parkview Theatre.

The performance at the Parkview overshadowed the performance at the Park Pavilion, for these reasons: The Parkview had better acoustics and presents /sic/ a more realistic atmosphere...

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph D. Clifton retired from the professional stage and settled in Covington sometime in the early part of 1915. In May of that same year, Mr. Clifton produced *The Little Red Lady*, a pastoral play of his own composition, at the Park Pavilion for the benefit of the Order of the Moose. Mrs. Clifton carried the "stellar role." Others in the local cast were Mrs. Lou Levenson, Lola Christoffer, C. S. A. Fuhrmann, Frank Boudousquie, A. C. McCormack, Joseph D. Clifton, and Master Kenneth Moise.23

On June 12, 1915, St. Paul's Dramatic Club presented at their school a three-act comedy called *The High School Freshman*.24

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23 *Ibid.*, May 22, 1915. Mr. Joseph Clifton and Miss June Agnott, Mrs. Clifton's stage name, were retired from the professional stage where they had been members of the Crawford Dramatic Company. The troupe had played in Covington three seasons earlier.

The annual closing of St. Scholastica Academy on June 23, 1915, offered three plays on their program: The Removal, The Echoes, and Justice and Mercy. 25

In the summer of 1915, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Clifton gave a benefit for the local library at Bogue Falaya Park. The play, Her Life for His, was written by Mr. Clifton and his wife headed the cast. 26

The Firemen's Minstrel, at the Park Pavilion in December concluded Covington's domestic talent shows for 1915. 27

In July of 1916, high flood waters in the area of Covington ruined Bogue Falaya Park and destroyed the pavilion where so many amateur presentations had been staged in the past. 28

A Christmas Masque for the benefit of the firemen was given at the Parkview Theatre in the month of December, 1916. The masque was something unique in the way of entertainment and happily combined music and dancing in a pleasing little play. 29

St. Paul's Dramatic Club gave a frolic at the Parkview Theatre in April of 1917. The program included a number of skits and recitations, and a minstrel show with W. H. Warner as the interlocutor,

26Ibid., August 28, 1915.
27Ibid., January 1, 1916.
28Ibid., July 8, 1916.
29Ibid., December 30, 1916.
J. W. Stanard and A. Claravie as endmen, and a large chorus of students.  

Nineteen-eighteen saw few amateur performances in and around Covington. Three miles to the east, in Abita Springs, the public school children performed their version of the fairy tale, Snow White.  

. . . The rendering of this little play showed real talent among the little ones, beautiful singing voices, and wonderful concentration for children of that age. There remained but one conclusion for the audience; There must have been genuine understanding and cooperation between teachers and pupils.  

The loss of the Bogue Falaya Park Pavilion, the coming of World War I, and the spread of the influenza epidemic of 1918 resulted in the cessation of non-professional theatrical activities in the Covington area. No newspaper reports about local performances in Covington appeared during the years of 1918 and 1919.  

In the northern part of the Florida Parishes, theatrical activities for Franklinton, Greensburg, and Kentwood were also very scarce during these years.

Franklinton  

On the day preceding the May, 1914, graduating exercises of the public schools in Franklinton, the chorus classes and the high school students presented an evening of entertainment. The main feature of

30 Ibid., April 28, 1917.  

31 Ibid., June 1, 1918.
the program was a play, Mr. Bob, directed by Miss Nallie Samuels, a member of the teaching staff. 32

The dramatic production of the 1917 senior class of Franklinton High School was entitled College Girls' Kimona Club, and was produced in May by students under the guidance of Nallie Samuels, assistant principal of the school. 33

In 1918, the class play at the high school was Our Wives, a three-act comedy staged under the direction of Misses Lloyd and Reeves. 34

Greensburg

Students of Greensburg High School acted in "a society drama in four-acts," Farm Folks, at the new school auditorium for the commencement on June 1, 1917. Mr. Pierce, the school principal, directed the play; Eugenia White supervised the music and songs. 35

The Greensburg Dramatic Club of the high school presented a play, Diamonds and Hearts. Once again Mr. Pierce was director for the young actors in his school. 36

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32 The Era Leader, May 28, 1914.
33 Ibid., May 23, 1918.
34 Ibid., May 28, 1918.
35 St. Helena Echo, May 25, 1917.
36 Ibid., May 31, 1918.
Kentwood

The only amateur theatrical production recorded in the **Kentwood Commercial** during the period of time from 1914 to 1920 was the high school play, **The Elopement of Ellen**, which was given in February, 1918.\(^{37}\)

St. Francisville

The Julian Frehan High School seniors were very active in 1914. They presented three plays within the year. In April, Miss Dixon, of the school faculty, directed a one-act play, **In the Spring a Young Man's Fancy**, at the Pastime Theatre.\(^ {38}\) On May 22, **The Burglar Man** was presented by the seniors with the following cast:

- Mrs. Bluff ................ Miss Mamie Carter
- Billy Bluff ................ Miss Josie Binning
- Lina Wantman ............... Miss Mary Hamilton
- Bess Lagbehind ............. Miss Lillian Daniel
- Dorothy Doolittle.......... Miss Lillie Tooraen
- Eva Otherwise ............. Miss Pearl Harvey
- Carrie Cheerup ............. Miss Beulah Smith
- Susan Telltale ............. Miss Mamie Cutrer
- Pat Onlyman ............... Mr. Willie Fort

**Diamonds and Hearts**, the last play for that year, involved adults in the cast as well as seniors.

... the seniors were assisted by Supt. Crump, who proved

\(^{37}\) **Kentwood Commercial**, February 14, 1918.

\(^{38}\) **The True Democrat**, April 24, 1914.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., May 23, 1914.
himself "a star", Mr. Frank Bacot and Mr. Davidson. The acting was very even, all doing their parts particularly well, but as aforementioned Mr. Crump, having a humorous role, was especially successful in amusing his audience. In this he was ably assisted by Miss Hortense Fulton, who impersonated the affectionate, middle aged sister and unassuming kindhearted countrywoman to perfection.  

At Pythian Hall in April, 1915, Mrs. L. V. Schwing directed Kentucky Belle in cooperation with other amateurs of St. Francisville for the benefit of the Union Church in the ninth ward.  

The seniors of Julian Frehan High School, assisted by Superintendent Crump, Frank Bacot and Immer Ball, performed Valley Farm, on May 27, 1915. 

Much of the scenery was home made, being constructed by Mr. Frank Bacot and his manual training class. Whole screens had been repaired and repapered, and a rustic cottage and well curb made. It will be a boon to the public if this scenery is left at the hall, as the bucolic scenery already there is as familiar to everyone as Mother Goose rhymes. Mrs. Crump was coach. . .  

The following year, the senior class of the high school selected Esmeralda for the annual play. Mrs. R. E. Crump directed the production at Pythian Hall in May.  

The Julian Frehan High School pupils presented a program consisting of musical, literary, and dramatic numbers at Pythian Hall in

40 Ibid., December 26, 1914.  
41 Ibid., April 10, 1915.  
42 Ibid., May 29, 1915.  
43 Ibid., May 6, 1916.
February of 1918. The play which was given at that time was *Girls at Boarding School*.44

In April, Jacques de Castillo, in the title role of his play, *The Red Prince*, performed with the Julian Frehan High School pupils at Pythian Hall. "The proceeds were divided between Mr. de Castillo and the school Improvement Fund."45

The towns of Bogalusa and Covington produced the most theatrical activities in Southeast Louisiana from 1914 to 1919. Although Bogalusa was a new town, incorporated in 1914, it presented a comparable number of activities to those of the well established community, Covington. In the summer of 1916, however, Covington lost the Pavilion at Bogue Falaya Park where a good many of the performances had been given.

Of the other towns studied, St. Francisville far exceeded Franklinton, Greensburg, and Kentwood in the number of productions for this period. Most of the plays put on in St. Francisville were presented by the Julian Frehan High School. In 1918, Jacques de Castillo, the state drama coach, took his play, *The Red Prince*, to the school in St. Francisville. This is the only record in this study of a Castillo script presented in Southeast Louisiana.

Of all the performances given by amateurs in the southeastern part of Louisiana for this period, none were reported as having been given in the interest of World War I.

CHAPTER VIII
NORTH LOUISIANA
1914 TO 1919
Alexandria

During the time of the First World War, the local performers were less active than they had been in preceding years. In 1914, however, they produced four offerings. Al G. Frazee managed The Elks' Minstrel at the Rapides Theatre in April with J. Norman Kramer as interlocutor. The following months, the Alexandria High School seniors gave their annual play, At the End of the Rainbow, in the school auditorium. Mrs. C. N. Glynn directed a one-act comedy, Casey on Trial, as part of the closing exercises of St. Francis Xavier's College at the Rapides Theatre on June 4. The Juvenile department of St. James Church School presented a cantata, Princess Sunshine, on June 6 in the school auditorium under the direction of Ellen and Annie Warnock.

The following year, St. Francis Xavier's Academy concluded its 1915 commencement with a production of All Is Not Gold That Glitters at the Rapides Theatre on June 9.

The students of Providence Academy performed a drama, The

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1Daily Town Talk, April 17, 1914.
2Weekly Town Talk, June 6, 1914.
3Ibid., June 5, 1914.
4Ibid., June 6, 1914.
5Ibid., June 12, 1915.
Countess of Tivoli, during the graduating exercises of 1916 at the Rapides Theatre.  

Louisiana College, in Pineville, developed and supported by the Baptist Church, held its eleventh annual closing exercises on June 2, 1917, with a special program. *The Arrow Maker's Daughter*, a dramatization of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, was performed by the students under the direction of Dahlia Caudell.  

The senior class offering at Bolton High School in 1917 was *Runaway Gretchen*, which played at the Rapides Theatre on June 7. The play, a romance of Serbia, was written and directed by Jacques de Castillo, the state drama coach. The production was interspersed with songs and dances. The cast was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liza</td>
<td>Kathrine Roberts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke Roger</td>
<td>Mr. de Castillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondo</td>
<td>Clifton Mobley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princess Frida</td>
<td>Clara Dee Shumake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blazer</td>
<td>Arthur Naquin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frenchy</td>
<td>Bertram Patureua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendrick</td>
<td>Truette Gandy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig</td>
<td>Robert Turner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Progress of Liberty*, a patriotic pageant, given on April 6, 1918, was repeated five days later at the army camp Beauregard just outside of Alexandria and Pineville. D. D. Nye was the director of the production and for the original presentation used the south side

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7 *The Weekly Town Talk*, June 2, 1917.
8 Ibid., June 9, 1917.
of the city hall as the stage area with the Bentley Hotel as an architectural and scenic background. 9

Farmerville

Farmerville High School included grades of the elementary and secondary levels and was responsible for the non-professional theatrical activities of the community during these years.

Fifteen student actors performed a Halloween play, *A Little Girl in Red*, at Farmerville High School on the evening of October 30, 1914, for the benefit of the school fund. 10

The pupils of the first four grades of Farmerville High School, under the supervision of Misses Beam and Avery, gave a program for George Washington's Day, February 19, 1915. The third selection on the program was a sketch, *The Boy Who Put His Mother First*, and the twelfth number was a play, *Washington's Birthday*. 11

The high school students staged a Christmas play, *Mrs. Briggs of the Poultry Yard*, in December, 1915. 12

In connection with the three-hundredth anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare, the high school students performed a burlesque on *The Merchant of Venice* on December 1, 1916. Mrs. C. M. Taylor,

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9Ibid., March 16, 1918.  
10The Gazette, November 4, 1914.  
11Ibid., February 17, 1915.  
12Ibid., December 22, 1915.
the expression teacher, and Clara Bridwell directed the presentation. 13

The remainder of the period of time from 1914 to 1919 is barren of reports concerning amateur performances in Farmerville. Apparently the high school refrained from giving performances during the latter years of World War I.

Homer

In order to raise money to purchase a small printing press to be used in the publication of the school paper, the pupils of the senior class of the Homer High School presented a play, Lost, a Chaperon, at the Homer Opera House on January 16, 1914. 14

The Homer amateurs performed Henry W. Savage's allegory, Everywoman, at the opera house in the early part of March, 1914.

Mrs. W. L. Ward, who played the part of Everywoman, and to whom credit is largely due for initiating and organizing the performance, had not long since witnessed the play on a large stage by professional artists, hence was well qualified to direct and coach the performance in all the parts. 15

Mrs. Hugh Taylor and Mr. Darden Ford directed the light opera Martha by Flotow, which was presented at the opera house, and later at the new high school auditorium in December, 1914. Mildred Senne

15Ibid., March 18, 1914.
sang the role of Martha.16

The first and second grades of Homer High School performed in the play *Hansel and Gretel* at the school auditorium on November 26, 1915.17

The Methodist choir gave a home talent musical comedy, *The Tale of a Hat*, at the high school on February 11, 1916. The proceeds from the play were used to buy hymn books for the church.18

Miss A. Godwin and a cast of local talent presented *The Littlest Rebel* at the opera house on February 14, 1916. The money from the play benefited the Homer Library.19

Miss Annie Heath’s music class performed a May festival, *The Isle of Jewels*, at the school auditorium in 1917.20

The Homer High School closed the 1918 spring semester at the auditorium on May 18. "The Play, *Cupid at Vassar*, was to have been given on Thursday evening but on account of some unavoidable condition was postponed and performed on Saturday."21

Monroe

Monroe actors presented *Mrs. Busby's Pink Tea*, supervised by Mrs. Minnie Ruffin, at city school in April of 1914. The entertainment introduced a number of historic dances including those of America. The cast of actors was composed of the following people:

- Mrs. Busby .................. Lilian Meyers
- Mr. Busby .................. Douglas Miles
- Mrs. Dashleigh ............ Daisy Strong
- Annette ..................... Pauline Prophit
- Miss Mary Busby ........... Cordelia Titch
- Mrs. Hightone ............. Sarah Mathew
- Mrs. Upperten .............. Mrs. G. B. Cooley
- Mrs. Wiseace ............... Mrs. Katie Green

At Sugar's Theatre on May 2, 1914, the students of St. Hyacinth's Academy presented a musical play, *Bibi*. Bertha Mason, the toymaker's daughter, received special mention from the newspaper reviewer "for the manner in which she executed her part, every word clear and distinct and every action suited to the word."  

The senior class of the Monroe High School enacted their annual play, *Putting it Over*, a comedy by Lee Arthur, at the school auditorium on May 29, 1914. Those students who took part were Virginia Russell, Lady Bird Dixon, Alston Prophit, Leonidas Ross, Nellie Webb, Ewin Marx, Beatrice Callman, and Warren Taylor.

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Neva Breese played the leading role in a comedy, Troubles, at the Monroe City School Auditorium in December of 1914 for the benefit of the Lyceum fund.25

Douglas Miles directed the High School Minstrel at City School Auditorium on April 13, 1915, for the purpose of raising money for the Athletic Association:

The end men, masters Issac Lemle and Briscoe Trousedale, as the blackface comedians were splendid.26

On April 22, at St. Matthew's Hall, the members of the Sodality Club presented the play Rebecca's Triumph as a benefit to be given to Bishop Van de Ben of Alexandria on the occasion of his twenty-five years in the priesthood.27

The seniors of the City High School brought the 1915 commencement exercises to a close on May 28 with the presentation of Charley's Aunt by Brandon Thomas.

Mr. A. G. Cook, Jr., as Charley Wytheham was splendid, as was Mr. Leroy B. Fisher as Jack Chesney, undergraduates of St. Ode's College, Oxford. Miss Neva Breese and Miss Phyllis Cummings as niece and ward of Mr. Stephens Spettigue were the sweethearts of Charley and Jack and knew well how to captivate and hold an audience . . .

Mrs. Ruffin, as manager-in-chief, had special scenery painted so that there would be no jar or discord in the production of Charley's Aunt.28

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\(^{25}\text{Ibid.}, \text{December 22, 1914.}\)

\(^{26}\text{Ibid.}, \text{April 14, 1915.}\)

\(^{27}\text{Ibid.}, \text{April 23, 1915.}\)

\(^{28}\text{Ibid.}, \text{May 29, 1915.}\)
An operetta, The Isle of Jewels, was sponsored by the park committee of the civic league at City School on October 1, 1915. Those who played the principal parts were Louis Whitfield, Mae Smith, W. A. Walker, and Eva Stroud. The production was repeated at the same auditorium on October 5, for the benefit of the Free Lyceum Course.²⁹

On November 14, 1915, at the City School, a collection of voices from Shreveport and Monroe presented An Evening with the Fine Arts as a benefit for the Free Lyceum Course. Special tableaux called "The Persian Garden Rubayait" were part of the entertainment. Arthur Bilding from Birmingham was the director.³⁰

The Monroe News Star of January 15, 1916, appeared in what it termed "a large volume." The usual length of the newspaper at that time was eight pages, but upon that date the publication was extended to fourteen pages. The added section was called "The Booster Edition" and carried news about the work of the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks. A program of the Elks' show, The Tuxedo Club Minstrels, given on January 18, 1916, filled the first page of "The Booster Edition."

²⁹Ibid., October 8, 1915.
³⁰Ibid., November 20, 1915.
PROGRAM
Monroe Lodge No. 454, B. P. O. E.

Present
The Tuxedo Club
Minstrels

(by special arrangement with Witmark Musical Library)

Direction, Miller and Depper, 1576 Broadway.
New York City.

Scene I--Parlor of home at Tuxedo, N. Y.: Time--afternoon.

CAST:
Miss Mildred Miller
Sadie
Evelyn
Aunt Mandy the Cook
Fidney Vincent
Jackson Park (Goth)
Lord Charlemagne
Red McGee
Frankie T. Plunkett
Mrs. Harry Oliver
Mrs. William Ahmack
Mr. Joseph Martin
Mrs. Harry Propsh
Mr. Adam Byler
Mr. Sam Martin
Mr. Gayson
Singing "Ol' Man River"

MUSICAL NUMBERS
"I Want to be a Prince"... Dr. Bert Williams
"Dream Girl"... Mrs. Harry Oliver
Song Selections
Just Jive, Move and Laugh
2,000 Years Ago

Scene II--Scene I
Scene III--The Polyesteration House. Time--Evening.

THE ROSS MINSTRELS PRESENTING

CAST:
Evelyn Tenparton (Maude)
Mrs. Nate Dingle (Mrs. Walter)
Reginald Tenparton (The Guard)

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

CAST:
Mr. Aubrey Tate
Frank Byler

MUSICAL NUMBERS

"Look at That Dixie Band"
"Everybody Rag With Me"
"When the War Breaks Out In Mexico"
"Chicken Rag"
"Can't You Hear Me Calling Carolina"
"Midnight Cakewalk Ball"
"Little Grey Mother"
"Joe Turner's Blues"
"Little Bit of Heaven"
"Pigeon Walk"

FINALE... Entire Company
Mrs. Minnie Ruffin presented the City High School senior play, *Fanny and the Servant Problem*, by Jerome K. Jerome, on the evening of May 26, 1916, in the school auditorium.31

For the tercentenary commemoration of Shakespeare's death, Mrs. Minnie Ruffin directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the spring of 1916, first at the high school auditorium and a few days later on the lawn of the Cooley home on St. John Street.32

On May 31, 1918, Mrs. Ruffin coached the senior class play, *Niobe, All Smiles*.33

Natchitoches

The graduates of Louisiana State Normal offered a dramatization of *The Princess* by Alfred Tennyson at the school closing in May of 1914.34

*Love or Money*, a play given by local amateurs at the Olympic Opera House, benefited the Catholic Street Paving Fund, in July of 1915.35

Instructresses Abbot and Dancy supervised an adaptation of *Cinderella* at Louisiana State Normal in July of 1916.

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31Ibid., May 27, 1916.

32Interview with Mrs. A. M. Mellgren of Monroe, Louisiana, on February 4, 1964. She was a student at the school and witnessed the Shakespearean production.

33Interview with Mrs. Mellgren.

34*The Natchitoches Enterprise*, May 21, 1914.

The play was given on the court. The beautiful Doric pillars which is all that is left of the historic old matron's building formed a wonderful background for the stage setting and the lovely costumes of the actors. 36

The pupils of St. Mary's Academy gave a play, *The Heart of France*, at the Olympic Theatre in May of 1917. 37

An original children's play was performed at the Amuzu Theatre in June, 1918.

The family and friends have every right to be proud of Miss Irma Sompayrae, the author of *Alice in Thrift Land*, as it is an unusually clever little play arranged with dramatic effects that would do credit to an experienced playwright. 38

Rayville

In an interview on August 12, 1963, with Mrs. John McCarthy of Rayville, formerly Miss Lucile Helm, a scrapbook belonging to Mrs. R. S. Swetman revealed a program given at Rayville High School in the year of 1916. Since the newspapers of the town are missing during the time of World War I, this program has been the only material uncovered by the writer of this work. The program is as follows:

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Programme

The Sweet Girl Graduates

by the Senior Class

Rayville High School

Thursday, June 1st., 1916

Characters

Miss Maude DeSmythe .... Miss Patsy Hogood
Mrs. DeSmythe ............... Miss Vivian Jones
Mr. DeSmythe ................. Mr. Jack Traylor
Mr. Jack Hamilton .......... Mr. Walter Jones
Miss Valerie Reynolds .... Miss Lucile Halm
Madame Sateen ............... Miss Nancy Wright
Madame Ratum ................. Miss Julia Ellis
Prof. Grindem ............... Mr. William Jones
Mr. Chinese Bulbus ......... Mr. Marion Stodghill
Katherine .................. Miss Hazel Hunter

Mrs. Duncan Buie

Director

St. Joseph

The commencement exercises of St. Joseph High School took place in May of 1914 with two plays being presented; a fantasy, The Flower's Party, offered by the smaller children, and a farce, The Heavenly Twins, enacted by the seniors. 39

At the St. Joseph High School pavilion, built on Court Square especially for the occasion, the students presented A Spring Pageant on May 10, 1915. 40

39 The Tensas Gazette, May 22, 1914.
40 Ibid. May 15, 1915.
During the next two years the neighboring towns of Waterproof and Newellton offered stage productions. The people of Waterproof performed *The Old Maids' Conference* on the evening of June 1, 1916. An announcement of the forthcoming production appeared in the *Tensas Gazette* on May 26, 1916. In Newellton, the high school commencement in May, 1917, included an operetta, *Mid Summer Eve*, performed by the primary and intermediate grades, and the play *Kentucky Belle*, enacted by the high school students.

Shreveport

The first of several local productions given in 1914 was G. H. Broadhurst's comedy, *What Happened to Jones*. The Shreveport Dramatic Club produced the play under the direction of Herman Arthur Peterman, Jr., at the Grand Opera House on January 5 and 6.

Non-professional talent under the management of Mrs. E. Wildon Jones offered a musical show, *Miss Bob White*, at the opera house on the evening of March 10, 1914. Gus Kline was the musical conductor and Herman Arthur Peterman, Jr., was the business manager.

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41 Waterproof is situated about ten miles south of St. Joseph and Newellton is the same distance to the north in Tensas Parish.

42 *The Tensas Gazette*, May 18, 1917.

43 *Shreveport Journal*, January 6, 1914.

44 Ibid., March 11, 1914.
St. Mary's Convent held its annual closing program at Trinity Hall in June of 1914. The students enacted a two-act drama which was called *The White Dove of Oneida*. 45

The twelfth annual commencement event of St. John's College in June of 1914 featured a comedy, *The Sophomore*. They performed the play at the Grand Opera House. 46

On September 7, 1914, local actors performed E. Denny's *All of a Sudden Peggy* at the Grand Theatre. Mrs. R. H. Davis staged the play and Lola Mae Tharpe played the title role. Others in the troupe were Joe Beasley, James McCann, Herman Arthur Peterman, Jr., Richard Bell, Murray Werner, Louise Buckley, Olive Henry, Emily Hunt, and Mrs. R. H. Davis. 47

In the summer of 1914, Mr. J. M. Doll organized a motion picture group in Shreveport which he called The Doll Production Company. The purpose of the organization was to produce films written and acted by domestic artists. Herman Arthur Peterman was engaged by the company as director. The initial script, and the only one produced, was *The Man of the Minute*. When the picture was completed the producer showed it at the Crystal Theatre in September of 1914. The cast included Fayrinne Finnegan, H. A. Peterman, Jr., and Otto Weikoff. 48

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46Ibid., June 13, 1914.
47Ibid., September 8, 1914.
48Ibid., September 10, 1914.
The local Thespians were on the stage of the Grand Theatre again on March 5, 1915, with the Shreveport Dramatic Club's version of Sidney Grundy's *The Way to Win a Woman*. H. A. Peterman, Jr., was the director for the production, and Miss Olive Henry carried the leading role.49

A cast of fifty members of the Shreveport Ad Club presented a minstrel at the Grand Opera House on April 13, 1915. James McCann directed the first part of the show and Meyer Benson, the second. Jim Crowles, the Ad Club President, was the interlocutor.50

St. Vincent's Academy held its commencement exercises for the spring of 1915 in the school auditorium. The students performed a French play, *Le Cour De Suzel*; a fantasy, *The Witches of Spiteful Glen*; and a drama, *The Venetian Slave*.51

For the joint benefit of the Ad Club and the Shreveport High School, *Priscilla*, an operetta adapted from Longfellow's poem, was staged at the Grand Opera House in April of 1916. Julia Doster filled the title role of *Priscilla*. Earl Bellows designed and constructed the settings. E. H. Flood acted as stage manager for the production.52

The United Commercial Travelers Lodge No. 127 presented *The Great Minstrel* under the guidance of Joe Bren of the Joe Bren Produc-

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tion Company of Chicago, at the Grand Theatre, on May 12 and 13, 1916.\(^{53}\)

Johnny Dauer coordinated a home talent \textit{Vaudeville Revue} at the Grand Theatre in November, 1917. The entertainment, given under the auspices of the Shreveport Council No. 1108, Knights of Columbus, was for the benefit of the American Red Cross.\(^{54}\)

The number of non-professional theatrical activities diminished annually during the war years. The Red Cross benefit show was the last of the local entertainments to be recorded by the newspapers after America entered the conflict.

\textbf{Tallulah}

Located in Northeast Louisiana, on the opposite side of the state from Shreveport, and possessing no more than a thousand inhabitants, Tallulah was almost without local stage performances. The Madison Journal recorded only two productions and both of them in 1914.

The music and art teacher, Virginia Robertson, directed a play, \textit{Coming Through the Rye}, at the Tallulah Opera House in April, 1914, for the benefit of the high school.\(^{55}\)

On June 4, 1914, Tallulah High School held its commencement.

\(^{53}\)Ibid., May 13, 1916.

\(^{54}\)Ibid., November 15, 1917.

\(^{55}\)The Madison Journal, April 11, 1914.
exercises at the school building. The senior class presented A Mock Commencement as part of the program.⁵⁶

North Louisiana was no less devoted to patriotism during World War I than South Louisiana, but the amateur performers were not as active in giving benefits for the war efforts as their southern neighbors.

The natives of Alexandria and Shreveport appeared at least twice before the public in the interest of the war needs. In 1916, the Knights of Columbus Vaudeville played in Shreveport for the benefit of the American Red Cross work overseas. The people of Alexandria produced a patriotic pageant, Progress of Liberty at Alexandria and also at Camp Beauregard in 1918.

Each community in the North Louisiana area possessed a public high school which produced plays of one kind or another. Shreveport High School, with its active Dramatic Club, was the most productive of the secondary schools. Alexandria High School was second in the number of productions, and the Monroe City School followed in third place. Other state schools offered scattered productions through these years.

Private schools such as St. Francis Xavier College in Alexandria, St. Mary's Convent in Natchitoches, St. Hyacinth's Academy in Monroe, and St. Vincent Academy in Shreveport made substantial contributions to local theatrical productions.

⁵⁶Ibid., May 30, 1914.
Three colleges in North Louisiana were producing dramas and other exhibitions during the war years. These colleges were Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana State Normal at Natchitoches, and Centenary College in Shreveport. Centenary College is not a part of this study.

All presentations grew fewer in number during 1917 and 1918 because of the war. The Influenza epidemic which was raging in South Louisiana was not as great a threat to the northern part of the state.

Summary of the Years
1914 to 1919

At the beginning of this period of time in Louisiana, agriculture was fairing well, business was good, and the people were not aware that the world was on the verge of a catastrophe. Taken as a whole the situation was a favorable one, for professional theatrical troupes were touring through the state, motion-pictures had become quite popular, and the amateur actors were getting set to do big things in the coming years.

The Crowley Dramatic Club (1914), the Jennings Dramatic Club (1914), the Olympia Opera Company of Lafayette (1915), and the Charminade Music and Drama Club of Bogalusa (1915), were formed during the war years. No new clubs were organized after 1916. Those groups already in existence before 1914, the St. Michael Church Dramatic Club of Crowley, the Convent Dramatic Club, and the Shreveport Dramatic
Club, were busily producing programs.

Communities all over the state were promoting and developing high schools. Nearly every one of these schools produced one or two presentations a year. The senior class play had become a tradition by this time. Many of the schools with insufficient facilities still had to use the local theatre, motion-picture house, or a private hall in which to give their plays and celebrate their commencements.

Southwestern Louisiana Institute in Lafayette, Louisiana College in Pineville, and Louisiana State Normal School in Natchitoches presented festivals, dramas, and musical shows which were open to the public.

Several schools in the state remembered the tercentenary celebration of the death of William Shakespeare in 1916. The students of Lake Charles Central High School offered *Master Will of Stratford*. A student cast played a burlesque of *The Merchants of Venice* at the Farmerville High School. In Monroe, the City High School presented an outdoor production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Native performers were actively engaged in raising money for the war needs and arousing patriotic feelings by means of their talents. In 1915, the Societie de Attakapas performed at the Jefferson Theatre in Lafayette for the purpose of gaining funds to aid European families made destitute by the war. The Knights of Columbus staged a vaudeville in Shreveport in 1916 for the benefit of the American Red Cross work overseas. Alexandria produced *The Progress of Liberty*, a patriotic
pageant, in 1918. That same year the soldiers of Gerstner Field performed several variety shows for the benefit of the United War Work and the Navy Knitting League. School children throughout Louisiana gave programs of various kinds in the interest of the work done by the American Red Cross.

The names which follow belong to people who were prominent in the theatre indigenous to Louisiana between 1914 and 1919. Professors M. F. Sontage and E. P. Gilchrist along with Miss Hugh McLaurn worked together on college productions at Southwestern Louisiana Institute in Lafayette. Professor J. F. Cisco was a valuable coach to the student actors of Lake Charles Central High School where Rosa Hart, later to be director of the Lake Charles Little Theatre, appeared in the 1915 senior play. In Covington, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Clifton stimulated local talent performances. R. E. Crump and Frank Bacot encouraged the student actors at Julian Frehan School in St. Francisville. Mrs. Minnie Ruffin was indispensable to the Thespians at the Monroe City School. In the schools of Abbeville, Alexandria and St. Francisville, Jacques de Castillo presented his plays The Whirl of the World, The Red Prince, and Runaway Gretchen with student casts.
CHAPTER IX

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

THE POSTWAR YEARS

1919 THROUGH 1925
THE POST WAR YEARS

1919 THROUGH 1925

The third division of this investigation begins with 1919, the year after World War I. The influenza epidemic continued in the state during the beginning months of the year. The stress of war was still with the people, and local entertainment was at such a low level of productivity it took several years to make a return and surpass the number of activities presented in Louisiana before the war. Continuing through a period of growth, and change in the manner of organizing and producing dramas, the study ends in 1925. During that time the non-professionals came to realize the need for better directors, for strict rehearsal periods, and for real attention paid to the business of producing plays. The meaning of the word amateur, a lover of his art, came into new importance by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Abbeville

Abbeville performers were inactive in 1919 until the pupils of Mt. Carmel Convent gave their annual presentations at the Victor Theatre on June 1.¹ They gave three plays: a patriotic drama,

¹Abbeville Meridional, June 21, 1919.

A paragraph concerning the end of St. Ann's Hall, where numerous amateur shows had been given in the past, appeared in *The Meridional* on January 10, 1920.

This huge tabernacle which was erected here in 1907 after the burning of the Catholic Church and served for several years as a temporary house of worship, will soon be no more. Work of demolishing the building began Wednesday and a few days more will find not a trace of the big building.

The findings of this investigation indicate that 1921 was a rather non-productive year for the non-professional entertainers of Abbeville. In May, Mount Carmel gave a festival with musical plays and recitations at the convent, and again, on August 31, the Boy Scouts from Lafayette presented *Around the Camp Fire*, a scout exhibition and minstrel, at the Victor Theatre, for the benefit of the Boy Scouts of Lafayette.  

Thelma Richardson, an itinerant director, produced a home talent play in Abbeville on May 29, 1922. It was reviewed by *The Meridional* of May 31.

Loud was the praise of the audience who witnessed the presentation of *The Microbe of Love* by local talent at the Victor Theatre on Tuesday of this week...

*The Microbe of Love* is a comedy par excellence, however, the success of it was no doubt due much to the director, Miss Thelma Richardson, and the local talent of which there is aplenty.

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Perhaps the performance of *The Microbe of Love* had something to do with stimulating a renewed interest in non-professional dramatics in Abbeville. A plea to give native talent a chance to entertain was published in *The Meridional* on December 9, 1922.

Let's get that local talent entertainment idea started and keep it going throughout the coming months. Many communities are successfully adopting it in the place of the usual transient lyceum courses, while others are alternating between local talent and transient entertainers. We believe the local talent entertainments present more real enjoyment and appeal to more people. After they have once been launched the entertainers get over the little stage fright caused by appearing before their own people and the local people began to realize the exceptional talent available right here at home . . .

On Monday night, May 21, 1923, Mt. Carmel Convent gave a program at the Victor Theatre. A two-act play, *The Gypsy's Dream*, performed by the pupils, was the main attraction of the evening.

From time to time the amateurs deserted the professional theatres and the community auditoriums in order to perform at the homes of different individuals. One such occasion, mentioned in *The Meridional* of July 7, 1923, was a show given by a local musical group which called itself "The Hobo Band", at the home of Mr. Pork White.

Frank's Theatre, primarily built for showing motion-pictures, but also possessing stage facilities, opened July 26, 1923. The amateurs took to the boards of the theatre on August 7, and performed a minstrel show in the interest of the Abbeville Municipal

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Band. Mr. Frank donated the use of his theatre for the benefit and
Messrs. Bourque and Payne were the managers of the entertainment. 4

Frank's Theatre became a very popular amusement place during
1924, and was also used by Abbeville High School for its graduation
exercises. 5

Another home talent minstrel was given at Frank's Theatre on
July 10, 1924, to raise funds for the Abbeville Baseball Club.

Although the night was very warm and made it almost
impossible for the blackfaced comedians to 'hold color'
all came through with their parts in a most satisfactory
manner . . . 6

On December 11, 1924, the local actors produced The Flapper
Grandmother at Frank's Theatre, under the auspices of Vermilion Post
No. 29 of the American Legion. The Meridional praised Mrs. Ping
Oertling, who took the title role, as being "the best 'Grandma' that
ever appeared on the stage in this town." The paper said that the
community should give thanks to the director, Marjorie Hogan, of
Little Rock, Arkansas, and ended the article by stating, "We hope
that more of this class of play will be staged in the future." Here
was another journalistic plea for the continuation of amateur theatrics
in Abbeville. 7

4Ibid., August 11, 1923.
5Ibid., May 31, 1924.
6Ibid., July 12, 1924.
7Ibid., December 13, 1924.
The first record of a senior class play by the Abbeville High School since 1915 was in The Meridional on March 14, 1925. Mrs. J. F. Samson coached Rube and His Ma, which took place along with the regular feature picture at Frank's Theatre. The student cast was as follows:

"Pa" Perkins ........................................ Frank Learner
"Ma" Perkins ....................................... Irene LaBauve
Harry ................................................ Emile Vitello
Daisy ................................................ Hazel Samson
Helen .............................................. Jessie Bourque
Lucindy ............................................ Myrtle Starburg
John Bulackburn ................................ Lawrence Broussard
Rube ................................................ Donald Caldwell
Zeke ............................................... Charley Fletcher

In spite of the numerous entreaties from the journalists, the non-professional theatrical activities of Abbeville, from 1919 through 1925, did not increase in quantity. In fact, Abbeville produced proportionately fewer amateur performances after the war than had been produced before that time.

Fortunately all communities in the Southwest did not follow the precedent set down by Abbeville. Crowley, for instance, was able to reach a quantity of productions comparable to those it had produced early in the 1900's.

Crowley

In 1919, there was praise for one side of the footlights at the Grand Theatre, and condemnation for the other by the Crowley Weekly Signal, when two articles appeared side by side in the May 31 issue of the paper. The first commentary contained the following approval
of the performance which was given earlier in the week.

From 7:30 Tuesday evening until after 9 o'clock throngs of people were crowding the doors and stairways of the Opera House seeking admission to the play that the high school graduates were producing. . . . The cast made good in every particular. Through the able direction of Mattie Kennedy, the actors in the drama were letter perfect. Admiration was given by the audience over the splendid interpretation of the Japanese characters. The scenes were excellent. . . .

The second criticism was written by way of a rebuke for some members of the audience in attendance at the play that same evening.

Members of the production that presented their play at the Opera House last night are highly indignant over the performance of some of the boys, whose names are known, who tried to interfere with their parts by the numerous cat-calls, spit-balls and peanuts that were thrown continually during the entire number of acts.

At one time during the performance, a missile was thrown which broke the eyeglasses of the pianist. . . . The high school class giving the play proved their mettle by carrying forward the plot of the play and bringing it to a successful conclusion . . . .

The Lafayette Elks appeared in a minstrel performance at the Grand Theatre on Sunday, February 15, 1920. The director for the show was James Hull. Those minstrel numbers particularly noted by The Signal were Mayor Mouton, with his rendition of "Sweet Mamma, Tree Top Tall;" Frank Meyers, in "Room 202", and Mrs. J. E. Carter, soprano, who "captivated the crowd."  

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8 The play was entitled Abu San of Old Japan.  
The Strollers Club, from Southwestern Louisiana Institute, came to Crowley to perform at a meeting of Post No. 15, of the American Legion. Three members of the Strollers, Chester Faulk, Eual Landry and Leo Ringuet, "spouted" an original sketch, Bonehead MacBeth, a travesty on Shakespeare, which was full of topical material that was "greatly enjoyed" by the Legionnaires.10

Members of the various Sunday Schools of Crowley participated in a pageant, The Rights of the Child in the Methodist Episcopal Church South auditorium. The script was written especially for the children's division work. Mildred Nixon represented the leading part, The Spirit of Religious Education.11

On Saturday, May 29, 1920, the headline across the top of The Crowley Daily Signal read, "Class Play Given to Huge Audience is a Big Success." Over seven hundred people had crowded into the opera house on the previous Monday to view the performance of All on Account of Polly.

. . . Kathrine Lyman made a beautiful and winsome Polly. One could not marvel, that she succeeded so admirably in turning all hearts. Her well modulated voice enabled her to put her lines across most admirably.

The high school seniors continued to be the most active amateur theatrical group in Crowley, and on May 25, 1921, they performed James Barrie's Quality Street at the Grand Theatre. Mrs. W. T.

10Ibid., March 13, 1920.

11Ibid., May 8, 1920.
Culpepper, a new name on the local theatrical scene, directed the play.

... To Mrs. W. T. Culpepper, the Signal doffs its hat. You have done well, and your years of training showed forth in all of its histrionic effectiveness, says the writer of this article, who, having trained as a critic in New Orleans and other cities knows whereof he speaks in matters of the theatre.\(^\text{12}\)

Again in 1922, Mrs. W. T. Culpepper received praise from The Signal for the presentation of the annual high school play, The Little Teacher, at the Grand Opera House on May 25. Ione Mauras, who played the part of "the little teacher," and Burton Merritt, who was the leading man, headed the cast.\(^\text{13}\)

The first amateurs to tread the stage in 1923 were the members of the St. Michael Dramatic Club, who presented a play, Love Pirates of Hawaii at the Grand on April 7. Mrs. Phil J. Reilly of Opelousas staged, directed, and took a leading part in the show. Lawrence Martin created the stage decorations.\(^\text{14}\)

The Daily Signal of Thursday, April 12, 1923, carried the following announcement about a troupe of amateurs from Lafayette:

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}, \text{May 28, 1921. The writer who "knows whereof he speaks" did not sign the article.}\)

\(^{13}\text{Ibid.}, \text{June 3, 1922. The new Crowley High School Auditorium, which was one of the largest being built in the state at that time, having a seating capacity of eight hundred, was not completed in time for the play, so it was held at the theatre.}\)

\(^{14}\text{Ibid.}, \text{April 14, 1923.}\)
Interest in the play, *Husbands on Approval*, which is to be presented at the High School tomorrow evening by the Southwestern Louisiana Institute Dramatic Club for the benefit of the South Crowley School League is heightened by the presence of Katherine Lyman, of this city, in the cast as Miss Nancy Glover, the leading lady.\(^{15}\)

The Crowley High School play, *The Flying Moon*, by Jacques de Castillo, took place at the school auditorium on May 7, 1923. Mr. de Castillo, the state high school dramatic coach, was the author of the book and lyrics which won the prize of the New York School of Dramatics.\(^{16}\) About sixty or seventy young people took part in the play, which drew its plot from the solar system featuring Mr. Moon, lesser luminaries, satellites and planets.\(^{17}\)

The high school seniors produced *Clarence*, by Booth Tarkington, at the Grand Theatre on May 29, 1923. Mrs. J. H. Lewis "developed the talent" in three weeks of rehearsals. *The Crowley Weekly Signal* of June 2 had the following to say:

> In the presentation of such a show as *Clarence* ... an interesting development of the class play is shown. Not so very long ago, it was the custom for a class to select some dime novel plot, because not always were others available, and with these shaky vehicles it was often very difficult even for the best coaches, and the most finished home talent to make anything worthwhile.

*A Tom Thumb Wedding* took place in the auditorium of the Methodist

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\(^{15}\)See page 231.

\(^{16}\) *The Crowley Weekly Signal*, May 5, 1923.

\(^{17}\) *The Crowley Daily Signal*, May 8, 1923.
Church June 5, 1923. Miss Gertrude Scovern was in charge of the entertainment, which was given to help finance the McDonald Wesley House in Houma. The children were costumed in nineteenth century style garments. The bride was little Helen Elbertson and the groom was Browning Finley.  

The Southwestern Strollers returned to Crowley on November 16, 1923, and put on Why Smith Left Home, in the high school auditorium. The play was to have been a benefit for the South Crowley school, but so few people attended that no profit was made. "The Strollers very graciously played for their bare expenses."  

In April of 1924, Crowley took an interest in the production of a motion picture film which was being made locally by a Los Angeles firm with the cooperation of the Arcadia Theatre. Lois Carr was chosen for the leading feminine part; Frank Bazerque was the hero, and Joe Martorano played the villain. The film, Youth's Romance, was shown as a special added attraction at the Arcadia on May 4 and 5.  

The seniors of Crowley High School gave their class play, Golden Days, at the school auditorium on May 20, 1924. The pupils were coached in their roles by Mrs. J. H. Lewis of the English Department. In the production of Golden Days, the high school finally made use of its newly installed stage machinery.

18Ibid., June 6, 1923.

19Ibid., November 17, 1923.

20Ibid., May 2, 1924.
The stage is now well equipped for the giving of school plays or other performances, in great contrast to the poor facilities heretofore available.\(^{21}\)

In 1925, Mr. Jacques de Castillo returned to Crowley to produce his musical play, *The Love Nest* at the high school on February 6. Castillo directed the play and also appeared as a member of the cast.\(^ {22}\)

The Knights of Pythias presented a minstrel show at the high school auditorium on April 17, with John Melton as the interlocutor. C. M. Singleton was the general manager of the production and Miss Helen Martin was the pianist.\(^ {23}\)

The last record of a non-professional theatrical group presenting a performance in 1925 appeared in *The Crowley Daily Signal* of May 21. The seniors of the high school gave *Miss Somebody Else*, "without a flaw" on the night of May 20 at the school auditorium.

Jennings

The sources of information about the non-professional theatrical activities in Jennings, during the last seven years of the first quarter of the twentieth century, are very scarce, especially since few newspapers still exist after the year 1920. Research yielded

\(^{21}\)Ibid., May 21, 1924. In the month of April, 1924, the barren high school stage had been furnished with scenery which was painted by R. De Lapouyade at his studios in New Orleans. A main curtain had been added along with more lighting fixtures.

\(^{22}\)Ibid., February 7, 1925.

\(^{23}\)Ibid., April 18, 1925.
only two productions. On June 6, 1919, an operetta for young people, *A Day in Flowerdom*, was presented by the chorus classes of Mrs. E. A. Borne, at the W. C. T. U. Auditorium, for the benefit of the Baptist Church. The following year, on April 16, a play, *Safety First*, was put on by the Jennings High School as a benefit for the school.

If source materials were scarce in Jennings at this time, they were proportionately plentiful in the newspapers of Lafayette, a town of nearly nine thousand people, which in 1920 was three times the size of Jennings.

Lafayette

During the influenza epidemic, which had begun in the fall of 1918 and had become widespread during the early part of 1919, the schools and many other meeting places had been closed. It was not until March 1, after the schools had reopened in February, that the newspapers carried a notice of an amateur theatrical performance. The St. Charles Dramatic Society from New Orleans gave a benefit for the purchase of a new organ to be installed in St. John's Cathedral.

On May 23, *The Seasons*, a fantasy composed of music, songs, dances,

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24 *The Jennings Weekly Times Record*, June 6, 1919.


26 *The Lafayette Advertiser*, March 1, 1919.
tableaux and recitations by the students of Southwestern Louisiana Institute, took place at the Jefferson Theatre under the general direction of Miss Hugh D. McLaurin.\footnote{Ibid., May 23, 1919.}

On the night of December 8, 1919, the L.S.U. Dramatic Club, under the leadership of Professor J. Q. Adams and Mrs. E. P. Flowers of Louisiana State University, performed a comedy, \textit{All of a Sudden Peggy}, at the Jefferson Theatre. The play was sponsored by the Southwestern Louisiana Institute Athletic and Lyceum Association.\footnote{Ibid., December 9, 1919.}

April 12, 1920, seventy-five children of the Lafayette Junior High School presented \textit{The Mistletoe Bough}, a pantomime play, at the Jefferson Theatre. The following teachers trained and rehearsed the little actors: Misses Markam, Tarlton, Comeaux and Smith.\footnote{Ibid., April 13, 1920.}

Mr. Jacques de Castillo put forth one of his musical shows, assisted by a cast of Broussard High School pupils, on May 3, 1920. "Mr. de Castillo was complimented highly upon the production preparations which were done in five days." The name of the piece was \textit{The Yankee Doodle Girl}, and it was presented at the Woodmen of the World Hall.

On December 16, 1920, the Christmas Toy and Doll Fund for underprivileged children of Lafayette, gave a program at the Jefferson

\footnote{Ibid., May 7, 1920. Broussard, Louisiana, is a community located some six miles south of Lafayette.}
Theatre made up of local vaudeville numbers. Mrs. C. M. Parkerson acted as the general director and coordinator for the project.31

An audience which occupied all the seats at the local theatre as well as much of the standing room, greeted the presentation of the musical comedy Hoop La, on March 30, 1921. The show was rehearsed and staged by James P. Rawlings, of the J. B. Rogers Producing Company, using a Lafayette cast under the auspices of Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of Isabella.32

In the month of May, 1921, Southwestern Institute produced two programs of a theatrical nature. The first of these performances was a May Day Festival and Pageant presented on the college campus on the fourth day of the month. The celebration was arranged by the Gymnastic and Art Departments with Hugh McLaurin and Janis Gibbs as the directors. The school orchestra, conducted by Dr. F. E. Girard, furnished music for the marches, dances and songs used in the festival.33 The second performance that month was the cantata, Pan on a Summer Day, which was the opening event of the commencement exercises that year. The presentation was given at the Jefferson Theatre on May 27 with a cast of forty students who prepared for public

31Ibid., December 16, 1920.
32Ibid., March 31, 1921.
33Ibid., May 5, 1921.
appearance under Ruth Stodghill, instructor in music at the college. An amateur cast acted The Millionaire Janitor, a two-act comedy on June 16 at the Jefferson Theatre. R. Escudier played the role of the janitor and the other members of the cast were Dick Montgomery, C. Broussard, P. Dupuis, J. Domengeaux, Joe Riehl and Tessie Whitmeyers.

A month later, at the Jefferson Theatre, the American Legion sponsored a two act operetta entitled The Little Tycoon. The stage equipment and scenery were arranged under the guidance of Mrs. Grover Mouton and Mrs. Harry Griffin.

The production showed the results of several weeks of hard training of the cast under the direction of Misses Eva and Paola Mouton and Ruth Stodghill and T. M. Callahan.

The 1921 Elks Minstrel, Biff, Bing, Bang, took place at the Jefferson Theatre on Tuesday and Wednesday nights of the first week in August. The minstrel was under the management of James Hull. The second performance was called Southwestern Institute night because four hundred seats were reserved by the school.

Troops Number One and Two, of the Lafayette Boy Scouts, brought another minstrel to the public of Lafayette on September 2, at the

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34 Ibid., May 27, 1921.
35 Ibid., June 17, 1921.
36 Ibid., July 15, 1921.
37 Ibid., August 3, 1921.
Royal Theatre. 38

The 1921 Toy and Doll Fund Program appeared again this year at the Jefferson Theatre under the administration of Mrs. C. M. Parkerson. . . . most of the performers were amateurs, but one special feature of the program was an Egyptian dance by Miss Evelyn Olliphant, of New York at one time with Zeigfield Follies, and who was spending the winter in Lafayette.39

The first notification of the organization of a Little Theatre group in Lafayette appeared in the Advertiser of December 21, 1921. The club made its initial offering with a sketch entitled Saturday Night. The performance was given in connection with the regular weekly literary society meeting at Southwestern Institute on December 16. The play was an original script written by Rousseau Voorhies. Those who took part in the piece, in addition to Voorhies, included Eva Mouton, Odeide Mouton, Delnorte Theriot and Lionel Jeanmard. The sketch was planned as a beginning of a series of offerings to be presented by the club.

The Little Theatre group continued to be active and on January 12, 1922, they began rehearsal for a new play, Suzanne Entertains, which was presented to the literary society early in the year.

Officers of the Little Theatre Club were announced in the paper as follows: President, Miss Odeide Mouton; Vice President, . . .

38Ibid., September 1, 1921. The Royal Theatre was a smaller place than the Jefferson Theatre and devoted most of its attention to motion pictures.

39Ibid., December 17, 1921.
Lionel Jeanmard; Secretary Treasurer, Miss Delnorte Theriot, and Director, Rousseau Voorhies. 40

A musical comedy, The Microbe of Love, presented under the direction of Louise Allen of the Sewell Producing Company "was enjoyed by a fair sized audience" at the Jefferson Theatre on April 18. 41

The Department of Music of Southwestern Institute put a cantata, King Rene's Daughter, on the stage of the college auditorium on the night of May 26, 1922. The performance opened the activities of the commencement exercises at the school. Forty members of the Institute Glee Club participated in the cantata, which was given under the general direction of Miss Ruth Stodghill and Miss Elizabeth Talley of the college faculty. 42

The Elks presented their annual show, The Jollies of 1922, on June 11 and 12. The show was a combination of musical, minstrel, and vaudeville numbers presented at the Jefferson Theatre with imported scenery and costumes.

The "Jollies" was produced and staged by Sibley Ross Harvey, of the Joe Bren Producing Company of Chicago, who had been here for several days directing and rehearsing. 43

40 Ibid., January 16, 1922.
41 Ibid., April 19, 1922.
42 Ibid., May 27, 1922.
43 Ibid., June 12, 1922.
A Community Service organization began its work in Lafayette during the year of 1922. The Community Service was a new kind of organization financed largely by the great philanthropists of our country, with headquarters in New York City. Their method of working was to form a body composed of one representative from each society, school, church, fraternity, labor union, or other groups which would meet and work out plans for a city's development along recreational lines. Among the many achievements of the service was the formation of a junior and a senior dramatic group. Mrs. Grover Mouton was the local chairman of drama for the Lafayette Community Service. She said the following about the aims of the newly formed dramatic society:

Our purpose is to give opportunity for an ever rising type of self expression. It might be legitimate to have the first effort a minstrel show, but it is not legitimate to continue to present minstrel shows or low comedy, and it is with this in view that the Junior Dramatic Club has been formed . . . . It is our purpose to give more or less advanced groups who may be ready to present plays of a high order an opportunity to do so for the benefit of the community through the Senior Dramatic Club . . . . To further this purpose each person taking a part in the work of the dramatic clubs must understand story-playing, little theatre movement, various plays, both for the adults and the younger members. Above all, community dramatics as we are undertaking it in Lafayette should be given an

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43Ibid., June 12, 1922.

44The Weekly Iberian, March 18, 1922.

45Interview with Mrs. Annie Lee West Stahl of Monroe, Louisiana on October 20, 1962.
opportunity for the expression of the beautiful, to the credit of the entire community and not to the professional producer who has done so much of the work in the last season or two . . . .46

The Community Service produced a cantata on December 7 at the Jefferson Theatre. After several weeks of preparation under the direction of Harry Munison, of the National Community Service staff, a large cast took part in Fredric H. Cowen’s The Rose Maiden. The soloists were Ruth Stodghill, soprano; Mrs. H. C. McKean, contralto; Mrs. R. S. Barnett, alto, and Stephen Labbe, baritone, all of Lafayette, and Bentley Nicholson, tenor, of New Orleans.47

On December 15, the Lafayette Junior High School Athletic Association sponsored a one-act farce, Love and Lather, presented at the Royal Theatre along with the regular film program.48

Children and adults performed the annual Christmas Toy and Doll Fund variety show at the Jefferson Theatre, on December 20, under the customary leadership of Mrs. C. M. Parkerson.49

The first non-professional theatrical performance in 1923 came from the Southwestern Louisiana Institute Dramatic Club. On January 18, the group presented a comedy, Tigerspaw, at the Jefferson Theatre.

46 The Lafayette Advertiser, December 2, 1922.
47 Ibid., December 8, 1922.
48 Ibid., December 16, 1922.
49 Ibid., December 21, 1922.
The cast of *Tigerspaw*, which was given under the general direction of Professor E. E. Roberts of the Southwestern Institute faculty, and with James M. Higginbotham as manager, included the following members of the S. L. I. Dramatic Club.

Daniel Winters, as Tigerspaw; Clay Dalferes, as Sam; Harry Beridon, as William Winkler; Fannie Barstow, as Aunt Jane; Charles Jagous, as Robert L. Baxter; James M. Higginbotham, as Benjamin Moore and Geneva Prater, as Kitty. 50

Jacques de Castillo, who had been in Lafayette to present a show in 1920, returned to the city to produce another of his musical comedies, *The Red Prince*. The play, presented on January 29, on the stage of the South Side School Auditorium, featured Castillo in the part of the Red Prince supported by a cast of high school pupils. 51

The local Elks staged their annual theatrical endeavor, *Better Times Revue of 1923*, at the Jefferson Theatre on February 7 and 8. James Hull, who had previously worked with the Elk's show in 1921, directed the cast of ninety people. 52

The Lafayette Advertiser of February 21, 1923, listed the first officers for the Southwestern Institute Dramatic Club, known as the "Cajun Crew," in the following order:

- E. E. Roberts, director
- James M. Higginbotham, president
- C. L. Dalferes, vice president

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50 Ibid., January 19, 1923. The production of *Tigerspaw* was verified in a questionnaire sent to Mr. Clay Dalferes of Lafayette, Louisiana, on April 18, 1963.

51 Ibid., January 30, 1923.

52 Ibid., February 27, 1923.
Geneva Prather, secretary
Ralph Squires, treasurer
Charles Jagou, advertising manager

Nina B. Lampkin dramatized and directed *The History of Lafayette Parish*, a pageant with a cast of two thousand participants, celebrating the founding of the parish, at Lafayette Fair Grounds on the afternoon of April 6, 1923. The business manager was Community Service Director H. B. Skinner, who also coordinated the Centennial Week program.

The movement for the pageant, as well as other features of the Centennial Program, was started several months ago, the observance of the centennial of this Parish by a celebration being the original suggestion of Judge Julian Mouton of this city. 54

After an out-of-town opening in Crowley, the Southwestern Institute Dramatic Club brought its second offering, *Husbands on Approval*, to Lafayette and performed at the Jefferson Theatre. 55

A number of students took part in a program given on May 10, at the Jefferson Theatre, by the Department of Physical Education of Southwestern Institute, under the supervision of Joyce Hartzell, teacher of aesthetic dancing at the school. Miss Hartzell originated

53 *Ibid.*, February 21, 1923. Professor E. E. Roberts, the "Cajun Crew" director, was a teacher of English at S.L.I., who had studied at Ohio State University, as stated by Mr. C. L. Dalfere of Lafayette, Louisiana, in an interview questionnaire on April 18, 1963. Mr. Dalfere further stated that the Dramatic Club took its January production, *Tigerspaw*, on tour, and performed in the Louisiana towns of Welsh, Broussard, Mansura and Marksville.


the dance drama, *The Legend of the Pool*. Ralph Squires was the piano accompanist; Miss Emily Huger was in charge of the costume work, and H. R. Bodemutter, of the Lafayette Electric Company, directed the lighting effects.56

On May 15, members of the Southwestern Institute Dramatic Club completed preparations for the presentation of a play, *The Rug of Truth*. Choosing the name of "The Strollers," the club worked for the promotion of the community and the college.

It is the aim of "The Strollers" to keep their prices low and give an evening's entertainment that is worthwhile, and for their loyal friends in Lafayette they wish to have it announced that every penny saved by "The Strollers" goes toward bettering the class of plays offered and toward advertising the advantages of Southwestern Institute and Lafayette.57

Their play, *The Rug of Truth*, took place at the Jefferson Theatre May 17. Mrs. Alice S. Roberts, directress, and James M. Higginbotham, president and manager of "The Strollers," were in charge of arrangements.58

The High School Senior Dramatic Club, under the auspices of the Community Service, gave a two act musical comedy, *Kathleen*, at the Jefferson on June 12 and 13.59


58*Ibid.*, May 18, 1923. "The Strollers" were not the same group as "The Cajun Crew" mentioned earlier in this work. See page 230.

Cathedral High School offered a play, Right Is Might, in connection with its commencement exercise in June, 1923.60

The faculty of Southwestern Louisiana Institute essayed a show billed as a Gilbert and Sullivan dream, and gave it the title of All at Sea. The production was an arrangement of several comic operas by the famous composers, staged under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Munison, of the Community Service of New York, who held special classes in community service at the Institute. The performance drew a capacity house at the Jefferson on the night of July 12. The principals in the cast were Dean James M. Smith, Ashby Frances, J. W. Mobley, G. J. Courville, Hugh Jones, Walter A. Chachere, Jr., Joseph Vincent, Frank Rickey, Robert Barnett, Robert Joyce, Louis A. Darby, F. V. Mouton, Dean Harry L. Griffin, Harry Munison, Undine Liverdais, Mrs. R. H. Agate, Mrs. H. C. McKeen, Ruth Stodghill, Mrs. Harvey Hopkins, Joyce Hartzell, Helen Lewis, Belma Legendre and Mabel Lewis.61

In spite of the hot weather on July 24, "The Strollers" presented a play, The House Next Door, at the Jefferson Theatre. "The show was one of the lyceum numbers of the Institute and approximately five hundred students were in the audience with two hundred town people." Mrs. Alice S. Roberts of S.L.I. once again directed the

60Ibid., June 19, 1923.

61Ibid., July 13, 1923.
student actors. 62

"The Strollers" began their fall season of 1923 with an out-of-town showing of George Broadhurst's Why Smith Left Home, at Broussard, Louisiana, October 26. They brought the play to Lafayette and performed it at the Jefferson four days later. William Greersand and Margaret Troth appeared in the leading roles of Mr. and Mrs. Smith; Mrs. Alice Roberts directed. The group gave another showing of Why Smith Left Home on November 14, at Jeanerette, Louisiana, 63 and finally at Lake Charles, in April.

Members of the choral club of Southwestern Institute sang an operetta at the Jefferson Theatre, on November 28. Ruth Stodghill directed the operetta, written by Paul Bliss. Emily Huger of Southwestern's Department of Art designed the oriental stage settings and costumes. Joyce Hartzell staged the special dance numbers. 64

On December 20, the students of the Lafayette Senior High School presented a three-act farce, Her Gloves, at the Jefferson Theatre.

Preparations for the play rehearsals, which had been under way for about two weeks were in general charge of Principal LaCour assisted by Mrs. Mary O'Brien and Miss Anne Buchanan. The play was staged for the benefit of the school Athletic Association. 65

62 Ibid., July 25, 1923.
63 Ibid., November 15, 1923.
64 Ibid., November 28, 1923.
65 Ibid., December 21, 1923.
Early in 1924, "The Strollers" presented a comedy adapted from the French, Pierre Patelin, at the Jefferson Theatre. The play was unsuccessful, and Mrs. A. S. Roberts, the directress, made the following statement in the Lafayette Advertiser of February 7.

We are under no delusions as to the success of Pierre Patelin. It simply failed to get across. I do not hesitate to say this as we used good players and they did their parts as well as any Stroller troupe has ever done, as the people are saying today. The play itself was simply a failure, and the troupe that did its best to put it across faced an impossible task.

A presentation of the operetta MidSummer's Eve, by fifty pupils in the lower grades at the Lafayette Senior High School, was performed on April 25 in the auditorium of the South Side Primary School.

In May of 1924 various amateur groups filled the calendar of theatrical events in Lafayette. Organizations at Southwestern Louisiana Institute gave four offerings. The Department of Physical Education presented a dance drama, Once Upon a Time, originated and directed by Joyce Hartzell, on May 9, at the Jefferson Theatre. "The Strollers" presented a final production for the school term 1923-24 with Fred Jackson's comedy, A Full House, at the Jefferson Theatre on May 14. The Glee Club staged an operetta, The Maid and the

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66 Ibid., April 25, 1924.
67 Ibid., May 10, 1924.
68 Ibid., May 15, 1924.
Middy, by David Stevens and Lowell Tracy, on May 16, at the Jefferson. Ruth Stodghill directed the music; Joyce Hartzell coached the dancers, and Emily Huger prepared the scenery. 69 The Choral Club presented a Chinese operetta, My Maid on the Bamboo Screen, as a part of the closing exercises at the college. Ralph Squires played the piano accompaniment; Ruth Stodghill directed the operetta. 70

Three other school groups of Lafayette performed in May, 1924. Under the supervision of Lucille Roudale, members of the Latin Club of Lafayette High School offered Booth Tarkington's The Ghost Story, in the auditorium of Southside School. 71 On May 20, the children of Southside Primary School gave an operetta, On Mid Summer's Day, at the Jefferson Theatre. 72 The seniors of Lafayette High School acted their annual play, A Little Clodhopper, at Southside School, on May 21. Principal Lacour and Mrs. E. A. O'Brien directed the play. 73

On June 3, at the Jefferson Theatre, students of the 1924 graduating class, and others of the Cathedral High School, performed a drama, Garcia Moreno, the story of the life of the president of

69Ibid., May 17, 1924.
70Ibid., May 24, 1924.
71Ibid., May 23, 1924.
72Ibid., May 21, 1924.
73Ibid., May 23, 1924.
Ecuador, who fell victim to an assassin.74

The Southwestern Strollers began their 1924-25 season on November 12 with George Broadhurst's three-act comedy, What Happened to Jones. Again that season, Mrs. Alice S. Roberts acted as director for the organization.75

The announcement for the last amateur performance in Lafayette for 1924 appeared in the Lafayette Advertiser, December 18. The Christmas Toy and Doll Fund program that year included a playlet, When Dreams Come True. Mrs. A. L. Tullier coached the cast which included a large number of children. As usual, Mrs. C. M. Parkerson made the general arrangements for the program.

Those interested in the formation of a dramatic club in Lafayette held a meeting on January 23, 1925, in the studio of Emily Huger on Johnston Street.76 The name selected for the club was "The Theatre Guild." The membership was limited to thirty people, to be voted on by the organization as a whole. The planning committee was Delie Bancroft, Joyce Hartzell, Odeide Mouton, and Harriet Hayes, with T. M. Callahan, as chairman. The program committee was R. S. Barnett, Mrs. H. J. Stahl, Dorothy Kidd, and Mrs. Harry L. Griffin.77

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74 Ibid., June 4, 1924.
75 Ibid., November 13, 1924.
76 Interview with Mrs. Annie Lee West Stahl.
77 Lafayette Advertiser, January 24, 1925. "The Theatre Guild" was basically a drama study group.
Early in 1925, Phi Delta Epsilon Sorority of Southwestern Institute staged a one-act play for the benefit of a scholarship loan fund sponsored by the society.

Assisted by Miss Emily H. Huger, faculty advisor of the sorority, and Mrs. A. E. Roberts, the members presented The Florist Shop, one of the Harvard Workshop Plays which recently attracted attention in colleges and other circles. 78

On May 1, Phi Kappa Alpha Fraternity of Southwestern Institute exhibited The Flashes of PKA at the Jefferson Theatre.

A wide variety of attractive feminine costumes were provided for the occasion and together with the capable manner in which they were displayed by the clever female impersonators of the evening proved an especially interesting feature. 79

Clinton Arnold was the director for The Flashes and Joyce Hartzell created the dances. The proceeds from the performance went to help build the P.K.A. home on Johnston Street.

Joyce Hartzell staged another of her original dance dramas, Varia, on the evening of May 19, at the Jefferson Theatre. The ballet told a romantic story of "Varia," a Russian Spanish dancer, who traveled with a band of gypsies. 80

On May 21, the players of Southwest Institute produced Clarence by Booth Tarkington, at the Jefferson Theatre, under the direction of

78 Ibid., February 4, 1925.
79 Ibid., May 2, 1925.
80 Ibid., May 20, 1925.
Mrs. Alice S. Roberts.  

The senior class of Lafayette High School performed its 1925 class play, Much Ado About Betty, at the Jefferson Theatre. Principal H. C. Lacour, assisted by Gladys West and Inez Neyland supervised the production.

The students of Joyce Hartzell's beginning class in aesthetic dancing staged a dance drama, Starlight, at the Jefferson Theatre on May 28. Miss Hartzell created the drama which represented a ball given by the Maid in the Moon to the celestial folk. The cast included Doris Brossat in the lead role and twenty-five children costumed by Emily Huger.

The 1925 senior class of Cathedral High School presented Major John Andre, a patriotic three-act drama dealing with the treason of Benedict Arnold, at the Jefferson Theatre on June 2.

The Children's Dramatic Club under the direction of Mrs. A. L. Tullier, offered a children's playlet about Mother Goose land, An Enchanted Isle, at the Royal Theatre, on June 19.

Students of Lafayette High School presented a three-act

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81 Ibid., May 22, 1925.  
82 Ibid., May 28, 1925.  
83 Ibid., May 29, 1925.  
84 Ibid., June 3, 1925.  
85 Ibid., June 22, 1925.
musical comedy, *Rosetime*, at the Jefferson, on November 3, under the management of Kathrine M. Jones of the Wayne P. Sewell Lyceum and Producing Company of Atlanta, Georgia. Mrs. R. C. Cunningham was the piano accompanist. 86

The high school pupils of Mount Carmel Academy organized a Dramatic Club in September of 1925, with the following officers: President, Alice Voorhies; Vice President, Jessie Lee Babin; Secretary, Audrey Pellerin; Treasurer, Mary Virginia Hughes, and Reporter, Jeanne LeBlanc. On November 13, the members of the newly formed Dramatic Club played the three-act drama, *Rebecca's Triumph*, at the school. Mother M. de Saies was the director of the play and Jeanne LeBlanc played the role of Rebecca. 87

The Pelican Players presented a comedy, *Not Guilty*, as a benefit for the Pelican Fire Company of Lafayette, on November 17 at the Jefferson Playhouse. James Lacosta, assisted by George W. Wash, directed the production. 88

A cast of characters taken from all departments and organizations of the church presented *Till the Day Break*, a Christmas pageant, at the First Presbyterian Church. A special stage was erected for the presentation and colorful lighting effects were thrown on the setting.

86Ibid., November 4, 1925.
87Ibid., November 14, 1925.
88Ibid., November 18, 1925.
The members of the committee coordinating the plans for the pageant were L. E. White, Reverend J. N. Brown, Miss Julia Charlton, Mrs. J. H. Chaterton, and Robert S. Barnett. Mrs. R. S. Barnett conducted the musical numbers and Earl S. Barnett was in charge of the costuming.

If there was such a thing as a golden age of the non-professional theatre in Lafayette, during the time covered by this study, it was the period from 1919 through 1925. Toward the end of these years, the stage of the Jefferson Theatre, where most of the performances were given, was kept busy preparing for or presenting local entertainments.

Lake Charles

After World War I, theatrical productions, all of which had slackened considerably during the hostilities, began to come alive again in Lake Charles. Road companies, motion pictures, and native talent shows put on by civic organizations, clubs, and schools became active once again.

As early as February 11, 1919, the Elks presented a minstrel show at the Arcade Theatre. Orill O'Reilly was the director and attorney Charles R. Cline was the toastmaster. The reviewer for the American Press especially welcomed Frank Shattuck back to the

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89 Ibid., December 22, 1925.
local stage by saying:

... Frank Shattuck who is an old time minstrel favorite here and who has not been seen for some time, kept faith with his admirers last night by giving as good numbers as was expected of him. . . .90

The pupils of Westlake School gave an operetta on April 4 in the school auditorium. It was a Japanese musical play, Princess Chrysanthemum, and Bertha Gordon coached the performers.91

On May 30, the boys of the high school produced an amateur minstrel show at the Central School Auditorium with Clyde Eddleman as the interlocutor. Clara Hall conducted a large chorus of boys and girls, Emma Hargrove drilled the boys' ballet, Dora Bres designed the dancers' costumes, and Margaret Foules directed the minstrel endmen.92

The seniors gave their class play June 18 at the Central School Auditorium. The newspaper said that the play, Prunella, was just a Pierrette and Pierrot story, but the royalty was fifty dollars.

Cast of Prunella

Pierrot..........................Clyde Eddleman
Prunella..........................Dorothea McWilliams
Scaramel..........................Joe Podrasky
Prim..........................Edna Rock

90 The Lake Charles American Press, February 12, 1919.
91 Ibid., May 5, 1919.
92 Ibid., May 31, 1919.
The Elks' Lodge put on its seasonal minstrel show at the Arcade Theatre, on January 27 and 28, 1920.94

... When the curtain rolled up ... a great gang of men in white face, red coats, black faces, checkered faces with Judge W. C. Braden as interlocutor faced the audience ... 95

Frank Shattuck, who had been on the Lake Charles stage of local minstrelsy for a generation, did a number called "In Room 202." For this program he used the name "High" Shattuck.96

The staff for the 1920 Elk's Minstrel was: director, W. D. Hull; manager, Neil Bryan; house committee, C. O. Nobles; program, G. C. Milford; publicity, Dave Rosenthal; stage manager, "High" Shattuck; and arranger for the minstrel parade, Bill Chavanne.

On April 16, Lake Charles High School presented its senior class play, Lindsey Barbee's At the End of the Rainbow.97

On May 22, the second grade children of Central School performed a cantata, Mid Summer Eve. The school used the proceeds toward helping

93Ibid., June 19, 1919.


96According to an interview with Miss Rosa Hart of Lake Charles, December 1, 1962, Mr. Shattuck took the name "High" from his long legs and the way he handled them while dancing.

97Heidt, op. cit., p. 7.
Central School produced the operetta *Articania*, on the evening of December 16. The director was Mrs. Charles Wall, and Miss Richardson and Miss Whittle designed the costumes. The production, a benefit for the Parent Teachers Association, was so well received that it was repeated on December 20.  

The final amateur production, in the year 1920, was a unique, semi-theatrical Christmas program presented at the Presbyterian Church. A set arranged upon the platform converted the entire hall into a massive living room containing two large Christmas trees. In the center of the room setting was an immense fireplace with steaming kettles hung over an artificial fire. After the processional by the junior choir, the program began with a recitation by little Beatrice Fields; Edwin Gorham entertained next with a solo, "If Santa Claus Was Pa;" then Professor Funderburg offered a short discourse on eight Bible characters, who came forth in costume and stood on the rostrum. A "Home Sweet Home" tableau of Christmas time brought the program to a close.  

The first of the non-professional performances in 1921 was the presentation of the senior class play, *Varsity Coach*, at the Arcade Theatre on May 17. The reviewer for the *American Press* was impressed.

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99 Ibid., December 17, 1920.

100 Ibid., December 28, 1920.
that "the curtain was called on schedule," and the breaks between the acts were "retrieved by entertaining vaudeville skits" and selections from the high school orchestra. 101

The senior class of Lake Charles Academy presented two plays in their auditorium on June 10. The pieces were a short play, A Sea of Trouble, and a four-act drama, The Two Orphans. 102

The primary department of St. Charles Academy gave a program on June 13, 1921, in the school auditorium. An operetta in four acts, Snow White, was the main feature of the evening. 103

The summer of 1921 passed without report of amateur performances in Lake Charles; then, in October came the Jollies of 1922, a minstrel sponsored by the Attakapas Shrine Club. W. C. Braden acted as the interlocutor, and Chris Ming, of the Joe Bren Production Company was the director of the show. 104

On January 13, 1922, a group of citizens met to organize the "Little Theatre Guild." The form of the guild was planned along the lines that had been found to be successful in other cities. The organization was interested in the study of drama more than the production of plays. 105

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101 Ibid., May 18, 1921.
102 Ibid., June 10, 1921.
103 Ibid., June 13, 1921.
104 Ibid., October 7, 1921.
105 Heidt, op. cit., pp. 17-19.
The seniors of St. Charles Academy wrote and produced Our Aunt from California, in their auditorium on March 16, 1922. The cast was composed of Nell McCain, Eileen Moss, Emile Chaisson, Lilly Verret, and Bernice Moss. The proceeds from the performance went to the Lake Charles Sanitorium.  

Miss D. Zena Thomson directed the production of Stunt Night at Lake Charles High School on April Fool's Night. The evening's entertainment was made up of a variety of songs, dances and sketches such as the one that follows:

... Joe Cambell as 'Jomeo' and Miss Judith Clingo as 'Rullet' was a side splitter. Especially was the tomb scene impressive and spooky. The act was probably the masterpiece of the evening.  

The W. B. Williamson Post of the American Legion and the Elks' Club presented a two night engagement for the Jollies of 1923 on April 27 and 28, 1922, at the Arcade Theatre. Many of the names of the regular minstrel players, such as Frank Shattuck, Ivan Schwing and W. C. Braden, did not appear in the accounts of the show, and new faces appeared on the program. The American Press complimented Ferdinand Foster as an actor and interlocutor, and Captain Woosley for his sense of comedy.  

Students of Lake Charles High School performed a comedy,

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106 The Lake Charles American Press, March 17, 1922.
107 Ibid., April 4, 1922.
108 Ibid., April 28, 1922.
Elizabeth Comes to Stay, on May 5, with Montie Satterlee in the role of Elizabeth. The newspaper gave the foremost compliment on acting to the male lead, Douglas Dunning. Florrie Kleinert and Annie Mae Taylor directed the play.

In April, the Lake Charles High School Civic League at Central School presented Come Out of the Kitchen under the co-direction of Kayte and Annie Mae Ulmer. J. O. Carson, the principal of the school, was the business manager; the proceeds from the play went for school improvement.109

In 1923, "The Catholic Daughters of America" began to present an annual musical comedy. Their initial production was Miss Cherry Blossom, "a Japanese extravaganza" in three acts.110

It rained on Thursday night June 27, 1923, and caused the postponement of one of the biggest attractions of the year. The Old Spanish Trail Pageant, staged in Athletic Park with a large cast, drew a crowd in spite of the fact that it was performed one day later than had been announced. The pageant was composed of fifteen scenes with one outdoor setting serving for all. The various scenes in the pageant were An Indian Sun Worship; Hernando de Soto, and his party; Iberville and Bienville; The Coming of Evangeline; Louisiana Products, and Jean Lafitte and his band of men. Edward Shumway of the Community Service was the pageant coordinator. The

109Ibid., April 30, 1923.

110Heidt, op. cit., p. 15.
Enterprise Club, with Mrs. John Springer as president, and the Lake Charles Community Service, with H. C. Chalkley as the chairman, sponsored the pageant.\textsuperscript{111}

The Attakapas Shrine Club had a two-night run with \textit{The Dixie Revue of 23} starting at the Arcade Theatre on October 23. The revue was a minstrel-musical show developed under the supervision of the Chris Ming Production Company. The books were by James Madison of New York, and the lyrics and music by Delos Owens of Chicago. Madame F. Katz of New York designed the costumes and the Service Studios of Chicago produced the scenery. Some of the personalities in \textit{The Dixie Revue of 23} were Frank Harmon, Charlton White, K. C. Rock, Will A. Poe, Jack Simpson, O. L. Gelsinger, I. A. Veasey and Tom Clarke.

Captain Terrell Woolsey was the interlocutor for the minstrel. \textit{The Lake Charles American Press} had the following to say about Libby Cline, a new name to appear in the local spotlight:

\begin{quote}
The star of the whole aggregation was without a doubt Libby Cline. He began to shine early in the evening. The climax of the stunts which he did was his '57' song or rather the dance part of the song, 'but, shucks, any simp could have done well in that part. All that was necessary was to be natural.'\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

On March 22, the students at Central High School offered a play in the French language, \textit{La Poudre Aux Yeux}, in the school auditorium.

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{The Lake Charles American Press}, June 30, 1923.

\textsuperscript{112}\textit{Ibid.}, October 24, 1923.
Bessie Colomb and Fannie Allen, French teachers at the school, staged the play. 113

"The Southwestern Strollers" presented Why Smith Left Home, at the Central High School on April 11. Jessie Mae Clement, of Lake Charles, was the president of the group for the season 1923-24. 114

In May, 1924, the graduating class of Central School presented the third annual Stunt Night. The reviewer for the American Press stated that "stunt night was not a classical event, neither was it thought provoking, it was purely a variety show for entertainment." 115

The graduating class of the Lake Charles High School presented a three-act comedy, The Boomerang, on May 28. Zena Thomson supervised the rehearsals and staged the production. 116

At the beginning of June, the girls of the eighth and ninth grades of the St. Charles Academy gave a play called Rebecca's Sad Story. Sister Seraphia coached the student actors, and Howard Leveque created special lighting effects. 117

In 1924, the Catholic Daughters of America presented their second annual musical show, The Gypsy Rover, with approximately the same cast

113 Ibid., March 24, 1924.
114 Ibid., April 12, 1924.
115 Ibid., May 1, 1924.
116 Ibid., May 29, 1924.
117 Ibid., June 3, 1924.
as the 1923 production of *Miss Cherry Blossom*. 118

Many of the papers for the *Lake Charles Daily American Press* are unavailable for the year 1925, but from those which exist, Miss Heidt's research, and interviews, the three following non-professional theatrical productions were verified. The Catholic Daughters of America performed their third annual musical show on May 5, 1925. The production was *Goin Some*, and the *American Press* gave special notice to the performance of Miss Luna Hearne, the leading lady. 119

The play *Saintly Hypocrites and Sinners* was enacted on September 22, 23, 24, 1925, at the Arcade Theatre, by the regional Klansmen and Klanswomen, with a cast made up of people from Lake Charles, Crowley, and some from Texas. On December 8 and 9 of 1925, the Dokey Club presented *The Only Road*, directed by Luther Preveto, who also performed the leading role in the drama. 121

Many of the people who had worked with local actors in Southwest Louisiana during World War I were also instrumental in the development of the theatre in their home towns after 1918. In Crowley, Mrs. Mattie Kennedy continued to direct the high school students in

118 Heidt, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
119 *The American Press*, May 6, 1925.
120 Heidt, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
121 Ibid., p. 16.
their plays. Mrs. C. M. Parkerson remained the principal worker with children's programs in Lafayette, and was the coordinator of the annual Christmas Doll and Toy Fund from 1920 through 1925. Frank Shattuck was still the favorite minstrel man in Lake Charles. Jacque de Castillo gave his plays The Flying Moon and The Love Nest at the Crowley High School, and The Yankee Doodle Girl and The Red Prince in the high school at Lafayette.

New names to appear on the non-professional theatrical scene in this area of the state were Professor E. E. Roberts, director of the Southwest Institute Dramatic Club; Mrs. A. E. Roberts, who managed "The Strollers," a touring dramatic group at Southwestern Louisiana Institute, and Joyce Hartzell and Emily Huger, other faculty members at the college in Lafayette, who produced several dance pageants.

Four play production groups became part of the Southwest during these years: The Dramatic Club and The Strollers, both of Southwestern Louisiana Institute, the Little Theatre of Lafayette (1921), and the Theatre Guild (1925) also in Lafayette.

The Community Service Organizations of Lafayette and Lake Charles were responsible for the presentations of two outdoor pageants: The History of Lafayette Parish and The Old Spanish Trail.

Because Lafayette and Lake Charles had larger populations, Community Service organizations, and school personnel interested in the performing arts, they produced the majority of theatrical activities in Southwest Louisiana.
CHAPTER X

THE BAYOU COUNTRY

1919 THROUGH 1925
Communities Along Bayou Teche

1919 through 1925

The communities centered around Bayou Teche; i.e., Franklin, Morgan City, New Iberia, Opelousas, and St. Martinville, followed the pattern set by those of Southwest Louisiana in reviving the activities of the non-commercial theatre in the post war time. At first the activities grew slowly, but as the years passed they gained in number to proportions unattained before the war.

Franklin

After the peace treaty was signed in 1918, it took a while for conditions to get back to normal in the United States. In Franklin, Louisiana, the local actors waited more than two years before becoming regularly active again. During March of 1921, the pupils of St. John's Academy sang an operetta, Sylvia, at the Franklin Opera House.¹

On April 7 and 8 the same year, a director supplied by the John B. Rogers Producing Company brought in special scenery and costumes for the talent of Franklin to perform in an oriental-american fantastique, Katcha-Koo. The play, staged at the opera house, was

¹St. Mary's Banner, April 1, 1921.
under the auspices of the Knights of Columbus.  

Again in April, 1921, the local amateurs, this time members of the senior class at Franklin High School, appeared in a drama known as *LoneStar* or *The Sweetest Story Ever Told* by Oliver P. Parker.  

In February of the following year, the students of St. John's Academy presented a morality play, *Every Soul*, at the opera house for the benefit of the school debt fund.  

The children of Franklin High School performed a *Tom Thumb Wedding* as a benefit for the Athletic Association at the opera house on April 26, 1922.  

St. John's Academy offered two productions at the Franklin Opera House in the first part of 1923. In February, the seniors presented their class play, *Mary Magdalen*, and in May the student body of the school gave the comic opera *Bulbul*. The proceeds from the latter production went to defray the cost of the sisters' vacation months.  

Almost a year later, on February 14, 1924, the students of Franklin High School gave a musical comedy, *Paul Revere*, at the opera house.

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The receipts from the play benefited the high school library. The cast of characters for the production of Paul Revere were as follows:

Dorothy Faxton.................Annie Lee Williams
John Faxton..................David Silverman
Phyllis Faxton..................Kuille Simoneaux
Paul Revere..................Clifton LeBlanc
Margaret Faxton..................Yola Louiviere
Rastus.....................Morris Guilotte
Captain Marks..................Don Gardnier
Michael Sweeny..................Francis LeBlanc
Lt. William Day.................Ktienne LeBlanc
Dinah (colored)...............Gladys Fournier
William Dawes...............Tony Cusemano

In the year 1925, the people of Franklin were occupied with entertainment of all kinds. On February 19, the grade classes of the high school presented a cantata, The Rainbow Fete. The director of the musical show was Yolanda Whitfield and the piano accompanist was Jo Bryan.9

The boys and girls of the Franklin High School basketball teams gave A. E. W. Mason's three act play, Green Stockings, on April 16 at the theatre as a benefit for basketball equipment.10

The young ladies of St. John's Dramatic Club presented By Way of the Secret Passage at the opera house on April 23. Mrs. Annie Shields Rankin of New Orleans, who had studied at the Boston School of Oratory, directed the production.11

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8Ibid., February 16, 1924.
9Ibid., February 28, 1925.
10Ibid., April 18, 1925.
11Ibid., April 25, 1925.
On December 3, after training for six weeks under the direction of Yolanda Whitfield, instructor of music in Franklin High School, the children of the lower grades gave an operetta, The Golden Apple, at the opera house. The story of the musical drama took place in the days of the Greek myths. Nellie May McCormick was the accompanist and Mrs. E. B. Spiller was in charge of the costuming.12

By 1925 the amateur actors of Franklin were actively producing plays. The offerings, however, were limited to the performances given by the schools.

Morgan City

The domestic theatrical talent of Morgan City did not hesitate to get back to work immediately after World War I. On June 13, 1919, the local opera house "rang with the merriment" of the Knights of Columbus Minstrel. The comedians for the show included Julius Hebert, Eddie Arceneaux, Louis Kihnemen, Raymond Crawford, John Mac Mahon, and Jim Drury. The Morgan City Daily Review, June 14, reported the results of the minstrel show as being "a happy success."

In June of the next year, the seniors of Sacred Heart Convent acted in two plays during the closing exercises in Convent Hall. The girls of the school presented a play, The Wild Rose, and the

12Ibid., December 12, 1925. Miss Whitfield had been a teacher-director in St. Martinville in 1924. See page 270.
boys performed *The Millionaire Tramp.*  

Over one hundred people worked under the direction of Lyle J. Brown of the John B. Rogers Producing Company in a musical comedy, *All Aboard,* sponsored by the Morgan City Eastern Star, on December 1 and 2, 1921. Edna Gillen, Frank Prohaska, Mildred Hanson, Paul Schreier, Mrs. John Bibbens, Eugene Delas, Raoul Delas and Janet O'Brien took the major roles in the show.  

Soon after the production of *All Aboard,* several of the people who had been in the cast, along with others who were interested, organized a little theatre group in Morgan City. The newspaper published the following information about the new organization.

New Orleans has its Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre and Baton Rouge has its Little Theatre Guild, but Morgan City will outshine either if unbounded enthusiasm and a spirit of whole-hearted cooperation means anything. A group of our representative young people met Wednesday evening to organize themselves into a company which will have for its purpose the production of artistic plays of high order, at the same time identifying themselves with the little theatre movement that is just now sweeping the country . . . . Present at the meeting on Wednesday, and voicing their hearty cooperation in no uncertain terms, were the following enthusiasts who henceforth will be known as the Teche Players.

Misses Genevieve Grevemberg, Mildred Hanson, Jeanette Greenwood, Edna Gillen, Gertie Lee Connor, Leah Norman, Adele Hanson, Mrs. Flossie Delas; Messrs. Laurie Mobley, Sidney Golden, Frank

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Prohaska, Paul Schreier, Eugene Delas, Meyer Levy and Raoul Delas.\textsuperscript{15}

Enthusiasm and eagerness were apparent in the newly formed Teche Players, and by January 1922, the troupe had found a playhouse in which to perform and a director to supervise the productions. The building was Gray's Hall, a structure which had been famous a decade earlier for the "lovely intimate entertainments" that had been held there. For their director the Teche Players selected Mrs. Amelia Ryan of Berwick.\textsuperscript{16}

The opening program of the Teche Players was on January 30, 1922, and ran for three evening performances. One of the plays was \textit{Sham} by Frank G. Tompkins, with a cast including Vida Bibbins, Laurie Mobley, Sidney Golden, and Meyer Levy. Another play was \textit{The Potboilers} with a cast headed by Frank Prohaska, supported by Edna Gillen, Jeanette Greenwood, Paul Schreier, and Eugene Delas.\textsuperscript{17}

The second presentation of the Teche Players came in February of 1922. The performance consisted of several "special" numbers. Mlle. Wilhelmina Pelke, a mezzo contralto from New Orleans, opened the program; Mayme Haggarty gave a reading; Mrs. Amelia Drury Ryan recited \textit{Wolsey's Farewell}, and a sketch entitled \textit{Burglars} was enacted.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., December 24, 1921.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., January 11, 1922. See "Morgan City -- 1914-1919," page 169.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., February 1, 1922.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Ibid., February 22, 1922.
\end{itemize}
On March 30 and 31, 1922, the Teche Players produced a third program, which was composed of several one-act plays. 19

The high school seniors presented a play, *Between the Acts*, in May of 1922. Richard Comfort, Gertie Lee Conner, Ruth Marie Besson, Richard Loeb, Cora Sofford, and Weldon Shim were in the cast. 20

June 14, 1922, was the night the children of Sacred Heart Convent presented an operetta, *The Captain from Plymouth*, in the Evangeline Theatre. Mayme Haggarty of New Orleans directed the show. 21

The Teche Players acted a comedy, *A Hot Day*, at the Evangeline Opera House on June 26, 1922. "Frank Prohaska, who achieved a reputation on the professional stage and added to his laurels locally," had the leading part. Others in the cast were Gertie Lee Connors, Sidney Golden, Janet Greenwood, Meyer Levy, Mildred Hanson, Vida Bibbina, Janet O'Brien, and Hattie Price. 22


22 *Ibid.*, June 28, 1922. Two years later, on July 30, 1924, *The Morgan City Review* published the following item concerning the first full time Little Theatre director for Baton Rouge: "The Baton Rouge State Times announces the selection of Mr. Frank Prohaska of Morgan City as their full time director of activities. Mr. Prohaska had several years professional training as director of theatricals. He promoted the Teche Players organization of this city for two seasons and created wide spread interest with his work in that connection."
The Teche Players were again on the boards of the Evangeline Theatre during the first week of December, 1922. At that time they played a three-act comedy, Fifty-Fifty, by Fredrick G. Johnson. The performance was a benefit for St. Margaret's Daughters and "drew a large crowd." A writer for the Morgan City Review said, "the denouements of the local Fifty-Fifty were particularly flat and its Bohemia was not at all convincing." 23

The American Legion Minstrel Show of February 12, 1923, featured "a circle of thirty of Morgan City's best local talent." 24 Miss Robinson of the high school faculty was the musical director. The Teche Players offered the dramatic playlet, Trifles, By Susan Glaspell, along with the minstrel. The editor of the newspaper in Morgan City expressed some definite ideas about the one-act play.

If one found fault with this play it was in its choosing rather than in its presentation. A sketch of such intense nature is somewhat at variance with the minstrel proper and in consequence people prepared for a rollicking circle found it very difficult to once readjust their attitudes and follow the sombre play. The Teche Players are clever and their objective is praiseworthy. However, it is to be remembered that an occasional lapse of memory is not conducive to the welfare of any play. Lines must be thoroughly committed to memory. No more embarrassing condition exists for audience or players than to have a member of the cast forget, even momentarily, his part. 25

23 Ibid., December 9, 1922.
24 Ibid., February 7, 1923.
25 Ibid., February 14, 1923.
On March 2, 1923, the school children gave a **Tom Thumb Wedding** under the supervision of the following teachers: Misses Pearl LeGendre, Gladys Adams, Irene Price, Amy Young, Ora B. Michael, and Mary Warner.

It is rare indeed to find a **Tom Thumb Wedding** so faultlessly carried out as the one that took place in the opera house on Friday night last—which was given by the children of the first and second grades of the Morgan City Public School.²⁶

The high school students produced a musical romance, **Runaway Gretchen**, written and directed by Jacques de Castillo. The reviewer for the local newspaper said about the July 19 production:

> Miss Edna Gillen, as "Liza", keeper of the inn was particularly good, and Roger Adams as "Rondo" played his part splendidly. But, without question histrionic honors of the evening go to Richard Loeb, for his clever and convincing presentation of his role as, "Ludwig," the mad king.²⁷

An all girl cast under the direction of Jeanette O'Brien performed a play, **Breezy Point**, at the opera house on August 6, 1924. The production was a benefit for buying a piano for the Presbyterian Church. The cast included Edna Gillen, Connie Hebert, Agnes Kenny, Florence Jolly, Caroline Maury, Myrtle Harris, Elizabeth O'Brien, Margaret Squires, Genevieve Hepler, Mazie Bourgeois, Ollie Mae Bourgeois, Gertie Lee Conner, and Hannah Kahn.²⁸

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²⁶Ibid., March 7, 1923.

²⁷Ibid., July 21, 1923.

²⁸Ibid., August 9, 1924. Gertie Lee Conner was a member of the Southwestern Strollers.
By 1925 the Teche Players were inactive. Frank Prohaska was in Baton Rouge and the playhouse which had been used by the group was changed into a dance hall.

Saturday, April 11, will mark the opening of the old Gray Dance Hall recently remodeled and taken over by the Buckie's Merry Makers. Dances every Wednesday and Saturday.\(^{29}\)

The last amateur production reported by The Morgan City Review in 1925 was The Poor Married Man given on November 9. Jeanette O'Brien directed the three-act farce and Tommy Sofford played the leading part of Prof. John B. Wise, "the poor married man."\(^{30}\)

**New Iberia**

Forty miles from Morgan City up Bayou Teche was New Iberia with 6,276 people, the largest settlement in the Bayou Country at that time. It was late in 1921 before the amateur theatrical performers of New Iberia resumed productivity after the war. The Dark Town Minstrels were given at the Elks' Theatre on August 5, for the benefit of St. Peter's College. A farce comedy, Oh Doctor, was also played as an afterpiece by the students along with their minstrel.\(^{31}\)

In the following year the Boy Scouts of troop 3 at St. Peter's College celebrated George Washington's birthday with a play given at

\(^{29}\)Ibid., April 1, 1925.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., November 11, 1925.

\(^{31}\)The Weekly Iberian, August 6, 1921.
St. Berchman Hall on February 22, 1922. The title of the play was
Boy Scouts. 32

A little over a year later, at the Mt. Carmel Convent Commencement on June 5, 1922, the two-act operetta The Gypsy's Dream was presented by the pupils of the school. 33

In March of 1922, New Iberia organized a community Service organization, and by July, H. D. Schubert, the director of the Service, produced an outdoor historical pageant at City Park. The community paid a vote of thanks to Theda Murray, chairman of the pageant committee, and to Rita Soulier and H. D. Schubert for planning and presenting The Pageant of the Attakapas Country, which depicted the history of New Iberia. 34

In the Weekly Iberian of July 22, 1922, the Community Service announced its sponsorship of a non-professional dramatic club known as the Community Players of New Iberia.

For those who are interested in community dramatics, an interesting program is being formulated which will give everybody an opportunity to express themselves in dramatic art and study the best of the one-act plays and others of greater length. A little theatre department of Community Service will be organized and the committee proposes to present local people in dramatics regularly this fall and winter. This committee comprises the following: Mrs. Joseph A. Malone, E. J.

32Ibid., February 25, 1922.

33Ibid., June 10, 1922.

34Ibid., July 15, 1922.
Carstens, Herman Hauser, Miss Louise Taylor, Mrs. Gordon Sandoz, Oliver Burke and Mrs. Perry Burke.

As a result of the response shown in amateur dramatics, three one-act plays were offered by the Community Players on September 12, 1922. The scripts were Miss Civilization, The Magic Path, and Zona Gale's Neighbors. The group performed at the Elks Theatre with the understanding that in the future they would act on the stage of the new high school auditorium which was nearing completion. A report by the Community Players on their expenses and receipts appeared in the newspaper.

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Net Profit $82.40

35 Ibid., September 16, 1922.
On February 8, 1923, the Community Players presented *Belinda* by A. A. Milne. The following cast of *Belinda* was directed by Mrs. Walter Burke.

- **Belinda** .................................. Mrs. Donald Burke
- **Delia** ....................................... Miss Ines LeBlanc
- **Betty (maid)** ................. Miss Anne Archer
- **Mr. Baxter** ..................... Mr. Alfred Hitter
- **Mr. Devenish** ........................ Mr. E. J. Carstens
- **Mr. Tremayne** ..................... Mr. Warren Jefferson

In 1924, the after-Lent amusement season in New Iberia started with a home talent performance entitled *The Old Maids' Convention*. Arrangements for the show were in the hands of Mrs. John R. Taylor and Mrs. Alfred Reid. The purpose of the entertainment was to raise funds for sending the high school athletic and literary contestants to the State Rally in Baton Rouge. *The Old Maids' Convention* was presented in the New Iberia High School Auditorium on April 23, 1924.37

The 1924 senior class play was presented at the high school on May 13. Jacques de Castillo directed the pupils in his production of *The Flying Moon*.38

A play called *Better Than Gold* was the comedy-drama feature of the evening at the 1925 commencement exercises of Mt. Carmel Convent. The young ladies of the academy presented the play on June 8.39

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The last of the non-professional performances in New Iberia during the year of 1925 was *Under the Flag*, a patriotic drama set in Cuba. The Dramatic Club of St. Peter's College staged the play several times in and out of town. The first performance was given on November 24 at home in the Elks Theatre. Again, on December 15, the club took the drama to Lafayette where they performed in the Jefferson Theatre. Returning to New Iberia the cast played the show a third time, on December 17, in the high school auditorium for the benefit of the local Christmas fund. The cast of *Under the Flag* included Clet Girard, Clyde Delauoussays, Jeffrey Folse, Jules Landry, Aleide Louviers, Lawrence Landry, Alwyn Dominguez, Claude Babineaux, Lionel Decuir, Donald Angers, Fernand Hebert, and Winfield McCulloch.  

Opelousas

About forty miles above New Iberia is Opelousas. In 1920, according to the Fifteenth Census of the United States, the town had a population of 4,437.

Non-local attractions such as tented dramatic companies, repertory theatrical troupes, and motion pictures were active in Opelousas both during and after World War I, but the non-professional performers did not reappear on the scene until November of 1920. At that time

the Opelousas Chamber of Commerce held a Trade Day Festival, and in connection with the celebration, the Knights of Columbus presented a minstrel show. An outdoor stage erected south of the courthouse was occupied by local blackfaced troubadours and the band. 41

One year later, in November, 1921, the fire fighters of Opelousas trod the stage of the Elks Theatre with The Firemen's Minstrel Show. Michel Halphen, Jr., assisted by Tommy Brooks, organized and supervised the amusement, which was given for the benefit of the Hope Hook and Ladder Company. Halphen also acted as interlocutor for the production. 42

In April, 1922, a musical comedy, The Microbe of Love, played at the theatre. Sarah Bowden coached the local cast and also took the leading role of Madame Hymen Cupid. Miss Bowden was a representative of the Wayne P. Sewell Company and a graduate of Curry School of Expression, Boston. Dave Ulmer, as Billy Bachelor, played opposite Miss Bowden. The production, given under the auspices of the Woman's Club, was a benefit for the public library. 43

An advertisement appeared in The Clarion Progress of July 1, 1922, announcing the coming attraction of the American Legion's Musicle-Minstrel at the Opelousas High School Auditorium on July 3. Further information did not appear in the newspapers.

41 St. Landry Clarion, November 27, 1920.
42 The Clarion Progress, November 26, 1921.
43 Ibid., April 22, 1922.
The students of the high school presented an operetta, *The Windmills of Holland*, at the school auditorium on December 21, 1922. Charles Borchers volunteered his services as manager and designer. The stage manager's instructions from the Educational Musical Bureau, Chicago, included plans for building a twenty foot windmill cottage. Mrs. Phil Reilly was the director for the production.44

The Elks Follies of 23 was a specialty revue performed at the Princess Theatre, a motion picture house in Opelousas, on November 21, 1923. The Elks gathered the entertainment for their follies from local, as well as out-of-town amateurs. A dance followed the film and the show.45

A. Harper came to Opelousas from Kansas City to prepare the Fireman's Frolic, given at the Opelousas High School Auditorium, on the night of May 2, 1924. Fifty young people performed in the show under the auspices of the Hope, Hook and Ladder, Fireman Company.46

A crew from the Athenian Motion Picture Company of Los Angeles began filming a script, *Youth's Dream*, in Opelousas on April 30, 1924. Director Seholm supervised the making of the picture, and Milton Athens was the cameraman. Screen tests were made of local people and Irene Dupre won the role of the heroine; Nathan Haas, the hero, and Felix Richard, the villain. The company completed *Youth's Dream* and


showed it at the Princess Theatre, on May 27 and 28.47

According to the sources investigated, at least three non-professional theatrical performances took place in Opelousas in 1925. The first of these entertainments occurred on February 11 at the high school auditorium. The senior class presented a comedy by James Montgomery, Nothing But the Truth. Caro Williamson and Ella Moreau of the high school faculty directed the play.48 Another production of that year was a musical show, In Old Louisiana, by Johnan Helen Dodges. Mrs. Phil J. Reilly directed the show at Opelousas High School. Martha Mistic played the leading role of Rose, and Nick Halphin acted opposite her. The Elks' orchestra, with Nina Stubbs at the piano, furnished the music for the play. The presentation was under the auspices of the Civic League of Opelousas.49 The third and last amateur piece of the year was a three-act comedy sponsored by the Woman's Club. The Flapper Grandmother, given at the Opelousas High School on October 9, was directed by Sarah Armstrong of the Wayne P. Sewell Company.50

47 Ibid., May 24, 1924.
48 Ibid., February 14, 1925.
49 Ibid., April 25, 1925.
50 Ibid., October 10, 1925.
St. Martinville

St. Martinville, thirty-five miles southeast of Opelousas in the heart of the Teche Country, had a population of 2,468 in 1920. Press reports indicate that nothing was done in the town by the domestic theatrical performers in 1919, but on February 28, 1920, there was a notice in "School News" of The Weekly Messenger about rehearsals for The Duchesse De la Valliere, by the High School Dramatic Club. Unfortunately, the newspaper was not published during the first part of March, because the Messenger's force was "down with the Flu." 51

St. Martinville High School commencement exercises for 1920 were held on June 3 and 4. On the first evening of the ceremonies, the students acted a three-act comedy, The Adventures of a College Bride. 52

Reuben Bienvenu wrote and directed a pageant in honor of the Red Cross, and the people of St. Martinville acted it on October 17, 1921. Dramaturgist Bienvenu called his pageant The Red Cross of Peace in honor of the work that the organization had done in war and during peace. 53

52 Ibid., June 5, 1920.
53 Ibid., October 22, 1921.
On May 29, 1922, the pupils of the high school gave an entertainment at the Bienvenu Opera House. The program consisted of a violin solo by Harold Bienvenu, songs and dances by the chorus, and a comic opera, The Glass Slippers.\footnote{Ibid., June 3, 1922.}

For almost two years the St. Martinville amateurs relaxed their efforts, then, on February 8, 1924, the high school students presented a musical play, Cherry Blossoms, at the school auditorium. Yolanda Whitfield was in charge of the production arrangements.\footnote{Ibid., February 9, 1924. See Franklin, p. 254.}

The pupils of St. Martin's Convent gave several performances at the Bienvenu Theatre, in April, 1924. Among the principal numbers staged by the girls on April 28 were two musical plays, The Gypsy's Dream, and Flowery Garlands. Two evenings later, the boys of the convent presented a comedy, The Grain of Salt, and the pupils of the French class acted a comedy, Le Gros Lot.\footnote{Ibid., April 26, 1924.}

Under the management of Harry English, one hundred and twenty-five pupils of the high school performed The Black and White Revue, on December 19, 1924, in the school auditorium.\footnote{Ibid., December 20, 1924.}

No amateur performances were recorded by the St. Martinville newspapers in the year 1925.
Communities Around Bayou Lafourche
1919 through 1925

With the termination of World War I, the non-professional actors of the Lafourche country began to increase activity. After a few years the performing groups became as numerous and lively as they had been in the earlier years of the twentieth century. The practice of touring and exchanging plays between communities became more common than it was in the past.

Convent

It was not until 1923 that the publications of L'Interim mentioned any activity worth noting by the amateurs of Convent. On May 4, they performed a comedy, All on Account of Polly, at the college auditorium for the benefit of St. Michael's Church and Jefferson College. "The work of Miss Stella Gaudin, as 'Polly Perkins' and Les Morgan as 'Baldwin' was particularly good."58 The players took the production on a tour and The Donaldsonville Chief wrote the following about the coming attraction:

The cast is composed of nine girls and six boys. The play made quite a hit when it was presented in the Jefferson College Auditorium two weeks ago. It will be played in St. Garriel's (sic.) Sunday May 20, and in Baton Rouge the following week. 59

58L'Interim, May 5, 1923.
59The Donaldsonville Chief, May 19, 1923.
The St. Gabriel Dramatic Club presented *My Irish Rose*, a comedy in three acts, to the inhabitants of Convent in the Jefferson College Auditorium, on the evening of December 4, 1923.

The Jefferson College Dramatic and Musical Club staged a full evening comedy, *Professor Dooley's Double Life* on May 3, 1924. The reviewer for *L'Interim* said that it was "one of the best plays given at the college auditorium for some time," and, "too much praise cannot be given Father Fox, who coached the play."

Donaldsonville

Across and up the Mississippi River fifteen miles from Convent, is the town of Donaldsonville. The United States Census Bureau gives the size of Donaldsonville as being 3,745 in 1920.

In February, 1919, the Victory Girls of Donaldsonville High School gave a variety entertainment at the Grand Theatre. Dora Kaffie of the school faculty supervised the program.

The girls of St. Vincent's Institute performed a minstrel show at the Grand Theatre on February 19, for the benefit of the school. The amusement consisted of song hits, choruses, jokes, tableaux, and

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60 St. Gabriel is located on the Mississippi River about 35 miles northwest of Convent.

61 *L'Interim*, December 8, 1923.


63 *The Donaldsonville Chief*, February 15, 1919.
monologues. 64

A new motion-picture theatre, The Community Theatre, opened in Donaldsonville on Sunday, October 17, 1920. 65 The first amateur presentation produced at the Community Theatre was Reveries of a Bachelor, a "spectacular production in which a number of popular young people" of Donaldsonville took part on July 6, 1921. A Fashion Pageant accompanied the play using domestic talent from Ascension, Assumption, and St. James Parishes. The script was originated by Rita Comeaux and Amelie Cire of Donaldsonville, who also co-directed the performance. 66

A minstrel entertainment, for the benefit of the Donaldsonville Fire Department, was set for December 19, 1921, at the Community Theatre. Forty men in the cast were under the direction of J. R. Andrews. 67

On December 22, 1921, the Donaldsonville High School presented a Yuletide entertainment, The Birds' Christmas Carol, by Kate Douglas Wiggins. 68 The teacher in charge of the program was Lillian

64 Ibid., February 22, 1919.
65 Ibid., October 16, 1920.
66 Ibid., July 9, 1921.
67 Ibid., December 17, 1921.
Jacques de Castillo, the state high school dramatic coach, directed his original script, *The Yankee Doodle Girl*, February 20, 1922, at the high school with the following cast:

- Kitty: Josie Lawless
- Capt. Breese: Leonce Castagnos
- Count de Luci: Louis Masala
- Mrs. Ainsworth: Constance Villiany
- Jack Simms: Mr. De Castillo
- Jerry Ainsworth: Irene Stuart (title role)
- William Ainsworth: Clyde Ayraud

Chorus: "Sky Rocket" sailor girls

The *Microbe of Love*, produced in Donaldsonville on April 19, 1922, at the Grand Theatre, was staged by native talent under the guidance of Ina Rose Greer, a representative of the Wayne P. Sewell Lyceum and Producing Company of Atlanta, Georgia.

"A packed house" witnessed the *Red Men's Minstrel* at the Grand Theatre on September 27, 1922. The show was given for the benefit of the Mohawk Tribe's building fund. Dr. Williany was the interlocutor and Willie Acosta, Henry Kocke, and Henry Casso were in charge of getting the production on the stage.


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69 *The Donaldsonville Chief*, December 17, 1921.
70 Ibid., January 23, 1923. Castillo had been staging his plays in Louisiana high schools since 1914. He was considered a writer of promise and his scripts were attracting national attention.
71 Ibid., February 18, 1922.
72 Ibid., April 19; April 22, 1922.
73 Ibid., September 30, 1922.
of the pupils of the school. The play was presented in the school auditorium on January 10; the cast included:

Miss Castleton ........................................... Josie Gisclard
Jenkins .................................................... Walter Lehmann, Jr.
Flossie ....................................................... Irene Stuart
Lawyer Garland .......................................... Melville Chapman
Jack Castleton ........................................... Leonce Castagnos
Glady Castleton ......................................... Hilda Dill
Bob Skinner ............................................... Jacques de Castillo
Rev. Sidney Carter ....................................... William Hickson
Dorothy Graham .......................................... Alice Sims

A chorus of "Singing birds" 74

In April of 1923, Castillo was back in Donaldsonville producing his light musical comedy, The Flying Moon. The piece was written by Jacques de Castillo and earned for him a six months tour in Europe, as the script was awarded the first prize in the 1921 playwriting contest by the New York School of Dramatics. A chorus and a cast of forty high school pupils appeared in the cast on April 18. 75

Flores Ford-Meagher, drama critic for The Donaldsonville Chief, made the following comments about the local presentation of The Flying Moon:

Mr. Castillo shows exceptional talent as stage manager in the always difficult art of directing amateurs.

The characters were excellently cast. Melville Chapman gave evidence of much intuition and sense of humor in his delineation of the eccentrics of the hen-pecked flying moon and his work showed at all times real artistic restraint and quaintness.

74 Ibid., January 23, 1923.
75 Ibid., April 7, 1923.
Leonce Castagnos, as David Mars, showed excellent character work and spontaneity in exhibiting the bewilderment and confusion of the other would-be flying hero.

The Jap of Lee Castagnos was very good and his dance was delightfully ludicrous.

Miss Anna Mae Allen, as the second Mrs. Moon, was possessed of a natural stage presence, a bewitching mixture of coquetry and vivacity and a most decided comic talent.

Miss Hazel Dill was a most sparkling little ingénue playing opposite to Mr. de Castillo. Her work was infused by a charming daintiness and the bubbling gaiety. Her dancing was a feature, especially in the play of her mobile face, in the figures with Mr. de Castillo.

Miss Irene Stuart was very charming as Gwendolyn Moon with natural grace and sense of rhythm in her clever dancing. She has a clear melodious soprano voice of much sweetness and ringing quality.

Miss Josie Gisclard gave a very skillful and amusing portrayal of the difficult part of Mrs. Moon. Her make-up and coiffure were in perfect character and her wifely commands and acidulous dignity elicited shouts of laughter. Her work was all the more admirable as she had a bit of trouble with her lines . . . .

The next two performances in Donaldsonville were given by visiting amateurs from neighboring communities. The Convent Players from Convent, Louisiana, acted at the Grand Theatre on May 23, when they presented the play, All on Account of Polly. The Jefferson College Band accompanied the players to Donaldsonville and furnished music during the evening. Two months later two short plays were

76 Ibid., April 21, 1923.
77 Ibid., May 26, 1923.
offered to the people of Donaldsonville by the White Castle Dramatic Club on July 27, 1923, at the high school auditorium. The plays were entitled Suppressed Desires, by Susan Glaspell, and The Life that Jack Built. Between the two performances Dr. Darcantel and Evelyn Barbay appeared with vaudeville songs.78

"One of the biggest audiences that ever crowded into the Grand Theatre" greeted the combination vaudeville and motion picture performance given there on January 31, 1924. A special feature of the program was a comedy sketch entitled Topsy Turvy Flats staged under the direction of Charles Ohlmeyer.79

Charles Ohlmeyer, local theatrical star, who has been enjoying a six months vacation here with his parents Mr. and Mrs. D. Ohlmeyer, will leave next Friday for San Antonio, Texas, and in that city will meet the manager of the Hazel Case Players. . .80

An operetta, Midsummer's Day, with a cast of seventy-five children, played on the high school stage in May of 1924. Celine Babin managed and trained the performers, and Jeanne Fortier and Elsie Schroeder were her assistants.81

A minstrel show, given by the colored people of Donaldsonville, was set for Sunday, July 26, 1925, at St. Augustine Hall. The

78Ibid., July 28, 1923.
79Ibid., February 2, 1924.
80Ibid., March 22, 1924.
81Ibid., May 24, 1924.
amusement was presented under the auspices of Council No. 37, Knights of Peter Claverie. There were eight male and female "stars" among the minstrels, who entertained with catchy songs, latest jokes and new dances.  

Henry Dugas was manager of the production, Always in Trouble, presented in the hometown of the Smoke Bend Dramatic Club, on September 18, 1925. On the first of October, the Smoke Bend Dramatic Club took Always in Trouble and performed it in Donaldsonville at the Grand Theatre. Both performances, at home and away, were given as benefits to the new Catholic Church fund in Smoke Bend.

Napoleonville

Down Bayou Lafourche sixteen miles from Donaldsonville, and the same distance southwest of Convent, lies Napoleonville. The town had a population of about a thousand people in 1920.

Among the many sport activities, professional theatrical performances, fairs, and festivals held in Napoleonville during the years following the war, there seems to have been little time left for the amateur players. Nevertheless, two programs were produced in this period. At the Victory Theatre, a benefit program, The Dance

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82 Ibid., June 20, 1925.
83 Smoke Bend, Louisiana, is in Ascension Parish, on the west bank of the Mississippi River, two miles west of Donaldsonville.
84 Ibid., October 3, 1925.
of the Flowers, and a film were shown in December of 1922, under the auspices of the Ladies Altar Society. Two years later the pupils of Napoleonville High School presented "a lively programme of entertainment" on December 18, 1924, at the Victory Theatre. The money raised was put into the educational fund in order to help carry on the nine month session of the school.

Plaquemine

Plaquemine, with a population of 4,632, was nearly five times as large as Napoleonville in 1920. The town produced in proportion to what was given in Napoleonville from 1919 to 1925, five times the amount of local entertainment.

The pupils of Plaquemine High School performed Captain Racket at their auditorium on May 28, 1919. J. D. Cointment, Jr. played the leading role in the play. The other members of the cast were Ben Deblieux, Wilfred Lessard, Kenneth Jeffrey, Bessie Saurez, Carrie Belle Marioneaux, and Marie Louise Berret. Ester Ellis of the school faculty directed the play.

St. Basil Academy closed its 1919 term with the presentation of an operetta in three acts called, The Golden Slipper, on June 22.

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85 The Assumption Pioneer, December 28, 1922.
86 Ibid., December 20, 1924.
87 The Weekly Iberville South, May 31, 1919.
88 Ibid., June 28, 1919.
Depicting characters from fairy tales, the pupils of the high school exhibited their production of *The House that Jack Built*, in the school auditorium on April 29, 1921.89

The members of the high school, with the assistance of Louise Allen of the Sewell Producing Company, staged the play, *The Microbe of Love*, on April 28, 1922, "in a manner which pleased the large number of patrons who attended."90

A brief item in the *Port Allen School*91 Notes of the *Iberville South* on November 3, 1923, stated:

Mr. Castillo gave his play, *The Love Nest*, here last night and most of the high school took part in it.

*Love Pirates of Hawaii* took place at the Port Allen High School in February of 1924. The students performed under the direction of Mr. Landess and Miss Hicks.92

The Dramatic Club of Plaquemine High School gave a revue, which they called *Highland Follies*, in the school auditorium in December of 1924.93


90 *Ibid.*, April 29, 1922. Miss Allen had produced the same play in Lafayette, Louisiana, just a few days earlier. (April 18, 1922). See *Lafayette*, p. 227. Also see *Donaldsonville*, p. 274.

91 Port Allen, Louisiana, is on the Mississippi River, directly across from Baton Rouge, and about 15 miles north of Plaquemine.


Alfred Hirsch assisted by Dr. J. A. Richard, Sr. directed another musical revue, *A Night in the Village*, in Plaquemine during the Firemen's Festival and the "grand opening" of Daigle's Auditorium, in January of 1925. The stage of the new amusement place measured 30' by 30', and the house had a seating capacity of 1,500.94

The Firemen's Revue of 1925 took place at the Wilbert Theatre on April 15, but bad weather warranted a repeat performance on April 20. The production was supervised by Lucile Wilbert and Leo Hebert and the Blue, Blue Melody Boys. "The vaudeville acts of Evelyn Barbay and Alfred Hirsch were very creditable, also that of Dr. J. A. Richard, Sr. in his negro dialect act."95

Thibodaux

In 1920, Thibodaux with 3,526 people, was the same size community as Donaldsonville, and had a thousand people less than Plaquemine. Thibodaux was one of the most active communities in amateur theatre among the towns included in this section of the study.

Mount Carmel Convent commemorated its sixty-third annual commencement exercise in June, 1919, with a program including two plays. The first of the dramas presented was *La Sorcière*, a script by the French author, Saynete. The second play was a comedy by the title of *One*


95*Ibid.*, April 18, 1925.
Night with the Spooks. 96

For four years, since June of 1918, Thibodaux was without an opera house. From time to time, The La Fourche Comet made references to the need for a theatre. Then, in June of 1922, a new playhouse called the Grand Theatre opened its doors for business. 97

In May of 1923, the sixty-seventh annual commencement concert took place at Mount Carmel Convent. The entertainment part of the ceremony embraced two short plays--The Social World, and Maid to Order. 98

The Raceland High School, of Raceland, Louisiana,99 held what it called an intersocial contest made up of the following program:

Declamation

The Soldier of the Empire . . . . Cleveland Daigle
On the Other Train . . . . . . . Corinne Daigle

Chorus

When Life is Brightest

Oration

The Vision of War . . . . . . . Gertrude Grabert

Play

The Mischiefous Nigger

Anthony Snow . . . . . . . . . Claude Mire
Jimmie Duch . . . . . . . . . . . Corley Miller
Fripon . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Chitta Brocato

96La Fourche Comet, June 12, 1919.
97The Donaldsonville Chief, June 10, 1922.
98La Fourche Comet, May 17, 1923.
99Raceland is fifteen miles southeast of Thibodaux, on Bayou Lafourche.
Native vaudevillists under the direction of Leroy Miller of Thibodaux and A. P. Marcella of Raceland gave a show at the Grand Theatre on May 16, 1924, for the benefit of the Thibodaux Library.  

Thibodaux College concluded the 1924 session with exercises held at the Grand Theatre, on June 13. The students offered a two-act comedy, Vacation. Clarance Bourge was stage manager for the production.

In June of 1925, Mount Carmel Convent presented Patricia, The Unknown Martyr, with the following cast:

Augusta (Emress) ..................................... Juliette Charetat
Octavia .............................................. Elsie Foret
Patricia .............................................. Alice Toups
Cecilia .............................................. Marian Taylor
Marguerite .......................................... Margaret Badeaux
Flavis .............................................. Marcella Pierson

Slave girls and dancing girls

The La Fourche Comet, of July 17, 1924, published the letter written below, which was received from "The Strollers" of Southwest Louisiana Institute in Lafayette.

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Laayette, Louisiana
July 7, 1924

La Fourche Comet
Thibodaux, Louisiana

Gentlemen:

Stroller Troupe No. 21 is to play in Thibodaux Monday, July 14, at the Grand Theatre. This troupe will give The House Next Door, a play that has proven very successful.

Mr. A. J. Dugas and Miss Velma Legendre, of Thibodaux, play leading parts in this production. We would appreciate any mention that you make of this play in the columns of your paper.

Very truly yours,
E. E. Roberts

Thibodaux College closed its 1925 session at the Grand Theatre with a play called The Toastmaster. 104

Native talent trod the stage of the Grand Theatre to present three one-act scripts in September of 1925. The plays were Eliminated Eggs, a musical farce; The Unseen, a comedy, and Love Sacrifice, a drama. Professor Leroy Miller supervised the production of the plays, which were performed under the auspices of the Woman's Club. 105

The 1919 through 1925 period found traveling stage managers, who produced stock scripts with local casts, frequently coming into the Bayou Country. The John B. Rogers Producing Company played its shows Katcha Koo in Franklin and All Aboard in Morgan City. At Donaldsonville,

104Ibid., June 25, 1925.

105Ibid., September 3, 1925.
Opelousas, and Plaquemine the Wayne P. Sewell Production Company presented *The Microbe of Love* and *The Flapper Grandmother*.

Jacques de Castillo, "the state high school drama coach," gave his plays at Franklin, Donaldsonville, and Plaquemine.

Individuals who proved themselves valuable to the non-professional stage in this region were Yolanda Whitfield of St. Martinville and of Plaquemine, Amelia H. Ryan, Frank Prohaska, and Jeanette O'Brien of Morgan City, Mrs. Walter Burke of New Iberia, Mrs. Phil J. Reilly of Opelousas, Charles Ohlmeyer of Donaldsonville, Arthur Dugas and Professor Leroy Miller of Thibodaux.

Nearly every community in the Bayou Country had at least one, and sometimes several, minstrel shows produced by the Elks, the Knights of Columbus, a high school, or some other group during the post war period.
CHAPTER XI
SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA
THE FLORIDA PARISHES
1919 THROUGH 1925
SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA, 1919-1925

The number of theatrical activities sponsored by a given locality can be influenced by a change in population. The communities in the Florida Parishes during the post war years presented a picture of this kind of fluctuation. The theatrical entertainments became fewer in Greensburg, Covington, Kentwood, and St. Francisville as these towns diminished in size through the first two decades of the twentieth century. On the other hand, Bogalusa and Franklinton increased their populations. Bogalusa came into existence in 1907, and by 1920 had developed into a community of eight thousand inhabitants. The stage productions of these two towns far exceeded those produced by the others in Southeast Louisiana from 1919 through 1925.

Bogalusa

Construction began on five new school buildings in Bogalusa in 1920. These structures, each of which had an assembly room, added greatly to the available stage space and audience seating capacity in the community. For a long time the Y.M.C.A. gymnasium and the Armory were the places used to stage most of the amateur performances. New contracts were let and work started in the first month of 1920 on four new elementary schools.
The auditoriums of the schools will afford each section of the city a meeting place for entertainments and meetings of various kinds, something the city has badly needed.¹

A few months later, in April of the same year, contractors arrived on the ground and started work on Bogalusa's new $200,000 high school.

... the first floor is taken up by a large auditorium. ... with a large stage and dressing rooms. The capacity of the auditorium including the balcony on the second floor, will be 700 people.²

In the meantime the hall at the Y.M.C.A. was busy with the activities of the local performers. On February 24, 1920, the Business and Professional Women's Club used the gymnasium to present their "brand new show," Tu Tu.³

A home talent company played a musical farce, The New Minister, at the Y.M.C.A. on February 28, 1920. "Mr. D. V. Blayney was drill-master and Miss Williams presided at the piano."⁴

The annual senior class play, held on May 17, 1920, in the Armory building, was A Strenuous Life. Miss Crumpton, a member of the school faculty, directed the play.⁵

The Excelsior Girl Reserves gave their version of a play, A

¹Bogalusa Enterprise, January 1, 1920.
²Ibid., April 8, 1920.
³Ibid., February 26, 1920.
⁴Ibid., March 4, 1920.
⁵Ibid., May 20, 1920.
Case of Suspension, at the Y.M.C.A. in May. "The girl-boys carried their parts beautifully and save for their soft voices could not be distinguished from the real thing." For the second part of the program Ruth Voss gave a dramatic reading, *Galatea of the Toy Shop*, by Evelyn Sutherland.  

A show called *The Asulagob Minstrels*, Bogalusa spelled backward, given at the Y.M.C.A. gymnasium in December of 1920, brought to a close the amateur productions of the community for that year. Bert Early, formerly of the Orpheum Circuit and a well known minstrel man, directed the minstrel. "Claude Blanchard as 'Sambo' made a decided hit. Ruth Voss starred in 'Virginia Justice,' the afterpiece of the evening."  

A local cast including Ester Jarvis, Edward Adams, Bessie Colomb, Harold LeMiller, Sunicus Tisdale, Howard Maury, and Joseph Blackwell, presented *The House of Rimmon*, by Henry Van Dyke, at the Garden Theatre on April 23.  

At the Armory on February 15, 1922, the Wayne P. Sewell Lyceum and Producing Company, under the auspices of the Magic City Post of the American Legion, presented *The Microbe of Love*. Sarah Bowden, traveling representative for the producing company, directed the show and took the role of Miss Hymen Cupid, supported by a cast of

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home talent headed by Mrs. Henry de Coligny, as Priscilla Prunes, President of the Spinsters' Club.⁹

The first mention of a play on the new high school stage appeared in The Bogalusa Enterprise, May 11, 1922, when the students presented a play, Dust of the Earth.

In November of each of the following three years, the Business and Professional Women's Club presented a production at the high school auditorium. In 1922, Ethel Mitchell directed a "lady minstrel," Liza Jane.¹⁰ They gave another minstrel show, Frills and Frolics, under the management of Mrs. Blanche Roach in 1923.¹¹ Their 1924 presentation was a musical production, Cheer Up.¹²

The Y Minstrel, staged at the Y.M.C.A. in the spring of 1923, had K. I. Bean as the interlocutor. The Elks' orchestra, conducted by Dr. Fellman, furnished the music for the production. The show played in Franklin, Louisiana early in May.¹³

The senior class of Bogalusa High School gave an annual play each May for the next three years. In 1923, they produced Over There, a story laid in France during World War I, under the direction of

⁹Ibid., February 23, 1922.
¹⁰Ibid., November 30, 1922.
¹¹Ibid., November 8, 1923.
¹²Ibid., November 20, 1924.
¹³Ibid., April 26, 1923.
Mrs. Lois Myers-Turner. They gave Professor Pepp in 1924, and on May 22, 1925, Ruth Voss directed the seniors in Little Parks, a burlesque on the English sense of humor.

The four-act comedy, The Flapper Grandmother, was offered under the auspices of the American Legion on February 13, 1925, at the Magic Theatre. The home cast was composed of Mrs. Blanche Roach, Mrs. Betty Frity, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Spekenhier, Mrs. Leah Cohen, S. Lacy Dickerson, and B. W. Miller. The itinerant directress was Grace McMurry.

Covington

Whereas Bogalusa was a rapidly growing town, Covington, thirty-five miles to the south, stayed much the same size with only a slight decrease in population. The United States Census Bureau reported that in 1900 Covington had 3,060 people, and 2,942 in 1920. The Covington performers were less active after 1919 than they had been in earlier years.

By June of 1920, a new pavilion in Bogue Falaya Park had replaced the one destroyed by flood waters four years earlier, but the restored structure never did house the amateur performances that its predecessor had.

The Slidell Follies: a Musical Cocktail, from the town of Slidell,

14 Ibid., May 24, 1923.
15 Ibid., May 29, 1924.
16 Ibid., May 28, 1925.
17 Ibid., February 19, 1925.
performed at the Parkview Theatre in December, 1921. Joseph C. Eggart was the production head of the organization; Estelle Gillis designed the scenery; M. F. Simmons was the electrician, and Frank Roach was the stage carpenter. New Orleans and Slidell musicians, conducted by H. C. Voorhies, accompanied the performance. 18

Mrs. J. J. Foley was the director of a vaudeville at the Parkview Theatre on August 16, 1922, for the benefit of St. Peter's Catholic Church. 19

On July 26, 1923, the Eastern Star sponsored A Manless Wedding at the high school. 20

In 1924, two groups outside of Covington occupied the attention of those interested in the amateur theatre. The Fairy Shoemaker, an operetta, was played by the pupils of Slidell High School on the stage of the Covington High School on January 11, 1924. 21 Many people from Covington attended a pageant, The History of Mandeville, enacted on May 24, 1924, in the town of Mandeville 22 by the high school students. Lois E. Music, assistant principal of the school was in charge of the preparations for the pageant, said to be the first of its kind in the

18*St. Tammany Farmer, December 17, 1921.

19*Ibid., August 17, 1922.


21*Ibid., January 17, 1924.

22*Mandeville, Louisiana, is about ten miles south of Covington on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain in St. Tammany Parish.
The graduating class of St. Paul's College chose The Hidden Gem for their annual play on June 14.24

The November 7, 1925, copy of The St. Tammany Farmer printed a notice that the play, The Flapper Grandmother, would be performed at the high school auditorium on November 13. The Women's Progressive Union sponsored the show in the interest of its educational fund.

The amateur productions in Covington were fewer during the last five years of this research than in the preceding period of time. There is no reason to say that there was less interest in theatrical activities, because the professional actors continued to arrive, motion pictures were popular, the pavilion in Bogue Falaya Park was restored, and a new theatre, the Columbia, was added to the town late in 1924. Perhaps all of these activities in some way diminished the interest in performances by the local people.

Franklinton

Franklinton with 964 inhabitants, as reported by the United States Census Bureau in 1920, was one third the size of Covington, but the smaller community was growing and its local theatre work compared favorably with that of the larger town.

Twenty-two seniors of Franklinton High School performed Rebecca's

23St. Tammany Farmer, May 24, 1924.

24Ibid., June 21, 1925.
Triumph on May 19, 1919, to raise money for a new piano at the school.  

On May 14, 1920, the music and expression department of the high school presented a cantata based upon the fairy story, Snow White, on the evening of May 14, 1920. Lillian Magee impersonated Snow White; Jwett Mizel, the prince, and Bernice Bateman, the queen. Mildred Milligan was the directress.

The high school auditorium was "filled to capacity" on April 19, 1921, by an audience who had come to witness the performance of the senior class play, A Kentucky Belle. The pupils were coached by Mrs. L. Foil and Miss Carpenter. "The door receipts paid off the debt on the school piano."

The 1922 senior class play of Franklinton High School was presented on May 12, 1922. They selected The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary for presentation that year.

At the End of the Rainbow, a comedy by Lindsey Barbee, was the senior class play during the subsequent year. Misses Aron, Tanner, and Simmering of the school faculty assisted the students in presenting the play.

The following news item appeared in The Era Leader on April 17,

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25 The Era Leader, May 19, 1919.
26 Ibid., May 20, 1920.
27 Ibid., April 21, 1921.
28 Ibid., May 11, 1922.
29 Ibid., May 10, 1923.
1924, concerning an out-of-town dramatic production at Mt. Hermon.

Quite a few of the Franklintonians drove to Mt. Hermon Saturday night and enjoyed the play Fifty Fifty given by the seniors of Mt. Hermon High School. 31

A part of the 1924 commencement program of Franklinton High School was the senior play, Ann, What's Her Name, presented on April 25 in the school auditorium. 32

Helen E. Shelby, a representative of the Wayne P. Sewell Producing Company, produced a musical play, Rosetime, with the pupils of Franklinton High School. The performance took place in the auditorium on November 26, for the benefit of the Parent-Teachers Association. 33

The Franklinton High School senior play, on May 12, 1925, was Brown's in Town. 34

All of the dramatic productions done by amateurs in and around Franklinton, from the close of World War I through 1925, were accomplished by the students of the schools. There is no record of any other non-professional group performing in the area at that time.

30Mt. Hermon is in Washington Parish fifteen miles north of Franklinton.

31The Era Leader, April 17, 1924.

32Ibid., May 1, 1924.

33Ibid., November 27, 1924.

34Ibid., May 14, 1925.
Greensburg

Greensburg was a small place with only three hundred inhabitants. After several years of inactivity in the field of dramatics, the Greensburg High School presented a play, Mr. Bob, on December 22, 1921. The students in the cast were Marguerite Holland, Alice Davis, Allie Burton, Marie Dean, Walter Cole, Moody Adams, and George Womack.35

In each succeeding year the Greensburg High Students presented a play during the spring closing exercises. On June 2, 1922, the seniors appeared in a comedy called Bashful Mr. Bobbs.36 The graduates of 1923 performed in Home Ties on May 3,37 and the seniors of 1924 played in Lost, a Chaperon on April 17,38 In the column labeled "School News," of the St. Helena Echo, on March 27, 1925, was the following short notice:

The Greensburg High School will stage the senior play, The Poor Married Man, Wednesday evening, April 8th.

As with many other communities in the southeastern section of Louisiana, Greensburg's amateur dramatic activities from 1920 through 1925 consisted of the plays done by the high school students.

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35 The St. Helena Echo, December 23, 1921.
36 Ibid., May 26, 1922.
37 Ibid., May 4, 1923.
38 Ibid., April 11, 1924.
Kentwood

Kentwood was a community of three thousand people in 1920. It is strange, therefore, that little activity was reported. Printed on November 30, 1923, in the St. Helena Echo of Greensburg, Louisiana, was a notice that the Parent-Teachers Association would stage Mr. and Mrs. Polly Tick, on December 7, 1923. A director from the Wayne P. Sewell Producing Company supervised the production.

Another achievement by the non-professional performers in Kentwood was announced in The Kentwood Commercial of December 18, 1925. The seniors of Kentwood High School performed Cynthia's Strategy on the morning of December 20. Miss Kerr of the school faculty was in charge of the play.

St. Francisville

Westward from Kentwood, on the Mississippi River, is St. Francisville. According to the United States Census, the town had a population of 1,059 in 1900, but by 1920 the number had decreased to 673.

The play, Why She Married Him, was the first of the amateur dramatic achievements in St. Francisville recorded by the newspapers of this period. The Bains branch of the American Red Cross gave the

39 Bains, Louisiana, is a settlement four or five miles north of St. Francisville.
performance at Pythian Hall in May, 1920. The cast of the comedy was composed of E. J. Young, T. E. Mackie (who later became active in the work of Le Petite Theatre of New Orleans), Mrs. Charles M. Barrow, Mrs. Sadie Ellis McGuire, Sarah Butler, Oriana Pillet, and "Mrs. W. J. Fort who took the leading lady's part."\(^\text{40}\)

In 1921, the pupils of Julius Frehan High School presented an operetta, *A Midsummer Eve*, at Pythian Hall on June 3, 1921. Misses Magee and Hamilton of the high school, "drilled the pupils in their parts." Mrs. J. M. Parker was the pianist.\(^\text{41}\)

The Julius Frehan High School held its closing exercises in May of 1923, when two plays were presented. Nine members of the seventh grade enacted a one-act play, *Borrowed Trouble*, and the senior class performed in *Kentucky Belle*.\(^\text{42}\)

On May 8, 1924, the seniors of Julius Frehan High School presented their annual class play, *Step Lively*, at Pythian Hall.\(^\text{43}\)

The teachers and the pupils of Convention Street School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, went to St. Francisville on February 27, 1925, to present the comedy, *The Spinster's Convention*. Mary Hamilton, of West Felician Parish, was a teacher in Convention Street School and had a

\(^{40}\) *The True Democrat*, May 15, 1920.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., June 4, 1921.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., May 5, 1923.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., May 10, 1924.
part in the play. Ernest Shorley assumed the role of Professor Make Over, and was supported by a cast of fifteen "old maids" and others. 44

The seniors of the Julius Frehan school performed the script, 
**Blundering Billy** at Pythian Hall on May 9, 1925. The cast included eight students. 45

St. Francisville remained reasonably active in amateur productions during the years of 1919 through 1925. Except for the year 1922, when nothing was recorded in the existing news accounts concerning non-professional dramatic activities, the high school students and others presented at least one performance per season.

**Summary**

In Southeastern Louisiana from 1919 through 1925, Bogalusa was certainly the most fruitful community in the production of non-commercial theatre. Very few names appear more than once on the various programs given in Bogalusa, but perhaps D. V. Blayney, director of **The New Minister** and Ruth Voss, who performed in entertainments as well as coached the high school seniors in their plays, are worth mentioning.

The Wayne P. Sewell Producing Company came into the area and presented **The Microbe of Love** and **The Flapper Grandmother** in Bogalusa, 44


45 *Ibid.*, May 9, 1925.
and Rosetime in Franklinton. Jacque de Castillo, who was very active in South and North Louisiana, was not reported as having brought any of his plays into Southeast Louisiana during these years.
CHAPTER XII

NORTH LOUISIANA

1919 THROUGH 1925
By 1920, the areas in North Louisiana were registering substantial increases in population. Among the more prominent examples of this expansion were: Caddo Parish, containing Shreveport; Rapides Parish, with Alexandria; Ouachita Parish, including Monroe, and the second and third tiers of parishes west of the Mississippi River encompassing Lake Providence, Tallulah, and St. Joseph.

Because of highways improved with gravel, better automobiles, and more people, the entertainment business grew in North Louisiana. The townspeople sponsored and produced local entertainment, travelled to neighboring communities to share activities, and brought in outside directors to help present stage productions. More amateur performances were produced than had been seen in previous times. Colfax, Delhi, Doyline, Gibsland, Mansfield, Mooringsport, Ruston and Urania have not appeared earlier in this study because they did not become active in the presentation of stage shows until after 1919.

Alexandria

The numerous plays and attractions brought to Alexandria by the professional performers were probably the cause for a decline in the

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1T. Lynn Smith and Homer Hitt. *The People of Louisiana*, pages 248, 249.
offerings of the domestic players. Vaudeville had reached its peak of popularity just before World War I, and continued for almost ten years longer. The Paul English Players, a repertory company formed in Alexandria, toured the state for many seasons. The Saenger Theatre, a built-to-last motion picture house, continued without interruption until well after World War II. ²

In 1919, St. Francis Xavier Commercial College had an enrollment of 296 students who furnished casts for two dramatic productions that year. The school produced an operetta, The Bogus School Inspector, and a farce, Gentlemen of the Jury, at the Rapides Theatre in June. ³

The Bolton High School seniors presented their class play on June 1, 1921, at the Rapides Theatre. The offering was "an Oriental-American Fantasque," Katchakoo. Hazel Robinson of the John B. Rogers Producing Company directed the production. ⁴

In October, 1923, John P. McGraw, manager of the Central Louisiana Fair Association, wrote and staged a tableau pageant, The Awakening, illustrating life in old and new Louisiana. McGraw was assisted by Mrs. Albert Fox Lanier and Mrs. C. C. Rougeon. Dr. Fayette C. Ewing played the role of Colonel Ashmore around whose plantation the story was built. ⁵

²Alexandria Town Talk, June 1, 1957.
³The Daily Town Talk, June 7, 1919.
⁴Ibid., June 4, 1921.
⁵Ibid., October 13, 1923.
In 1924, the Central Louisiana Fair Association produced another pageant entitled *Louisiana Riches*. Ernest Jelek was the announcer and narrator for the pageant. The chorus was conducted by O. H. Helton. Dr. F. C. Ewing portrayed "Uncle Sam," and Mrs. A. F. Lanier prepared and coordinated this feature of the fair.  

Farmerville

Local theatrical performances in Farmerville during this period seem to have been in the hands of the women. The young ladies of the community gave a play by the title of *Ma Sweet and Her Family* in the month of December, 1920. The Woman's Civic League began rehearsals in the second week of January, 1925, and gave a showing of Booth Tarkington's play, *Tweedled*, on February 13.

Homer

The United States Census of 1920 reported the population of Homer to be 3,305. The town had an interest in both professional and non-professional theatrical entertainment which resulted in the following announcement in *The Guardian Journal* on May 5, 1920.

The new theatre (the Woodbine) built by A. E. Wilder, on the corner of the lot north of the Homer Drug Store, has been completed and is now ready for formal opening.

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6Ibid., October 18, 1924.

7The Gazette, December 3, 1920.

8Ibid., February 11, 1925.
A Japanese operetta, *The Garden of Cherry Bloom*, was shown on the stage of the Homer High School Auditorium in December of 1921. "The Japanese costumes, and the entire performance was interesting and highly creditable to Misses Lewis and Dormon, the directors."9

In March of 1922, *An Old Bachelor*, a production composed of home talent, was presented at the high school. The director was Evans Harris, and Miss Ruth Mims of Minden took the leading role.10

Miss Standfield, an itinerant stage director for the Wayne B. Sewell Producing Company, arrived in Homer in the summer of 1922, and produced the play *Microbe of Love* with a cast of local amateurs. The performance was given on the stage of the Woodbine Theatre in July under the auspices of the Methodist Missionary Society.11

The Homer High School students presented a musical comedy, *In Ole Louisiana*, on two evenings in the last month of 1923. Three teachers supervised the presentation: Misses Lewis, Lacy, and Dormon.12


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9The *Guardian Journal*, December 21, 1921.
10Ibid., March 22, 1922.
11Ibid., July 5, 1922.
12Ibid., December 12, 1923.
13Ibid., May 28, 1924.
A local cast played *The Flapper Grandmother* under the sponsorship of the American Legion at the Legion Auditorium in December of 1924.\(^{14}\)

In 1925 the people of Homer saw five non-professional presentations: three by local performers, and two by troupes from out-of-town. The American Legion gave *The Pollyanna Black Face Minstrel* at the American Legion Auditorium in February. The proceeds from the production were given to the Homer Cemetery Fund.\(^{15}\) Jacques de Castillo's *The Love Nest* was performed by the students of the high school on May 8, 1925.

*The Love Nest* is a story about a house in Baton Rouge that has a very peculiar charm. It is said that anyone entering the house with a young lady will marry her before the year is out. Three engaged couples attend a party at the house and accidently enter the door with someone other than their own sweetheart. The charm begins to work. These complications, together with the news that a famous criminal had escaped from prison and was at large caused a rapid succession of tense and exciting moments.\(^{16}\)

The expression students of Miss Susie Willis offered a three-act comedy at Homer High School on May 22, 1925. The title of the play was *Fatty Makes Things Hum*.\(^{17}\)

The State Normal Dramatic Club from Natchitoches directed by Mary Francis Davis presented *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde,

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\(^{14}\)Ibid., December 3, 1924.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., February 11, 1925.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., May 13, 1925.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., May 27, 1925.
at the high school auditorium in October of 1925.\textsuperscript{18} For the second out of town presentation for 1925, the Little Theatre of Shreveport brought its play Dear Me to the Woodbine Theatre in Homer.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Monroe}

Many times the smaller communities of North Louisiana depended upon directors from outside to train their talent. In contrast to this, Monroe, the largest settlement in Northeast Louisiana with approximately thirteen thousand people, presented dramas directed by its own citizens.

In 1919, John Humble returned from Europe where he had seen a dramatization of H. T. Wilson's novel, His Majesty Bunker Bean, by Lee Wilson Dodd. He was so impressed with the script that upon re-establishing residence in Monroe he sought out Mrs. Minnie Ruffin to suggest that they produce the play. She agreed to act as director for the production, and he assumed a character role in the show. Ruth Washburne took the part of the feminine lead, and Elmer Richards impersonated Bunker Bean. The production of His Majesty Bunker Bean early in 1920 marked the beginning of the Monroe Dramatic Club.\textsuperscript{20}

During the winter of 1920-21, a dramatic club was organized in Monroe. It produced one full length play

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., October 7, 1925.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., December 6, 1925.

\textsuperscript{20}Interview with John Humble of Monroe, Louisiana, on January 21, 1964.
and several one-act plays the first season. Mrs. Minnie Ruffin, a history teacher in the City High School, directed the plays. At the Dramatic Club meetings Shakespeare was read and studied. The Little Theatre did not spring specifically from the Dramatic Club, but the desire to have a theatre in Monroe stemmed from this organization.

In 1932, the Little Theatre was duly organized...  

Six parishes: Ouachita, Morehouse, Richland, West Carroll, Union, and Caldwell, joined with the city of Monroe for the presentation of a historical pageant, representative of Northeast Louisiana. The production was Don Juan's Dream, in honor of the Spanish cavalier who founded Monroe. The setting for the pageant was in Forsythe Park on Thanksgiving Day, 1922. More than three thousand people, including school children and leaders from different towns, took part in the event. Edna Keith was the pageant director, and Ruth Washburne was queen of the Northeast Louisiana pageant. Robert M. Breard, a great, great, grandson of Filhiol, played the character of Don Juan Filhiol.

The Monroe Dramatic Club and other organizations in Monroe interested in the theatre made arrangements with Edna Keith, who staged Don Juan's Dream, to hold a drama institute at Monroe. On February 1, 1923, the Monroe Dramatic Institute opened for a three week session. All branches of dramatic art including play writing were offered. The institute was another effort on the part of the community to get the little theatre movement started in Monroe.

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22 The Shreveport Journal, November 30, 1922.
23 Ibid., December 7, 1922.
THE purpose of Community Service is to liberate the power of expression of people and of communities. What we are trying to do is to help the men, women and children of America to find their voices—to set forth in drama, art and music, and in the hundred other forms of play, what it is they have all along been trying to say, which could not get itself expressed within the confines of their daily work.

—JOSEPH LEE.

PRESENTED UNDER AUSPICES

MONROE COMMUNITY SERVICE
FORSYTHE PARK, MONROE, LOUISIANA
NOVEMBER 30, 1922
MONROE COMMUNITY SERVICE

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W. B. GLADNEY
A. T. NEISON
ISAAC LEMLE

PAGEANT DIRECTOR
MISS EDNA G. KEITH, Dramatic Department
Community Service, Inc., New York City

BAND DIRECTOR
C. E. WINNIFORD, Knights of Pythias Band
CHARACTERS AND GROUPS
IN THE ORDER OF THEIR ENTRANCE, WITH GROUP SPONSORS

Prelude

Heralds
(Miss Dorothy Taylor, Bastrop, Louisiana Miss Mildred Howell, Mer Rouge, Louisiana Miss Margaret Meem, Columbia, Louisiana Miss Lillian Bryn, Calhoun, Louisiana Miss Lucille Helm, Rayville, Louisiana Miss Josephine LaBaum, Monroe, Louisiana Miss Pauline Rolfe, Monroe, Louisiana Miss Mary Belle Simonton, West Monroe, Louisiana Miss Irene Sims, West Monroe, Louisiana Miss Roselyn Lieber, Monroe, Louisiana Miss Edna Mae Whitter, Monroe, Louisiana Spirit of Grey Moss
Armandine Renaud

Flowers of Louisiana (Second Grade)
City School
Parish School
South Side School
Georgia Tucker School
Miss Lillian Bryn
Miss Mary Belle Simonton
St. Hyacinth's Academy
West Monroe School
Miss Josephine LaBaum
Miss Roselyn Lieber
Miss Edna Mae Whitter
Miss Mary Belle Simonton
Miss Robinet
St. Hyacinth's Academy
Miss Julia Wossman
Miss Irene Sims

In the Order of Their Entrance, with Group Sponsors

Epilogue

Chief of Choctaw Tribe
W. D. Anderson
Fire Maker
J. J. Burroughs
Indian Men—Knights of Pythias, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Associated Crafts, Ouachita Parish High School Boys, and City High School Boys.

Indian Women—Auxiliary of Associated Crafts and Miscellaneous Groups.

Indian Messenger
Tilton Hawkins
French Traders—Carpenters' Union, B. O. Yeldell
French Women—Eastern Stars, Auxiliary to Legion
Visiting Tribe of Indians—Monroe Boy Scouts, Bastrop High School, Columbia High School, Calhoun Grade School.

Don Juan Filho
Robert M. Breard
Joseph de LaBaum
Robert B. Blanks
Charles Francois Adrienne de Paulnier
Dr. Philip M. Gayle
Jean Poiret
John R. Humble
The Marquis de Maison Rouge
Dr. W. M. Henry
Jean Louis Alexandre Breard
George Lawrey
Antoine La Montagne
Ben Downing
Luke McDaniel
Eugene Houston
Spanish Dancers—
Miss Ruth Washburn
French Group—
City Fire Department
Chief Frank Roddy
Gavotte Group—
St. Hyacinth's Academy
Armadine Renaud
United States Group—
Parish High School Boys
Marshall Johnson

Hudson House Group—
Business Women's Club
Miss Julia Wossman
Parent-Teachers' Association, and Mothers' Club
Mrs. T. H. McMillan

Early Years—
City High School Girls—Thelma DeGraffenreid

Epilogue

Early Settlers—
West Monroe Methodist Church
Mrs. Budy Mitchell

Ouachita Parish High School, Calhoun High School
Children—
Island Desiard School
Mrs. M. P. Lundy
Aunt Betsy Ross
Mrs. Tom Hicks
Circuit Rider
J. L. Cummins
Mail Carrier
T. J. Brown
Fiddler
George Steelo
Messenger
P. R. Mitchell
Men from Boats—
Men's Bible Class, First Methodist Church
First Baptist Church
S. M. Melreynolds
S. C. Blackmon

Epilogue

Symbolic Group—
Liberty
Mrs. Phillip Chauvin
Democracy
Miss Dorothy Renaud
Progress
Miss Evelyn Mangham
Courage
Miss Lucille Patton
Education
Miss Elizabeth McGuir
Truth
Mrs. F. M. Hill
Justice
Mrs. George Love
Hope
Miss Mary Lewis Boyd
Peace
Miss Josephine Hanna

Exhibition of First Flag—
D. A. R.
Mrs. C. W. Phillips
Betsy Ross
Mrs. Frank Stubbs

Spirit of 1776—
J. A. Heidenharn, M. Johnson, Frank Bell.

Spirit of 1865—
Confederate Veterans
Major W. P. Renwick

Spirit of 1918—
Soldier
Herman Eady
Marine
R. F. Courtney
Sailor
Carl K. White
Red Cross Nurse
Cecile Renaud
Army Nurse
Evadne Renaud

World War Veterans
American Legion

Honor to Those Who Did Not Return—
Ouachita Parish High School, Eighth Grade
Woolworth's
Mrs. Jack Hayes
City High School, Eighth Grade
Miss Patton

Modern Health Crusaders—
Ouachita Parish Tuberculosis League (Third to Seventh Grades City High School, Parish High School, South Side School, Georgia Tucker School, West Monroe School, St. Hyacinth's Academy, Calhoun Grade School
Mrs. F. L. Watts

Spirit of Double-Barred Cross
Mrs. W. C. Bechtold

Spirit of Future Years
Pauline Clarke

Bears of Crystal Ball
Carolyn Stubbs, Mary Belle Horuff
Edna Keith was the manager-director of another pageant at Monroe in 1923. A large group of local citizens and children gave *America's Review* in December after bad weather cancelled an earlier date in November.  

In 1925, John Humble and Mrs. Blanche Oliver took the leading roles in the play *Springtime*. Mrs. Minnie Ruffin was the director of the show.  

Before the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, Monroyans saw numerous stage productions. There were professional troupes at Sugar's Opera House, in tent theatres, and in revues and variety shows. Home talent productions by the Monroe Dramatic Club, the high school students, and two historical pageants rounded out the activities during the last seven years of this study.

**Natchitoches**

Natchitoches talent performed a musical comedy, *The Gypsy Rover*, at the Amuzu Theatre on March 30, 1921. Violet Winslow was the director, and George Poleman and Emily Hughes took the leading roles.  

Mildred Hill assisted by Josephine Bryan and Thelma Zelenka planned and carried out the arrangements for *Les Petite Follies*, a benefit for

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25Interview with Mr. John Humble.

26*The Natchitoches Enterprise*, April 7, 1921.
the Catholic Church, given at the Amuzu Theatre early in November, 1921. 27

The same group of amateur actors who gave The Gypsy Rover in the spring of the previous year prepared a benefit for the fire department, The Drum Major, and presented it at the Amuzu Theatre on April 26, 1922, and at Louisiana State Normal College a few days later. Violet Winslow was the director, and Josephine Bryan, George Poleman, Edwin McClung, and Dorothy Lawton played the principal roles. 28

From the "Normal Notes" in The Natchitoches Enterprise of May 24, 1923, the review of a spring festival at the college was as follows:

The May Festival, "Natchitoches in Song and Story," which was given in the Academic Court of the College on May 19th, was a complete success from the entrance of the herald, Mr. Horace D. Martin, who delivered the prologue written by Mr. George Williamson through the many episodes to the final assembling of all the participants in the epilogue. The credit for the success of this beautiful pageant belongs to Misses Thelma Zelenka and Gladys Breazeale.

The Natchitoches Dramatic Club presented three one-act plays: The Maker of Dreams, Trifles, and The Pot Boilers at the high school in December of 1923. The drama teacher at Louisiana Normal, Mary Frances Davis, was the director. The money made by the show went to the High School Library and the Dramatic Club. 29

Seniors of the Natchitoches High School, coached by Miss Tomlinson

27 Ibid., November 17, 1921.
28 Ibid., April 27, 1922.
29 Ibid., December 6, 1923.
of the domestic science department, gave The Poor Married Man at the school on February 18, 1924. The girls in the play were Gem Cheves, Marcia Poleman, Antoinette Smith, and Ruby Williams; the boys were Clyde Cook, Bert Boyd, Bill Mears, and John Nixon.  

In the spring of 1924, the May Day Festival presented at Louisiana State Normal College under the guidance of Miss Davis was entitled The Spring Song.  

Three scripts were written by students at Louisiana State Normal College, and the Dramatic Club under the leadership of Mary F. Davis produced the plays in June of 1924. The first of the dramas was In Sabine, a story based upon Kate Chopin's Bayou Folk, dramatized by Iva May Pearce. The second piece was Madame De Lisle, adapted from the book, by Doris De Witt. The other play, written by Nedra Cromwell, was Christmas Eve in a Logging Camp.

The annual spring pageant, The Wonder Box, given by Normal College occurred in May, 1925.  

The Normal Dramatic Club prepared a presentation of Oscar Wilde's comedy, The Importance of Being Earnest, and took the play to Homer and Lisbon, Louisiana. Mary F. Davis was the director.

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30Ibid., February 24, 1924.  
31Ibid., May 22, 1924.  
32Ibid., June 12, 1924.  
33Ibid., May 7, 1925.  
34The Guardian Journal, October 7, 1925.
Jennie Milton supervised a pageant, The Rights of the Child, at the First Methodist Church in October, 1925.35

St. Mary's Academy offered a holiday play, Christmas Eve at Goodie Green's, at the school auditorium in December, 1925.36

Natchitoches had a population of thirty-five hundred in 1920 according to the fifteenth United States Census. Northwestern State Normal College gave the major portion of the non-professional theatre in that community. St. Mary's Academy, the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, and one independent drama group also contributed to theatrical activities in Natchitoches.

Rayville

Rayville, with one third the population of Natchitoches, equaled and surpassed the number of amateur performances done by the college town between 1919 to 1925. Perhaps the influence of nearby Monroe was an encouragement to the performers of Rayville.

Jacques de Castillo, "the professional leader in musical comedy for the schools throughout the state," brought his production of The Red Prince to Rayville, and performed with the high school students at the Buie Grand Theatre in November of 1919.37 Clifton Sorey, Katie Sue Oliver, Josephine Fragala, W. A. Cooper, Dorothea Jones, Herman

35The Natchitoches Enterprise, October 22, 1925.
36Ibid., December 10, 1925.
37The Richland Beacon, November 1, 1919.
Herring, and Abner Cook were members of the cast. 38

While Mr. de Castillo was here only a few days, less than a week, to train the young people, he succeeded in putting on one of the best plays of the kind we have seen in this town. This gentleman who trained the students of the high school is connected with the public school department of the state and visits the various high schools of the state to encourage the study of expression and calisthenics. 39

A local cast trained by Mrs. C. J. Ellis, Jr. and Mrs. E. B. Green presented The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan, at the Buie Grand Theatre, on November 11, 1921. Those appearing in the operetta were Barry Norman, Jack Calder, Mrs. J. Y. Gladney, Wilmer J. Thomas, John Kline, Elliot Haynes, Carolyn Calhoun, Evelyn Abel, Josephine Fragala, and Miriam Wallon. 40

At the Buie Grand Theatre, on May 25, 1922, the pupils of the high school presented a four-act comedy, The New Coed. 41

The children of Rayville High School presented the three-act play Boy Blue, written by C. M. Wise, 42 on March 16, 1923. The show had a cast of seventy-five pupils under the supervision of Mrs. J. Y. Alraugh, Mrs. C. C. Hineman, and Mrs. Frances Calhoun. Mary Ella Sproles took the title role of Boy Blue. 43

38 Interview with Mrs. W. C. Croxton, whose maiden name was Katie Sue Oliver, of Rayville, Louisiana, on August 12, 1963.

39 The Richland Beacon, November 8, 1919.

40 Ibid., November 19, 1921.

41 Ibid., May 27, 1922.

42 Interview with Dr. C. M. Wise.

43 The Richland Beacon, March 31, 1923.
A home-talent cast under the direction of Wrenne Hopkins of the Wayne B. Sewell Producing Company performed the musical comedy Mr. and Mrs. Polly Tickk in April, 1923. The Rayville Parent-Teachers Association sponsored the play. Jack Calder performed in the role of Mr. Polly Tickk, and Mrs. E. B. Green portrayed Mrs. Polly Tickk. 44

In May of 1923, the students of Rayville High School gave a three-act comedy, The Senior. The following pupils acted in the play: Waldorf Traylor, Sidney Williamson, Bill Eddins, Leo Shamblin, Monroe Long, Joe Orick, Josephine Fragala, Helen Cook, Ruth Whatley, Rosa Langford, Edna Mae Beavers, Mary Heimback and Charles Smith. 45

H. A. Turner of the Connella-Kromer Producing Company, directed the high school students in Rustic Romeo on the school stage November 14, 1923. Mrs. R. F. McCook was the piano accompanist for the show. 46

The seniors of Rayville High acted in Much Ado About Betty on May 29, 1924. 47

Members of the Parent-Teachers Association appeared on the high school stage in November, 1924 in the "up-to-the-minute" musical comedy, The Flapper Grandmother. 48

44Ibid., April 14, 1923.
46Ibid., November 17, 1923.
47Ibid., May 31, 1924.
48Ibid., November 22, 1924.
Rayville High School presented two productions in 1925. Thirty-five students gave Wind Mills of Holland on March 31. Mrs. E. B. Green directed, and La Valle Calhoun did the music. A large cast of children offered The Marriage of the Midgets at the school in April.

Talent from the Start Methodist Church performed a three-act drama, Lighthouse Nan, at Rayville High on May 1, 1925.

All the performances given in Rayville between 1919 and 1925, with the exception of The Mikado, were in one way or another associated with the Rayville High School organizations.

St. Joseph

Newellton, St. Joseph, and Waterproof are treated as a community in this investigation because they are all located within a circumference of twenty miles, and the Tensas Gazette of St. Joseph carried the news of all three places.

The Newellton High School began its closing program in May of 1919 with the play, At the End of the Rainbow. The entire student body participated in the presentation.

49 Ibid., March 28, 1925.
50 Ibid., April 25, 1925.
51 Start, Louisiana, is six miles west of Rayville.
52 The Richland Beacon, May 2, 1925.
53 The Tensas Gazette, May 16, 1919.
At the annual exercises of Waterproof High School, in May of 1919, the girl students presented a play, *Trouble at Slatterlee's*.54

In May of 1921, the Newellton High School produced a play, *The Heavenly Twins*.55

Jacques de Castillo exhibited one of his works, with a cast of St. Joseph High School students, during the month of May, 1921.

The entertainment given at the Masonic Hall by Mr. Jacques de Castillo, entitled *The Love Nest*, was a most delightful affair and enjoyed the best attendance of perhaps any attraction ever given at this place, the receipts exceeding two hundred dollars.56

The Waterproof High School students acted their version of a play, *Closing Day at Beanville School*. The performance was part of the commencement exercises on May 25, 1921.57

The Episcopal Guild of St. Joseph gave a variety show which was called *The Follies*. The entertainment took place at the Blackman Theatre on September 26, 1924. Marjorie Lampkin was the manager and coordinator of *The Follies*.58

54Ibid., May 23, 1919.
55Ibid., May 20, 1921.
56Ibid., May 20, 1921.
57Ibid., May 27, 1921.
58Ibid., October 3, 1924.
With a combined population of less than two thousand, Newellton, St. Joseph, and Waterproof were small communities in North Louisiana, but they showed interest in domestic drama which was lacking in many towns of equal size.

Shreveport

In 1920 the United States Census gave the population of Shreveport as 43,874, which made it the largest city in northern Louisiana.

Even without the dramatic productions given by the Shreveport Little Theatre and Centenary College, the theatrical presentations by other groups in Shreveport surpassed the number done by any community in North Louisiana. The first of these productions occurred during the graduating exercises, in the spring of 1919, when the junior elocution class of St. Vincent's Academy performed in a play, Her Daddy. The head of the Dramatic Arts Department of St. Vincent's Academy was Sister Elizabeth.

The Shreveport Journal of October 14, 1919, stated that a company of eighty Shriners presented The El Karubah Minstrels, at the Grand Opera House, on October 13 and 14.

As a benefit for the Pines Hospital at Shreveport, a troupe of 150 children danced, sang, and acted in The House that Jack Built at

\[59\] The Shreveport Journal, June 15, 1919.

the Grand Opera House in the month of April, 1920. Mrs. C. M. Hunt was the stage director, and Mr. Charles Craig was the music conductor. 61

The Dramatic Club of St. John's College presented The Old Homestead, by Denmen Thompson and George W. Ryer, in May of 1921. 62

Local talent staged a play, The Return of John Bruce, at the Grand Theatre on May 25, 1921. George B. Pinchera of Shreveport wrote the script and also acted a role in the production. The presentation, given under the direction of Madame Emily Wakefield, had Byrne Hudson in the title role. 63

The graduation exercises in Trinity Hall at St. Mary's College on June 3, 1921, included a one-act farce, Wanted, A Confidential Clerk; a pageant, The Months, and a three-act play, The Charity Pupil. 64

Two playlets; The Sweet Family, and Sailey's Luck, were part of the closing celebration of St. Vincent's Academy in June, 1921. 65

Henry A. O'Neal was the interlocutor; Earl H. Crane, the director, and W. C. Hensley, the scenic artist for the annual Shriner's Minstrel,
in the State Fair Coliseum on October 21 and 22, 1921.  

Students of Shreveport High School played in Lord Dunsany's one-act script, *The Lost Silk Hat*, at the City Hall Auditorium on February 20, 1922.  

George Benhort Pinchera wrote and directed an original three-act script, *The School Master of Pleasant Valley*, starring R. L. Portwood and Mrs. Jane Carter. The premiere of the play took place at City Hall Auditorium on May 4, 1922.

Three thousand people formed the cast of a historical pageant, *The Pelican's Flight*, given at the State Fair Grounds in Shreveport on October 19, 1922. Edna Keith was the pageant director.  

The students of Shreveport High School offered a musical revue, *The Follies of 1922*, in the auditorium of City Hall on December 8. Edith Reed and Margaret Chambers were the teachers in charge of arrangements for the show.

The high school senior girls' literary society, the Pierian,
prepared two plays for presentation at City Hall Auditorium on April 12, 1923. The scripts were *Just Women*, by Colin Campbell Clements, and *The Ghost Story*, by Booth Tarkington.\(^72\)

More than a thousand persons witnessed the home production of *Springtime*, a musical comedy, staged by the Business and Professional Women's Club, at the Fair Ground Coliseum, on the night of April 25, 1923. Olivia Allen and E. C. Schirmer carried the leading roles.\(^73\)

The Shreveport newspaper noted a production by Bossier City High School which is just across Red River. Mrs. S. E. Smith directed the students in *The Rainbow Kimono* on May 29, 1923.\(^74\)

The L. O. E. Club, an organization of young Jewish girls, performed a two-act comedy, *Young Dr. Divine*, at the City Hall Auditorium in May of 1923. The play was a benefit to the Shrine Hospital for cripple children.\(^75\)

The cast of *The 1923 Shrine Minstrel* of the El Karubah Temple played to more than two thousand people at the Coliseum on opening night in November. The minstrel ran for three performances.\(^76\)

The Shreveport telephone operators gave an amateur vaudeville in November of 1923, at City Hall. The operators of the Cumberland

\(^72\) *The Shreveport Journal*, April 13, 1923.

\(^73\) *Ibid.*, April 26, 1923.


Telephone and Telegraph Company promoted and performed in the show.\footnote{Ibid., November 23, 1923.}

At the Coliseum, on December 18, 1923, the Alathean Bible Class of the Queensborough Methodist Church enacted \textit{The Man from Nowhere}. Mr. and Mrs. W. L. McCurry co-directed the play.\footnote{Ibid., December 19, 1923.}

The Young People's Service League of St. Mark's Church presented \textit{Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves}, adapted and directed by Mrs. J. R. Parten in May, 1924. The attraction was performed outdoors at Ardenwood, the garden of Edward H. Randolph on Jordan Street. The cast included Frank Taklee, Evelyn Stoltz, John A. Mills, John Moore Redden, Louise Redden and others.\footnote{Ibid., May 15, 1924.}

The Pierian Club of the high school gave a farce-comedy, \textit{Safety First}, by Sheldon Palmer, at the City Hall Auditorium in May of 1924.\footnote{Ibid., May 29, 1924.}

The voice pupils of Mrs. C. M. Hunt presented a musical comedy, \textit{Bulbul}, by Rhys-Herbert, at City Hall Auditorium in the spring of 1924. "The costumes and stage settings added much to the play, and Mrs. Hunt's direction of the cast resulted in a remarkably successful entertainment."\footnote{Ibid., June 21, 1924.}
The church school of St. Mark's Church revived and enacted the Christmas section of the Chester Mystery Cycle, a pageant play written at the time of Chaucer. The presentation, given at the City Hall Auditorium during the last month of 1924, included carols and music incidental to the play.82

St. John's Dramatic Club played a farce-comedy, The Fatal Shot, at the City Hall Auditorium, on January 28, 1925.83

The Pierian Society of Shreveport High School presented a two-act comedy, Mr. Bob, at the City Hall Auditorium on February 5, 1925.84 Miss Pearl Pryor, an English teacher at the school, was the play director.85

The Catholic Dramatic Club of Shreveport, affiliated with the National Catholic Dramatic Clubs of America, offered When the Clock Strikes, at the City Hall Auditorium, on February 18, 1925. Andrew Querbes was the president of the organization, and Mrs. Marcus Jacobs was the director. Mrs. M. C. Gowan was the membership chairman.86

The Catholic Dramatic Club celebrated National Music Week in May of 1925 with a one-act play, Distinguished Service, at City Hall Auditorium. Mrs. William C. Gross, Mrs. Belta Pickett, and Mrs. John

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82 Ibid., December 25, 1924.
83 Ibid., January 29, 1925.
84 Ibid., February 6, 1925.
85 Interview with Clara Alma Brian.
86 Ibid., February 19, 1925.
Breffeith performed in the play. 87

Pearl Pryor, assisted by Florie Kleinert, with L. T. Bailes serving as stage manager, produced a three-act comedy by H. V. Esmond, Eliza Comes to Stay, at the City Hall Auditorium on May 21, 1925. 88

The pupils of St. Mary's Convent gave a two-act drama, Through Fires of Sorrow, on May 22, 1925, in Trinity Hall. 89

The St. John Dramatic Club presented the historical drama, The Fool, by Pollock Channing, at City Hall Auditorium in May, 1925. 90

Mrs. May Crawford Becker wrote a musical comedy, Fulford by-the-Sea. The premiere performance, given at the Grand Opera House on June 4, 1925, was a benefit for the organ at St. John's Church. C. L. Woolly, Margaret Chambers, and Fred Parish were directors for the production. 91

A new dramatic organization, the Theatre Guild and Workshop, appeared in Shreveport in 1922. Julia Rogers was the director for the group; Olivia Allen was the assistant director, and C. E. Byrd, Jr. was the scene designer. The troupe made its debut in three one-act plays: Maker of Dreams, by Oliphant Down; Suppressed Desires, by

87 Ibid., May 6, 1925.
88 Ibid., May 22, 1925.
89 Ibid., May 23, 1925.
90 Ibid., May 27, 1925.
91 Ibid., June 5, 1925.
GlasPELL, and Playgoers, by Pinero. In 1925 the Guild presented a comedy, Anna, Annette and Anne, on July 15 at the Fairfield Court Auditorium. Miss Rogers adapted the play from a story by Frances H. Lea. She played the role of Annette; Olivia Allen played the role of Anne, and Mrs. Kate Jones Pickett was Anna. Others in the cast were Clifford E. Byrd, Jr., Louis Valadee, Francis Roberts, and John Paul Goodwin. 92

The Catholic Dramatic Club presented Contents Unknown, a comedy-drama in three acts, on October 22, 1925. The play was a benefit to St. John's Church building fund. Mrs. Marcus Jacobs was the director. 93

An interdenominational Bible study group gave a show which they called The Four Square Bible Class Minstrel. The performance was given at the Grand Opera House on December 17, 1925. An old fashioned police quartet was among the numbers in the program, and one of the singers in the quartet was the public service commissioner, Huey P. Long. 94

A cast of more than a hundred students gave The White Flower, a musical play, at Byrd High School on December 18, 1925. Presented under the direction of Mary W. Crowder and Joseph S. Jones, the play was the first to be given in the auditorium of the new school building. 95

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92 Ibid., July 16, 1925.
93 Ibid., October 27, 1925.
94 Ibid., December 14, 1925.
95 Ibid., December 19, 1925.
From 1919 through 1925, Shreveport kept its amateur performers busy. Most of the producing groups presented more than one show during these years. Religious organizations active in amateur theatre were The Queensborough Methodist Church, St. Mark's Church, The Catholic Dramatic Club, The L.O.E. Jewish Girls' Club, and The Four Square Bible Class. Schools which gave stage productions were St. Vincent's Academy, St. John's College Dramatic Club, St. Mary's College, and the Shreveport High School. Other groups which presented more than one theatrical entertainment were El Karubah Temple, and The Theatre Guild. The hometown performers enjoyed the stage, and the people supported and encouraged their efforts; this condition made Shreveport a good theatre community.

Tallulah

The Tallulah High School students performed the American Revolutionary War play, The Red Prince, by Jacques de Castillo, at the Opera House on October 21, 1919. Kathrine Ward took the ingenue role and Mr. de Castillo played the part of the prince. Others in the piece were W. H. Ward, Emma Louise Sevier, Lesser Saiwitz, Margaret Ward, William Purnell, and Will Adams.96

At the Lyric Theatre in November of 1920, the high school students presented a musical comedy, Gittin Acquainted, and a short play.

96The Madison Journal, October 25, 1919.
A Pair of Burglars.  

H. V. Esmond's script, Eliza Comes to Stay, given at the Lyric Theatre by the pupils of the Lake Providence High School on April 12, 1921, was a benefit performance for both Lake Providence and Tallulah High Schools.

Concluding a year's study of American history, the Tallulah Book Club offered a pageant, America, at the Opera House on May 3, 1921.

Jacques de Castillo directed his musical comedy, The Love Nest, at the Lyric Theatre on April 25, 1922. The high school students who took parts in the play were Clara Coltharp, Billy Craig, Lorraine Harris Abernathy, Floyd Hynum, Emma Louise Sevier, Charles Montgomery and Josephine Found.

As usual with Mr. de Castillo's plays, the pupils had only one week for preparation and as is also usual, the play was remarkably presented. The Tallulah people, and pupils of the school as well, look forward to the Castillo plays.

The seniors of the high school presented their play, At the End of the Rainbow, at the Lyric Theatre, in May of 1922.

Talent from the Methodist Church exhibited a black-faced variety

97 Ibid., November 6, 1920.
98 Ibid., April 16, 1921.
99 Ibid., May 7, 1921.
100 Ibid., April 29, 1922.
101 Ibid., May 6, 1922.
show at the Tallulah Opera House in the summer of 1922. 102

Under the sponsorship of the Scott-Nichols-Voak Post of the American Legion, Virginia Street of the Wayne B. Sewell Lyceum and Producing Company presented The Microbe of Love with local actors at the Lyric Theatre, on July 10, 1922. 103 The Sewell Producing Company returned to Tallulah in April of 1923 and staged Mr. and Mrs. Polly Tickk with a cast of high school pupils. 104

Director H. A. Turner of the Turner-Connella-Kromer Producing Company presented a musical comedy, Rustic Romeo, at the Lyric Theatre in February of 1924. Home talent acted the play under the auspices of Tallulah High School. 105

The Seniors of Tallulah High School, 1924, presented Hoodooed Coon at the Lyric Theatre in May. 106

The Music Department of the Tallulah Book Club offered a cantata, In Foreign Lands, at the Lyric Theatre on September 3, 1924. 107

The Tallulah Book Club gave The Flapper Grandmother on February 13, 1925, at the Lyric Theatre. Marjory Hogan of the Wayne P. Sewell Producing Company was the director of the production. The title role

102 Ibid., July 8, 1922.
103 Ibid., July 14, 1922.
104 Ibid., April 28, 1923.
105 Ibid., February 9, 1924.
106 Ibid., May 3, 1924.
107 Ibid., September 6, 1924.
was played by Mrs. Randall Flippin, of Tallulah. 108

Itinerant directors directed six plays in Tallulah during the 1919-1925 period of this study. The Wayne P. Sewell Producing Company did three of these productions; Jacques de Castillo, two, and the Turner-Connella-Kromer Producing Company, one. The most active group for stage performances in Tallulah was the high school.

Miscellaneous Communities in North Louisiana
1919 through 1925

Scattered theatrical productions in towns of North Louisiana are included in this section. The communities are Colfax, Delhi, Doyline, Gibsland, Mansfield, Minden, Mooringsport, Ruston, and Urania.

The pupils of Ruston High School in Lincoln Parish staged a comic operetta, Prince Charming, on May 19, 1921. 109

Jacques de Castillo went to Colfax, located about thirty miles northwest of Alexandria, in order to produce his script The Love Nest with the Colfax High School students. The performance was given at the school on June 16, 1921. "The play was a success, $145.90 was made and divided with Mr. deCastillo." 110

Local talent at Minden, Louisiana in Webster Parish performed in

108 Ibid., February 28, 1925.
109 The Shreveport Journal, May 21, 1921.
110 The Colfax Chronicle, June 18, 1921.
a play, *An Old Bachelor*, in January of 1922, Evan Harris, who also appeared in the cast, directed the play.\(^{111}\)

Louisiana Polytechnic Institute at Ruston gave Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* on June 14, 1922. Miss Johnson of the college faculty supervised the production.\(^{112}\)

Another classical drama, presented in June of the following year by the students of Louisiana Polytechnic Institute was *The Rivals* by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.\(^{113}\)

The 1924 closing exercises of Gibsland High School, forty-five miles east of Shreveport in Bienville Parish, included the annual senior class play, *The Kingdom of Heart's Content*, by Lindsey Barbee.\(^{114}\)

The next year in February the faculty and students of Gibsland High School cooperated in producing a three-act comedy-drama, *Won by Waiting*. The production was staged under the management of H. Phil Duncan, a traveling director from Cincinnati, Ohio.\(^{115}\)

The year 1925 was very productive in the field of dramatics in the miscellaneous communities of North Louisiana. All of the offerings mentioned here were given by schools, and some of the groups

\(^{111}\) *The Shreveport Journal*, January 28, 1922.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., June 16, 1922.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., June 17, 1923.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., May 24, 1924.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., February 14, 1925.
presented more than one play during the year. Doyline High School, near Minden, Louisiana, in Webster Parish, produced a four-act comedy, *Valley Farm*, in March. In May, "the best Delhi talent" presented *The Flapper Grandmother*, at the Delhi High School, sixteen miles to the east of Rayville on Highway 80. Annie Laura Hiatt, head of the vocal and expression work at the school directed *The Windmills of Holland*, an operetta, at Gibsland High School in May. Jacques de Castillo directed his play, *The Bynum Gate*, at Urania High School — about forty miles to the north of Alexandria — in May. In the same month, the members of the junior class of Gibsland High School performed in Susan Glaspell's *A Woman's Honor* on the evening of May 19. "Miss Gaye Pace, the director, as Maria, and Julian Martin, as Pedro, gave a splendid representation of two Spanish characters." On the morning of May 26, the Female College in Mansfield, Louisiana, forty miles south of Shreveport, performed a play entitled *The Modern Cinderella*. The senior class gave the play under the direction of their teacher, Mrs. Z. E. Templeton.

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117 *The Richland Beacon*, May 2, 1925.
118 *The Shreveport Journal*, May 7, 1925.
119 *Alexandria Town Talk*, May 9, 1925.
120 *The Shreveport Journal*, May 21, 1925.
Three high schools located in the northwestern part of the state (Mansfield, Mooringsport, and Gibsland) gave plays during the last two months of 1925. In November the students of Mansfield High School staged a comedy, *The Only Road*, for the benefit of the Mansfield Benevolent Association. The juniors of Mooringsport High School, sixteen miles northwest of Shreveport, gave a play, *Patsy Makes Things Hum*, on the evening of November 19. In December the Gibsland High School students appeared in an operetta, *Christmas at the Pole*. Principal H. L. Nobles, and Bessie Jordan directed the forty members of the cast.

Summary

North Louisiana, between the years of 1919 and 1925, was alive with visiting directors who coached the local actors in plays. The John B. Rogers Company sent Hazel Robinson to Alexandria to produce *Katchakoo* in 1921, and in 1924 another representative of the same company presented *Springtime* in Alexandria. The Wayne B. Sewell Producing Company was represented by a Miss Standfield who directed *The Microbe of Love* in Homer, and Virginia Street who presented the same show in Tallulah in 1922. Wrenne Hopkins produced *Mr. and Mrs. Polly Tickk* in Rayville and Tallulah in 1923 for the Wayne B. Sewell Company.

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which also produced The Flapper Grandmother in Tallulah in 1925. A company, The Connella-Kromer Producers, presented A Rustic Romeo in Rayville (1923) and Tallulah (1924). H. A. Turner directed both performances.

The Louisiana director Jacques de Castillo gave his play The Love Nest in Colfax, Homer, Rayville, St. Joseph, and Tallulah. He presented The Red Prince in Rayville and Tallulah, and The Bynum Gate in Urania.

Edna Keith, a drama director with the National Community Service Organization, supervised two pageants in Monroe. The first of these offerings was Don Juan's Dream, in 1922, and the second was America's Review, in 1923. Miss Keith also directed The Pelican's Flight, a historical pageant for the Louisiana State Fair at Shreveport, in 1922.

People who worked with dramatic clubs and schools in their own localities were Susie Willis in Homer, Mrs. Minnie Ruffin in Monroe, Violet Winslow and Mary Frances Davis in Natchitoches, Mrs. E. B. Green in Rayville, George Pincheria, Julia Rogers and Olivia Allen in Shreveport.

By 1925, non-professional dramatic activity in North Louisiana had reached a peak in quantity never before attained in the region during the history of the state.
Summary of the Years  
1919 through 1925

More non-commercial theatre flourished in Louisiana during this time than in the two previous periods. After World War I, it took a few years for the memory and the wounds of the conflict to heal. As tranquility and prosperity returned, so did peacetime activities including local dramatics. By the end of the second decade of the century, the communities of North Louisiana were producing as many shows as the other sections of the state. Some of the northern villages, which had been quiet before and during the war, began to present plays in their schools and elsewhere after the 1920's. The amateurs in the city of Shreveport were especially busy with theatrical performances by 1925.

Provincial theatre in Louisiana attracted more attention than ever before. Transportation was improved and itinerant directors representing such companies as the Wayne P. Sewell Producing Company and the John B. Rogers Company circulated more readily through the state and produced their plays. The directors, usually women, entered a community with a script such as The Microbe of Love, The Flapper Grandmother, or Springtime, and selected a local cast to rehearse for about two weeks before presenting shows.

Jacques de Castillo, a writer, actor, and director, was a frequent visitor to the high schools of Louisiana. Castillo encouraged the study of expression and calisthenics. He accomplished this by
using the students as actors, singers, and dancers in one of several
of his own musical productions. He always appeared personally in a
principal role in the play. The titles of the Castillo scripts were
Prince, Runaway Gretchen, and The Bynum Gate. Castillo was very active
from 1919 through 1925 and took his plays to Alexandria, Crowley,
Donaldsonville, Homer, Lafayette, Morgan City, Plaquemine, Rayville,
St. Joseph, and Tallulah.

The senior class play was well established by this time and many
of the high schools attempted to present such an offering annually.
Unfortunately most of the scripts used by the schools were of meager
literary value and were given by the students in order to make money
for some organization or fund at the school. By the end of this
period of time nearly all of the high schools were producing plays
in their own auditoriums. Most of the performances were scheduled
during the spring of the year. Scripts which appeared often in the
schools were Captain Racket, Diamonds and Hearts, and Rebecca's
Triumph, plays by G. M. Baker. Teachers and individuals who were
workers in the field of drama at the high schools were Professor
Leroy Miller, in Thibodaux; Mrs. Phil Reilly, at Opelousas; Mrs.
Mattie Kennedy, Mrs. W. T. Culpepper, and Mrs. J. H. Lewis, in Crow­
ley; Sue Willis, in Homer; Mrs. Minnie Ruffin, in Monroe; Violet
Winslow, in Natchitoches; Mrs. E. B. Green, in Rayville; Pearl Pryor,
in Shreveport; Principal H. C. La Cour, in Lafayette; Zena Thomson,
Sister Serophia, Anna Mae Taylor, in Lake Charles, and Mrs. Felix J.
Samson, in Abbeville.

Community Service members formed dramatic groups and developed an interest in the production of plays and historical pageants. The community of Lafayette dramatized The History of Lafayette. Lake Charles offered The Old Spanish Trail Pageant. New Iberia's contribution to the list was The Pageant of the Atakapas. Don Juan's Dream depicted the history of Monroe. In Shreveport, The Flight of the Pelican told the story of Louisiana. Edna Keith, a representative of the National Community Service, supervised the last two pageants.

Colleges in both the northern and southern areas of the state were presenting theatrical performances. The selection of literary materials with which to work was well above those chosen by the average high school. Southwestern Louisiana Institute of Lafayette organized a drama club called the Cajun Crew in 1922 and produced a play, The Tigerpaw. The following year the club began touring through the southern part of the state and adopted the name of "The Strollers." While on tour, "The Strollers" included two plays by George Broadhurst, What Happened to Jones and Why Smith Left Home. The Normal Dramatic Club at State Normal College in Natchitoches presented The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde under the direction of Mary Frances Davis. Louisiana Polytechnic Institute in Ruston produced such classics as Shakespeare's Twelfth Night and The Rivals by Richard B. Sheridan. Although Baton Rouge is not included in this dissertation, it is important to note that the Louisiana State University Dramatic Club, under the direction of John Quincy Adams and
Mrs. E. P. Flower, traveled over the state and presented Ernest Denny's *All of a Sudden Peggy* and *The Prince Chap*. 124

Minstrel shows were still popular and the fraternal orders capitalized upon them yearly; the Shriners of Shreveport produced the El Karubah Minstrels, the Elks of Opelousas gave their *Follies of 23*, and the American Legion of Lake Charles performed in *The Jollies of 23*.

Little theatre groups began to appear at this time among the amateur actors of Louisiana. In Morgan City, The Teche Players organized in 1921, with Frank Prohaska as director. In the same year, a little theatre troupe directed by Rousseau Voorhies was formed in Lafayette. In 1925, two groups used the name of The Theatre Guild: one began in Lafayette and was primarily a play reading club, and the other was a group in Shreveport with Julia Rogers as director. In 1920, Mrs. Minnie Ruffin organized the Monroe Dramatic Club, a forerunner of the Little Theatre in that city. The Community Players of New Iberia, formed in 1922, and produced A. A. Milne's drama *Belinda*.

The 1919 through 1925 period of years was an active time for amateur theatrical productions. A definite change took place with an increase in performances and a desire on the part of the community actors and little theatre casts to perform for the love of the art. Fewer plays were given as benefits for an outside cause, and the troupes were beginning to use the money in promoting their own work.

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CHAPTER XIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1900 THROUGH 1925
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Writers have termed the years from 1877 to 1920 the period of "Old Louisiana." It was a time when people did little traveling. Modern conveniences did not come into regular use until the latter part of these years. Real progress in the towns and villages of the state entered the picture about 1900.¹

Amusements of various kinds existed in Louisiana around the turn of the century. Watermelon parties, bee tree cuttings, hay rides, singing, dancing, musicals, Mardi Gras celebrations, bazaars, and amateur theatricals serve to point out some of the forms of local entertainment. Circuses, animal shows, minstrel troupes, showboats and touring theatrical companies added professional offerings to those produced by the native Louisianians. But of all the formal diversions engaged in by the people of the state, theatrical activities of all kinds were apparently the most popular.

Before the First World War, dramatic clubs, schools, churches, fraternal orders, and clubs of various kinds staged productions which extended in nature from children's plays and pageants of the seasons and of Bible stories to presentations of the classics, plays by William Shakespeare, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard B. Sheridan.

Preceding 1920, the majority of the communities of any size

possessed opera houses, in which very few, if any, operas were pro-
duced. The playhouses were called opera houses because musical plays,
which were very popular at the time, were produced there. After 1920,
the term "theatre" was seen more often to designate the buildings
where dramatic representations and motion pictures were shown. It
was through the use of these combination playhouses and motion pic-
ture theatres that local performers were able to present a great
number of their offerings.

Dave Lyons built the Grand Opera House in Crowley in 1901. The
Rapides Theatre in Alexandria, with seats for eight hundred, began
its long career in 1903 and is still being used as the Paramount
Theatre today. The Jefferson Theatre of Lafayette, owned and operated
by C. M. Parkerson, opened its doors to the public in 1905. The
Gondran Theatre of Donaldsonville, with a seating capacity of six
hundred, was completed in 1906. The Benevolent and Protective Order
of the Elks of New Iberia constructed the Elks' Theatre in 1907. The
Arcade Theatre opened in Lake Charles in 1910 under the management of
J. L. White. The Victor Theatre opened in Abbeville in 1913, and the
Parkview in Covington in 1914. The Parkview, with three hundred seats,
was managed by Sidney Fuhlman. In the same year the big Crystal
Motion Picture House — used very little by the non-professional
performers — opened in Shreveport. O. E. Wilder built the Woodbine
Theatre in Homer in 1920, and the Community Theatre opened in Donald-
sonville in 1921.
In the early years of the century, many of the school auditoriums were inadequate in size and equipment for the production of plays. Some halls had nothing more than a platform and a temporary curtain at the end of the room. Oftentimes it was necessary for schools to rent the nearest theatre or townhall in order to hold their graduating exercises or other presentations.

In spite of these difficulties, the private and public schools throughout the state gave the greatest number of stage productions. The teachers worked with the student actors toward the promotion and better understanding of the performing arts. Among the plays directed by R. F. Cisco at Lake Charles High School was a 1910 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. During the same year in North Louisiana, Anthony Blanks introduced the policy of producing plays at the Monroe City High School when he presented the students in a performance of *The Coed*. Later on, throughout World War I and after, Mrs. Minnie Ruffin, a history teacher in the Monroe City School, developed an interest in drama among the students. She produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with her students in 1917. E. S. Carver of Thibodaux High School was the director for the school dramatic club which was called *The Progressive Thespians* (1913). Mrs. Mattie Kennedy was very active in local theatre in Crowley during the earlier years of the century and later assisted the students of the high school with their plays. Interest created in drama by Mrs. Kennedy undoubtedly carried over into the plays done by Mrs. W. T. Culpepper, who directed the Crowley High School production of J. M. Barrie's *Quality Street* in 1922, and Mrs. J. W. Lewis'...
production of *Clarence* by Booth Tarkington in 1923. Others whose efforts promoted drama in the high schools are D. Zena Thomson of Lake Charles, R. E. Crump of Lafayette, Yolanda Whitfield of St. Martinville and Franklin, Ruth Voss of Bogalusa, Mrs. Felix Samson of Abbeville, Sue Willis of Homer, Mrs. E. B. Green of Rayville, and Pearl Pryor of Shreveport.

In the high schools covered by this study, the first senior class play and the first dramatic club were in 1904 and 1912 respectively. Lake Charles High School seniors produced *The Albany Depot* as their class play in 1904; E. S. Carver organized the Progressive Thespians, a drama club, at Thibodaux High School in 1912.

Whatever status dramatics may have in the secondary school program today, it is the vision, ability, and enthusiasm of many teachers and students who laid permanent foundations in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Often working in isolation and under incredible difficulties, teachers in charge of the early dramatic programs brought dignity and artistic integrity to 'amateur theatricals' and made the study and practice of the arts of the theatre an important tool in the education of American youth.2

State colleges and universities operating before 1925 were

Louisiana State University, at Baton Rouge; Louisiana State Normal School, at Natchitoches; Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, at Ruston; and Southwestern Louisiana Institute, at Lafayette. Each of these schools was actively producing dramas with their students. Two of

the above institutions had touring troupes: the Dramatic Club of Louisiana State University played throughout the state in 1913 and again in 1919, and "The Strollers," a touring company from Southwestern Louisiana Institute, presented plays in the southern part of the state in the 1920's. The Louisiana State University group, under the supervision of John Q. Adams and Mrs. E. P. Flowers, presented such plays as Sir Arthur W. Pinero's Trelawney of the Wells, Augustus Thomas' The Earl of Pawtucket, All of a Sudden Peggy, by Ernest Denny, and The Prince Chap. "The Strollers" performed in two of George Broadhurst's plays, What Happened to Jones and Why Smith Left Home. Other plays which were given by Southwestern Louisiana Institute were The Merchant of Venice in 1902, Monsieur Beaucaire by Booth Tarkington also in 1902, Bourgeois Gentlehomme by Moliere in 1908, and She Stoops to Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith in 1910. Louisiana Polytechnic presented Shakespeare's Twelfth Night in 1922, and Sheridan's The Rivals in 1923. The Dramatic Club of Louisiana State Normal, directed by Mary Frances Davis, offered Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest in 1925.

Several titles continually appeared on programs through this study: The Old Maids' Convention, The Deestrick School, The Tom Thumb Wedding and The Womanless Wedding. These shows could be described best as a kind of Commedia del Arte presentation with a core story flexible enough to suit various casts and production situations. The scripts were such that they could be done easily with minimum rehearsal time. On occasions the productions were promoted and performed by townspeople
under the direction of itinerant stage managers.

Trained stage directors came into Louisiana from several sources. The Wayne P. Sewell Lyceum and Producing Company, of Atlanta, Georgia, produced light musical plays such as *The Microbe of Love, Mr. and Mrs. Polly Tickk, and The Flapper Grandmother*; the John B. Rogers Producing Company used local talent in its productions of *Hoop La, All Aboard, Springtime, Rosetime, and Katchakoo*; the Connella-Kromer Company produced *A Rustic Romeo*, and The Miller and Draper Company worked with fraternal orders and other groups to present minstrels. The Sedgwick family played *The American Indian* and *The Chief's Revenge* in Southern Louisiana. They acted the leading roles and used local talent for the minor parts.

Within the state, Jacques de Castillo asserted a stimulating influence on amateur dramatics by touring and presenting his original plays at the high schools. Castillo first appeared on the non-professional scene in Abbeville in 1912 where he produced his script, *Royal Runaway*. During the war he was not active in Louisiana dramatics, but after 1918 he continued his work with the high schools. He produced his plays—*The Flying Moon, The Red Prince, The Love Nest, Yankee Doodle Girl, and The Bynum Gate*—throughout the state, and was still directing and performing in them in 1925 when this study ends. Undoubtedly de Castillo helped influence some of the smaller high schools to become more interested in a drama program. Schools such as St. Joseph High School, Tallulah High School, and Rayville High School, were always anxious for a return visit by Castillo.
Castillo’s plays were not the only ones written and produced in the state. A number of other local authors also created scripts for the Louisiana stage. George B. Pinchers of Shreveport wrote two plays: *The School Master of Pleasant Valley* and *The Return of John Bruce*. Mrs. Mary Crawford, also of Shreveport, produced a musical show, *Fulford-by-the-Sea*. Iva Mae Pearce, Doris De Witt, and Nedra Cromwell — students at Louisiana State Normal — adapted three stories for the stage: *In Sabine, Madame De Lisle, and Christmas Eve in a Logging Camp*. In Covington, Deeden Williams wrote *Echoes from Childhood*, and Joseph D. Clifton wrote *The Little Red Lady and Her Life for His*. Herbert Dickard and Pat Whittington of Monroe co-authored a musical show, *Billy*. Two Jennings High School students, Francis Gill and Camille Hunter created *The X Y Z Affair*.

Native theatre enthusiasts organized dramatic clubs in the towns of Louisiana before World War I. Abbeville, Covington, Crowley, Opelousas, Pineville, Plaquemine, and Shreveport had drama groups organized before 1900 which continued to function after the turn of the century. Similar associations were formed by communities early in the new century. Usually the organizations possessed a president, a secretary, a treasurer, and a director who was often called the stage manager. The dramatic club membership was limited to those who participated in or contributed to the production of the plays put on by the group. The Thibodaux Dramatic Club was formed in 1901 with Dr. H. S. Smith as president. W. T. Grant was the president of the newly organized Jefferson Dramatic Club of New Iberia in 1901. The Enterprise
Dramatic Club began in Covington in 1902 with thirty-six members. In Thibodaux, Joseph A. Trone managed a club for young people called the Dixie Dramatic Company which began in 1902. The Crescent Dramatic Club was organized in Crowley in 1902 under the management of James L. Wright. Dr. J. A. Richard headed The Plaquemine Vaudeville Company of 1905. Under the guidance of Professor and Mrs. William T. Luck, The Junior Dramatic Club of Thibodaux was formed in 1910. The Shreveport Dramatic Club, directed by H. A. Peterman, Jr., began in 1913. In 1920, The Monroe Dramatic Club was organized with Mrs. Minnie Ruffin as the director. Julia Rogers started The Theatre Guild of Shreveport in 1922. T. M. Callahan was chairman of the Lafayette Theatre Guild when it began in 1925.

The most significant changes in the manner in which non-commercial theatre groups functioned in Louisiana after the first World War came through the development of the Little Theatre movement. The idea arrived in this country from Europe and took root as early as 1911. In that year three Little Theatres were established: The Little Theatre of Maurice Brown in Chicago; Mrs. Lyman Gale's Toy Theatre in Boston, and the Winthrop Ames Little Theatre in New York. The movement had its rise in Louisiana during 1916-1917, when the Little Theatre was formed in New Orleans. Other communities followed New Orleans and organized theatres of a similar nature. Lafayette, Morgan City, New

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Iberia, Shreveport, and Baton Rouge had Little Theatres. The Lafayette Little Theatre originated in 1922 with Odeide Mouton as president. The Teche Players of Morgan City organized in 1921, and Mrs. Amelia Ryan of Berwick was the first director. New Iberia formed the Community Players in 1922 under the direction of Mrs. Perry Burke and Herman Hauser. To Julia Rogers must go the credit for the Shreveport Little Theatre (not included in this study) which began in 1922.

These new associations differed from earlier drama clubs, which held sway in Louisiana since the days following the Civil War, in that the principal purpose of the Little Theatre was to perform for the love of the art. Little Theatres did not give plays primarily to benefit other organizations. They did not offer the cheaper non-royalty plays just to save money, nor did they do the classics to the exclusion of other good literature. The movement was one of experimentation, and gave life to many of the one-act plays by new writers, such as Suppressed Desires by Susan Glaspell, Sham by Frank G. Tompkins and The Potboilers by Alice Gerstenberg. This period of time was the high point of one-act play production in Louisiana as well as in the rest of the country.

The last few years of this study is a period of the spectacular historical pageants, forerunners of the modern symphonic dramas, a term created by Paul Green, author of The Lost Colony, who, in 1937, said that the word "pageant" had become "death at the box office."

The symphonic dramas and the earlier pageants had one thing in common; they were both produced on the land where their stories originally happened. Lafayette, New Iberia, Shreveport, and Monroe celebrated
their pasts with such productions. The History of Lafayette Parish, presented in 1923 in Lafayette, was directed by Nina B. Lamkin. The Pageant of the Attakapas Country, given in New Iberia in 1922, was under the direction of H. D. Schubert. Edna Keith directed two pageants in 1922—The Pelican's Flight in Shreveport and Don Juan's Dream in Monroe—and another in Monroe in 1923, America's Review.

Out of the first quarter of the twentieth century came the experimental and pioneer work done by teachers and others in order to develop an appreciation for the drama in Louisiana. Alba Heywood, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Clifton, Charles Ohlmeyer, and Jacques de Castillo were professional theatre people who lived among and worked with local talent of Louisiana, setting standards of excellence envied by the less experienced actors. From these early efforts of the local players, the foundations were laid for the community player groups, the civic theatre organizations, and the little theatres of Louisiana in mid-century.

The period from 1900 through 1925 was one of transition and progress for the non-professional theatre in Louisiana, delayed only slightly by World War I. Stimulating these changes were the construction of buildings with better auditoriums and stage facilities, the growth of the motion picture industry, the availability of trained stage directors and drama teachers, and the development of the community and little theatre movements. Moving from the rather clumsily organized vacillating dramatic clubs, which had little faith in their own abilities or in the value of the art they served, through the many struggling high school and college dramatic clubs, to the beginnings of the little
theatre idea, the amateur performer began to realize the true worth of his avocation.
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George Craft Brian, Jr. was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on July 16, 1919. He became a student at Louisiana State University in 1938 and worked toward a degree in speech education. Beginning in 1941, he served four years in the Signal Corp Radio Intelligence. In 1947, he returned to L.S.U. and completed his undergraduate work. That same year he taught at Jefferson Military College in Washington, Mississippi. The following year he went back to L.S.U. to study for a master's degree in speech, which he received in June, 1951. From 1948 to 1951, he was the director for the Baton Rouge Civic Theatre. In 1952-53 he held a position with the Baton Rouge Better Business Bureau. The position was terminated when he went to Northeast Louisiana State College, Monroe, Louisiana, as an assistant professor of speech. He has remained with the college until the present time and was promoted to full professor in 1963. He is a candidate for degree of Doctor of Philosophy in January, 1965.
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Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: The Non-Professional Theatre in Louisiana 1900 - 1925

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Date of Examination:

January 13, 1965