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Language Maintenance and Shift in a Bayou Community.

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Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN

A BAYOU COMMUNITY

A Thesis

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
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by

Maida Owens Bergeron
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1975
August, 1978
MANUSCRIPT THESIS

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I would like to thank the many people who helped me during the year. I thank the present and past residents of Four Miles Bayou who so kindly allowed me to talk with them. In particular, I thank Frere and Margie Bailey, T-Ed Bailey, the late J. P. Diaz, Cleve Aucoin, T-Man Bailey and his mother, Caroline Daigle Bailey. Special thanks to Lucille Bailey Gros who so kindly allowed me to stay with her with so little notice, and to my parents-in-law, Mae and Calvin Bergeron who were so patient with me.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF MAPS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and Setting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early History and Settlement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Life, 1880 to 1930</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies of Change</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Update</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Model and the Situation in Louisiana</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency of Four Mile Bayou Residents</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Geneological Chart</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Generations in the Bailey Family with Number of Persons</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Language Fluency Categories</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Types of Bilinguals</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Age Distribution of Family Members in Four Generations, 1977</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Birthplace of Family Members</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Residence of Family Members, 1977</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Education Level of Family Members</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Map Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Atchafalaya Basin</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Lake Verret Region</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Four Mile Bayou, 1940</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Community of Four Mile Bayou viii
2. Four Mile Bayou. Some families prefer mobile homes. viii
3. T-Man Bailey's store on Four Mile Bayou. ix
4. Attakapas Landing. ix
Four Mile Bayou is a fishing community on the boundary between Assumption and Lower St. Martin parishes near Lake Verret. In the past forty years, the community has felt the impact of modernization. After 1930, many residents moved away because they wanted access to roads, electricity, and schools for their children. Many abandoned fishing and other traditional occupations and moved into nearby towns. Today, only ten fishermen remain in the south Lake Verret region and only ten original households are still on Four Mile Bayou.

This thesis investigates the effects that modernization has had upon fluency in French and English among the former and present residents by examining one extended family in detail. Language is not a strong ethnic marker in this community since the early settlers were from diverse linguistic backgrounds. In the face of modernization, the residents readily adopted English, since English does not threaten their ethnic identities as Cajuns. Cajun culture consists of more than the French language. Today only a few children under the age of twenty who were raised on Four Mile Bayou speak or understand French, but all residents consider themselves Cajuns.
Photograph 1. Community of Four Mile Bayou

Photograph 2. Four Mile Bayou. Some families prefer mobile homes.
Photograph 3. T-Man Bailey's store on Four Mile Bayou

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Four Mile Bayou, a settlement near Lake Verret, is small today, but in the past, it was a thriving fishing community of more than thirty five households. At times, this group of isolated close knit families conjure up a romantic picture of idyllic contentment, full of the "joie de vivre" so often attributed to Cajuns. At the same time, the visitor gets a feeling that this was a community where rough, almost pirate like men found a refuge on the edge of civilization. Both of these images are felt as one traces the history of the community. However, the harsh reality is that Four Mile Bayou is a community of poor, hardworking men and women trying to make the most of their lives. They shared in the American dream and eagerly accepted modernization.

By 1880, a fishing and trapping economy had developed in the Atchafalaya Basin, and people from various backgrounds came to the basin to participate in that economy. The settlers, who were primarily Caucasian, settled on the natural ridges along the bayous winding through the basin. Four Mile Bayou is an example of a Cajun community composed of people from different ancestories who were absorbed by the Cajuns and became culturally French. Many of the residents' names are English, Spanish or German, but all consider themselves Cajuns. Cajuns are the descendants of the Acadian settlers in south Louisiana, but they are also from ethnic groups that settled among them. Spaniards, from Spain, the
Canary Islands, and the Caribbean; French, directly from Europe and the Caribbean; Germans, Scots, Irish and Americans were absorbed by the Acadians. The predominate language in the community of Four Mile Bayou was French, although English, Spanish, and to a lesser extent, German were spoken during the early history of the community.

The purpose of this thesis is to document the changes that occurred in the community of Four Mile Bayou and to describe the shift from French to English as a response to modernization. This thesis demonstrates that language is not a strong ethnic marker among this group of Cajuns since many languages had always been spoken in the community and the people learned to be flexible concerning language. Cajun identity is based upon more than the French language, therefore when modernization encouraged adoption of English, these Cajuns did not view the language shift as a threat to their ethnic identity. The introduction of English language public education in 1935 had the most direct affect on the language in the community. Most families abandoned French or retained it only in the home.

This study is not a linguistic or sociolinguistic one. It does not concern itself with the dialects of French nor the actual use of French, but rather the fluency in French and English of the residents, i.e., whether or not a person is capable of carrying on a conversation in French and/or English. Fluency was not subdivided into varying degrees of ability, but one other factor was investigated -- whether a person could understand
the spoken language, yet was not fluent in it. The data are based upon the informants' responses to questioning in English, but as only three people in the community are unable to speak English, the use of English by the investigator was not a problem. Literacy in either language was not investigated.

To be able to statistically describe the language maintenance and shift among all the former residents of Four Mile Bayou, it would have been necessary to reconstruct the entire community at an arbitrary date, an impractical if not impossible task because the population had dispersed throughout Louisiana. As a microcosm of the community, one extended family was traced.

Several types of resources were utilized to reconstruct the historical background. The most important resource was the memories of the older residents. Intensive interviews and participant observation provided the most enjoyable phase of the research. Reception by the informants was particularly warm, partially because I am related by marriage to one of the families. Thirty interviews were necessary to collect the information concerning this one family. Parents provided all information about their children. Another fifty-four people provided the historical background and thirty hours of tapes were recorded. The courthouse records of Assumption and St. Martin helped fill in some of the gaps, such as dates. The Catholic church records of St. Joseph the Worker in Pierre Part, of Sacred Heart in Morgan City, and of St. Ann in Napoleonville enabled a partial reconstruction of the settlement of the community. At times, these records
were difficult to use since many names were written as they were pronounced, but they are still invaluable. Father Toups in Pierre Part and Father Souby in Morgan City kept thorough and immaculate records. Air photos taken by the United States government in 1940 and 1952 reveal former home sites in the community. Part of the community does not yet have a road and a boat was required to reach some of the residents.
Map 1. The Atchafalaya Basin (Comeaux 1972).
CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
Location and Setting

Four Mile Bayou forms part of the boundary between St. Martin and Assumption parishes near Lake Verret (See maps 1, 2, and 3). Being split between two parishes has hindered the development of the community since neither parish wants to provide services for residents of another parish. Nearby is a small bayou called the Gannevait, sometimes spelled Geneve and pronounced [gə:nə:və] that is the home of one extended family. Bayou Magazille, often written Maxile and pronounced [mə:zlə] or [mɑ:g ə:zlə] has always been sparsely inhabited. Cancienne Canal, also called Bayou Crab, dug in 1905 to help drain the plantations along Bayou Lafourche, provided a water route from Lake Verret to Bayou Lafourche for the fishermen to buy supplies and sell goods (Davis 1973:184). Bayou Felix is uninhabited and in the past was used for gardens by surrounding communities. The settlements of Four Mile Bayou and the Gannevait are part of a larger community around the southern end of Lake Verret. Other settlements in the area include Bayou Long, Bayou Louis, Attakapas Landing, and the "brulee" settlements of Upper Texas and Lower Texas. (The "brulees" are the natural high points in the swamp.) The old French residents of these communities call the settlements by the name of the bayou on which they are located. More recent
English speakers call the settlements by another name; for example, Bayou Long becomes Stephensville, and Bayou Boeuf becomes Amelia.

These settlements are in the western part of Assumption and the lower section of St. Martin parishes. Formerly, this entire area was known as the Assumption interior. Four main areas of the interior were settled: Pierre Part, the largest settlement on the north of Lake Verret; the settlements around Belle River; the southern Lake Verret region; and Bayou Boeuf near Morgan City. Most of these settlements were on the high ridges along the bayous with swamp surrounding them and since they had to be reached by water, they remained isolated.

Bayou Lafourche is known as the Front. These two terms, the Front and especially the Interior, are presently not generally known or used among younger residents of the parish. Between Lake Verret and Bayou Lafourche are natural high points in the low swampland called "brulees" which were also settled: Brusly St. Martin, Brusly St. Vincent, Upper Texas and Lower Texas. These communities also remained relatively isolated without roads.

The interior could be reached by land, by going north of Lake Verret to Pierre Part and by water to the south through the Attakapas Canal, which dates back to the Spanish regime between 1763 and 1800 (See map 2). It was intended as an alternate route to the Attakapas country to the west, the former name of the Teche area. Bayou Plaquemine was a more important route, but this bayou was often blocked by logs (Robin 1807:183-184).
A natural bayou was extended to connect Lake Verret with Bayou Lafourche where the present town of Napoleonville is. People quickly settled along the Canal and a road was built. But the Canal remained only a minor route because problems developed. An early traveler complained that the Canal entrance,

"is less in line with the rivers current. The canal opens into the bayou and is about 200 paces long, but it is still not oblique enough to the current and still is subject to blocking by driftwood as scouring action of the current enlarges it. It should have been dug further down stream, at a more oblique angle with the river. I had the misfortune to arrive two to three hours after the current had dropped, for the canal is quite shallow. I therefore, had to unload the boat to put it, empty, over the pile of driftwood in the entrance by sliding, with the aid of a great number of people, and a block and tackle at the grave risk of puncturing it. The unloaded objects had to be carried in carts to the boat. This took several days and cost a great deal of trouble and expense" (Robin 1807:183-184).

In 1811, the right to operate a ferry for seven years was granted to Henry Rentrope. The ferry ran through Lake Plat, Palourde, De Jone, and Verret and a passenger paid a fee of four dollars, and a man and horse paid twelve. Then in 1817, the privilege was transferred to Fredrick Rentrope of Assumption and Henry Knight of St. Mary (Prichard, Kniffen, and Brown 1945:781fn). During the same year, Brackenridge (1814:171) passed through the canal and described it.

"The route to the Opelousas and to the Attakapas, is either by Plaquemine, as before mentioned, or by the ferry of la Fourche. This is also the route in time of high water, to Rapides or Natchitoches, for persons going by land. I rode along the lower bayou la Fourche about twenty-five miles, then crossed over to the outlet of a small bayou, 15 or 20 feet wide, called the Canal, from its having been somewhat improved by labor, and forming a convenient communication with the lakes, and the Teche. Following this
bayou or canal about fifteen miles, I came to the ferry kept by a German, who has the exclusive right from the state, on condition of keeping suitable accommodations. Here I embarked, in the evening on a platform erected on two large canoes, with a railing in the middle for the purpose of confining our horses, and after passing through Lake Platte, and several other lakes and bayou, landed about three o'clock next morning, two miles up the Teche. The distance twenty-three miles."

Darby (1817) mentions that "along the right bank of the canal a road has been opened. This canal and road now forms the great throughfare to the Opelousas, Attakapas and many other places west of the delta of the Mississippi. . . . The mail is also conveyed weekly by this route and seldom fails." The Attakapas Canal could have been improved and developed into a major route, but this was not attempted for political reasons. Pugh (1888) reported that "after a few years the water passing through this channel was found to be injurious to the plantations situated on its banks and the canal after great opposition, was closed by order of the police jury." By 1862, the Attakapas Canal "had passed into oblivion and only the memories of its appearance lingered" (Chapman 1956:95). Today, even though only a faint depression remains where the canal once was, the area retained the name, The Canal and is considered a separate community. At the end of the Canal Road is a small, more recent community, Attakapas Landing.
Early History and Settlement

Even though the Attakapas Canal and Rentrope's ferry brought many travelers through the Atchafalaya swamp, the bayous were practically uninhabited before 1830. The few descriptions of the swamp written by early travelers rarely mention anyone living there and any settlement was worthy of mention since any settlers at this time were squatters. The Federal government owned all swamplands in the United States and in Assumption parish, which meant that all land behind the fortieth arpent line following Bayou Lafourche was owned by the government.

The original inhabitants of the swamp were the Chitimacha Indians. Originally, their territory was bounded by Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Teche and the Gulf of Mexico. But by 1707, they had begun to retreat into the remote parts of their territory. In 1784, they had one village on Bayou Lafourche and two on the Teche (Swanton 1946:199-220). By 1882, the Indians were culturally the same as the French surrounding them (Gatschet 1883). Today, the remaining Indians live at Charenton on Bayou Teche. The Chitimaches indirectly influenced the settlers in terms of helping them locate the high points as home sites and giving them some of the technology of swamp life, but the present day residents of the bayous are unaware of the Indian influence. Few stories concerning the Indians are remembered.

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1Arpent - An old French system of measurement used in Louisiana in which one arpent equals 193 feet.
Few references are found concerning the earliest European settlers of the interior. One was "a certain Moreau", who was among the first settlers in Assumption parish, but the date of his arrival is not reported. Moreau "died on Lake Verret. His life was a mystery. On his arrival in the parish [Assumption] he retired from all society and lived thirty years alone on Lac Verret, which was then only known to a few hunters" (LeBlanc 1850:288).

In 1819, James Cathcart surveyed the area for the United States Navy. Cathcart called the land east of Bayou Milhomme and west of Four Mile Bayou Lafourche Island, a name that was not adopted by others. Cathcart reported that this island was inhabited and that "there [were] several plantations on it [but] whose possessors [were] said to have no title to the lands" (Prichard, Kniffen, and Brown 1945:833,887).

In 1849, when the Federal government gave ownership of the swamplands to the states, Louisiana received 10,210,122.58 acres in 1849 and 543,339.13 acres in 1850 (Melton 1948). With Act 248 of 1852, the Federal government authorized the states to sell the swamplands to individuals who homesteaded the land. An individual could purchase from 640 to 40 acres at the price of $1.25 per acre. The homestead law was intended to prevent large timber companies from gaining control of vast acreages, but in Louisiana several companies bought land by fraud. The records show several men who bought land on Four Mile Bayou between 1852 and 1856, but it cannot be determined if they actually lived
The Timber Act of 1876 repealed the Homestead Act of 1866 and the swamplands were opened for legal timbering (Norgress 1947). In 1878, the Louisiana State Legislature gave all swamplands belonging to the state to the police juries of the parishes with the stipulation that the funds procured from the sale of the land must be used to levee and reclaim the land.

By 1850, people had begun to settle the interior bayous of Assumption to grow sugarcane. LeBlanc (1850:288) comments that many of the bayous were inhabited. The western side of Four Mile Bayou was one of these early sites (Comeaux 1972:18). Romain Daigle is recorded in the biennial Statement of the Sugar Crop as having produced ten hogsheads of sugar in 1861 on Four Mile Bayou. All that is known of this plantation is that Daigle had a wooden sugar house which was operated by horse (Bouchereau 1861-1862). The older present day residents are unaware that this plantation existed on Four Mile Bayou. Some do recall the remnants of a second sugar plantation that is not recorded in the Statement of the Sugar Crop. The foundation of a syrup mill remains today on the Blanchard property, known to the residents as the Aucoin place. Confusion exists concerning the official name of this plantation. The residents of Four Mile Bayou say the name was Hot Times Plantation, but in the Napoleonville courthouse, it is recorded that between 1867 and 1875 "a certain sugar plantation, known as the Hard Times Plantation [was] situated in the parish of
Assumption on the western shore of Lake Verret between Bayou Maxile and Four Miles" (Alleman 1936). At that time the boundary between St. Martin and Assumption was Bayou Long, not Four Mile Bayou as it is today. This plantation should not be confused with another Hard Times plantation located on Bayou Lafourche. In 1873, Lockett who was conducting a geographical survey of the state, noted that on

"the western side of Lake Verret...are found some extensive and well improved farms. The eastern shore of this lake contains a few scattered settlements whose inhabitants are engaged in fishing, hunting and timber getting" (Lockett 1969:113).

But these farms did not last long on Four Mile Bayou, and for the residents growing up at the turn of the century, the plantations were merely stories told to them.

Agriculture began to decline in the Atchafalaya Basin primarily because the annual floods were getting worse. In 1874, one year after Lockett passed through the area, a particularly bad flood occurred and convinced many farmers to give up agriculture. With the increased flooding, the sugarcane became inferior with a slightly salty taste. A few farmers in the northern portion of the swamp continued, but to the south, all farms were abandoned.

The area gradually changed to a hunting and gathering economy. The Negroes who had been slaves on the plantations, left the Atchafalaya leaving only white communities, which is still true at present. The swamp provided an abundance of natural resources that could easily be harvested -- fish, crabs, cypress, moss, and others. Fishing could be easily learned by newcomers and it
required relatively little initial cash investment. As an informant stated, "anyone could make some kind of a living fishing -- even if he didn't know anything about it."

Louisiana was trying to attract settlers during this time and several books and pamphlets were written encouraging people to come and benefit from the state's abundance. In one such book, one finds the potential cypress industry described,

"There are large bodies of land in the interior of the parish [Assumption] densely covered with fine cypress, at this time a little inconvenient of access, but as the timber now near at hand is being rapidly consumed these swamps in the near future must necessarily become very valuable. The timber business offers a large field for industry and enterprise for lower Louisiana of necessity deals largely in building materials, pickets, barrels, and hogshead staves and shingles" (Harris 1881:106).

The lumber companies brought many men from the North to work in the swamps and others came on their own. Many of these lumbermen married into the local families and became Cajuns (Southern Lumberman, August 15, 1895:4).

Abundance was not the only aspect of swamp life that lured people. The settlers also valued their independence. The fisherman, trapper, or swamper worked for himself and took no orders from a boss, unlike the plantation worker on Bayou Lafourche. He determined when and if he should work. To this day, the fishermen are very independent, and their lack of an organized union can be attributed to this fact.

The isolation that the interior bayous offered was also desirable to some people. Before the roads began to penetrate
in 1924, the interior was practically inaccessible especially in winter. Communities that were only a few miles away had little contact when only a trail connected them or when one had to row a boat. Many informants remembered that no one ever bothered them. Rent was not collected, and few paid taxes; as a result, few people from outside the communities were seen.

Crimes such as theft were practically unknown; but this is not to say that crime was non-existent. The swamp had another aspect to it. It was also a refuge located beyond the reach of the law. One person felt that it was uncivilized when compared to the area along Bayou Lafourche. Stories are told of the knife fights and brawlings that sometimes occurred between two settlements. Communities and individuals had reputations as fighters, and whenever two communities got together, particularly Bayou Long and Four Mile Bayou for a dance, a fight seemed inevitable. When fights occurred, they were usually settled among those involved. The sheriff came only when someone went to get him or when a death occurred.

Several scholars have emphasized that people were pushed into the swamp as the only place left that they could go rather than as a place that they were attracted to (Parenton 1938) and (Sparks 1872). They maintain that as Americans bought the prime quality land to consolidate and form large plantations, the poorer small farmer or "petit habitant" who feared debt, sold out, and moved farther and farther from Bayou Lafourche. The "petit habitant," following the pattern of his ancestors in Acadia,
purchased land of inferior quality and became even poorer. This theory assumes that the inhabitants of the swamp had previously lived on the Front or in the "brulees." It also assumes that the people living along Bayou Lafourche were a homogeneous group and that the people in question were peasants of Acadian descent. This particular area of Bayou Lafourche, the northern half, received many settlers from different areas. It is not as "Acadian" as the Teche area. Many Spanish settlers arrived in 1778 and 1789 from the Canary Island and from Cuba in 1809. Frenchmen came directly from Europe and not necessarily from a peasant background. Many "Mericains" of Irish, Scotch, and English backgrounds, who were not wealthy planters, moved in (Smith and Parenton 1938) and later the area received many Italians. Certainly land pressure was a factor in the settling of the interior, but other factors were also important. The settlers were not only pushed into the swamp, they were attracted to it. The interior bayous offered the poor man an opportunity to break out of the social hierarchy of the Front and work for himself. Gilmore (1933:79) emphasizes the opportunities available in the swamp. A description of some of the early settlers help to illustrate this point.

The settlers of Four Mile Bayou came from diverse backgrounds. Some were well educated, while others were not. Some were French such as Aucoin [o kwa], Daigle [dej], Daigre [dej] or [degr], two different Gros families [gro], Parré [pa re], and
Thibodeaux [θi bə do]. Only Aucoin, Daigle and Thibodeaux are Acadian names, the others came directly from France or other French areas (Arsenault 1966:233,227) (LeBlanc 1966:383,418). The other names were not French. Acosta [a kɔ sə] is Spanish. Some of the residents use the French forms Lacosta [lakɔ stə], Lacoste [lakɔ st], and Acoste [akɔ st]. They are all considered to be the same name, but in French or Spanish. Different families chose to have it written differently when they first became literate. Bailey is English but pronounced in French [be li]; Ohmer [o mər] is English; Solar [so lar] is of undetermined descent; and Wiggins [wɪ ɡɪn] is the anglicized form of an unknown German name. These eleven major stem families settled on Four Mile Bayou and remained there at least until the 1930s. Several other names can be found in the church records listing Four Mile Bayou as their residence, but these early settlers did not remain on Four Mile Bayou as long as the other families. Because they were isolated, the early residents tended to marry people from Four Mile Bayou or nearby communities. Marriages between first and second cousins was not uncommon and several times two or more brothers married sisters.

Throughout the Atchafalaya, a considerable number of families have periodically moved looking for better fishing spots. The campboat made this particularly easy. The general pattern was for a young man to marry, settle on Four Mile Bayou, and raise six

2Phonetic transcriptions are based on IPA (1949).
to twelve children. Some of the children in each generation would leave. Some would stay to fish.

The major families on Four Mile Bayou did not come at one time, but rather they settled gradually. Which family arrived first is unknown. Family tradition and the birth records in the churches are the only way of determining the order of the settlement of Four Mile Bayou.

At least two families came shortly before or after the Civil War, the Daigres and the Wiggons. Sned G. Daigre (later changed to Daigle) was born in 1847 and died in 1927. He settled on Four Mile Bayou to grow sugarcane sometime before 1870. Possibly, he was the Romain Daigle mentioned before or related to him. Often the names in the records are misspelled, written the way they sound, or simply wrong. Anyway, his sugarcane attempt failed and he began cutting cypress. Before the days of the lumber companies' pullboats, he would buy a piece of land, cut the cypress, drag it out of the swamp with only the aid of bull or mule, and sell the logs to a mill. S. G. Daigre, an educated man who read French and English, had a set of medical books, and called himself an Indian doctor. He wrote prescriptions for the people living nearby. S. G. Daigle married seven times and had twelve children, only three of whom remained on Four Mile Bayou to raise their families.

Robert Wiggons, another early settler, was born in 1839 in Germany and came to New York City around 1856. In order to anglicize his German name, he adopted the name Wiggons. After
drifting south, he married a Gauthreaux from Morgan City and settled on Four Mile Bayou. Robert Wiggons never did learn to speak French very well, but was educated in German and English and corresponded with his family in Germany until his death in 1927. His primary occupation was cutting cypress, but his children became fishermen.

Another man, Cleveland Aucoin's father, had worked on a Kitteredge plantation for forty cents a day. Then, sometime before 1900, he moved to Upper Texas, a "brulee." A lumber company's pullboat was operating in the area so he worked for the boat for twenty cents per log that he had pulled out of the swamp. By doing this he could make from two to three dollars a day and was able to get his start. He bought some land and began trapping.

Oscar Gros, moved from Choupic around 1875 to Upper Texas. Since at that time, only a trail led to this "brulee" settlement, he hauled on his back the lumber for a house and a small store. Later one of his sons, Cyprien Gros took over the store; expanded it; and started peddling goods to the fishing communities on a boat. Another son, Alcee Gros, married Louisiana Acosta from the Canal and moved to Four Mile Bayou around 1895 to fish. Later around 1921, Alcee Gros also opened a store on Four Mile Bayou and his son, Shelby, later took it over. Alcee and Louisiane Gros had seven children, all of whom stayed on Four Mile Bayou to fish.

The date that V. A. or Vilior Aucoin moved from Napoleonville to be overseer of the Blanchard sugar plantation
cannot be determined. He also pulled cypress out of the swamp and at one time was growing rice on Prestonbach Island, the section of land between Lake Verret and Bayou Magazile. He married Elma Boudreaux and had thirteen children, five of whom stayed on the Bayou.

Sometime before 1875, two brothers, Joseph and Hypolite Daigle settled on Four Mile Bayou to fish. Joseph married Leah Hebert, not from the area, and had six children all of whom stayed in the area. Hypolite Daigle married Marie Landry from Little Texas and had twelve children, three of which stayed there.

Other early settlers living on Four Mile Bayou between 1880 and 1893 were: Louis Gros, who married Marcellite Acosta, known as Manique from the Canal and owned land on the Gannevait; Edmond Gros; Marcellin Solar who married a Carter girl and lived on the Blanchard property; Antoine Parré, who married Elizabeth Acosta; Ureslin Thibodaux (possibly the English name Eugene), and his wife Marie Simmons from Lower Texas; Edmond Ohmer and his five children; Aristide Acosta, who married Philomena Kern from the Canal and lived on the Canal Road near the present day Attakapas Landing; and Victorin Bailey, who is discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Description of Life, 1880-1930

After agriculture was abandoned in the Atchafalaya Basin, a fishing, gathering, and trapping economy developed that remained stable until after the Atchafalaya levee system was constructed. Annual flooding created an ideal habitat for fish, fur-bearing animals, cypress, frogs, turtles, and Spanish moss.

After the raft on the Red River was removed, the Upper Atchafalaya rapidly enlarged. But the Lower Atchafalaya, the part that had not been cleared and dredged, could not handle the increased volume of water. This situation resulted in annual flooding of "land previously exempt from overflow" (Mississippi River Commission 1881). High water came three months every year -- April, May, and June, and usually peaking in May. The worst flood came in May 1927 when the water was seven feet above normal in this area. The water stood on the Canal Road six of its eleven miles (Assumption Pioneer May 28, 1927). The residents had plenty of warning and on May 21, 1927 an evacuation was begun by gas boats, houseboats, and barges to remove all personal belongings. Only a few families living in campboats did not leave their houses and the flood in this area caused no deaths. Hundreds of people poured into Napoleonville, where one of the Red Cross refugee camps was located. The Assumption Pioneer reported that "few people realized how many people lived in the lowlands of the Atchafalaya. For one solid week there [was] a steady stream of people and their cattle and belongings coming to this town"
(June 4, 1927:1). The water finally receded by July 30, 1927, ten weeks after evacuation.

Most settlers on Four Mile Bayou were commercial fishermen, but many other occupations were possible in the basin and an individual combined the possible occupations to his liking. At different times of the year, different "swamp crops" were harvested and an individual did not necessarily follow the same pattern each year. The primary occupations were fishing, crabbing, trapping, and cutting cypress or swamping as the local people call it. Secondary occupations include frogging, moss collecting and curing, and hunting alligators, turtles, deer, and duck.

Fishing was by far the primary economic activity on Four Mile Bayou. The most important fish in the area were catfish, buffalo, gaspergou, and garfish. The fishermen were paid three to five cents per pound during the depression and presently receive approximately fifty cents per pound for some rough or undressed fish and thirty seven cents per pound for catfish. Some wives helped their husbands fish, and children began running the lines at an early age. The men would have to get up at one o'clock in the morning to begin baiting the lines and setting them up. They often stayed on the water until ten in the morning or later. The fishermen say that today no one works hard like that anymore. Today only ten fishermen are still fishing in the south Lake Verret area (Bailey 1978).

During the summer, the fishermen and some wives also crabbed. Often they spent the entire night on the water since the crabs
bite during the cool of the night. Crabs sold for five cents per dozen during the depression and presently sell for two to three dollars per dozen live and three dollars a pound for picked crab meat.

During the winter, trapping was important for the residents. Because the trapping land was often far from the house, they either built a small palmetto camp where they lived for the three winter months or the whole family would live on a campboat that was pulled to the trapping grounds. Raccoon, mink, opposum, nutria, muskrat, and otter were trapped in this area. Trapping peaked in the years 1922 to 1923 when ten million muskrat furs were taken in Louisiana. At that time, the trappers had no restrictions. In 1922, high water left animals marooned on logs and the trappers killed all that they found. For several years afterwards, the population of fur-bearing animals was low in Louisiana. Trapping gradually recovered and in 1929, 6.2 million muskrat skins were taken, but at a time when prices were low during the depression (Doiron 1940). In 1925, Assumption parish had 275 trappers and St. Martin had 125. The number decreased until only 109 were in Assumption in 1929 and only 21 in St. Martin (Arthur 1928). Today only three residents of the south Lake Verret area trap. The primary animal is now nutria, a south American rodent.

Before the pullboats began operations in the area around 1900, some men were independent swampers, or men who cut cypress during low water and pulled it out of the swamp during high water
with only the aid of a mule or bull. They then sold the logs or made cross ties for the railroad, which before 1900 sold for three dollars a piece.

Frogging began in the Atchafalaya Basin in 1916 as a commercial endeavor (Comeaux 1972). At that time, frogs were plentiful in Louisiana. One man described the situation -- "They had frogs all over. You move a log and they jump all over. They had 'em by the millions. I don't know where you'd go to catch a frog today. People destroyed it. They'd catch them faster than they could grow" (Aucoin 1977). In 1936, 2.75 million pounds of frogs were sold in Louisiana, but the take has steadily declined since then (Department of Conservation 1934:103). In 1966, Louisiana produced only 37,300 pounds of frogs (Department of Wildlife and Fisheries 1968:18). During the depression, frogs sold for one and a half dollars per dozen and cleaned frogs sold for five to eight cents per pound.

After 1900, turtles became a commercial product. The common snapping turtle and the loggerhead or alligator snapping turtle were the primary species. In the 1930's the fishermen received seventy five cents for one hundred pounds of turtle meat. Today they receive $3.25 to $3.75 per pound of dressed turtle meat, but few turtles are found in the southern Lake Verret area and are unimportant as a commercial food product.

Another type of turtle industry later developed in the Atchafalaya Basin. Some families collected the eggs of the red ear turtle, a small green turtle to raise and sell as pets.
Often this was the project of the wife. But this industry declined after the 1960s when an outbreak of salmonella was traced to the turtles in Pierre Part (Comeaux 1972:91).

Crawfish did not become an important product until the 1930s. Before this date, crawfish were abundant but not considered a food product and did not command any price. Today it is not as economically important in the southern Lake Verret area as it is in others.

The moss industry became important in the Atchafalaya during the 1920s and 1930s when roads were built allowing transport (Comeaux 1972). Many fishermen supplemented their income from February to June by collecting Spanish moss which was primarily used for furniture stuffing. But few families on Four Mile Bayou relied totally on moss collecting as was done in the Pierre Part area. Some individuals sold the green moss to the several moss factories in the area; others cured it themselves to command a higher price. A good picker could average 500 pounds a day (Aldrich, DeBlieux, and Kniffen 1943:348). In 1930, green moss sold for two and a half cents per pound and cured moss sold for three cents per pound (Sondregger 1930). A few of the local men became the middlemen and bought moss from the other locals to cure it. After 1940, the moss industry rapidly declined as synthetics replaced the moss as furniture stuffing.

Today, these swamp occupations are not as important because of the decline in population and to a certain extent because the resources have also declined. Most of the residents today
are older than sixty years, and many continue to fish into their eighties.

Several people developed small businesses that catered to the needs of the settlement, and some were quite successful. Five different men had grocery stores, and at one time a moss gin, and a boat shop were on Four Mile Bayou. Only two of the grocery stores were in operation at one time.

Theodore Bailey is a good example of a versatile, hardworking small entrepreneur who was successful. He and his wife, Caroline Daigle opened a small store in 1937, where his wife worked while Theodore continued to fish and crab. At the same time, he bought fish, crabs, and occasionally moss. Once a week, he drove his Model T truck to Baton Rouge to sell on a route he developed. When one of his sons went to fight in World War II, Theodore vowed that if his son, T-Man, came back he would give his son the store. In 1945, T-Man returned, so Theodore turned the store over to him and moved to Bayou Boeuf where he started another store. T-Man, nicknamed for his small stature "petit" man, enlarged the building and is still in business. The fish buying side of the business declined with the fishing in the area.

Stores were also started by Alcéè Gros and Clairfè Blanchard. Alcéè Gros started his in 1921 and turned it over to his son, Shelby, who stayed open until 1957 when he closed because of a lack of customers.

The area was also served by several peddlers who had stores in boats and later in buses. They followed a route and sold
dry goods and groceries. Ed Landry of Brusley St. Vincent started a grocery bus and developed routes throughout the parish, including one down the Canal Road to Attakapas Landing. Today he has reduced the number of routes but continues because many old people who cannot leave their houses rely on him to bring them all supplies. A recent law prevents him from stopping without pulling completely off the highway, therefore he limits his stops only to regular customers.

Another man, Toby Ohmer tried to develop a small boat making business. In 1920, one of his cypress boats sold for twenty-five dollars. Later the same man began ginning moss on a small scale, but sold his business to a larger company after a few years of operation.

As commercial fishermen, trappers, and swampers, they were definitely in the cash economy, but they tried to remain as self sufficient as possible. A large garden was important to all of the families on Four Mile Bayou. If a family did not have sufficient high land near the house, they found high land, uncleared and unclaimed on nearby Bayou Felix and cleared it for their own use. Several families had apple, fig, peach, orange, and pecan trees and one family had fifteen orange trees. Some grew grapes to make wine, cotton to stuff quilts, and straw to make brooms, in addition to a full array of vegetables: corn, beans, squash, cucumbers, sugarcane, and tomatoes. Surplus vegetables could be sold to neighbors, and lumber companies' pullboats or the skidder camp. Cows, chickens, and hogs were kept by all the residents.
One family even had sheep and goats, which they kept for the meat, not for wool or milk. Some families provided a platform for the chickens during high water. Before 1960, the hogs and cattle were allowed to run loose. Some families had as many as fifty head of hogs or cattle and usually neither had to be fed. The hogs lived off the acorns of the oaks in the swamp. When a hog was to be butchered, it was rounded up by a pit bulldog owned by T-Ed Bailey. The ears of the hogs and cattle were notched for identification. Then the animal was fattened for a few weeks until slaughter. For various reasons, this honor system began to fail. Hogs and cattle began to disappear and the system was abandoned.

As soon as the corn was harvested, winter firewood was cut. The lumber companies that owned much of the surrounding land permitted the residents to cut the trees as long as the cypress was not bothered. Gum, willow, ash, and hog pecan was burned for firewood. Oak was not cut since it provided food for the hogs.

For their own use, families made their mattresses of moss, cornshuck, and occasionally feathers. Sewing machines were bought as soon as they were available, and the wife made all of the clothes, linens, quilts, and mosquito netting for the family. Often some of the furniture was made by the family: tables, chairs, iceboxes, and pie safes.

But many furnishings required cash to purchase them. The family bought iron beds, coal oil or wood burning stoves, flour, sugar, rice, coffee, cooking utensils, and other supplies.
To make extra cash, some residents made charcoal, cut firewood to sell to the pullboats at sixty cents a cord, carved cypress oars for ten dollars a pair or carved ax or shovel handles of pecan and ash. Some made and repaired deerskin chairs.

This area was always isolated, yet the residents of Four Mile Bayou were not ignorant of the latest developments in American society. Most families had phonographs, and one woman born in 1901 said that as a child she knew all of the popular songs since they bought the records. When radio became available, all the families bought one. As another woman put it, "Oh sure, we may not have gone to the movies, but we all knew who Shirley Temple was."

As in other bayou settlements the houses lined the bayou where the ground was naturally higher. In front of the house was a pier where boats were tied and nets were drying. Behind the house were chicken coops, outhouses, and sheds. In the past the yard was often fenced. Along the bayou were tied a few campboats belonging to either newcomers or married children of local families.

The material wealth of the families living on Four Mile Bayou varied. While some houses were large and kept prim and neat with flower beds surrounding them, others were in poor condition. But the physical condition of the house and yard does not necessarily reflect the owner's monetary worth. Stories are told of the people who did not trust banks and for years stored thousands of dollars in coffee cans until children convinced them
to deposit it.

When a couple married, they might have lived with a parent until they found a house, but several couples started out in an abandoned school, store, or home. Usually, the families helped them build a small, two room house. As they grew older and more children arrived, the couple added a room or closed in the porch. Sometimes, the couple built a new, larger house next door then tore down the old one to reuse the lumber since few resources were wasted. When the skidder camp closed in 1926, Williams Lumber Company sold many of the houses that had been provided for the workers to the local people. One man, T-Ed Bailey bought two of them and combined them into one house. Before 1900 at least one family lived in a palmetto house, which was framed as any other house, but the walls and roof were made of overlapped palmetto leaves and the floor was dirt. One man, Jim Aucoin, who was raised in one, assured that they were watertight and excellent in summer since they allowed a breeze to come through. But most families used this type of construction only for their hunting camps (Knipmeyer 1956:73).

Most houses were cypress board and batten. They were either shotguns or similar to the Acadian house with front and back porches. None were two story and few had fireplaces. Few houses still standing on Four Mile Bayou today are very old since the families readily tore them down when they moved away. The oldest houses date to around 1930. The two room house was considered a small house. A large house was one that had a large kitchen
that the family also used for a dining and living room and two
to three bedrooms that may have three to four beds in each.
Campboats usually had three rooms in a line with porches either
on both ends or all the way around. One campboat of average size,
belonging to T-Ed Bailey was three rooms deep and fourteen feet
by thirty-six feet wide.
Agencies of Change

After 1930, bayou life began to change. Not only were the residents of Four Mile Bayou attracted to the surrounding modern world, but the outside world was encroaching upon them. Several factors contribute to the change. Business interests entered the area for economic reasons; Huey Long's road building project made the area more accessible; and schools were finally provided.

The development of roads into the interior and the resulting decrease of isolation started the process of change in Four Mile Bayou. Roads allowed more contact and the development of other agencies of change. La. 1, paved only since 1932, follows Bayou Lafourche, the focal point of Assumption parish. From La. 1 are two major roads going west toward Lake Verret. To the north is La. 70, the road to Pierre Part which had gravel laid on part of this road in 1928 and finished all the way to Pierre Part in 1933 (Louisiana Highway Commission 1934). To the south is the Canal Road, La. 401. Graveled in 1924, it follows the old Attakapas Canal from Napoleonville to Lake Verret. During the winter, both of these roads, La. 401 and La. 70 were impassable by car because they were so badly rutted. Thirty-four years passed before La. 70 was paved to Pierre Part and La. 401 was paved to Lake Verret in 1959. Today, La. 70 connects Pierre Part to Morgan City by following the levee. No road existed previously. After the levee was built people used it as a passage way even though the government prohibited its use as a road.
Gradually, a shell road from Morgan City to Pierre Part and Belle River was laid beside the levee between the years 1936 and 1951. Stephensville on Bayou Long was connected to La. 70 in 1939, but a shell road to Four Mile Bayou was not begun until 1972, years after most of the residents had left because no road connected them with the surrounding towns.

Today, only one road, Interstate 10, penetrates the Atchafalaya Floodway formed by the levees. The only other way to get to the Teche area is to go north of the basin on U.S. 190, to the south on U.S. 90, or by boat.

Even without good roads, outsiders entered the area for economic reasons and had an impact upon the residents. Often these business ventures provided jobs for the residents.

One of the first business ventures in the area was a shingle mill at Attakapas Landing which employed at most five to ten local people. The site of the mill is presently underwater about fifteen feet past the end of the road at Attakapas Landing.

The owner, Johnny Christen, known to the residents as Johnny Chris, had purchased the land in 1855, but the date he built the mill cannot be determined, although it was certainly in operation before 1900. In 1915, he sold the mill to Willie Aucoin, who closed it in 1917.

Large cypress companies moved into this area during the 1890's but the cypress industry did not boom until 1905 in Louisiana. Through 1912, most companies did well, but only a few were able to stay in business until 1925 and then folded. F. B. Williams
Lumber Company and Jeanerette Lumber and Shingle Company bought huge tracts of land around Lake Verret. In 1891, the pullboat which pulls cypress logs out of the swamp with cables was introduced (Norgress 1947). Norman and Breaux Lumber Company had several pullboats operating in the area before 1920 and paid young men $1.50 per day to attach the cables to the logs which were then floated to the mill in Morgan City. The steam skidder, developed in 1886, performed the same function as a pullboat, but was on land (Mancil 1972). Around 1912 to 1918, a skidder camp operated at the junction of Four Mile Bayou and Bayou Felix, but details are uncertain concerning it. Later a second skidder camp, operated by F. B. Williams was located on the eastern shore of Lake Verret on Williams Canal which the local people called the "Skitty Camp." Bayou Pluton was extended and deepened for use by the lumber company. Williams had an overhead skidder, an improvement of the steam skidder, that was attached to a tree and pulled the logs out of the swamp with cables. The logs were then loaded onto a steam engine and taken to the lake by a raised railway where they were dumped into the lake and floated to Morgan City. Williams brought in many people, primarily blacks, to work at the camp, but some local people also worked there. After the camp closed, all of the workers moved away. The camp was a large one and included a commissary, houses, dormitories for the workers, and a school for the children of the workers. Most other lumber companies provided similar housing for their workers at this time (Mancil 1972). On
Saturdays, dances were held for the workers. Today all that remains of this extensive camp are the two steam locomotives abandoned in the swamp. The raised tracks that supported them long ago sank into the swamp.

Two Napoleonville men, Alphonse Blanchard and Honore St. Germain, set up a moss gin at the lake near Bayou Crab in 1920 or 1922, employed a few locals and operated until the flood of 1927. After the flood, they moved their operations to the Canal and later to Napoleonville.

During prohibition, 1919 to 1933, bootleg and moonshine provided another contact with outsiders and an economic opportunity for a few of the local people. The bootleggers of prohibition realized that the bayous of Louisiana provided a haven for smuggling just as Jean Lafitte did. The organizers of such ventures were wealthy people from Thibodeaux and Donaldsonville, but they needed people to unload the boats at the rendezvous and to pilot the boats at night through the winding bayous without getting lost. The top men were willing to pay a lot of money for these jobs at a time of an economic depression. Someone in any community would be willing to take the risk for the fifty dollars a night offered for piloting the boat and the twenty dollars a night to unload the crates of whiskey. One such meeting place was Attakapas Landing, which, since it was remote and few people lived there, provided a good cover. On the night of Tuesday, March 17, 1931 the Federal agents "captured a boat load of fancy whiskey at Lake Verret and arrested seventeen men. . ."
value of the whiskey capture (was) estimated at several thousand dollars" (Donaldsonville Chief March 21, 1931). Then the next week on Saturday March 21, the dry agents made a second raid at the Landing and "seized more than $70,000 worth of liquor, the boat and four members of the crew." Stories are still told of how men ran into the swamp and stayed for days until the dry agents gave up looking for them. One thousand sacks of imported assorted liquors valued at fifty dollars a sack, five hundred cases of alcohol valued at $15,000 and fifteen kegs of malt valued at six thousand dollars were broken in the lake (Donaldsonville Chief March 28, 1931). A massive fish kill resulted. The broken bottles are still often found whenever anyone digs at the Landing.

Moonshine was not a large operation in this area. Only two men in neighboring communities made liquor to sell, but on a small scale. Several families made liquor for their own use, but not everyone in the community drank alcohol. Several of the families interviewed completely abstained from any liquor.

Several men from Bayou Lafourche saw the potential for a recreational resort at Lake Verret intending to attract the wealthy people on the Front, not the locals. Soon after the Canal Road was graveled in 1924, a Napoleonville man opened up a summer resort near the Landing. Boxing on Sunday afternoons and a large restaurant with bathing facilities attracted people from several parishes. But this resort was destroyed in the 1927 flood and was not rebuilt.
Barlow Delaune built a second resort on an Indian Mound near Cancienne Canal at Lake Verret after 1900. Only a trail led to the dancehall, so a barge traveled up Cancienne Canal to pick up people on Bayou Lafourche.

Motor boats played a large part in decreasing the isolation of the area. Without a motor the residents did not take as many trips to Morgan City and Bayou Long, as they do now. "Putt-puts," which were the first gas motors, became available and were not uncommon by 1915 (Case 1973). By 1928, most families were able to have a motor for their boat. In that year Father Souby commented on the abundance of motor boats of every size, shape, and color that brought the parishioners to the dedication fair of the Catholic Church on Bayou Long (Morgan City Church Records 1928). Today fishermen are able to fish miles away from home and still be able to return that night.

Before the Atchafalaya spillway levee system was built, the sediment was periodically flushed out of Lake Verret to the Gulf by the annual flooding and fish including occasional sharks and porpoises, freely entered Lake Verret. The banks along the bayous were high and a person could easily walk its length. But the building of the levee system started a series of environmental changes. After the disastrous flood of 1927, the Louisiana State Legislature decided preventative measures must be taken to insure that such a flood would not reoccur. Construction began in 1934 and provided jobs for locals. The levee reduced the annual flooding and cut off Bayou Long, preventing
water and fish to move from the spillway and reducing exchanges of fish and water to the Gulf. Lake Verret is presently silting in, causing the water level to rise and cover many homesites. Some former homesites are now thirty feet into the lake. Fishing has been adversely affected by the levee construction and the south Lake Verret area can no longer support as many fishermen as it did in the past.

Until recently, the general educational level has been low throughout Louisiana and particularly in rural areas (Smith, M. 1937). Four Mile Bayou is an example of an area where the educational level was formerly low even though the residents valued an education. Many of the people who settled Four Mile Bayou prior to 1900 were not illiterate, since many had come from areas that provided public schools. Thus many of the residents born before 1890 were able to read and write in English and many in French. But in general, the people born after 1895 on Four Mile Bayou did not learn to read and write because of the absence of schools.

The Assumption parish school board was created in 1877. Before that time only a few public schools were provided but they were not attended since they were provided for the "indigent" families and even the poor people did not want to be labeled indigents (Carmouche 1944). Upon creation of the school board, the parish was divided into thirteen wards and the salary of the white teachers in the larger communities were set at thirty-five dollars per month. Four Mile Bayou, Bayou Long, Bayou L'Ourse
and Bayou Boeuf formed a separate ward with its own school board representative, Romain Frioux. Whether or not a school was actually provided cannot be determined (Proceedings, Assumption Parish School Board August 20, 1877). In the sporadic lists of schools and teacher assignments that are in the proceedings of the meetings, a school for Four Mile Bayou is not mentioned until 1894. But entries previous to 1894 refer to a school on Four Mile Bayou therefore the date of the school cannot be determined. In 1892, a teacher was appointed to teach three grades. All schools at that time had a two month session and opened "at 8:30. A recess was given from 11:30 to 1 pm and the evening session [was] from 1 to 3 pm" (Proceedings, Assumption Parish School Board January 1892). Students had to purchase their own books, which prevented many children from attending. The school board had to "raise the grade and salary of nearly all schools in the interior [because] it [had] been found difficult, if not impossible with the former salaries to find competent personnel to fill their functions with satisfaction to either the board or patrons of the school." By 1894, white teachers assigned to the interior schools were paid twenty dollars a month compared to the forty to forty-five dollars on the Front; and all black teachers regardless of assignment were paid fifteen dollars a month. The school board decided that "any school that has for two consecutive months less than an average of twelve students, the school would automatically be abolished." This rule eliminated several of the interior schools. In 1899, the Assumption parish
school board realized that "according to Hardee's map [1895], the Four Mile Bayou school [was] situated in the parish of St. Martin."

The School was discontinued May 31, 1899 and the building abandoned (Proceedings Assumption Parish School Board May 25, 1899).

From 1899 to 1935, no public school was provided for this community because it was split between two parishes. An attempt to collaborate with St. Martin parish and share the expenses was made in 1909, but for undetermined reasons, the school did not materialize. Eighteen children in Assumption and twenty-three in St. Martin had indicated that they would attend.

While the Williams Skidder camp was in operation from 1921 to 1926, Assumption Parish provided a school for the children of the workers. Local children were permitted to attend, but few did because most families did not have an extra boat for the children to take and because crossing Lake Verret, a two mile trip, can be dangerous. It is shallow and becomes rough with the slightest wind.

Because of this lapse in public schools, a generation living on Four Mile Bayou did not learn to read and write. The nearest public schools were across the lake on the Canal, over six miles and in Upper Texas, three and a half miles. A few families established a private school in one of the homes. Various teachers lived with families and were paid at first, five cents a day per student and later, the pay was raised to thirty cents a day per student. In the 1920s and 1930s Governor Huey Long and the State School Superintendent T. H. Harris began a program
to improve education in Louisiana (Harris 1924). As a result, Four Mile Bayou was finally given a school for the more than fifty children living there. In 1934, a year before the public school opened, a social survey of the remote settlements of Assumption Parish was conducted by T. Lynn Smith, an LSU sociologist. Four Mile Bayou had 145 people over the age of six and 93 percent of them were illiterate. Other settlements in the Assumption interior had similar percentages. Bayou Godel had 70 persons over the age of six and 100 percent of them were illiterate. Belle River had 262 people with 99 percent illiterate and Bayou Pigeon had 231 people with 84 percent illiterate. Bayou Pierre Part which had public schools earlier than the other communities had the lowest rate of illiteracy - of 342 people, 51 percent were illiterate (Smith, T. L. 1937:66).

In 1935, Assumption Parish and St. Martin Parish agreed to share the expenses for a one room school house without a library and with outside toilets. One teacher taught seven grades for fifty-three students in 1944 when the teacher was paid $1,210 per year. In 1945, 25 of the 35 students in the Four Mile Bayou school were over age (Coxe 1946).

During the 1940s, with the improved roads, the Assumption Parish School Board began closing the small one room school houses to consolidate. In 1952, the Four Mile Bayou School was closed and T-Man Bailey took the children by school boat to Attakapas Landing where they were picked up by a bus and taken to Napoleonville Elementary School. When the road to Four Mile Bayou
from Stephensville was finished in 1975, the children were transferred to Stephensville Elementary School.

Schools had the largest and most direct impact on the people of Four Mile Bayou. First, the lack of a school motivated people to move away, and later when the school was available, it directly affected the children and indirectly affected the parents. The school had the greatest impact on the mother tongue and preferred language of the residents. This impact is discussed in the next chapter.

Churches were another agency of change that affected the lives of the residents of Four Mile Bayou. All of the residents are and were Catholics, but the isolation and the relatively small population hindered the establishment of a church for that community. As Catholics, the residents were consistent in three of their Catholic obligations -- baptism, marriage, and funeral within the church. Since they did not have a church, they went to the churches in surrounding towns to have these sacraments performed. Their records can be found in nearby Napoleonville since it served the Canal Church and in farther towns that could be reached by boat: Pierre Part, Labadieville, and Morgan City which provided the mission to the church in Stephensville.

Four Mile Bayou has been a mission out of all the major surrounding Catholic churches -- Morgan City, Pierre Part and Napoleonville. All of the small communities in the interior that were missions have been shifted from church to church and have had a succession of priests serving them.
The oldest church in Assumption Parish is St. Elizabeth in Paincourtville, established in 1840. Through missions, it served the entire parish of Assumption. In 1858, the ecclesiastical parishes of Pierre Part (St. Joseph the Worker), and Canal (Immaculate Conception) were created. In 1895, Pierre Part, and in 1920, the Canal, received resident priests. Pierre Part began missions to several settlements in the interior, but they were transferred to other churches through the years. Sacred Heart Church in Morgan City began a mission to Bayou Long and in 1928, Father Souby built a chapel at the junction of Bayou Long and Belle River (Baudier 1939). At the dedication of this church on August 12, 1928, Father Souby estimated that "1500 souls were gathered. . .Gas boats of every size and description and colors, brought people from Bayou Boeuf, Bayou Chene, Milom [Milhomme], Sorrel, Four Mile, Persimmon Pass, not counting a few from Belle River and Napoleonville." In the Church records, Father Souby said "the motive for building [the church] was the spiritual destitution of all the Catholics not only on Bayou Long, but on all the neighboring bayous. . .On Belle River I was told fifty percent had been perverted by the so-called Holy Rollers (Mormons)" [his parenthesis] (Morgan City Church Records 1928). Later in 1943, this church was moved closer to Stepensville to the end of the road and made smaller. Since this church was relatively close and could be reached by water, many people from other settlements attended.

Four Mile Bayou has been served by various churches as a mission. In 1928, Father Souby commented that Four Mile Bayou
was attached to Morgan City, but it had been served by the Canal for several years. Once every two to four weeks, a priest came to say mass, baptize infants, perform marriages, and hear confession. Attendance was high when the priest came. After 1894, the church service was held in the schoolhouse, but it was too small to accommodate the community, so the service was moved to a home. Hypolite Daigle had a shotgun house with a large front room in which he had an altar. The priest used this room to say the mass and the next room to hear confessions.

Since the priest came only once a month, some of the more devout people gathered every Sunday to say their prayer in the Daigle home. This service was attended primarily by several wives and their children and only a few men attended.

Around 1930, a new priest, Father Jules Toups, was assigned to the church in Pierre Part. He was a particularly enthusiastic priest who quickly earned the love of all his parishioners. He spoke French, drank, played cards with them, and jokingly said, "Don't do as I do, do as I say." In 1936, Archbishop Rummel gave him a chapelboat, "Mary Star of the Sea" with a motorboat to pull it to the missions. For one week per month, Father Toups stayed one to two days at each of the five missions: Belle River, Bayou Godel, Bayou Pigeon, the Canal, and Four Mile Bayou. Father Toups and the chapelboat attracted the attention of various novelists. In 1938, Harnett Kane interviewed Father Toups who professed that "If [the people] cannot come to the church, then the church must go to them." Kane described
"double green painted doors leading to a double row of unornamented benches. At the front [stood] an altar, and along the wall are holy pictures and statuary. No naves or stained glass window for this new kind of church. . . Rooms for Father Toups are at the back. And symbolic of the mission of the vessel atop the roof is a small, white painted cross.

"The parish and the people. . . have reacted in typical fashion to the chapelboat. Its arrival brought a curious sight, Father Toups recalls, with rows and rows of pirogues, crowds racing along the levees to get to the scene among the first. Willing hands helped them to the land; the gang plank was lowered and the rush for seats. Children crowding into every corner, some finding seats on the altar platform at the communion rail and in the aisles.

"The first day was an uninterrupted one from dawn until long after dusk. Catechism, communion, calls by congregation members. . . Father Toups found few who could properly answer the catechism questions, he reported sadly."

"In the first year, Father Toups and the chapelboat had a total of 6,531 attendances at mass, 2151 communions, 25 baptisms, and 7 marriages" (Kane 1938).

Another novelist reported that the chapelboat had a "roomy porch deck running all the way round." At a landing all of the benches which seated fifty people were filled and others stood on the banks and listened to mass (Ramsey 1957).

In 1940, Father Toups was transferred to Morgan City; two other priests continued the mission, but it was never the same. In 1943, the chapelboat was hit by lightning and was pulled on land on Four Mile Bayou. The building was used as the church for a while and then dismantled and the lumber sold.

Most of the funerals were held at the Canal Church. Prior to 1937, the family prepared the body, built the coffin, and held the wake in their home before the procession to the church.
But in 1937 a mortician began operating in Labadieville and since Labadieville could be reached by Cannienne Canal at that time, the families began buying coffins and using the mortician's services. The body was then returned to the home for the wake. After the wake everyone got in boats for the funeral procession across the lake and the largest boat available, a fishing boat, carried the coffin. At Attakapas Landing, the procession was met by a hearse and everyone went to the Canal Church for the service. Most residents of Four Mile Bayou were buried in the Canal Church cemetery, although some were buried at home. Following the death, many women wore black dresses and bonnets for the one year to eighteen months of mourning. Few men and children had any special clothes for the mourning period, but their actions were restricted.

Public services were not supplied to this community as early as others. Some services, such as postal services, were discontinued because of the small population. This lack of service influenced many people's decision to move away.

During the 1850's, mail to the Teche region went by skiff through the Attakapas Canal to Lake Verret (Historical Records Survey 1942:8). Whether or not mail was delivered to the residents cannot be determined. The marine route that delivered mail to the bayou settlements in the interior was established some time prior to 1930. Four Mile Bayou, Belle River, Pierre Part, and Bayou Godel were serviced on this route. The mailman, T. J. Oufnac,
performed many services for the people; if they could not read, he would read letters for them; if they had to write a letter, he would help them. He also delivered coal oil and certain other supplies to the families who could not get into town. The marine route was discontinued in 1964, when President Lyndon B. Johnson decided to discontinue the rural postal routes that were too expensive to operate. Belle River and Pierre Part received their own post office in 1966, but by that time the population of Four Mile Bayou was too small to warrant its own office. For a few years, residents of Four Mile Bayou were allowed to have a mailbox at Attakapas Canal, but this was discontinued. Presently, they have a mailbox in the Napoleonville office, thirteen miles away.

Even though all surrounding communities received electric service before 1950, Four Mile Bayou and the Gannevait did not receive it until 1965. This lack of service motivated many people to move. Napoleonville got electric service in 1920 (Gilbert 1936). In 1938, Pierre Part and parts of the Canal Road received service. Then in 1948, with five resident families, Attakapas Landing got service. In 1952, Stephensville got electric service from Morgan City. But another thirteen years passed before Four Mile Bayou got electric service. By that time, most of the families had moved away.

Presently, Four Mile Bayou does not have water, gas or telephone service. In comparison, Stephensville received a seven party line as early as 1939 and Attakapas Landing received telephone service around 1968.
An Update

With all the changes going on around them, the residents of Four Mile Bayou began to move away. People in each generation had always left the area, but after 1930 entire extended families began to leave. The pattern was for several brothers and sisters to leave and finally the parents to follow. During the 1930s, the economic depression that affected the entire United States pushed prices for fish and crab so low that the people found it difficult to maintain the same standard of living even though they were relatively self-sufficient (Spitzer 1977). During and after World War II, better paying jobs were available that lured people away. In either case, the population steadily declined.

The most common reasons given for leaving were lack of electricity, no roads, and no or poor schools. Even though many of the parents could not read or write, they valued education and felt that they had to provide it for their children. Most people felt that if these had been available, they would have remained. Even though they admit that life was hard and they were poor, former residents have fond memories of bayou life. At present many intend to return upon retirement, especially since electricity and roads are now available.

Families could move to two different types of places. One choice was a similar nearby community where they could continue to fish. Attakapas Landing, Bayou Long, and Bayou Boeuf were the
most common choices, since electricity and roads were available. The levee connected Morgan City with Bayou Long and made travel by land possible (Rudolf 1969). Eight families moved to Attakapas Landing, at least fourteen to Bayou Long, and five to Bayou Boeuf.

If a family did not want to move to these communities, most moved to nearby towns such as Morgan City, Thibodaux, Houma, Labadieville, and a few to Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. The women, in particular, married people from other areas and moved away. Morgan City was experiencing an economic boom and attracted the majority of the people. People flooded into Morgan City from all of the bayou settlements, not only Four Mile Bayou, to take advantage of the jobs that required little education. In 1937, jumbo shrimp were discovered in the Gulf of Mexico (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:83). The shrimp boats needed crews, and the boat builders needed workmen. Crab factories in Morgan City expanded during the 1930s and 1940s, paying more to the crab pickers, - fifty cents for every one hundred crabs picked -- than the crab fishermen could make at the price of five cents per dozen (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:80). In the 1940s a defense plant was located in Morgan City, that "stimulated business and growth to an abnormal degree and absorbed all the available labor of the entire port area" (Morgan City Historical Society 1960:60).

In 1946, the first deep water drilling rig was built off the coast of Louisiana. As a result, many oil related companies
developed in Morgan City, such as ship building, crewboats and service companies that employed a variety of crafts and trades. The growth of J. Ray McDermott, the largest employer in the area, reflects the economic boom. The company began operations in 1954 with fifteen employees. By 1965, 1,400 were employed and by March, 1978, 2,875 were employed (Clune 1978).

This pattern of migration away from Four Mile Bayou was characteristic of the entire Sugar Bowl Delta, a twelve parish region from the Mississippi River to the Teche. Assumption experienced a ten percent decrease in population in each decade from 1890 to 1930 (Smith 1935:16). From 1935 to 1940, Louisiana experienced massive population movements. Those who migrated tended to be below the age of 25 from small unincorporated villages and females outnumbered males (Smith and Hitt 1952:228,229). Those residents of the Sugar Bowl Delta who left the region went in equal proportions to Baton Rouge and New Orleans (Miller 1953:93).

At present, forty-five people are permanent residents of Four Mile Bayou and the Gannevait. Five are retired from other areas and live in three camps. The other forty people are descendants of the early settlers. Two men and three women are over the age of sixty-five and are officially retired although they continue to fish. Twenty-one are between the ages of eighteen

3The Sugar Bowl Delta includes the parishes of Ascension, Assumption, Iberia, Iberville, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne, and West Baton Rouge.
and sixty-five, and fourteen people are younger than 18. Only eight continue to fish full or part-time and the youngest fisherman is thirty-five years old. Three men commute to jobs and one has a store on Four Mile Bayou. These forty people live in eleven households. Four live in frame houses built around 1930, one lives in a brick veneer house and six other families live in trailers.

Attakapas Landing has seventeen people living in nine households who are descended from the original families of Four Mile Bayou. Another man from the Canal has lived there fifteen years operating a bar. Seven people are over sixty-five and are retired. Seven are between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five, two of these men continue to fish and three commute to jobs. Three children under the age of ten are living at the landing.

In the last ten years, many people from Napoleonville, Baton Rouge, and Thibodaux purchased or built homes to use as fishing camps and summer resorts. Since 1948, the area has had a few camps, but in recent years they are rapidly growing in number at Attakapas Landing, Bayou Crab, and Four Mile Bayou. Four Mile Bayou is beginning to look as it did sixty years ago with a row of houses down the bayou.
CHAPTER III
LANGUAGE SHIFT AND MAINTENANCE

The Model and the Situation in Louisiana

In the last fifty years, changes came to Four Mile Bayou as a result of increased contact with English speaking areas and modernization within their own culture. These two processes -- acculturation and modernization -- should not be confused. However, both are closely related and can have similar effects upon different groups. In the sense that the Cajuns are a non-English speaking ethnic group, they face many of the problems that immigrant groups face. Since the dominant United States culture has always emphasized conformity, any non-English group has felt much pressure to abandon their ethnic characteristics. Since "language is the clearest marker of ethnicity," it is one of the first characteristics to be discarded (Nahirny and Fishman 1966). Among immigrant groups, this pressure was applied most directly against the second generation immigrant or the native American of foreign parentage. Among the Cajuns, the generation born between 1925 and 1945 felt the most pressure. In a slightly different situation than the immigrant, the Cajuns arrived in Louisiana in 1765 and thoroughly resisted assimilation into the larger United States culture until 1900. Until that time, the French culture of Louisiana has successfully assimilated individuals from diverse ethnic groups making their offspring French speakers. After the turn of the century, modernization began in Louisiana and changes began at a rapid pace. Both the Cajun and many
immigrants experienced these changes at approximately the same time, but a basic difference exists. The immigrant shifted languages in the process of acculturation and the Cajun from Four Mile Bayou shifted languages in the unconscious process of modernization.

Language shift within ethnic groups occurs between generations as the group is assimilated into the national culture. The process of assimilation involves the nature of ethnicity. Among immigrants and, to a certain extent among Cajuns, the immigrant father is unconscious of his ethnicity and is only conscious of particular cultural items, i.e., beliefs, values, material culture, and actions. They are concrete realities of everyday life. The son, who has never seen the "old country," or in the case of the Cajun is removed from the traditional lifestyle, becomes conscious of his ethnicity and can only relate to these ethnic characteristics as ideals. He tends to rebel and reject such ethnic characteristics since the dominant society declares them backward and unworthy of retention. The sons may make a deliberate attempt to dissociate the grandsons from their ethnic heritage. But it is difficult to disassociate if one does not remove oneself from the locality. If the grandson remains in the ethnic sphere, he cannot help but retain many traditional traits, but the traits are more generalized. There is no doubt that he is American; he is simply an American of one particular ethnic heritage. The third generation picks up certain traits and idealizes them. An idealized history of the group emerges that
ties the group with both its ethnic heritage and to the larger American culture. A "highly selected and transmuted past" develops (Nahirny and Fishman 1966).

In this process many ethnic traits can be dropped by the sons, but picked up by the grandsons. But this is not necessarily the case with the traditional language. The generational gap is often so pronounced that the grandson does not speak the mother tongue even in the home. He would have to learn his parents' language in school as a foreign language. But often there is no desire to do this. The grandson sees himself primarily as an American and to speak a language other than English is to somehow be less American. This is closely related to the general conception of the United States as a melting pot, which holds that all non-English language groups should and would naturally assimilate into the national American life. Professionals, educators, and the general public alike considered groups that resisted assimilation as problems. In 1921, a scholar addressing educators wrote that,

"the solution of the problem of Americanization is largely dependent upon the early acquisition of English by the newly arrived immigrant as his ordinary medium of communication. . .In order that he may secure the necessary familiarity with English, the utmost time and effort of directors of Americanization are employed to the end that the immigrant may be given the privileges of school for children and adults" (Jordan 1921:1).

Another specialist on nationalism in the United States wrote,

"Americanization requires learning English. . .Since nationality is largely a matter of ideas, there can be no assimilation without an interchange of ideas
and there can be no traffic without a common means of communication" (Fairchild 1926:169,231).

Bilingualism was never considered a possible solution to language contact in the United States. Recognition of the disadvantages of the melting pot theory and the benefits of ethnic identity in the United States has come only recently, largely because certain groups had not assimilated after being in the United States a long period of time.

One questions why so many ethnic languages have disintegrated in the face of American nationalism, when the United States government has put relatively few legal restrictions on the public and private use of foreign languages. Other than the requirement to conduct schools in English, the only pressure has been indirect, unorganized social pressure, as discussed above. One reason why other ethnic languages have not survived in the United States is that the ethnic groups were not faced with another well defined folk group in which to assimilate. Americanism was an abstract idea of democratic freedom for all. Few groups had other ideologies that could compete with this goal. "And since their specific cultural and linguistic attributes were not under attack directly, they developed little loyalty in defending them. Culture and language became an embarrassment and an obstacle in the way of becoming true Americans, rather than something of value to be cherished" (Glazer 1966:360). Scholars have offered several reasons why many immigrants succumbed to American culture. They include "1. The irresistible attractiveness of American mass-culture, 2. the destruction of immigrant folkways under the
impact of rapid industrialization and urbanization, 3. the openness and ampleness of the American reward system through public education to social mobility, 4. the geographic mobility of a highly diversified population which worked for a lingua franca and against the entrenchment of regional traditionalism, 5. the emphasis on childhood and youth and even 6. an 'old world weariness' which immigrants purportedly carry with them at a subconscious level. All of these explanations are undoubtedly true -- in part, at times and for some immigrants" (Fishman 1966:29).

Six major factors must be considered when examining language maintenance and shift in a community. They include 1. the time of settlement of each language group and historical priority, 2. the amount of isolation of contact between the two groups, 3. the relative size and uniformity of two language populations, 4. the policy of the church, 5. the educational system, and 6. the policy of the government and the dominant linguistic group toward the minority ethnic language (Fishman 1966). Each of these will be discussed in detail. As the colonial language in Louisiana, French had historical priority and became more firmly entrenched than non-English languages of more recent immigrants. French also benefited from the fact that at one time it was the only official language of the colony, adding prestige in the minds of the dominant group. From 1682 to 1765, French predominated in all legal, social, and religious spheres of life. From 1765 to 1803, Spain ruled Louisiana and Spanish was officially the language for records, but French continued to
be used in the legal courts in the French parishes. The rural areas also continued to use French for most social, business, and church concerns. When the Americans took over in 1803, English completely replaced Spanish in any official concerns, but French was not as easily replaced. In the areas that Americans settled in quantity, English slowly replaced French in the business realm, particularly among the upper classes. By 1880, French was not heard on the streets of New Orleans, and in many other anglicized areas (Davis 1965:320). Fortier (1891) reports that by 1891, even in the heart of Acadiana, St. Martinville, the wealthy were fluent in English although the lower classes were not.

East of the Atchafalaya Basin, along the upper Bayou Lafourche, which was another major settlement of the Acadians, the French language did not long remain dominant in public spheres. The area, which was top quality land for cultivating sugar cane, became known as the Sugar Bowl and after 1820 Americans arrived and established large plantations. One of the first settlers, William Pugh, the largest landholder along Bayou Lafourche in the nineteenth century, wrote in his memoirs that from 1820 to 1825 "the use of the French language was universal, [it was even used in the courts] though in some of the settlements [between Napoleonville and Donaldsonville and down the Canal Road] Spanish was spoken. The English language was spoken by a very small number: now it is in general use" (Pugh 1888). A few months after his arrival, his neighbors who were monolingually French had learned enough English in order to speak with the
new settler. The Americans did not learn any French and relied upon sign language (Pugh 1903).

The legal documents of the parish reflect the changes that took place among the elite in the legal and business spheres. In the Napoleonville courthouse, the parish seat of Assumption, the entries from 1788 to 1870 are handwritten in Spanish, French, and English. The language of the records was determined by the heritage of the clerk of court at any particular time. After 1871, all entries are in English. The Assumption Pioneer, the parish newspaper, was established in 1850 and written in French. In the 1870s, an English section was added and in the 1890s the French section was discontinued. The school board records begin in 1877 and are entirely in English.

Pugh's comment and the legal documents reflect the change in language that occurred among the elite in the legal and business realm on the Front, but this change was not uniform throughout the parish and in all social segments. Many areas, because of their physical, economic, and cultural isolation were able to maintain their mother tongue. Isolation is a major factor in language maintenance and the people of the "brulees," Lake Verret and on the bayous west of Lake Verret had little contact with the English speaking people of the Front. The Canal, which the residents call the road following the old Attakapas Canal route, can be seen as a transition zone from the Front along Bayou Lafourche to the interior. As one progresses down the Canal Road, less English and more French was and is spoken.
Another factor in language maintenance in numerical size, which can have both positive and negative effects, depending upon various social factors. When a group is small and isolated, it can have less linguistic contact with outsiders than a large group. In small groups where value is placed on the language, socially or religiously, there is a good chance that the language will be retained. Examples include religious groups as the Hutterites (Hostetler and Huntington 1967) and culture groups as the Koasati Indians of Louisiana (Folson-Dickerson 1965). But if the group does not place emphasis upon the language, sufficient population size and concentration are of utmost importance in language maintenance. The Cajuns of the Assumption interior are an example of a group that does not place significant emphasis upon the language. They maintained the language until 1900 because of their concentration and isolation, but in the face of modernization and assimilation, the French language was not considered a necessary cultural item and was discarded.

Estimates of the French speaking population in Louisiana are difficult to determine since several sources have published conflicting data. Problems exist in relying on any of these sources. The U. S. Census first investigated mother tongue of the native born or native parentage of the white population in 1940 and reported fewer French speakers in 1940 than in 1970. Mother tongue is defined as "the principal language spoken in the home in earliest childhood" (US Census 1943). In 1940,
Louisiana had 1,403,700 people of native US parentage. French was the mother tongue of 289,760 or 20.6 percent of these people who can be assumed to be the Cajuns and Creoles of Louisiana. Of these French speaking people, 64,340 were urban, 87,280 were rural non-farm and 138,140 were rural farm. In 1970, the US Census (1975) estimated 572,262 people or 15 percent of the total population have French as their mother tongue. Assumption Parish has 8,876 French speakers which is 45.2 percent of its population. It is doubtful that the actual number of French speakers in Louisiana has almost doubled from 1940 to 1970. Possibly the earlier estimate is low because French people denied their French background to the census interviewers.

The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) estimates that 1,468,440 French speakers were in Louisiana in 1969. Smith-Thibodeaux (1977:43) suggests a more realistic estimate of 300,000 to 500,000 French speakers in Louisiana in 1977.

The policy of the church towards language maintenance can greatly aid or hinder the stability of a language in a community. In some churches, the language takes on religious significance -- for example the Hutterites believe that German is closer to God (Hostetler and Huntington 1967). The language will be reinforced by the church and help the group resist assimilation, whereas other groups that do not have assistance from the church are more likely to submit to the dominant language of the area.
Three sets of data are valuable to determine the attitude of the church toward the language: the language in which the records are kept, the language used in the parochial schools, and the language of the sermon.

In Louisiana, the Catholic church records reflect the language of the priest and elites of the community rather than the congregation. The records of St. Joseph the Worker in Pierre Part, a predominantly French section, begin in French, but switch to English in 1870. The records of St. Ann, the Catholic Church in Napoleonville and its mission, Immaculate Conception on the Canal shifted to English at approximately the same time. Christ Episcopal Church in Napoleonville, established in 1853 with a largely American congregation has English records.

Assumption Parish has two parochial schools, one in Labadieville and one in Paincourtville. St. Philomena Elementary, located in Labadieville, operates as part of the convent. Established in 1871, it was originally conducted in French because both the nuns, who were for the most part from France, and the children spoke predominately French. But by 1900, classes were taught in English and French was taught as an elective to children who wanted to learn to read and write it.

The sermon is a more important gauge of language maintenance than the church records because it is "sensitive to the linguistic needs and preferences of the congregation as a whole" (Hofman 1966:133). In Louisiana, the priests could use English or French at their discretion. The church hierarchy
influenced the language through their appointment of priests. The language of the sermon changes with the heritage of the priest assigned to the church. The last sermon in French in Assumption Parish was by Father Berthault of Labadieville before he retired in 1962. He alternated the sermons in French and English. The last sermon in French in Napoleonville was in 1920 shortly before the priest, Father Anglais, died. The last sermon in French at the Canal Church was in 1955, before the last resident priest left. Four Mile Bayou was a mission of Pierre Part. Father Toups, the priest in Pierre Part from 1930 to 1938, was a Louisiana Frenchman who spoke French and was loved by his congregation. In 1936, he began missions to Canal, Four Mile Bayou, Bayou Godel, Belle River, and Bayou Pigeon. At first he said the mass in French and the catechism was learned by rote memory in French. English language schools were begun in 1935 and in 1936 Father Toups changed the policy concerning the French language.

"Before opening the new [catechism] classes the pastor announced that explanations of the catechism would be given in English and that English texts would be supplied the children for purposes of home study. The pastor felt that this would help the children realize that their religious education was a part of their formal education and not something extraneous. Moreover, with so many of the older children able to read English they would be able to assist their younger brothers and sisters in studying the catechism. In organizing the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in his parish, the pastor obtained the cooperation and assistance of the school teachers [English language]. They were to act as leaders in the work of the confraternity. The meetings and discussions were to be conducted in English."
On the missions and in exceptional cases at Pierre Part, the catechism is still taught in French. The pastor, however, is introducing a program whereby explanations are given in both English and French even in these instances" (Jacobi 1937:52).

Obviously, the priest feels that his first duty is religious instruction of the people. If this is not accomplished best in French, then English should be adopted.

Catholic congregations accept the dictates of the priest without question. One man said, "when the priest started pushing English, no one resisted. No Catholic will openly go against the priest." But many people, particularly the older ones, resented not being able to say confession in French and went to neighboring churches where the priest let them speak French. By doing this they were not exactly going against the church. Loyalty to the church was stronger than loyalty to language.

The problems between the Catholic clergy and the congregation encountered in French Louisiana were part of a wider process going on throughout the United States. A similar situation existed at the same time among the Franco-Americans of New England. It is reported that,

"The number of French speaking priests was never sufficient. The American bishops, predominantly Irish, were increasingly reluctant to name French-Canadian pastors. They alluded to the difficulty of convincing the more desirable French-Canadian priests to leave Canada" (Lemaire 1966:255).

The Catholic hierarchy encouraged assimilation because it wanted to establish the Catholic Church as a wholly "American" church and not a "religion of foreigners" (Rumilly 1958).
But this process was not unique to the Catholic Church. Ethnic churches throughout the United States abandoned the mother tongue of the congregation. Usually, it was not an ideological or even a planned move. In most cases, the primary function of the church is its religious duties, not maintenance of the ethnic language. As the congregation becomes more anglicized the church gradually decreases the use of the mother tongue in deference to those members, until the mother tongue is retained solely for the benefit of the old people. When no speakers of the ethnic language are left, no one questions the use of English. The mother tongue also decreases as the parish opens up to other ethnic groups. In order to appeal to other ethnic groups, English is adopted. This usually happens unless there is religious significance in the mother tongue, which is not the case with French in Louisiana.

The German Lutherans in North Carolina are an example of a religious group, speaking a non-English language that opened their doors to other ethnic groups and adopted English in the process. The process began earlier in North Carolina than in Louisiana. Between 1790 and 1825, the residents of even isolated communities were bilingual and by 1848, German was seldom heard (Gehrke 1935). The German Catholics in the Ozarks experienced the same process as the Cajuns at approximately the same time, except that it was much more thorough. Today, German is retained in only the most isolated and concentrated communities of the Ozarks (Gerlach 1976:121).
The educational system affects an ethnic group's efforts to maintain its language in many ways. The policies of the educational system toward the minority language will determine the language of instruction in the schools. If the ethnic group establishes its own schools in the mother tongue, the chances of retaining their language are greatly improved. But, whether they establish their own school largely depends upon the educational level of the ethnic group. A group that does not have either a tradition of education or the aid of the church in education will not establish ethnic schools. Often when the public school system is confronted with an ethnic group that speaks a non-English language and is undereducated, it views the non-English language as inferior and a hinderance to the education of the group. Educators often feel that it is their duty to help draw the group into the larger society by teaching them English.

To be taught in a language other than the mother tongue affects a child in certain ways. In an English language school, the non-English language child does not make an effort to speak the new language and reverts to the mother tongue at any opportunity when no reward is perceived for speaking the new language. Punishment for speaking the mother tongue does not encourage adoption of the new language, although it has often been tried. Only after the individual resolves to take on the burden of learning to speak a new language will he make any progress. This usually comes much later after he realized the
social and possibly economic advantages of the new language (Osuna 1948:230).

Monolingual literacy can have psychological affects upon the bilingual child. Children who are taught in a language other than that of their parents are indirectly told that the language of their parents is only suitable as a means of oral communication. It is not to be written as is the language of the school and the larger society, which usually leads to the conclusion that their mother tongue is second rate or inferior. "It is not far from that conclusion to the conclusion that those who speak the home language are second-rate people" (Christian and Christian 1966). In school, through the literature, the child develops a self image. In a school that teaches in a language other than his own, that image will be one of the dominant culture, not of his own culture. As a result, he learns to identify with the values and culture of the larger society presented in school. The situation is amplified when the child is taught his mother tongue in school as a standardized foreign language. Since it differs from the colloquial language in the home, a stigma on the parents' language is learned. This happened in both New England and Louisiana among the French (Lemaire 1966:269). All of this hastens the process of assimilation into the dominant United States culture.

Before 1920, neither the state government nor the Catholic church provided schools for children in rural Louisiana. The Catholic church provided schools for the wealthy and to train the
clergy (Gaynor 1931:231). The public school system was grossly underdeveloped before 1920, and officially was an English language system. As a result, the Cajuns were undereducated and without French language schools since they did not develop them for themselves. This is particularly true of the bayou settlements of the Atchafalaya Basin. When the first public school opened on Four Mile Bayou in 1935, it was conducted in the English language, but the students were French speakers. This school lasted until 1950 when the children were taken by boat to the Canal and bused to Napoleonville. Later, the children were transferred to Stevensville. The community's first contact with French language instruction was in the 1973-1974 school year when CODOFIL began teaching standard French as a foreign language in the Stevensville elementary school. Neither the Cajun nor the Creole language is studied in the CODOFIL program, which has been largely unsuccessful and has generated little community enthusiasm or response. Labadieville Elementary also has a CODOFIL program. Otherwise, French is only taught at the high school level in Assumption parish.

The policies of the government and the dominant linguistic group toward the minority language is crucial to the outcome of language contact. Language shift is not the only possible outcome, since different groups have found different solutions, as the cases of the German speaking areas of French (Alsace-Lorraine), Belgium, and Luxembourg illustrate. In these areas, the Germans had historical priority; yet in terms of the country as a whole, they were a linguistic minority, except in the case of Luxembourg.
which is a small German speaking country surrounded by French speaking countries. Members of the linguistic majority (French speakers) moved into the area and demanded public schools in their own language. The attitude of the national government and the general population toward the linguistic minority differed in each country and the outcome of language contact varied respectively.

In Belgium, the government and the people accept bilingualism in the school system. As a result, both the French and the Germans are able to maintain their languages. But in Luxembourg even though the native Germans also accept bilingualism, the government requires immigrants to send their children to German primary schools and knowledge of the local dialect to become a citizen. Under these circumstances, the French immigrants have far less impact on the German speaking population than in Belgium or France.

The French government has imposed French on the native German speakers in France as the only official language. The French people that immigrate to Alsace and Lorraine are able to live their lives without any knowledge of German, because French schools were established. Because the French were generally better educated and more prosperous, they occupy the higher economic positions. But if the German speakers wanted to achieve the same positions, they had to learn to speak French (Verdoodt 1971). The same situation exists in Louisiana with the Cajuns and the government. The state of Louisiana has imposed English on the native French speakers, particularly through the English language
The French in Montreal and the Spanish in the southwestern section of the United States illustrate balanced bilingualism, and alternative solution to language contact. In both areas, the pressure to learn English still exists, but primarily from the dominant culture, not from within their own society. Within their own society, individuals feel social reinforcement of the mother tongue. The mother tongue remains the language of the home, so it is not threatened. Most individuals become bilinguals during school, but do not discontinue speaking the language of the home. An equilibrium has been reached between the two languages (Lieberson 1965) (Skrabanek 1970). The Spanish in the southwestern United States differ from the French in Montreal in that the Spanish benefit from the constant flow of Spanish speaking immigrants from Mexico to replace any members who assimilate into the national culture.
Fluency of Four Mile Bayou Residents

Four Mile Bayou in Louisiana is an example of an interior settlement that was isolated from the English speaking people on the Front and was able to retain the French language. This community was not linguistically uniform. The fourteen family names associated with Four Mile Bayou were discussed in the previous chapter. Six of these families were Acadian or French. The other five were Spanish, English and German. French was the predominant language of the community, but Spanish, English, and to a lesser extent, German was also spoken before 1920. After 1900, even if French was the language of the home, most individuals, particularly the men, learned English by the time they were eighteen. Often the women and some men who did not have contact with outsiders did not learn English until they learned it from their children or grandchildren.

One exception was the Wiggons family, that was primarily English speaking. By tradition, the name "Wiggons" is an anglicized form of an unknown German name. Robert Wiggons came from Germany shortly after the Civil War. He spoke German and English, but learned little French. He eventually settled on Four Mile Bayou, married a woman from Morgan City, and had seven children. English was the language of the home. His children and grandchildren learned French from other children and from their spouses after they married.

Obviously, the people of Four Mile Bayou have been flexible
and adaptive concerning language. In such a community, language has little ethnic meaning. Membership in the community cannot be based upon the language or languages spoken. Thus, it is not surprising that as the process of modernization began, the community would again show considerable flexibility and adopt English. The people clearly saw advantages, both economic and social, in speaking English. The shift, which began with the introduction of public education in 1935, met little opposition. Few regrets are expressed concerning the loss of French among the young people, except that when asked about it they concur that "it is a shame." The goal of the people was not to lose French, but to adopt English. Except for a few parents who moved away and intentionally hindered the learning of French by their children, the loss of French was merely an unplanned side affect of learning English. Many parents aged 40 to 55 in 1977 used French as a "secret language" to hide things from their children. In some homes the parents spoke both French and English. When the children were questioned in French, they would answer in English. Many grandchildren communicated with their grandparents in this way. The Cajuns of the Assumption interior have no contact with the few ethnic institutions in French Louisiana. The French "Renaissance" going on in such places as Lafayette and the activities of CODOFIL attract little attention with these Cajuns. Similar reports concerning the decline of the French language have been cited in other areas of Louisiana -- Assumption (Parenton 1948), Avoyelles (Bordelon 1936), Evangeline (Bertrand and Beale 1965) (Savells 1969), Jefferson,
Lafourche (Folse 1935) (Savells 1969) (Kammer 1941), Plaquemine, Pointe Coupee (Bertrand and Beale 1965), St. Bernard (Kammer 1941), St. James (Bourgeois 1957), St. Martin (Savells 1969), and Terrebonne (Pierron 1942).

In the past thirty years, the community on Four Mile Bayou has lost many residents. Only ten households from the original families remain. Since 1970, the area has boomed with camps, but these are people from outside the community. The original residents have moved to various towns making it impossible to randomly choose households for the purpose of study. Therefore, in order to describe the language fluency of the people of Four Mile Bayou and the process of language shift, one large family has been chosen, the Bailey family. To date the family has 258 members in five generations. A generation is defined not as an age group, but as all the members who have the same relationship to the patriarch of the family, Joseph Bailey.

Assuming that Jacobi's 1936 census was correct, the Bailey family constituted 21 percent of the thirty-three households on Four Mile Bayou. The Bailey family is good to choose because all but one of the second generation married into other families of Four Mile Bayou and they were raised with French as their mother tongue. Thirty-seven percent of the third generation married people from Four Mile Bayou or other nearby settlements. Another twenty-six percent married people from the Canal, Napoleonville, or Labadieville. This family is an example of one that was monolingually French during the turn of the century and later
shifted to English. Little is known of the great-great-grandfather, except that he came from England. The great-grandfather, Victorin Bailey, was born in Louisiana, had a few years of school and was monolingually French. He settled on Four Mile Bayou to fish sometime around 1874 and married Catherine Acosta, a bilingual (French and Spanish) from the Canal, who later learned English from her contacts as a midwife. They had five children, only one of whom stayed on Four Mile Bayou to fish. The others moved to other bayou settlements and little or no contact exists between the different branches of the family. The grandfather, Joseph Bailey (Generation 1 of this family for the purposes of this study), was born in 1875 and died in 1940 (See Geneological chart -- Table 1 and Table 2). He was monolingually French, had no education, and fished for a living. His wife, Irma Fryou, was born in 1876 in the Lake Verret area, and was monolingually French until the age of eighty (in 1956) when she learned English from her grandchildren. Joseph and Irma Bailey had eight children (Generation 2 for this study), five sons and three daughters, born between 1892 and 1917. Although French was the language of the home, all but one learned English later. For the most part, this generation learned English after 1935 from their children when the children learned it in school or from the grandchildren. Several men in other families of this age report learning English when they went to work on pullboats or at the skidder camp. Here, they learned enough English to work with the English speaking blacks that were brought from the Front.
Table 1. Geneological Chart, Showing Language Abilities of Bailey Family, 1977.

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Generation 1} \\
\text{G-2} \\
\text{G-3} \\
\text{G-4} \\
\text{Number of Children}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\Delta = \bigcirc \\
\text{Monolingually French} \\
\text{Speaks French, Understands English} \\
\text{Bilingual, French learned First}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\Delta = \triangle \\
\text{Bilingual, English learned First} \\
\text{Speaks English, Understands French} \\
\text{Monolingually English}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Male} \\
\text{Female} \\
\text{Kinship} \\
\text{Marriage}
\end{array}\]
Seven of the eight children in the second generation stayed on Four Mile Bayou to fish for a living or in related occupations. One daughter left when she married a farmer on the Canal Road. All of the second generation married people from Four Mile Bayou, the Canal, or nearby communities. French was the first language for all but one spouse who was a granddaughter of the German man, Wiggins, mentioned before. She learned French after she married, but spoke English with her children.

The third generation becomes very heterogeneous. They have different language capabilities, live in different places, have more diverse occupations and range in age from 62 to 18. Most are bilinguals, but the oldest in this generation understands English but cannot speak it and five of the youngest understand French but cannot speak it.

The fourth generation varies similarly in age. Joseph Bailey has to date, 112 great grandchildren ranging in age from 43 to less than one year old. They include bilinguals and monolinguals in English. The fifth generation, not included in the statistical information, has 99 children ranging in age from 23 to less than one. Seventy or 70.7% of these children are below the age of ten. The two oldest, aged 23 and 21, understand some French. The other 97 are monolingually English.

TABLE 2. Generations in the Bailey Family with Number of Persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERATION</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Joseph Bailey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. his children</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. his grandchildren</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. his great grandchildren</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. his great-great grandchildren</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>258</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Introduction

Each independent data set (age, birthplace, residence, and education) for each individual was compared with that individual's fluency in French in an attempt to see if any significant correlation exists. For example, two of the individuals were a man, sixty years old, with no education who was born on Four Mile Bayou and presently lives there and a woman, aged thirty-five with a high school education who was born in Napoleonville and is now living in Labadieville. Since these data are neither independent variables nor randomly collected, non-parametric statistics were used since they do not need such prerequisites.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, which tests for similarity of ranked observed data was used for the analyses.

\[ R_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)} \]

where \( R_s \) = rank correlation coefficient

\( d \) = difference between pairs of ranks (observations)

\( n \) = numbers of pairs of ranks

1.0 = perfect correlation

0.0 = no correlation

-1.0 = perfect negative correlation

A null hypothesis was used to test the significance of the rank correlation.

\( H_0 \) = There is no significant difference between the two sets of data (ranks).
The combination of coefficient and statistical significance allows us to verify if, for example, residence and fluency are correlated.

However, correlation does not imply causality. This may only be assessed by study of the results and knowledge of the local situation.

**Language Fluency Data Set**

Language fluency was divided into five categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Fluency Categories</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category one -- Monolingually French</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category two -- Speaks French and Understands English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category three -- Bilingual in French and English</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category four -- Speaks English and Understands French</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category five -- Monolingually English</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>99.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Category one (monolingually French) had only two individuals in the first four generations of this family in 1977. One was born in 1909 and did not want to learn to speak English, and the other was born in 1920 and died at the age of 17.

Language Category two (Speaks French and can understand English) has only one individual who was born in 1916 and still today has little contact with non-French speakers. I believe that twenty to thirty years ago, many of the present day bilinguals would have been in this stage of the shift from French to English.

Language Category three (Bilinguals) has 52 of the 159 people
in four generations. Most of the bilinguals were in the third generation. Many bilinguals show much linguistic interference and language switching. The bilinguals in all generations fall into four classes (See Table 4). Class A includes the children in one nuclear family who spoke English at home and learned French after they married. Few of their children even understand French. The bilinguals in Class B were born before 1916 and learned English from their children or grandchildren. The bilinguals in Class C were of school age in 1935 when the public school opened and learned English when they entered school. The movement away from the bayou started with this generation. Whether or not their children learned French seems to depend upon where they moved. The Class D bilinguals were born after 1940 and tend to be the oldest children in a family where the parents spoke both English and French to them in the home. The younger children in such families rarely learn to speak French, although many understand it. These families tend to be the families that remained at or near Lake Verret.

TABLE 4. Types of Bilinguals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. English learned at home and French learned later</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. French learned at home and English learned after age 20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. French learned at home and English learned at school</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Both French and English learned at home</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ages thirty to thirty-five seem to be the pivotal ages, since forty-one of the forty-four people over the age of thirty-six were
bilingual. The youngest bilinguals were aged twenty-seven and grew up at Lake Verret or Bayou Long.

Language Category four (speaks English and understands French) had 42 or 26.4% of the 159 family members. Ninety-three of these persons were between the ages of 18 and 35. The youngest was eleven and lived at Attakapas Landing.

Language Category five (Monolingually English) had 62 or 38.9% of the 159 family members. The oldest persons that were monolingual in English were thirty-five years old, in the fourth generation and grew up away from Lake Verret or the bayous. When one includes the 99 children in the fifth generation, there are 80 children below the age of ten in the family. All of these children are monolingually English no matter where they live.

The same individuals can be reclassified according to their mother tongue. Three groups emerge: 1) those who spoke French first, 2) those who spoke both English and French in the home, and 3) those who spoke only English at home. When this is broken down by age, one finds that except for one family, who spoke both English and French at home, the people born before 1938 spoke French first. Nineteen of the 47 people (40.4%) born between 1938 and 1952 spoke both French and English at home. The others were monolingually English. All people born after 1952 have English as their mother tongue.

**Age Data Set**

Age, rather than generation, was used as a category to compare with language fluency due to the great variance of ages
within one generation. Most generations had a range of forty years and many nephews are older than their uncles.

The age of the family members range from Joseph Bailey, who would be 103 years old if he were alive today, to his great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren who are less than a year old. The distribution of their ages are shown in Table 5 below. Age showed the closest correlation to language.

**TABLE 5. Age Distribution of the Family Members in Four Generations, 1977**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Age and Language**

\[ R_s = .76 \]

\[ P < .001 \]

**Birthplace and Residence Data Sets**

Data on the birthplace and residence of the first four generations (159 people) were collected. Six categories were devised in the form of six concentric circles increasing in distance from Four Mile Bayou: 1) Four Mile Bayou, 2) Attakapas Landing at Lake Verret and Stevensville on Bayou Long, 3) Morgan City and Bayou Boeuf, 4) Other small French towns -- Napoleonville, Labadieville, Thibodeaux, Houma, Gibson, 5) larger, more urbanized
and anglicized areas -- Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Anglo areas -- North Louisiana and out-of-state. See map 2.

Table 6 shows the birthplace of the family members compared to their present residence. The movement away from the lake area is apparent. Whereas 53% of the family was born at the lake (Category 1 and 2), only 24%, which includes the deceased members, never moved away. Now 57% of the family live in Morgan City or other French towns (Category 3 and 4). Only 21% of the family was born in New Orleans, Baton Rouge or Anglo areas (Category 5 and 6), 19% now live there. This family is representative of the other families that lived at Four Mile Bayou. They also spread out and have family members in these same categories. This family also reflects the widespread population movements occurring in Louisiana between 1935 and 1940 (Miller 1953). Modernization began to affect the average family. Some areas received roads, schools and electricity before others. These areas increased in population as entire extended families moved in order to have access to these conveniences. The majority moved from small rural communities to the intermediate size towns. Morgan City is an example of a small town that experienced rapid growth after 1935.

When one correlates birthplace with the language data, a high correlation coefficient is obtained (.62) which is significant to the .001 value. This indicates that a close relationship exists between that birthplace of an individual and his language fluency. A person born in certain areas will be
most likely to speak French. When one correlates residence to language fluency a correlation is shown, (.36), but it is not as high as the birthplace correlation coefficient. Although it too is significant to the .001 value. This was expected since the knowledge of a language would be determined in the home. The social environment of the place of birth would be more important than the present day residence. A study of language use would focus on the place of residence. The highest rate of retention of French occurs on Four Mile Bayou and the nearby fishing settlements. Very few children that were raised away from the fishing communities retained any French. None of the children that were raised in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, or in Anglo areas speak any French.

TABLE 6. Birthplace of Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Four Mile Bayou</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attakapas Landing and Bayou Long</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Morgan City and Bayou Boeuf</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other small French towns</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Baton Rouge and New Orleans</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Anglo areas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TOTAL* 159 100.0%
TABLE 7. Residence of Family Members, 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Four Mile Bayou</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attakapas Landing and Bayou Long</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Morgan City and Bayou Boeuf</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other small French towns</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Baton Rouge and New Orleans</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Anglo areas</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>159</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Occupation Data Set**

Due to the difficulty of developing an ordinal scale of categories for occupations, it was not possible to test language fluency and occupation with the Spearman Rank Correlation test. There is the problem of using the occupation of the spouse who often earned the primary income of the family. Many individuals married non-Cajuns or Cajuns from backgrounds other than fishing. Using these occupations would distort the results. To a certain extent, the occupation is reflected in the place of residence. Only certain types of jobs will be available in any one place. The decline of fishing as an occupation within the family relates to their movement away from the bayou area. Only fourteen members of this family presently or used to fish for a living. The other 105 employed persons are in non-traditional occupations. Thirty-eight percent are in the trades, but all types of occupations are represented.
Education Data Set

Problems also arose in correlating the years of formal education to language abilities. A person who was eighty years old and bilingual fell into the same category as an English speaking preschooler because neither had any education. As discussed in the previous chapter, before 1935, there was no school available. Eight of the nine persons over sixty-five had no education. After the seven year school was provided, many children did not take advantage of it for various reasons. Often the child was needed at home to work. Many of the overage children were embarrassed to be with the younger children and quit. Thus many received a third grade education. But the education of those that moved away drastically increased if schools were available. Sixty percent of the persons over 18 finished high school and fourteen percent of these have attended college or trade school. Seventy-five percent of the people aged 18 to forty finished high school (68 of 91). The education level of the family members is outlined in Table 8.

When the data on the education and language fluency was correlated a low but still significant correlation coefficient was obtained (.29) which is significant to the .01 value. Of all the data compared to language, education showed the lowest correlation. This indication is dubious since the introduction of the public school was logically the most important factor in the shift from French to English. A second test was done using only adults over the age of 18 who were most likely to have
finished their education. This obtained a correlation coefficient of .57, significant to the .001 value. This more clearly shows the impact of education of the language of the area. The more education a person has the more likely he will speak English and the less likely he will speak French. Three competing hypotheses attempt to show causality of this correlation between education and language. Does the lack of school cause the speaking of French? Does the speaking of French cause the lack of school? Or are the lack of school and the speaking of French caused by a third element, such as isolation? More data and research are required to answer these questions.

TABLE 8. Education of Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Education</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>159</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education and Language -- Using entire family

R_s = .29
P = .01

Education and Language -- Using persons 18 and over

R_s = .57
P = .001

Thus, it has been shown how a family shifted from French to English in the course of thirty years. None of the 80 children under the age of ten speak or understand any French. In any attempt to determine which factors involved in language shift correlate the closest to the language fluency of an individual, one finds that his age and birthplace are the most important factors.
It is not surprising that those individuals that were born in the more isolated, French speaking areas before 1940 are more likely to speak French. Younger individuals whose parents moved from these areas and were raised elsewhere are less likely to know French. If they did learn French, there is little likelihood of them teaching it to their children. The importance of education as a factor in language shift is obscured by the result of the correlation of education and language fluency. This is the single most important factor in the process of language shift. Residence, while related, does not play as important a part in the process of language shift in this bayou settlement.

The data described here are more than the idiosyncratic traits of one family. They are probably representative of what has happened to other families from this community. Furthermore, the process of modernization and Americanization throughout south Louisiana is illustrated by this family. The Cajuns in this community were flexible and adaptive in many aspects of their life, and particularly so in their language. Settled by people of diverse backgrounds, language in this swamp community was never a strong ethnic boundary. In the face of Americanization and modernization, the mother tongue shifted to English in this community on Four Mile Bayou.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapters, the historical setting of the community and the language fluency of the residents have been discussed. Their adaptability concerning language and other aspects of the traditional life can be seen in the way the residents readily adopted English and abandoned their traditional homes and occupations in order to get better jobs and move into the modern world. Historically, several languages have been spoken in the community. Individuals were flexible concerning language, for example, speaking different mother tongues did not prevent couples from marrying. Children learned the language of the father, mother, or both. Monolingually English children learned French, the language of their peers, as they grew up. Obviously, language was not an ethnic boundary among these Cajun families. Therefore, when faced with modernization, speaking English did not threaten their Cajun identities. They would still consider themselves Cajuns if they spoke English. Cajun identity is based on more than the French language (Spitzer 1977) (Waddell 1978).

The shift from French to English as the predominate language of these people is only the most recent part of the history of language fluency among the present and former residents. When families moved away, the adults became bilingual, but most of their children did not learn French, since most were living in
English speaking communities. The families that remained on the bayous retained French longer, but even there in 1977 few children under the age of twenty speak any French, although some understand the spoken language. Nevertheless, the French accent and intonation of the parents often influences the English of children that do not speak French.

The introduction of the English language public school was the most important factor in the shift from French to English. Practically all French speaking children learned English together at the same time. Learning the language of the dominant society in a school setting undermines the status of the mother tongue. Children learn to think of their mother tongue as inferior, especially if they cannot write the mother tongue. This quickens the process of language shift. These ideas are reinforced when they leave the community to one where the dominant language is spoken. In the new community, the mother tongue will probably be retained if sufficient numbers of speakers also live there and it is spoken regularly.

Other factors were important in the language shift in the community on Four Mile Bayou. The Catholic Church was not an ethnic unit and did not support the retention of French. Since the residents were Catholics who respected the authority of the priests, they did not rebel when the church decided to abandon French, which undermined French even more.

French may have been retained if the community had been able to survive modernization. But because the community was
isolated, relatively small, and split between two parishes, the community was not provided the modern conveniences as other bayou communities were. If schools, electricity, and roads had been obtained earlier, the community could have been quite different today. Other interior bayous that did get these services earlier, are thriving today and the French language is still spoken in many of them. In the past 20 years, television has brought the English language into homes that had not previously been exposed to it and older people learned to at least understand English.

Pierre Part which had a larger population, received roads, electricity, and a school during the 1930s. The history of Pierre Part is similar to that of Four Mile Bayou in that it was isolated and the economy was based upon the traditional occupations of fishing and moss picking. The early settlers also came from diverse backgrounds. Based upon the family names, a social survey was conducted in 1934. Even though many different ethnic groups had settled the area, French was the predominant language and many families with names such as the Spanish Morales, claimed French descent. All but one of the Spanish and German families had lost the original language and most were bilinguals in French and English. More of the families with English and Irish surnames could understand or speak English but several spoke and preferred French. The language abilities of the non-French descent families are outlined in Table 9 (Smith and Parenton 1938).
TABLE 9. Language Fluency Among Non-French Descent Families in Pierre Part, 1934

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Abilities</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual French</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands English</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual ---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prefers French</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prefers English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Families</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At approximately the same time, a survey of the language fluency was conducted in Plattenville, a community on Bayou Lafourche in Assumption Parish. This community does not have families of such varied backgrounds. Forty-nine of sixty families had French names and French was the preferred language. But by 1938, 59 of the 60 families were already bilingual in French and English. The older people "used French exclusively, [but] the younger generation who show the effects of the public school system are now using English to a greater degree than French" (Parenton 1938).

If Four Mile Bayou had received modern conveniences earlier, before families had left, French may have had been retained as it was in other communities, and confronted with so many obstacles, the community declined and the transplanted families shifted to English as the predominant language.


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EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Maida Owens Bergeron

Major Field: Anthropology

Title of Thesis: Language Maintenance and Shift in a Bayou Community

Approved:

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Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination: July 14, 1978