

Proud To Be In Bossier

A Retrospective



— Clifton D. Cardin —

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Commemorating the Opening of
WK Bossier Health Center
July 15, 1996

Text and Photo Research

By Clifton D. Cardin

Official Bossier Parish Historian

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Willis-Knighton Health System

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—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

—FOREWORD —

Proud To Be In Bossier is a compilation of Bossier Parish historic photos and facts commemorating a modern-day historic event, the opening of Willis-Knighton's WK Bossier Health Center. With the opening of WK Bossier Health Center we join a long list of people and businesses who have found Bossier Parish a good place to live and work. We build on the proud heritage of Bossier and dedicate this book to those who have had a vision for this city and this parish. In addition, we acknowledge the cooperation and generosity of the many people who have shared their photos and information. We, like you, are *Proud To Be In Bossier*.

James K. Elrod
President and Chief Executive Officer
Willis-Knighton Health System

— ACKNOWLEDGMENTS —

Vernon Floyd

Bossier Parish Library Archives

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George Chambers Jr.

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8th Air Force Museum

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— PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

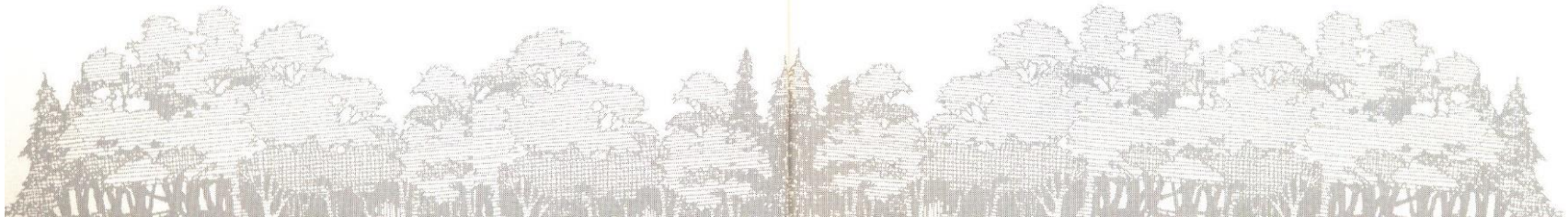
- Bossier City can trace its origins to 1883 when Anna B. and J. J. Stockwell began selling lots carved from Anna's grandmother's place originally known as the Elysian Groves Plantation. The plantation was the legacy of Mary Doal Ciley Cane who has become known to some as the "mother of Shreveport." Thus, she is "the grandmother of Bossier City."
- Bossier Parish was officially created February 24, 1843, when Governor Alexandre Mouton signed Act 33 into law.
- Originally Bossier Parish was larger than it is today. In 1871 the eastern third of the parish was taken to form Webster Parish.
- The oldest church in Bossier Parish is the Salem Baptist Church founded November 23, 1844.

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- The first electrical service was offered in 1912 when Shreveport Gas and Electric Company ran lines into Bossier City.
- Bossier is believed to be the first parish in Louisiana to use school transportation. On July 18, 1903, N.W. Sentell began transporting school children from Collinsburgh to Plain Dealing in a covered wagon.
- The famous Shed Road of Bossier Parish ran from Red Chute to just north of Bossier City. It was the only known dirt-floor, roof-covered roadway in the United States. It is thought to have been nine miles long and was in operation from 1872 until 1888.

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- The first bank in Bossier Parish was the Plain Dealing Bank which opened May 3, 1904. It was also the first to fail when an employee embezzled over \$121,000 in 1921.
- The first successful oil well was drilled in Bossier Parish on June 30, 1908, by Gulf Coast Oil and Gas Company. It was located on Oakland Plantation south of Haughton.
- Evidence of what is believed to be the largest round Indian ceremonial hut ever found in the United States was excavated by a Boy Scout troop north of Bossier City in 1959.





Photos Courtesy Clifton D. Cardin

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Bossier Parish is named to honor Pierre Evariste Jean Baptist Bossier. Pierre Bossier was a fourth-generation Bossier to live in Louisiana. His great-grandfather built the first and second fort at Natchitoches. Pierre Bossier is recorded as having been highly educated and a general in the Louisiana Militia. He entered the service in the War of 1812 at the age of 15. General Bossier is remembered for his duel to the death with Francois Gaiennie of Clouterville at the plantation of Emile Sompryac in 1839. At a distance of 120 feet Gaiennie fired first but missed; Bossier did not. Despite earlier reports, General Bossier did not die of suicide but of a lengthy illness with his wife and family present. He had no children. His wife died a few months later.

Matilda Blair Bossier, wife of Pierre E. Bossier. They were married in 1817 at Natchitoches. Records show that she was from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is believed that they may have met while P. E. Bossier attended college at Maryland.



Photo Courtesy Katherine Brash Jeter

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Edward Kendell Russ, Bossier Parish's Reconstruction Yankee sheriff, arrived May 7, 1869, and assumed office during a period of upheaval in Bossier Parish. This native of Lowell, Massachusetts, served until December 1870, losing the November election to Benjamin Franklin O'Neal. He was then appointed tax assessor for Bossier Parish by Governor Warmouth but resigned that office due to political problems. He then returned to New Orleans and accepted a position as inspector for the Custom House. He died in 1929 at Gulfport, Mississippi. During Reconstruction, Bossier Parish did not suffer as much as the rest of the south from forced "elected" officials. William Luper was appointed by Governor Warmouth. He arrived in Bellevue and met with some opposition so he refused to take office. E. P. Clark arrived with his own deputy but without his official paperwork and was not allowed to take office. His appointment was never confirmed.



Photo Courtesy Ford Stinson Jr.

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Robert Emmet Wyche, the 10th sheriff for Bossier Parish and the first Democrat sheriff for Bossier Parish after the Civil War, was a war veteran. He entered the Confederate forces as Captain of the Bossier Guards and quickly rose in rank to major of the 13th Louisiana Battalion Cavalry (also known as Wyche's Battalion). Elected in 1878, R. E. Wyche performed the second legal hanging in Bossier Parish in 1882. The burning of the jail at Bellevue in 1885 forced him to use jail cages placed in a warehouse as a temporary jail. R. E. Wyche was a party to the battle to move the courthouse from Bellevue to Benton during the 1880s. He served an injunction on the Police Jury preventing them from moving the records in 1888. He died in 1889 in a horse-drawn buggy wreck.



Photo Courtesy Sandra Whittington Upshaw

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

The family home of Joseph Jackson and Ann Heath McKinney photographed in 1902 shows many of their family members, all identified. Surnames include McKinney, Demoss, Davis and Clark. Tradition holds that this house was burned by the McKinney family after one of the couple's sons died in the rear of the house of tuberculosis. The decision was made and the home was burned while the mother was away.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Sheriff John Ford Edwards gained the Democratic nomination to run for sheriff of Bossier Parish by defeating his wife's brother (R. E. Wyche Jr.) in an election held April 19, 1904. He ran unopposed for sheriff gaining all 333 votes, and was sworn into office June 15, 1904. Edwards was the 12th sheriff of Bossier Parish but only the second to have been born in Bossier Parish. Because his father was legally blind and his mother died while he was an infant, Edwards was raised by his grandparents. He attended school at Bellevue and he worked at various mercantile jobs until becoming first deputy in January 1890. He was married in 1885 to Hattie Wyche, daughter of Sheriff R. E. Wyche. He died April 22, 1924, and is buried at Fillmore Cemetery.



Photo Courtesy Beulah Allen Findley, John H. Allen Collection

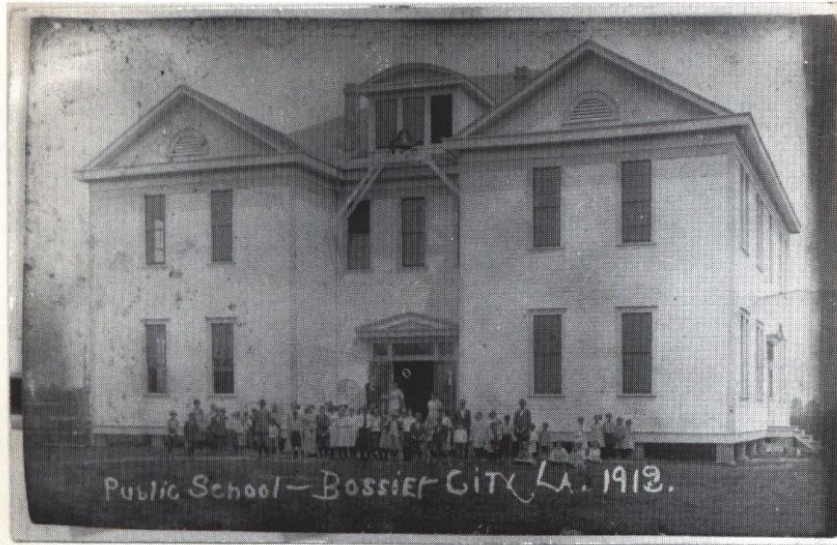
—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

This photo of two mail carriers loading mail on their horses was taken *circa* 1912. Home delivery was begun in Bossier Parish in 1907. These men have never been identified. Prior to home delivery, patrons picked up their mail at the post office. Weekly listings in the newspaper advised patrons if they had mail at the post office. Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.) changed that and made mail delivery much simpler. Many R. F. D. addresses were still in existence when 911 changed all addresses to numbered street addresses.

The introduction of the automobile to Bossier Parish by W. J. Fish in 1912 changed local society forever. The years to follow showed an improvement in roads and the beginning of a system of service stations, including this Standard Oil Company of Louisiana station. It was built across the street from the First State Bank at Plain Dealing. The building is still standing.



Photo Courtesy Beulah Allen Findley, John H. Allen Collection



The building housing Bossier City School *circa* 1912 sat back and to the right of the current Bossier Elementary School. The site is now covered with houses. The newer brick school was constructed in 1927.

Photo Courtesy D. A. Horton Jr.



Photos Courtesy LSU in Shreveport, Noel Memorial Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Among those identified at the dedication of the old Traffic Street Bridge between Bossier City and Shreveport on January 15, 1915, are George Thurber, *Shreveport City Council*; Lewell C. Butler, *SCC*; *Shreveport Mayor* L. H. Dickson; Mr. Ward; Claude Rives, *Shreveport accountant and former councilman*; J. C. Logan; J. T. McDade, *Bossier Parish Police Jury*; George Wilson, *SCC*; Nat Stewart, *BPPJ*; Robert Whittington, *BPPJ* and J. G. McDade, *BPPJ*. This bridge was constructed as a toll bridge and joint venture between the Bossier Parish Police Jury and the City of Shreveport. A few years later the Police Jury sold its interest in the bridge to Shreveport. In 1917, E. E. Wart, night collector for the bridge, was not found at daybreak. A large pool of blood was found in the toll house and a smear led to the edge of the bridge. He was presumed murdered and his body thrown into the river, never to be found.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

— PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

In 1918 the first effort to create an east-to-west-coast highway began in Columbus, Georgia. The road was named the Dixie-Overland Highway, now U.S. Highway 80. After 1928, Louisiana's governor, Huey P. Long, included the Louisiana portion in his highway projects. Cutting the ribbon at the dedication of the Long administration's first section are (from left) Volney Voss Whittington, state representative from Bossier Parish from 1928-1932; Robert Brother, Shreveport; Governor and Mrs. Long; J. R. Wendt, state maintenance engineer (formerly Bossier Parish Engineer, responsible for planting live oak and magnolia trees along Highway 190 outside Baton Rouge); J. G. McDade, president of the Bossier Parish Police Jury; V. R. Rucher, and two unidentified participants.



Photo Courtesy 8th Air Force Museum

Barksdale Air Force Base was built in 1933 on land purchased by the City of Shreveport and donated to the federal government. It was officially dedicated February 2, 1933, as Barksdale Field. The airfield was named to honor Lieutenant Eugene Hoy Barksdale, a pilot who was killed August 11, 1926, while testing a plane at Dayton, Ohio. The original size of the base was 21,705 acres, but several additions have been made since 1933. It is considered the seventh largest air base in America.



Photo Courtesy George Chambers Jr.

Bossier City's growth period in the 1940s (the time of this photo) was fueled by Barksdale Air Force Base, built in 1933. The base has been important economically to Bossier City and the entire area. In addition, it provided names for two heavily-traveled streets, Barksdale Boulevard and Airline Drive.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

The Bossier Parish Library System was born in 1940 when the Bossier Parish Police Jury used \$1,250 of \$5,000 in gambling fines to establish the library at Benton. In 1941, a 1/2 mill tax provided \$7,000 to finance the operation, but in 1942 it took a persistent effort by citizens to renew that tax. In 1940, circulation for the library was 19,842 books. This photo indicates that airmen used the old downtown Bossier City Library during World War II. The airmen and the library employee have never been identified.

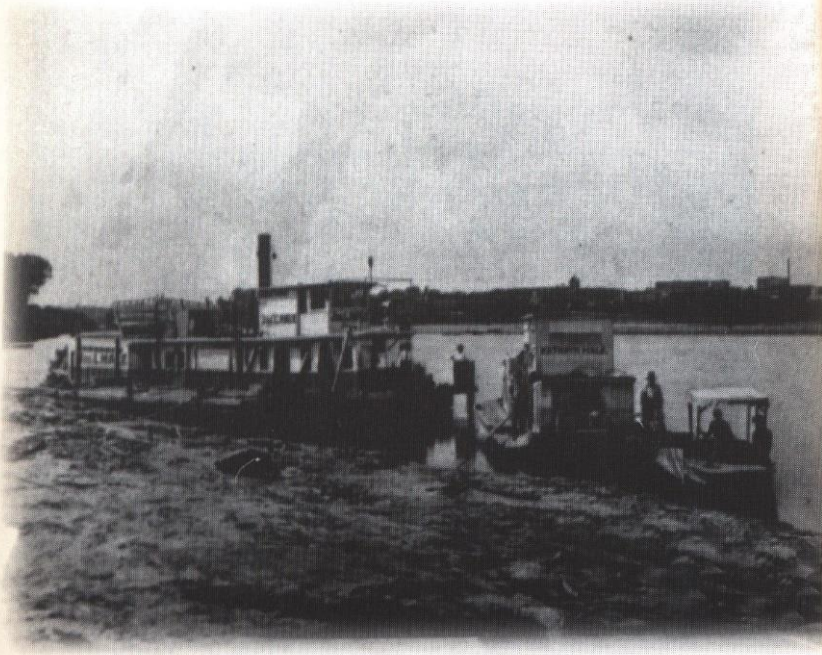


Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

The Bossier City riverfront is shown in the 1950s with Shreveport in the background. The Red River has provided a definite but often disputed border between Caddo and Bossier Parishes. The opening of the river to navigation by Henry Shreve in 1835 provided the impetus for the creation of Caddo Parish in 1838 and the creation of Bossier Parish in 1843. It was deemed important for transporting of “white gold” (cotton) to New Orleans. Market demand on the east coast kept the riverboats active until well after the turn of the century. The purpose for the boats shown in this photo has never been determined.

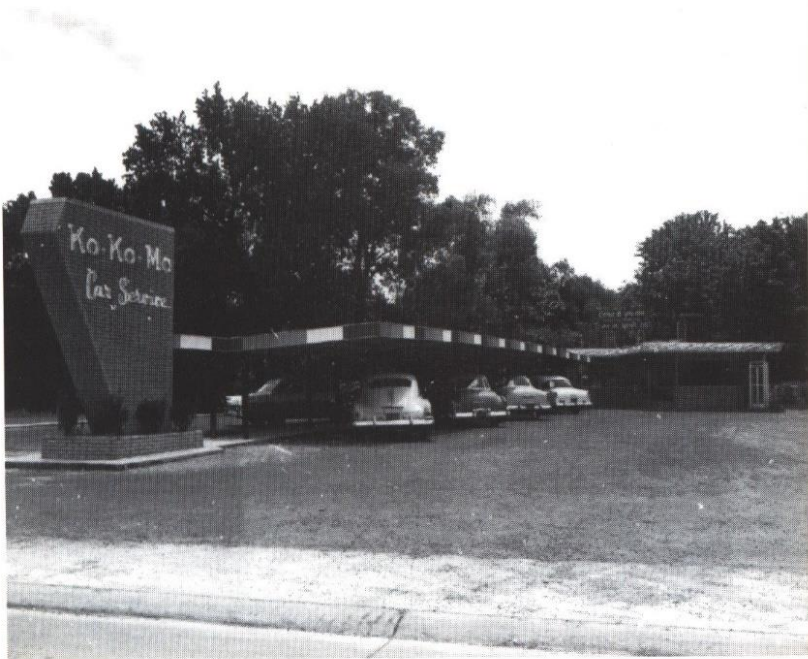


Photo Courtesy LSU in Shreveport, Noel Memorial Library Archives

This photo taken by a *Shreveport Times* photographer, records a site familiar in the memories of many current Bossier residents. The KoKoMo drive-in, located on Texas Street in Bossier City, was a popular teen-age hangout for the area youth.



Photo Courtesy Ford Stinson Jr.

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

T. W. W. Stinson, early Benton farmer, was the third of six generations of Stinsons to live in Bossier Parish. His father and grandfather arrived in the 1850s. T.W.W. was the first generation of Stinsons to be born in Bossier Parish. He was a founding member of the first public school in Benton in 1890 and was appointed to the Bossier Parish Levee Board in 1900. The farm, still owned by the family, is known as the Rough and Ready.



Photos Courtesy Ford Stinson Jr.

The third Bossier Parish Courthouse was the first at Benton. On November 12, 1891, after the infamous stealing of the courthouse records at Bellevue, the Bossier Parish Police Jury met at Benton. The meeting was held in a room over the town's blacksmith shop, which was owned by a local Negro businessman. In 1892, after settling of the three lawsuits caused by moving of the records, the Bossier Parish Police Jury contracted with Gibson and Oliff for the building of a new courthouse at Benton. The cost of the courthouse was \$23,684. The bricks were handmade by Seaborn H. Young at the courthouse site. Electric lights were added in 1898, the steeple was removed in 1926, a switchboard was added in 1937, and air conditioning was added in 1954.



Photo Courtesy Ford Stinson Jr.

The courthouse that served the parish for most of this century sat in the square in Benton, just south of the current school board headquarters. An old one-room school house and the Hughes House now stand on that site. A single-story jail was added in 1914. The courthouse almost burned in 1926 due to a fire in the electric generating plant. This was the impetus for remodeling in 1926 when the prominent steeple was removed. Later a clerk's vault was added, and a two-story jail replaced the single-story one in 1954. This courthouse was used until 1972 and was demolished shortly thereafter.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

This scene shows the Clerk of Court's office in the old Benton Courthouse. Seated to the left is James M. Henderson, Clerk of Court in Bossier Parish from 1914 to 1931. To his left is Grace H. Larkin, who was appointed Clerk of Court upon his death in 1931. At the rear is Grace Thompkins. The other two women have never been identified. This is one of the few known photos of the interior of the old courthouse.



Photo Courtesy Martha Ree Jones

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

This portrait of the entire class of Benton School in 1925-1926 includes all grades. Early education in Bossier Parish was considered a private affair until the state created the present education system in the late 1890s. It was then that the schools were built in Benton, Plain Dealing, Haughton and Bossier City. An early educator wrote, “The parents tell the teachers to whip [the children], but if they do it will cost him his place.”



Photo Courtesy LSU in Shreveport, Noel Memorial Library Archives

Doctor Paul Lawrence, shown at his home, was a country doctor who served the Haughton community for years despite having lost a leg in the Civil War. Most of the doctor's professional pictures were close-ups, but this picture reveals the extent of his handicap. It reminds us that he overcame a serious handicap to live quite a productive life. A leading merchant in Haughton, he had a business career in addition to his medical one. The store he owned in Haughton is still standing, and the home in the background was built in 1884 after the original burned. It is still standing.



Photo Courtesy D. A. Horton

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

This photo of downtown Haughton shows the area *circa* 1910. It was taken atop the church south of the tracks and looks to the north and east. To the extreme left is the Lawrence Store, which is still standing. A wagon with one bale of cotton, is apparently headed to the rail station for shipment. Just left of center and behind the tracks is the three-story Crume Hotel with a ladder leading out the third-story window. All of the other buildings have been destroyed or burned.



Photo Courtesy D. A. Horton Jr.

This building for Haughton High School is shown in the 1920s. It was built in 1907 to replace an earlier school. In those days children rode vehicles called “transfers” to school or walked. A later brick building at Haughton was constructed in 1927 and is still standing. Prior to the formation of the town of Haughton in 1884, all students in this area attended the old Fillmore Academy run by Lyman “Gris” Griswold. Old Gris was an attorney who left that profession to follow his passion to teach. A tall man with white hair and flowing white beard, he was quite intimidating to his students.

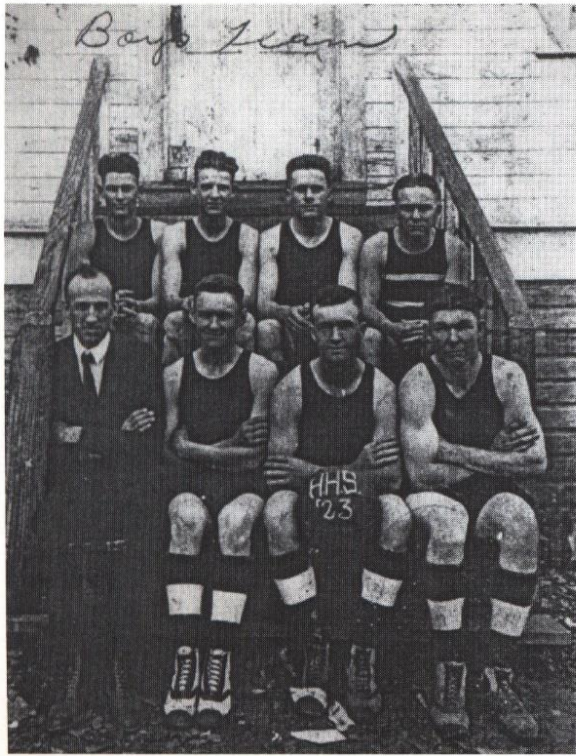


Photo Courtesy D. A. Horton Jr.

The 1923 Haughton basketball team played outdoors on a dirt court. Yet, they managed many wins against other local schools. Known to be in this photo are Belton Madden, Lee Lawrence, Harry Leach, Jacob Murff, Chandler Gillette and an Allen boy whose first name is not remembered.



Photo Courtesy Beulah Allen Findley, John H. Allen collection

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Plain Dealing phone service has always been privately owned and independent of the rest of Bossier Parish's system. This photo of the switchboard and an unidentified woman working the switchboard at Plain Dealing brings memories of earlier times. In the years prior to dial phones, a customer asked the operator to connect to the person being called.



Photo Courtesy Beulah Allen Findley, John H. Allen collection

This pair of 1920s photos of a train arriving at the depot in Plain Dealing indicates that the arrival of the train prompted quite a gathering of residents. Notice that the steam engine and train jarred the ground so much that the second photo is blurred as the camera stand was shaken. Steamboat travel in the late 1800s was slowly replaced by the “iron horse” that arrived in Bossier Parish in 1884. It was the preferred method of travel until the popularization of the automobile in the 1920s. Bossier Parish still boasts families whose forebears arrived via the train and settled in the parish.



Photo Courtesy Beulah Allen Findley, John H. Allen collection

This photo of children playing marbles was taken in Plain Dealing about 1920 by John H. Allen. It depicts simpler times and entertainment. The children have never been identified.



Photo Courtesy Adelaide S. Busey

Abney Downs Scanland published the *Bossier Banner* newspaper, which was founded by his father in Bellevue on July 1, 1859. William H. Scanland, a 17-year-old orphan, had come to Bossier Parish to print the *Bossier Times* newspaper. When the *Bossier Times* failed, he purchased the equipment and produced his own newspaper until his death in 1916. The paper then passed to Abney. The *Bossier Banner* is the oldest weekly newspaper printed in North Louisiana. It is currently owned by the *Bossier Press-Tribune*.



Photo Courtesy Vernon Baham

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

The Bodcau Dam built in the 1940s at the location of the old Durden Ferry northeast of Bellevue is not really a dam but a flood control gate. Known to be in this construction photo are Delmas Floyd and his father, Frank Floyd, both iron workers. Flooding has always been a problem in Bossier Parish, but it has also been a blessing, yielding rich soil. Several natural lakes were created as a result of the raft in the Red River, but they drained when the raft was removed. Among the lakes later created as flood control projects were Plain Dealing, Cypress, Black Bayou and Bistineau. Bodcau created a spillway but no lake.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Gregg's Landing on Lake Bistineau near Koran, Louisiana, has long been a tourist attraction in Bossier and Webster Parishes. This photo taken in 1902 contains families bearing the names McClanahan, Yearwood, Houston, Gilmer, Sibley, Evans, Tooke, Connel, Love, Stewart, Aiken and Robertson.



Photo Courtesy LSU in Shreveport, Neil Memorial Library Archives

Giddens' Castle was built by Bossier native and Shreveport businessman Tandy Key Giddens atop Reed's Hill at Fillmore during the 1920s. The site is now known as Hilltop. This promotional photo was taken for a postcard soon after the castle was finished and while it was being promoted as a tourist attraction. Notice the family atop the castle and the added moon background and the wheels of the vehicles at the bottom of the photo. The finished postcard had none of these. Giddens' castle was used in the 1920s for early television broadcast tests. The castle burned a few years later and all the statues that stood outside have disappeared.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Dr. Shea Edward Prince, M.D., was known in Bossier Parish as a country doctor, rancher, and early Bossier Parish banker. He was son of Alonzo W. Prince, after whom the town of Princeton was named. Dr. Prince lived just south of Bossier City and north of the Scopeni Plantation (now Scopena) where he maintained a doctor's office and a small banking office. He later established Bossier State Bank which became Bossier Bank and Trust. Dr. Prince was typical of early doctors who had active business interests in addition to their medical practices.



Photo Courtesy Sandra Whittington Upshaw

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

This house was owned by Jasper B. Whittington and was located behind the store at Ivan. Ivan W. Whittington, Jr., was born in this house. The house is no longer standing. It burned after Casper C. Young reportedly built an excessively hot fire in the fireplace. The Whittington family is still active in business and politics in Ivan and Bossier Parish.

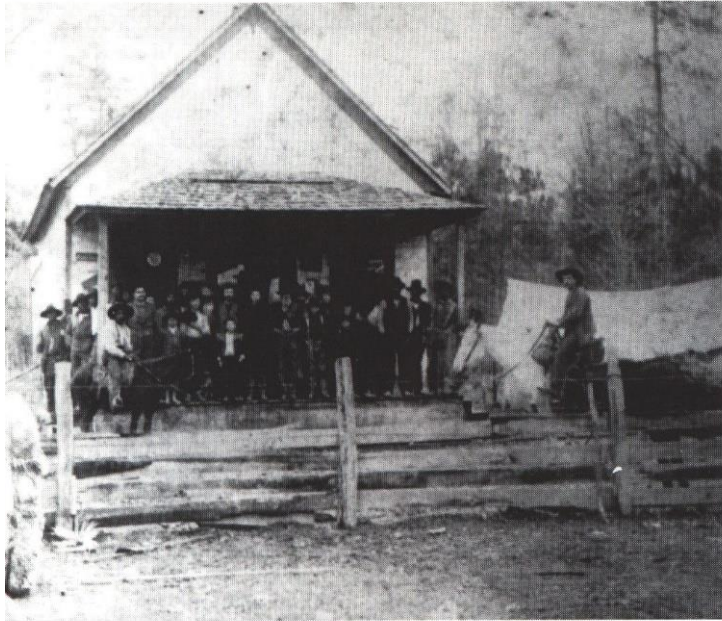


Photo Courtesy Sandra Whittington Upshaw

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

This is the first store built in the Ivan community and owned by Jasper Bunyun Whittington. Ivan was named for one of J. B.'s sons, Ivan Whittington. In 1958, part of the store was still standing and was then owned by Casper C. Young. This building was replaced by a new store owned by Jasper B. Whittington. The Ivan community is a popular recreational area thanks to Ivan Lake, a fishing and skiing lake in the northeast portion of Bossier Parish.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Virginia Hodges Mercer (Mrs. James H. Mercer) was the second generation of Mercers to operate the family plantation and the Taylortown Store, built in 1892. The store, still owned by the Mercer family, is standing today.



Photo Courtesy Bossier Parish Library Archives

—PROUD TO BE IN BOSSIER —

Taylortown Church, now only a tower in the middle of a field opposite the Taylortown store, has been both haunting and inspiring. For many years, tales were told about a church built for a bride who died before the wedding and about unmarked graves. Both of these tales are false, and the truth is more mundane. The church was built by the Methodists in 1907 and used until the 1950s. It was designed by John M. Dortch, engineer for the City of Shreveport, and built by J. G. Jordan on land donated by Will Mercer Sr. They used dark red McCormick brick.

