



2006 News

[Home](#)
[Site Map](#)
[VHS Feedback Page](#)
[VHS Site Search](#)
[Submit Materials](#)

Vermilion Historical Society

2006 News

Meeting schedule 2007

Date	Place
January 23, 2007 5:30 pm	Board meeting, Old Vermilion Parish Library, Abbeville
April 24, 2007 5:30 pm	Membership meeting, Abbeville
July 24, 2007 5:30 pm	Board meeting, Old Vermilion Parish Library, Abbeville
October 23, 2007 5:30 pm	Board meeting, Old Vermilion Parish Library, Abbeville

Quarterly meeting of October 24

October 24, 2006—The last quarterly meeting of 2006 of the Board of Directors of the Vermilion Historical Society was held on Tuesday, October 24, 2006, at the old library building facing Magdalen Square at 5:30 p.m. Board members present were President René Breaux (Gueydan), Vice-President Margaret Steen Villemez

[Up](#)
[2009 News](#)
[2008 News](#)
[2007 News](#)
[2006 News](#)
[2005 News](#)
[2004 News](#)
[2003 News](#)

(Abbeville), Treasurer Gary Theall (Abbeville), Secretary Patricia Heard (Gueydan), Joseph G. Vallee (Abbeville), Velta Bourgeois (Abbeville), Sue Butaud (Erath), Lloyd Doré III (Abbeville), Kenneth Dupuy (Maurice), Betty Girouard (Kaplan), and Barbara Hebert (Abbeville). About twenty non-board members also attended.

The secretary, Patricia Heard (Gueydan), read the minutes from the July 25 meeting, which were approved as read. Gary Theall, Treasurer, reported that the financial statement had changed little since the last meeting. Commissions of \$40 to the Alliance Center and \$100 to the Depot were the only liabilities, and the assets in the form of cash and unsold inventory of buildings and books was substantial. The financial report was accepted.

Gary Theall reported that the Abbeville Chief of Police, Rick Coleman, had come in before the meeting and requested assistance in researching the history of the Abbeville Police Department. He said their records go back only to 1970. He wants to know when the police department was formed. Theall said that he had not seen any report of a police department before 1906 or so, and Ken Dupuy also was not sure of the date that the police department was formed. Coleman asked that we contact him if we have any information.

Gary then demonstrated the prototype of the model 1903 Abbeville High School (now the school board office). The structure of the building was excellent, but the brick color was a little dark. A change of brick color and lightening of the roof color have been requested, and the model buildings are expected to be shipped shortly.

The President, René Breaux, announced the meeting dates for the year 2007: Tuesday, January 23; Tuesday, April 24; Tuesday, July 24; and Tuesday, October 23. All meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. and are held at the old library facing Magdalen Square in Abbeville unless otherwise announced.

Gary then projected on an overhead screen some of the 2006 acquisitions of documents, pictures, and artifacts. He also had the items themselves on display in the meeting room. The first item was an Oris A. Broussard Lumber Yard wooden yardstick from the 1950s. Next were three Abbeville High School yearbooks: 1948, 1973, and 1975. Gary said we are trying to acquire as many yearbooks as we can of Vermilion Parish Schools over the years. The 1948 yearbook was donated by the heirs of Robert May, who was principal of Abbeville High School in the late 1940s. These heirs also contributed a framed map of Abbeville and the autobiography of Robert May. The other two yearbooks were acquired by Gary for the Society. The next acquisition was the Ambroise Lacour

Scrapbook. This book was restored and rebound by U.S.L. some years ago. When U.S.L. received it, there were numerous newspaper clippings pasted in the book. The university removed the clippings and did not preserve them. Ken Dupuy made notes from the clippings some years before the book was rebound, so some of the information has been preserved. Lacour was a Justice of the Peace, teacher, clerk of the police jury, clerk of the school board, and held other positions during his lifetime. The scrapbook begins in 1845, and contains records and judgments in the small cases that he handled, classroom attendance records, notarial acts, and many other records. Another book acquired was "Bayou Cajuns" by the artist John Bergeron, a collection of Cajun stories. The next item was a small brass trade token with "Pacetti Fish Company Abbeville, La." on the front and "Good for 1¢ in trade" on the back. No one present had ever heard of the Pacetti Fish Company, and Gary stated that he found no acquisition of property in Vermilion Parish by any Pacetti. He nevertheless acquired the token for the Society with the hope that further research will discover who these people were. Next were two picture postcards of Gueydan from the 1950s. The first showed the Republic Rice Mill, which René Breaux reported burned to the ground some years ago. The second was a picture of Main Street with 1950s vehicles on the street. The next item was one that Gary regarded as being of great significance for the Society. It was a 1909 colored picture postcard of the magnificent Fenwick Sanitarium designed by George Honold. The postcard was used—it was written by Mrs. Albert Laurents of the Shell Beach area near Lake Arthur, to Mrs. Lee Fox of Portland, Oregon. It still has the 1¢ stamp that was in use in 1909. The Society previously had an image of such a postcard, and it was used by artist Ted Baudoin as a model for his painting of the Fenwick Sanitarium, but we never had an actual postcard before. Now we have one for posterity. Gary then showed images of a couple of items he tried to acquire but failed. The first was a 1948 matchbook cover advertising a taxi service from the Crescent Pool Hall on the outside, and showing the Abbeville Athletics baseball schedule on the inside. The other item he missed was a 1908 postcard of the Abbeville High School with a wooden tower standing on the north side of the building.

Gary, with the assistance of Ken Dupuy, then narrated a PowerPoint® presentation of "The History of the Veranda Hotel, Part II," based largely on excerpts from Ken Dupuy's upcoming book, *Journeys Into the Past—A History of Abbeville, Louisiana*. The show began with a review of Part I of the presentation, in which Chapter 1 dealt with the construction of the hotel, and Chapter 2 dealt with the owners and managers of the hotel over the years. Tonight's presentation started with Chapter 3, the patrons and shops of the hotel. The hotel was used by dentists, oculists, and other specialists as temporary offices

for the treatment of Abbeville patients who would otherwise have had no access to these professionals. The hotel was also used by traveling salesmen, jurors who were called in from out-of-town, and the sick—for the first few decades of its existence, Abbeville had no hospital. The hotel also contained a barber shop and a saloon. These businesses brought local people into the hotel and also served the travelers staying in the hotel.

Chapter 4 of the presentation covered some of the events in which the hotel played a part. First were the numerous downtown fires near the hotel—the 1885 courthouse fire, the 1900 State Street fire that destroyed the stores on the east side of State Street, the 1902 Concord Street fire that destroyed the Horace Trahan saloon and other buildings, the great 1903 Concord Street fire that destroyed the buildings on the south side of Concord Street and some of the buildings on Jefferson Street and State Street, and the 1917 fire that attacked the west side of the hotel itself. None of these fires destroyed the Veranda Hotel. Other events were banquets for groups such as the Knights of Pythias, wedding receptions, celebrations such as the end of World War I, and poker games in the back room. One of the notorious events in which the Veranda Hotel played a part was the midnight duel between Sheriff Granville Shaw and State Representative Paulin Fontelieu. These two friends got into a drunken argument in the saloon of the Veranda Hotel, and one challenged the other to a duel. They went to the edge of town (probably to the property now known as "Gray Friars") with their seconds and stepped off twenty paces. At the signal, both men fired, and both missed. At the second signal, Shaw's weapon fired but Fontelieu's misfired. The ball from Shaw's pistol struck Fontelieu in the head. He died six days later. The report of the duel in the *New Iberia Sugar Bowl* was entitled, "Duel by Moonlight." Was there a full moon? Through the miracle of the Internet, Gary was able to show a slide of the sky over Abbeville, Louisiana, at midnight on the night of the duel, May 31, 1874, and indeed there was a full moon. A second notorious event in which the Veranda Hotel played a part was the murder of Carl Schneider by Frank R. King on July 26, 1876. The killing took place outside the Veranda Hotel. King was an attorney who was in a position to expose certain frauds committed by Schneider. Believing King to be unarmed, Schneider attacked King by surprise, shooting him four times. King used a derringer to fire one shot at Schneider, and wounded him in the chest. Both parties recovered from these wounds. Later, Schneider began to stalk King. King acquired a double barreled shotgun, went to the Veranda Hotel, and shot Schneider upon sight without warning, killing him instantly. King was arrested and tried, but the jury found that he acted in self defense, and acquitted him after only twenty minutes' deliberation. King then moved to New Orleans.

Chapter 5 of the presentation consisted of a display of a wooden token given to the Society by Heloise Broussard, good for one cup of coffee at the Veranda Restaurant, and the few pictures of the Veranda Hotel that are still in existence. By 1927, the Veranda Hotel had outlived its usefulness, and its then-current owners, J. B. Miller and his partners, decided that it was time to demolish the Veranda and to build a new hotel in its place—the Audrey Hotel. And so the Veranda Hotel passed into history.

Quarterly meeting of July 25

July 25, 2006—The regular quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors of the Vermilion Historical Society was held on Tuesday, July 25, 2006, at the old library building facing Magdalen Square at 5:30 p.m. Board members present were President René Breaux (Gueydan), Vice-President Margaret Steen Villemez (Abbeville), Treasurer Gary Theall (Abbeville), Joseph G. Vallee (Abbeville), Velta Bourgeois (Abbeville), Sue Butaud (Erath), Charles Dill, Jr. (Abbeville), Kenneth Dupuy (Maurice), and Barbara Hebert (Abbeville). About fifteen non-board members also attended.

The secretary, Patricia Heard (Gueydan), being absent due to illness, Ken Dupuy served as acting secretary. Ken read Patricia's minutes from the April 25 meeting, which were approved as read. Gary Theall presented a financial report stating the cash in bank accounts and other assets in the form of unsold inventory, as well as the liabilities, which showed that the Society is still quite solvent. The financial report was accepted.

Arlene White was recognized to speak on behalf of "Alumay" (phonetic), a new Abbeville society headed by the man who is currently restoring some of the buildings on Concord Street. The purpose of the organization is to revitalize downtown Abbeville. They intend to raise money through fundraisers and grants in order to restore old buildings. They would like to have the support and participation of the Vermilion Historical Society. The president had intended to come to our meeting but was unable to attend.

Gary then reported on the Model Village project, saying that the manufacturer has all of the pictures and dimensions for the next project, which is the first high school in Abbeville (now School Board Office). It was designed by Abbeville's "stellar architect," George Honold, which will mean that four of the first five buildings we have produced were designed by this same architect. We usually

don't hear from the manufacturer until they notify us that the buildings are on the way. They have always delivered them before Christmas. Gary also reported that he has been contacted by Rebecca Shirley, who said that the VHS still has some display items at their former headquarters next to the Tourist Center on Highway 14 By-pass. She would like to move those items and wanted to know if we wanted them. Gary volunteered to pick up the items and bring them to the Alliance Center (old library) where VHS could make a decision on what to keep.

Gary then projected on an overhead screen pictures of two gifts that Heloise Broussard has donated to the Society. The first is a complete pre-indoor-plumbing bathroom set, consisting of a basic, hot water pitcher, cold water pitcher, hot towel bowl, soap dish, *pot de chambre*, and several other items, all in a pink rose and gold trim pattern. They are beautiful display items for the museum. Heloise bought this probably more than fifty years ago from Mrs. Milstead, who was the wife of the head of the telephone company here in Abbeville. The second gift was an old Underwood typewriter. She said this was the typewriter used by Louise Amelia Hebert when she worked for Louisiana State Rice Milling Company. The Godchauxs gave this to Louise Amelia when they bought her a new typewriter to use at work. Louise Amelia gave it to Heloise.

Gary then narrated a PowerPoint® presentation of "The History of the Veranda Hotel, Part I." The presentation began with the formation of the Parish in 1844, naming Perry's Bridge as parish seat. Père Mégret, founder of Abbeville, then made a contract with the police jury that he would give land for a courthouse square, build a courthouse, and provide a ferry across the Vermilion River if the police jury would make Abbeville the parish seat. The police jury got the legislature to pass a law calling for an election for parish seat. Abbeville won the election, reportedly by one vote. Mégret started building a brick courthouse. The police jury was not satisfied with the pace of the progress. Another election was called, and this time Perry's Bridge won. Mégret stopped building the courthouse. He sued the police jury to annul the results of the election and for \$10,000 damages. He lost in the parish court, and appealed to the Louisiana Supreme Court. The case lingered in the court until 1855. Meanwhile, Père Mégret died in 1853, and the legislature, probably at the urging of the police jury, named Abbeville as parish seat, this time without calling an election. At Père Mégret's succession sale in 1854, the police jury bought Lot 40, which was the lot on which Mégret was building a brick courthouse, probably with the intention of completing the courthouse. In 1855, the Louisiana Supreme Court decided Mégret's case against him, two years after his death, but the legislature had already given Mégret the victory. In August of 1856, the Last Island

Hurricane devastated many of the buildings in downtown Abbeville. In 1857, the police jury abandoned the idea of building a courthouse on Lot 40 and hired a contractor to build a three-story wooden courthouse across the street on the courthouse square. The police jury then sold Lot 40 to Joseph Gallet, together with the "bricks of the old Court House situated thereon." The interesting thing about all this is that M egret's original courthouse was to face the courthouse square, rather than being situated on it, a fact that is not commonly known. Gallet completed the brick building on Lot 40, and it became the Veranda Hotel.

Gary then discussed many of the owners and managers of the hotel, from its earliest days to its final days in 1928, when it was demolished to make room for the Audrey Hotel. At the next meeting he will present Part II, which will consist of the patrons and shops in the Veranda Hotel, the events in which the Veranda Hotel played a part, including one duel and one murder, the surviving photographs of the Veranda Hotel, and its final days.

Membership meeting of April 25

April 25, 2006—The annual membership meeting of the Vermilion Historical Society was held on Tuesday, April 25, 2006, at the old library building facing Magdalen Square at 5:30 p.m. Ken Dupuy read the minutes of the last meeting, which were adopted without change. Gary Theall presented a financial report showing that the Society is extremely solvent. The election of officers and directors was held, with the following results by acclamation: President Ren e Breaux (Gueydan), Vice-President Margaret Steen Villemez (Abbeville), Secretary Patricia Heard (Gueydan), Treasurer Gary Theall (Abbeville). Other board members: Donna Garling (Abbeville) was promoted to director emeritus and Joseph G. Vallee (Abbeville) will take her seat on the board; Velta Bourgeois (Abbeville), Heloise Broussard (Abbeville), Sue Butaud (Erath), Charles Dill, Jr. (Abbeville), Lloyd Dore III (Abbeville), Kenneth Dupuy (Maurice), Betty Girouard (Kaplan), Barbara Hebert (Abbeville), Meceal Smith (Gueydan), and Alberta Winch (Maurice).

Gary Theall reported that he had taken the photographs of the school board office (Abbeville's first high school) and emailed them to our representative with the company that makes the model buildings for us. This one should be easy because it is a squarish building and has no columns. Our representative also wants more pictures of the courthouse. She thinks that the company may be able to make the courthouse in two pieces, for example, the roof in one piece and

the rest of the building, including the columns, in another piece. It should be no problem to get each piece out of its mold. The problem is that it would cost twice as much to make a building, and we would have to charge a higher price when we sell them.

Ken Dupuy reported an interesting fact that he had learned recently. The Fenwick Sanitarium here burned in 1906, after which Dr. F. F. Young had another one built on the same spot, which later became the Palms Hospital. After the new Fenwick Sanitarium failed, Dr. Young moved to Covington and built another Fenwick Sanitarium. The interesting fact that Ken learned was that that building also burned.

President René Breaux, who is also on the Board of Directors of the Gueydan Museum, announced that the Gueydan Museum will host an event on May 6, 2006, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at which antique quilts will be displayed, including one that was buried during Reconstruction to hide it from the carpetbaggers. Another part of the display will be the magnificent decorated eggs created by our own board member, Velta Bourgeois, whose eggs have been displayed as far away as Washington, D.C. The public is invited.

After the business meeting, Gary Theall, Ken Dupuy, and Patricia Heard made a PowerPoint presentation of "Presidential Visits to Vermilion Parish." The first topic was the "near-visit" of Grover Cleveland between his two terms as president. Cleveland was a good friend of Joseph Jefferson, the actor who owned what is now known as Jefferson Island. Cleveland visited his friend in January of 1892. James H. Putnam, proprietor of the Rose Hill sugar plantation and refinery in Vermilion Parish, offered to let Cleveland use his boat for a hunting trip along the Vermilion Parish shores. However, Putnam was detained on business in New Orleans and the hunting trip was cancelled. In typical fashion, the *Meridional* reported not that Putnam had missed an opportunity to socialize with an American president, and not that the people of Vermilion Parish had missed an opportunity to host an American president, but that an American president had missed the opportunity to see Vermilion Parish. The next topic (written by Ken Dupuy) was the visit of Harry S. Truman to Abbeville for Dairy Day in 1960 to campaign for the John F. Kennedy-Lyndon B. Johnson ticket. Photographs of the event, courtesy of Allen LeBlanc, were shown. René Breaux commented that he was on the reviewing stand with Truman, and that a couple of Republicans had set up a political office in the Audrey Hotel across the street, and were watching from the window. Truman said, "I'm very happy to be here. A hundred thousand Democrats in the street and two Republicans in the window!" The next topic (written by Patricia Heard) was the secret hunting trip of Lyndon Baines Johnson

to a lodge south of Gueydan in 1971. The information was based on an interview by Patricia Heard with an eyewitness, Wesley LeMaire. The visit was described in detail. Since there were no photographs of the secret visit, Patricia supplied magnificent photographs of the area to show why a president would want to go there. The last topic (written by Ken Dupuy) was the visit of George H. W. Bush to an oil rig outside Maurice for the purpose of signing an important energy bill in 1992. Ken was an eyewitness to the event, took notes, and took photographs. Ken witnessed the occasion through the eyes of a historian, and the presentation gave everyone the sense that they too had witnessed the event.

Board meeting of January 24

January 24, 2006—The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Vermilion Historical Society was held on Tuesday, January 24, 2006, at the old library building facing Magdalen Square at 5:30 p.m. Gary Theall presented a financial report showing that the Society is still quite solvent. He gave a detailed report on the "Model Village" project, showing how many of each building have been sold and the profits so far from each.

After a discussion of which Abbeville buildings are candidates for the next miniature building, the board decided on the school board building, which was the first high school building in Abbeville. It was built in 1903 and was designed by Abbeville's stellar architect, George Honold, who also designed the St. Mary Magdalen church, the Bank of Abbeville, the Fenwick Sanitarium (Palms Hospital), the Masonic Temple, the rice mills, and the Peoples' Bank. Velta Bourgeois then discussed the Vermilion Parish courthouse. The previous prototype created by our current supplier was not acceptable because they could not handle the columns on the front porch. Perhaps they can create a model that gives an acceptable illusion of depth for the front porch. Otherwise, a company that can handle columns must be found, or a company that can manufacture the building in two parts to be assembled. Gary Theall agreed to contact our current supplier to find out if they can either create an illusion of depth or create a model in two pieces.

President René Breaux, who is also on the Board of Directors of the Gueydan Museum, announced that the Gueydan Museum will host a "Meet the Artist" event on January 28, 2006, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. The theme is "Swamp Spirits." Eleven artists have painted their impression of the same photograph of a swamp scene. The public is invited.

Gary Theall displayed an old 1934 leather fireman's helmet from the Abbeville volunteer fire department. The helmet belonged to Frank Ognibene, and was donated to the Society by his son, Gerald Ognibene. The helmet will be placed on display at the Culture Center Museum and Art Gallery.

Gary then announced that he is creating a poster display of the history of Abbeville, to be displayed on panels at the Center. He displayed as a sample the first poster, depicting Père Mégret and Robert Perry, and describing Mégret's search for a church site. The poster was printed by Walgreen's through their website, and was of very high quality.

The board voted to have quarterly meetings instead of bimonthly meetings. The meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the first month of each quarter. The meeting dates for the remainder of 2006 are April 25, July 25, and October 24. The April meeting will be in Abbeville, and the places of the other meetings remain undecided at this time.

After the business meeting, Lloyd Dore III made a PowerPoint presentation of "Abbeville, France." He started with the origin of the town, and went through its history. Many slides of the buildings and streets were shown. Abbeville, France, played an important role in World War I and World War II. It was largely destroyed in World War II, so most of the buildings now are of modern construction, but many pictures still exist of the old buildings. When Lloyd got to the part where the Germans were about to take Abbeville in World War II, Margaret Villemez stopped the presentation to ask if we had heard what happened in Delcambre at that time. She said the bridge tender in Delcambre was listening to the radio and heard that the Germans were about to take Abbeville. He said, "Not on my watch." He opened the bridge in Delcambre so that the Germans could not cross it. The traffic backed up for miles, and finally the superintendent of highways had to investigate to find out what the problem was. When he traced the problem to the bridge in Delcambre and went there, the bridge tender told him, "Mais non, the Germans are not going to take Abbeville while I'm here!" Margaret swears this is a true story. After the laughter died down, the presentation continued and was very much enjoyed by all.

Upcoming Board meeting of January 24

January 21, 2006—The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the

Vermilion Historical Society will be held on Tuesday, January 24, 2006, at the old library building facing Magdalen Square at 5:30 p.m. After a short business meeting, Lloyd Dore III will entertain the board and visitors with a PowerPoint presentation on "Abbeville, France." The meeting is free and is open to the public. Please come if you can.

The meeting had previously been scheduled for Wednesday at the new library, but the Board voted a few months ago to change its meeting days from Wednesdays to Tuesdays. Unfortunately, the meeting rooms at the new library were not available for Tuesday, so we have moved the meeting to the Museum/Culture Center, which is now in the old library building, corner of Jefferson and South Magdalen.

This website was created and is maintained by [Gary E. Theall](#) on behalf of the Vermilion Historical Society.

All copyrights are retained by the original authors of works appearing on this website.

All other copyrightable material © Vermilion Historical Society.

Privacy policy: We do not share your nonpublic personal information with anyone without your consent.

This page was last updated on 10/28/2007.