

THE TRUE DEMOCRAT

ST. FRANCISVILLE, WEST FELICIANA PARISH, LOUISIANA, FEBRUARY 24, 1917

Come to West Feliciana -- Land of Opportunity

THAT section bounded on the north by the thirty-first degree, north latitude, which is the line of demarkation between the States of Mississippi and Louisiana, on the east by the Rio de la Feliciana, now called Thompson's Creek, and on the south and west by the great Mississippi River, is the portion of the State of Louisiana which burst upon the delighted vision of the sick and travel-worn Spaniards after their wanderings through the swamps and wilds of the Mississippi and Red Rivers, and which in their joy they called "Feliciana" and which is today called the parish of West Feliciana.

Acreeage and Soil.

This parish contains 246,400 acres of land, of which about 75,000 are open and in use, the balance not touched, and available for the tiller of the soil or the stock raiser, who will find the soil of a peculiar formation known as "bay land," so called from the continued deposit of decaying magnolia or "bay" leaves which are of a dark green, thick and velvety texture, making the surface soil a rich black closely resembling the alluvial soils in color. The lower, or subsoil, is a rich dark brown. This soil is found nowhere else in the state and in very few places in the South in such quantity and fertility. In the northwestern portion of the parish are the Tunica hills which are a rich marl loam, said to be exactly similar to the famed grape lands of France. There is, besides these soils, an alluvial deposit at the foot of the hills along the course of the Mississippi river of about 50,000 acres, which is richer than the Valley of the Nile.

The topography of the hill country is rolling and interspersed with running streams.

Products and Crops.

This parish is a country of diversified products, great strides having been made in this direction since the advent of the boll weevil. Formerly an all-cotton section, producing on an average in the neighborhood of 20,000 bales a year, our people were forced by circumstances to make a complete change in farming operations. For several years it was found to be impossible to produce cotton profitably, and diversified farming and stock-raising were resorted to. Such a revolutionary change naturally required much time and patience before their returns seemed to justify the energy expended in this direction. Happily, last year witnessed what is conceded to be the end of hard times in this section. A crop of 1954 bales of cotton was produced, which, together with the seed, brought war-time prices, and distributed more money in the parish than twice this crop would have done in former years.

West Feliciana is properly called the home of Lespedeza in Louisiana, this crop growing luxuriantly in all sections of the parish. It has been a specialty with some of our planters for many years and those who have gone extensively into its cultivation are unable to supply demand for both seed and hay.

The Red Rust Proof Oat is another West Feliciana specialty. Little of this product is used for feed as there is a steady demand from other sections for the West Feliciana variety to be used as seed.

Cabbages, sweet and Irish potatoes have played an important part in the diversified farming of West Feliciana, and several hundred cars of these commodities are shipped to the northern and eastern market each season. West Feliciana enjoys the distinction of producing the best yams that reach the New Orleans market. One advantage of this method of farming is that two, and sometimes three, crops can be grown from the same land in one year.

Cow peas, beans, cauliflower, tomatoes and small vegetables are also produced in abundance.

Cattle- and hog-raising have received great impetus in this parish within the last few years and now form a considerable part of our products. Thousands of head of each are shipped every year. Texas cattlemen make regular visits here to make purchases for their ranges, and frequent shipments are made to packing centers. The razorback and the scrub are becoming a thing of the past in West Feliciana. Nearly every one who has gone into this line of business has wisely decided that only the best pays and has introduced fine-blooded stock.

Dairying is another comparatively new industry for this vicinity that is now coming into its own. Our excellent climate, running streams and abundance of pasture make stock-raising and dairying a profitable business and hundreds of gallons of milk are shipped to New Orleans every day. This industry has grown to such proportions that the Y. & M. V. railroad contemplates putting a refrigerator car on the Woodville Accommodation, next summer, in order to care properly for milk shipments originating in this vicinity.

Climate and Health.

This parish lying just south of the thirty-first degree of north latitude, enjoys the balmiest and most equable of temperatures, never going very high, on account of the proximity of the Mississippi River, which tends to keep the atmosphere cool and moist. We never have more than an inch of snow on the ground, and then for only one day, and some winters none at all.

The rainfall is sixty inches, with no long dry or wet "seasons."

The health of the parish for the reasons above given is unsurpassed by any place in the world.

Industries Needed.

Among the industries which could find profitable investment in the parish are a canning factory, a wagon and buggy factory, and a furniture factory, as all the raw materials are at hand, freight rates are the lowest. The soil of West Feliciana will produce any quantity of fruits and vegetables of every kind. The forests are heavily timbered with hardwoods of every description, such as oak, poplar, cottonwood and locust, just such woods as are needed in making wagons, buggies and furniture. The magnolia growing freely here takes a higher polish than mahogany, thus being adapted to the manufacture of the finest furniture.

Population and Its Origin.

This parish is peopled by both the white and black races. The whites are descended almost exclusively from early English, Scotch and German settlers, with some French and Spanish. The black or negro race, like most places in the South, are in the majority, and while the landowners are generally ready and anxious to replace them with white persons, the reason is that most of them are shiftless and dependent upon the whites from year to year, and not because of their behavior, for it can be said, that there are few bad negroes in the parish. This is due to the unwavering course of the white people, to accord them every right to live and work, but to deny them every vestige of social equality.

The total population is about 13,000.

Timber.

There are vast quantities of trees to be found in the uplands and upon the lowlands. Hardwoods such as oak of several varieties, cedar, magnolia, and black walnut, while softer woods like poplar, cottonwood, locust, willow, pine, are abundant in almost endless variety. An exhaustive account of the different sorts of trees to be found in West Feliciana appears elsewhere in these pages.

Water Supply and Drainage.

Besides the Mississippi River the parish has abundant water and is drained by the Big Bayou Sara, the Little Bayou Sara, the Bayou Tunica and Alexander and Thompson Creeks, with innumerable smaller streams, all clear water, and running from the state line on the north to the Mississippi River on the west and south.

The two first mentioned streams are of such size that in sections less bountifully watered than this, would be regarded as rivers. Thompson's creek is indeed a river, and Big Bayou Sara and Little Bayou Sara are so large that the real meaning of the Indian word, bayou or bayouque, a gut, expressive of a conjunction of many winding streams, is not appropriate. Nor is the word, creek, which has, in local parlance, been superflously tacked on to the name of each of these streams.

Shipping Facilities.

The Mississippi River skirts the parish for forty miles on its west and south and the Woodville branch of the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad runs from the extreme northern boundary a distance of some thirty miles to the southeastern line, and the Louisiana Railway & Navigation Company's road traverses the parish from the northwestern to the southeastern corner, a distance of more than forty miles. Freight rates to most points in the parish are as low as anywhere in the world. Bayou Sara enjoys very low freight rates, being on a parity with New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Natchez, which makes this place an ideal location for wholesale and manufacturing enterprises.

The Towns.

St. Francisville and Bayou Sara are the only towns in the parish and are contiguous to each other. Two railroads pass through them. They are 108 miles from the great city of New Orleans by rail, and about 150 by river, as the latter lies on the Mississippi River, and the former on a noble bluff just behind its twin town on the river.

Mineral Deposits.

There is an abundance of building sand and gravel in the parish, much of which is close to railroad transportation. The gravel is of two kinds, one being white and of value in building operations requiring the use of white cement. The other kind is found in greater abundance and should find a ready market in common building operations, road-building and railroad-ballasting.

There are a number of clays here which experts pronounce to be of value in the manufacture of pottery and earthenware.

West Feliciana's streams furnish potentialities for the future development of hydro-electric power. They never run dry, and, when the demands of population justify their exploitation, will, when properly harnessed, furnish electric current for a large territory.

It is a fact that the immense gravel

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"SOLID CATTLE TRAIN—WEST FELICIANA DID IT"



The photograph from which this cut was made was taken in Bayou Sara, October 29, 1915, at which time a solid train load of cattle was shipped over the L. R. & N. to Texas points. There were twenty-two cars in the train, averaging thirty-two head to the car. The inscription appearing over this cut appeared on large signs attached to the train. The cattle industry in West Feliciana has grown greatly since this event.