

THE HISTORY OF ACADIA BAPTIST ACADEMY

APPROVED:

G. A. Odum
Major Professor

Joseph Johnson
Minor Professor

G. A. Odum
Director of the Department of Education

Joseph Johnson
Dean of the Graduate Division

THE HISTORY OF ACADIA BAPTIST ACADEMY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North
Texas State Teachers College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

131935

Evelyn S. Boyett, B. A.

Gilliam, Louisiana

August, 1945

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	3
People	
Religion	
III. THE REALIZATION OF THE NEED FOR THE ACADIA BAPTIST ACADEMY	23
IV. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACADIA ACADEMY .	26
The Period from 1917 to 1923	
The Period from 1924 to 1929	
The Period from 1930 to 1935	
The Period from 1936 to the Present	
V. PRESENT LOCATION AND SIZE OF ACADIA ACADEMY .	41
Location	
Buildings	
Land	
Finances	
Other Property and Equipment	
VI. THE WORKS AND ACTIVITIES OF ACADIA ACADEMY . .	47
Principals	
Library	
Curriculum	
Student Activities	
Advantages and Influences	
VII. CONCLUSIONS	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to give a brief history of Acadia Baptist Academy, giving some facts essential to the development, and to evaluate the curriculum of the Academy.

The study has been limited to the historical background, the realization of the need for the Academy, the origin and development of the Academy, present location and size of the Academy, works of the Academy, and the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

The data concerning this subject have been taken from books, the Baptist state paper, letters from the superintendent, and friends of the Academy, the Southern Baptist Convention Minutes, and catalogues of the schools.

Care has been taken to follow good technique in historical research. Controversial issues, gossip, and hearsay have been eliminated, and only such material as could be substantiated by documents and information from people closely connected with the Academy has been employed.

No attempt has been made to add to or detract from the educational significance of the Academy. An attempt has

been made to relate the history of Acadia Baptist Academy in such a way that both the triumphs and the adversities will be shown.

It is the wish of the writer to present this study in such a way that it will cause the administration, faculty, students, and ex-students of Acadia Baptist Academy to collect other material, together with the original materials used in this study and to place them in a permanent file in order that friends of the institution may know its story.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

People

In order better to understand these French people, who they are, where they came from and why they are in South Louisiana, the writer is giving a brief account of their historical background. She believes these words will help those who are interested in these people to understand them and to realize their great need.

The French are great people and their contribution to the life and development of the material and cultural life of the state of Louisiana cannot be estimated here. Many of Louisiana's greatest men have been Frenchmen. They are among the most courteous, hospitable, kindly people to be found anywhere.

These French people live mostly in the southern part of the state, but will be found scattered everywhere and are engaged in all kinds of business.

The first white men to form settlements of any note in Louisiana were the French. Du Pratz, one of the state's oldest historians, at Iberville's suggestion, located on the St. John before the city of New Orleans was founded. He

relates in his history:

I went to view a spot on St. John's creek, about half a league distant from the place where the Capitol was to be founded which was yet only marked out by a hut, covered with palmetto leaves, and which the commander had caused to be built for his own lodging. From this creek to the town a part of its banks is inhabited by planters; in like manner as are the long banks of another creek. The habitation of this last go under the name Gentilly.¹

During the first and second quarters of the eighteenth century, France was in possession of the territory of Louisiana. The French company, chartered by the king, neglected the vast agricultural regions which abounded in great wealth. The district about Orleans remained a wilderness, inhabited only by a few trappers and Indians, who found on its immense prairies, where vast herds of cattle roamed at large, and in its lakes and bayous well stocked with fish and game, a source of profit and sustenance. The fur trade carried on was very extensive.

However, when Spain took possession of Louisiana in 1764, Spanish emigrants from the Canary Islands and Canadian refugees settled in this region. The Spaniards under the order of Don Louis Bouligny attempted to settle at the present site of New Iberia. Having failed in the attempt to raise hemp and flax, they became discouraged and traveled to Lake Tassa, in St. Martin Parish, where they settled. Their

¹La Page Du Pratz, The History of Louisiana, p. 33.

descendants occupy the land which was granted to their ancestors.²

The German colonists came over to John Law's settlement. They were industrious and became important as they furnished the city with vegetables, fruits, wild fowl, and fish. They gradually spread to the neighboring bayous, and now their descendants are found throughout southern and central Louisiana. It is interesting to note that the names in this section are French and not German, the German influence having been absorbed completely by the French. This evidenced by the name Des Allemands, which is typically French. It was their custom to load their pirogues with produce and float with the current to the city where on Saturday they held a market along the river front.³

The Acadians were the prevalent type of people in this south land; therefore it is necessary to review briefly their historical background. Nova Scotia was first settled by the French in 1604. Here they lived in peace and prosperity until 1713, when this land became a British possession by the Treaty of Utrecht. Since the French and English were at war, the Acadians were harassed and persecuted. Finally, they were deported in 1755. An estimate of more than six thousand, probably about half of the population of the French descent,

²W. Perrin, Southwest Louisiana, p. 17.

³William O. Scroggs, Rural Life in the Lower Mississippi Valley about 1805, VIII, 268.

embarked in ships which had been prepared for their deportation. Some of these exiles landed on the coast of the Atlantic from Delaware to Maryland, penniless and starving. Their one purpose was to reach Louisiana, the land of France. They started on an overland pilgrimage from Maryland to the Tennessee River, which they finally reached after untold sufferings, then to the Mississippi as far as Plaquemine in the country of Iberville, wending their way through dismal swamps and numberless bayous before reaching their future homes.

Longfellow has memorialized this deportation in his famous poem, "Evangeline," a story of our Bayou Teche country.⁴

In 1764, with the coming of the Acadians and the Spanish emigrants, settlements grew up along the bayous and even greater trade developed. Louisiana, which was now under the rule of Spain, became more prosperous. Spain realized the wealth of the colony depended on the development of its agricultural resources and in the raising of stock and cattle in its rich pasturage grounds. The fostering of these industries became the policy of the Spanish government. Military posts were stationed in different districts of the province. The Poste des Attakapac, which was stationed on the Bayou Teche, attracted settlers. It was here that many

⁴Ibid., p. 263.

of the Acadians settled after their long journey from Maryland.⁵

When the Spanish governor took possession, financial aid which had been given to the Acadians by France was discontinued.

Here the people lived, the Indian, French, and a few English, trading among themselves until the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the territory, in 1803, became the possession of the United States. At this time there were twenty distinct zones of rural settlements within the limits of the present state of Louisiana. These people settled to a simple life. They were mostly concerned about being left alone to their simple necessities, and to enjoy life.⁶

The French settlers secured land from the province officials through oral and written titles. Regardless of how these were secured, the rights were transmitted by inheritance and the lands could be seized for debts.⁷

Many of the Acadian houses consisted solely of wood, the locks, bolts, and keys often being made entirely of this material.⁸

These Acadians, who were illiterate, were descendants of the ignorant peasants from Normandy. Living upon a rich

⁵Perrin, op. cit., p. 18.

⁶Scroggs, op. cit., VIII, 263.

⁷I. L. Smith, Farm Trade Centers in Louisiana, p. 3.

⁸Ibid.

soil, with the woods at their back door affording game and the bayou at their front door teeming with fish, they felt no need for industry. An easy way of travel and a cheap means of transportation were within his reach.

Each of these isolated villages without the influence of the school or the printing press developed a dialect of its own, which today is still heard in words, phrases, and terms that are unintelligible to others. These people, who are simple and hospitable, resent the name "Cajun."

An interesting Acadian custom was that practiced when a betrothal was announced. The neighbors assembled and a log cabin was erected for the young couple.

There were very few educational facilities at this time. Some twenty years later, appropriations were made by the state for educational purposes. However, rich planters who could afford it sent their sons abroad to be educated. The group of educated was in the minority.⁹

Southern Louisiana, which is the point of interest, is settled by French-speaking people and exhibits a variation growing out of the "family-size" farm. The river or bayou was selected as the point of departure and their homes were made here. The holdings were a series of long narrow strips lying side by side. Roads followed the banks of the streams. For miles and miles the bayou presented the appearance of a long one-street village with houses on each

⁹Ibid., pp. 3-7.

side. Occasionally a church or school, or trading center, was seen. Plantations were interspersed here and there. The type of organization contains elements of both types, the isolated farm and the village community.¹⁰

During the past thirty years Louisiana has witnessed a general disintegration of the old plantation system of farming. This is important, because it witnessed the growth of larger trade centers which replace the general stores which were run in conjunction with the plantation. There were scattered trade centers. The centers now are specialized units localized in different areas.¹¹

The tenants, many of whom are Acadians, are also illiterate, although their contacts with the outer world are much greater. The educated minority is found in small professions, such as store proprietors or owners, lawyers, and in a few cases dentists and doctors.

Automobiles and good roads brought about a revolution. Methods of communication were changed and rural life was affected. There has been a great modification in the relationship between open-country population and townsmen, whose social contacts have completely changed. The mechanization of agriculture and improved methods of transportation, faster communication, increased mobility, and widening social horizons reduced the number of small rural centers.¹²

¹⁰Dorothy King, Phases of Bayou Life, pp. 59-60.

¹¹Smith, op. cit., pp. 9-14.

¹²H. W. Gilmore, Social Isolation of the French-Speaking People of Rural Louisiana, p. 83.

The language spoken here in these isolated places is not a pure French, but a dialect commonly called "Cajun Patos." It is said by some to be the language spoken in France at the time original settlers left for Nova Scotia. This dialect, which is a product of social isolation, is also a source of this isolation. They were left without a means for spoken communication, and had no reading facilities. Their occupations, which were self-sufficient, assisted in causing this isolation which surrounds these people. Their interests were within the community. They sold or bartered fish, furs, and moss to the local shopkeepers. The factors of language, occupation, and travel set up a high degree of social isolation, causing their culture to remain the same. The Acadians have a distinct status among other grouping in the state. This produced in them a provincial outlook, a resistance to social change and devotion to time-honored customs. The Acadians had no interest in government, save when a question arose in regard to appropriation of money to improve a cut-off between bayous. A few have attained some degree of American culture.¹³

Until a few years ago and even now in many sections, these people have been influenced very little by American progress. They still sit in darkness. They are illiterate, ignorant, and superstitious. Many do not know any more than to eat, drink, and enjoy life in their own way. They live

¹³King, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

in their narrow world. They can neither read French nor English, and know practically nothing of the outside world.¹⁴

However, this condition is changing. The young generation is all going to school and the old ones are encouraging them. They are beginning to think for themselves, and a revolution is on among them. They want to learn. They are not a lazy people. They are thrifty and industrious. No one is more desirous to be an American than these young French people. They have many good qualities. They are friendly and easily approached and very hospitable. They have great capacities to develop themselves.¹⁵

These people are our neighbors, our evangelistic opportunity, and our responsibility. They have been robbed of spiritual opportunities. Most of them know only a religion of ceremonies and empty formalism.¹⁶

Religion

Louisiana was settled by French colonists. With the soldiers came priests. Some were godly men, some were adventurers, but all were servants of the church whose tenets they taught. Their chief aim seems to have been the preservation of the teachings of the Catholic Church, and not the establishing of the right relation between men and God.

¹⁴Maurice Aguiard, Acadia Academy, p. 8.

¹⁵ibid., p. 9.

¹⁶Mary Lou Jenkins, Around the World in Louisiana, p. 39.

The official religion of the province of Louisiana during the French and Spanish rule was the Roman Catholic faith. The preaching of other faiths was not allowed, particularly during the Spanish rule. All Protestants who attempted to preach the Gospel were subject to expulsion and penalties. With the province passing to the American control came people from other states, who were not familiar with the tenets of Catholicism and had united themselves in thought and spirit to the several Protestant denominations.¹⁷

The situation of the country in 1802, when it was turned over to the Americans, was not ideal. Secular and religious instructions were inadequate; laws were not well established and enforced; the settlers came from different localities and nations, and there were often feuds and misunderstandings among them. Besides the things mentioned here there were many others which caused difficulties among the people. The difficulties in Louisiana were more serious than in other parts of the country. The province was controlled from overseas; some of the governors were not interested in the welfare of the colonies and only looked after their own interests, while some were able and even brilliant men. Besides all this, there was frequent change of policy that did not tend to security or permanence.¹⁸

¹⁷Henry E. Chambers, History of Louisiana, I, 460.

¹⁸John T. Christian, History of Louisiana Baptists, p. 15.

The religion of the country was Roman Catholic and no other was tolerated. The spiritual authority was high above the temporal; the bishop above the governor. The bishop was paid more than the governor. Quoting from John T. Christian:

However that may be and while waiting for the natives of the Northwestern part of America to enter willingly or by force into the bosom of the Church, and until converts can be established throughout the country, the bishop of Louisiana limits himself to exercising his ministry in the interior of the colony, and since the spiritual, in the eyes of every good Spaniard, is as high above the temporal as the soul is above the body, and as the cavalier is above the horse, it is quite necessary that the emoluments of the one also surpass greatly those of the other. Consequently, by a just and moderate appreciation, the bishop receives annually fifteen thousand piasters as a fixed salary, while the governor generally receives six.¹⁹

The inhabitants of Louisiana recognized no other religion than the Catholic. However, they were not persecuted for their religious opinion by the priest.²⁰

Great respect was shown for the dead. The burial ceremony was sad and respectful. This ceremony or mass was repeated four or five times a day, the priest deriving a good profit from it.

Protestants who died were not buried in the Catholic cemeteries; and since there were no cemeteries for them, their bodies were deposited in an open field which was used as a pasture for horses and cows. The burial was so shallow that sometimes it happened that the dogs digging with their feet would get at the bones and gnaw them. All who were not

¹⁹Ibid., p. 20.

²⁰Ibid., p. 22.

Catholic were considered as beasts, and ferocious in their religious opinion.²¹

Bienville enacted the Black Code, which remained the law of the land until the Americans took charge of the country, before leaving the province. It was published in March, of the year 1724, and contained all the legislation applicable to slaves. Some of the provisions of the cession of Louisiana to the United States have been incorporated into the Black Code which is now the law of the land. It embodies the views, feelings, and legislation of our ancestors more than a century ago. Its first article declares that the Jews were forever expelled from the colony; and the third, that the Roman Catholic religion was the only religious creed which would be tolerated in Louisiana. It is difficult to imagine by what causes, or ideas, these provisions concerning the supremacy of the Roman Catholic religion and the expulsion of the Jews came to be inserted in the Black Code. When O'Reilly became the Spanish governor, he thought it necessary to re-enact the Black Code by a special proclamation.²²

It was O'Reilly who inaugurated the Spanish Inquisition in Louisiana. Several attempts were made to fasten the Inquisition upon Louisiana. Phelps says, as quoted from John

²¹Ibid.

²²Charles Gayarre, History of Louisiana, Vol. I, French Domination, pp. 326-363.

T. Christian:

What prevented the grim church of Spain from taking such hold upon Louisiana as it had done in other colonies was not the then small influence of alien Americanism, but the very nature of the French people themselves. They were a gay people, light-hearted and generous, independent, and impatient of restraint. In their nature there was a kindly tolerance which shrank from the cruel tyranny of such a priesthood as dominated Spain and the Spanish colonies. Even the Spanish Governors were imbued with this ecclesiastical power within harmless bounds.²³

Afraid the mere name of the Inquisition would not only check immigration but would also be capable of driving away those who had already come, Governor Miro issued a pledge that the new colonists should not be molested in matters of religion, provided there should be no other public mode of worship than the Catholic.²⁴

In 1723 the spiritual concern of the colony was not neglected. Louisiana was divided into three grand ecclesiastical districts. The first extending from the mouth of the Mississippi to Illinois was entrusted to the Capuchins. The Carmelites had all the section of the country which spread as far as Mobile; the Jesuits were entrusted with the Wabash and Illinois districts. Orders were given and provisions were made to build churches and chapels, as the colonists had to assemble in the open air around wooden crosses erected in the fields, or public thoroughfares and roads, for want of proper places of worship.²⁵

²³Christian, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Gayarre, op. cit., I, 357.

Religious conditions in Louisiana at the time of the purchase were very distressing. In 1815 the Massachusetts Bible Society sent two agents to Louisiana. These agents had gone from Natchez to New Orleans by boat and wrote this society of the conditions along their way. Mills and Smith reported:

We found the banks cleared and many very elegant plantations. The whole distance of the banks appeared like a village. The greater part of the population is ignorant of every thing except what relates to the increase of their property. They are destitute of schools, Bibles, and religious instructions. In attempting to learn of the religious state of the people, we were told that they had no Bibles and that the priest did not allow their distribution among them. An American who had resided two or three years in a place that had the appearance of being a flourishing settlement told that he had not seen a Bible during his stay in the place. He added that he had learned that a lady from the State of New York had come there recently and had brought one with her.²⁶

In 1815 Mills, accompanied by Daniel Smith, made another trip to the state and reported that there were American families in the state who had never seen a Bible nor heard of Jesus Christ. He says:

It is a fact that ought not to be forgotten that as late as 1815 a Bible in any language could not be bought in New Orleans nor could one be given away. The only difference in Sunday and Monday was that all the men went hunting on Sunday. In the church one found only the women and children and the slaves.²⁷

It is interesting here to state that in 1943 the students of the Baptist Bible Institution of New Orleans alone distributed over 17,000 copies of the Bible and portions of

²⁶Christian, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

²⁷Ibid., p. 29.

the New Testament in this French section of Louisiana. Other evangelical churches also do missionary work in these places.²⁸

Sanitary conditions were very bad after the removal of the seat of government from Biloxi to New Orleans. There were only a few hundred poor huts in the settlement. The people had malaria all the time, and yellow fever was very common. Smallpox could not be controlled because the priest opposed vaccination. The colony was poor and the revenues for the French government were very small. Because of this the French government did not feel inclined to care for the colony. Some of the persons who had been accustomed to all the luxuries and had been educated in the schools of France, had come to the colony. They wanted their children to have the same type of training that they had received in France. They appealed to the governor and negotiations were begun with the religious orders with the hope of receiving nuns and priests as teachers to come to the colony. Finally, after extensive negotiations with Rome, satisfactory arrangements were made and a company of Ursuline nuns were sent over to the colony. They lived in the home of Bienville until one could be built for them.²⁹

There seems to have been a school taught by the priest for boys. The nuns were to teach the girls. The school for girls prospered and efforts were made to help the boys.

²⁸Jenkins, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 41-42.

Bienville presented the great opportunities to France and urged that teachers of geography, geometry, the classics and the "principles of religion which is the basis of morality" be sent to the colony. The request was refused on the ground that the colony was not important enough for such effort. Other efforts must have been made as visitors spoke of the people as being educated and refined. After the Louisiana Purchase some educational efforts were made, but they were mostly controlled by the priests. Very few in the rural sections could take advantage of the cultural opportunities offered.³⁰

It was under conditions like these that the Baptists began their work in Louisiana. The religion of the country was confined to that of the Roman Catholic Church. The people were heterogeneous. The standard of morals was not always of the highest type. The country was thinly settled and was not prosperous. Some of these conditions were changed by the Louisiana Purchase. More settlers came and to some extent new ideas prevailed; but there was much jealousy between the natives and the newcomers. But in spite of all this, the Protestants began their work.

Political and commercial activities were such as to monopolize the attention of the newcomers during the first year or two of American control. Gradually these late

³⁰Ibid.

arrivals awoke to the realization that they should not disregard the things of the soul and spirit. About the time when the second territorial government was about to be inaugurated a movement was started to organize a Protestant place of worship in the city of New Orleans. A fund was raised for this purpose and a meeting was called to meet in the Cabildo to complete plans for the new religious venture.³¹

A week later another meeting was held to determine what denomination the preacher was to come from. A vote was taken and thus came into existence the first Episcopal Church to be established within the present limits of the state of Louisiana.³²

As there was no suitable place in which to conduct services at first, it was decided to use the assembly hall of the Cabildo. Philander Chase was secured as pastor. Later a church building was erected and became known as the Christ Church. This was only a crack in the shell of the entrenched church, but soon a wedge was inserted and the opening continued to widen during the century that followed.³³

In 1799 Baily Chaney preached the first Baptist sermon in the state of Louisiana to a settlement near Baton Rouge, but he was not permitted to organize a church on account of Catholic opposition.³⁴

³¹Chambers, op. cit., I, 461.

³²Ibid., p. 462.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Jenkins, op. cit., p. 45.

There were Baptists among the many colonists who came after the Louisiana Purchase, but they were scattered, they had little knowledge of each other, they were poor and there was very little leadership. Roman Catholics about them were the dominant factors in everything so the Baptists made very slow progress. However, against these odds they endured and grew.

In 1804 other Baptist preachers settled in the state and began to preach. Ezekiel O'Quinn and Joseph Willis, licensed preachers, took part in every religious movement in the new country. The churches were very far apart and for the most of the year the bayou was the only means of travel and communication.³⁵

This is a dark picture, but some men were faithful to their task of preaching the Gospel to all the settlers, and this included their French neighbors. They distributed Bibles that were so often confiscated by the Catholic priests, who were still the power in politics and religion, regardless of the change of government in Louisiana. Sometimes our missionaries of today will find a Bible in the homes of some of the families who do not know where it came from originally. Evidently these Bibles are some that were not destroyed and have been handed down through several generations as heirlooms. The masses of the people were

³⁵Chambers, op. cit., I, 461-462.

illiterate. With a few exceptions all the French preachers that Louisiana Baptists have had in the last thirty years have had to learn to read after their conversion.³⁶

The Catholic Church, as has always been her policy, opposed the public school or any other school in the country. She erected schools of her own, and has fought against the coming of schools in southern Louisiana. The power of the church kept the people in ignorance until a few years ago when public schools sprang up throughout the section, and these French people began to go to school to become Americanized.³⁷

The French mission field in Louisiana extends from New Orleans to Lake Charles, from Morgan City to Baton Rouge. This is a region populated by people of French descent. The country is not only picturesque in landscape, but the people, too, are interesting and lovable. They are among the most courteous, hospitable, kindly people to be found anywhere.³⁸

Many of these people have large families, though they may not have been legally married. This resulted from not being able to pay the priest the amount he charged for the marriage ceremony. Many of them, after conversion, have been married by missionaries or pastors in the presence of their grandchildren.

There is a great humility in these people. When they

³⁶Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 45-46. ³⁷Aguillard, op. cit., p.7.

³⁸Baptist Message, September 2, 1943, p. 5.

are converted, they give their all. They want to help carry on the Christian work at once.

To bring the Gospel to the neglected portions of south Louisiana is to dispel ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, and fear.

This French mission field is Louisiana's largest evangelistic responsibility and greatest opportunity. Louisiana Baptists have made more efforts to evangelize the French than any other neglected groups in the state. More interest has been manifested in work for them, and more men and money have been given to this field than to any other in Louisiana.³⁹

³⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE REALIZATION OF THE NEED FOR THE ACADIA BAPTIST ACADEMY

The greatest hindrance to the spread of the Gospel in Louisiana among the French people is their inability to read the Bible. Practically none of the French ever have a Bible until they are converted. Some have been taught to fear the Bible and never touch it. They are very superstitious. They do not know God. Their religion is a low worship of images and blind following of the priest. Many do not go to church.

Their first desire after becoming a Christian is to tell their people about the Bible. The Baptists soon saw that it would be necessary to have a school where young French men who wanted to be preachers could learn to read their own language as well as English. The children of those who have been converted needed a school where they could be taught free from priestly interference and interpretations of the Bible.

W. J. Westberry, who was pastor of the Pilgrim's Rest Church, Church Point, Louisiana, in 1907, decided to look

things over in this great field. After looking over that vast section of unevangelized territory, his spirit became stirred for missions. He had always been interested in the spiritual welfare of the French people and now realized that there must be a school to train Baptist French preachers and their children. There was at that time much interest and discussion of the evangelistic move in that section. The Baptist state papers and many of the pastors of the neighboring churches showed much interest.¹

The following article on the need for a school of missions in south Louisiana was written by E. C. Routh of Texas, associate editor of the Baptist Standard, after a visit to the field:

Beyond all doubt one of the greatest needs in that field of appalling destitution is a better system of education. There is no where in the south a more fruitful field for mission schools. I visited Faquetairie where there is a little Baptist school supported by the patrons who pay one dollar a month for each pupil. This school is taught in their meeting house. In this school, the only one of its kind in the state, are eighteen children from strict Catholic homes, and thirty or forty children from Baptist homes. All these children are taught English in the school, but talk French at home. In not more than three or four of these homes are the parents able to give these children any help in the elementary studies. Let these schools be scattered over south Louisiana and the rising generation will speak English and break forever with Catholicism.²

This school was a forerunner of Acadia Academy. It operated two years and disbanded. That was the first school opened

¹Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

²Baptist Standard of Texas, March 16, 1914.

for Christian education in south Louisiana. Another small school was opened by the State Mission Board but it failed to survive.³

Years were passing by. Many young men were being converted with no educational advantages. They realized the need for an education for the ministry, but there was no school where they could get it. Pastors of the nearby churches saw this need also. They began to try to get the State Mission Board interested.⁴

In 1913 W. J. Westberry, who had become interested in the spiritual welfare of these French converts, began to promote the idea for some kind of a mission school for these French people who wanted to become ministers of the Gospel to their own people. After many years of untiring efforts, the dream of this worthy man who was interested in these neglected French people was about to be realized. He had at times almost given up hope of establishing a school for them. But now the time had come. The result was the opening of the Acadia Academy, October 1, 1917.⁵

The next chapter will tell about the origin and growth of the Acadia Academy.

³Jenkins, op. cit., p. 115.

⁴Aguillard, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵Jenkins, op. cit., p. 115.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACADIA ACADEMY

The Period from 1917 to 1923

After much effort on the part of W. J. Westberry, a committee was appointed by the State and Home Mission Boards to investigate the move of establishment of a mission school. The committee reported unfavorably and the plans presented were rejected. He continued his fight in the face of all opposition. In 1917 another committee was appointed, consisting of Dr. B. D. Gray of the Home Mission Board, Dr. G. H. Crutcher of the State Mission Board, and J. W. Westberry, pastor of the Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church at Church Point, Louisiana.¹

The first meeting was held in the Coliseum Place Baptist Church, New Orleans. This committee was responsible for the selection of a site and making of the plans for the beginning of the school. They were given full authority to act. The Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, Church Point, Louisiana, offered to give five thousand dollars and twenty acres of land for a site on which to build a school. This offer was accepted by the committee, and the church was asked

¹Jenkins, op. cit., p. 115.

to proceed with the building immediately.²

The church selected a board of trustees of which W. J. Westberry was elected financial secretary for the soliciting of all funds. The board of trustees was authorized to buy the land and raise funds for the building and furnishing of the first unit. This they did. The Home Mission Board agreed to pay the salaries of two teachers for the first session. J. H. Strother, who was pastor of the Queensborough Baptist Church of Shreveport, Louisiana, was chosen as principal, and Nea Leet was selected as assistant.³

The principal reached Pilgrim's Rest Church the fifteenth day of September and faced the task of erecting a building and organizing a school for that year. A large crop of rice and good prices made conditions favorable. In two weeks W. J. Westberry had raised more than \$4,500 and let the contract for the first building.⁴

On the morning of October 1, 1917, the Acadia Academy was opened. It was opened in a public school house (the Richard School) about one mile from its present site. There the Academy had its genesis. The school opened with two teachers and fifty-four pupils. Due to the fact that the public school was expected to open soon, leaving the Academy without a place to teach, made it necessary to construct the building quickly. Before Christmas the new home was ready.

²Ibid.

³Aguillard, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴Ibid.

Early the next year, because of the large increase of students enrolled, two teachers were added to the faculty. Helen Warford was employed to teach music and Thelma Haygood was employed in the literary department. By the end of the second session the enrollment had grown to 150 students.⁵

During the second year the Home Mission Board made an appropriation of seven thousand dollars for the school, and seven teachers were employed. A girls' dormitory and four cottages were needed. These were very necessary to take care of the boarding students and faculty. A campaign was started for this fund and before the end of the second term \$14,000 was raised for the dormitory. One of the cottages was built by the gift of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Bottoms of Texarkana, Arkansas. Through the help of Dr. G. H. Crutcher, the appropriation of seven thousand dollars was to be given annually by the Home Mission Board to run the school.⁶

Near the close of the second term W. J. Westberry succeeded in getting the Pilgrim's Rest Church to donate the entire school plant with all of its holdings to the State Mission Board, the school to be maintained as a mission school. The board took over the property in its own name, then W. J. Westberry closed his official connection with the school, though his interest in the school and its works did not diminish. He continued to help the school in its struggles

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 16.

throughout the years to come.⁷

Reverend L. U. Comolander succeeded W. J. Westberry as financial secretary. He also served as principal for three terms. He resigned in 1923. At this time the Academy went through a period of darkness and struggle for its life. It seemed that the school would have to be closed. The State Mission Board seriously considered disposing of the property. They had almost lost the vision of the need and usefulness of the school.⁸

The Period from 1924 to 1929

In that dark hour of the school the State Board asked T. E. Mixon of Pineville, Louisiana, to go and look the situation over with a view of his accepting the position as principal of the school. The school was closed and things looked discouraging. But he was a man of courage and a good builder. His acceptance of the position as principal of the Academy marked the beginning of a new life, and a period of prosperity for the school as well as for the mission work. Much praise and appreciation are due him for his work at the Acadia Academy. During his term of office many improvements were made. His task was to blaze the way through a thick forest of ignorance, superstitions, financial problems, and many other hindrances that stood in the way of progress.

He built a boys' dormitory. This dormitory was built

⁷Ibid., p.17.

⁸Ibid.

by the donation of five thousand dollars from Mrs. Elta Mc-Alpine of Opelousas, Louisiana, a loyal friend of the school. He also built eight additional cottages for married students, a dining hall, a large cow shed for the school's milch cows, a light plant was bought, waterworks were installed, and many other improvements were made. When he became principal there were only twenty acres of land belonging to the school. During his term of office he bought two more tracts of land adjoining the twenty acres already owned by the school. First he bought thirty acres and later he bought fifteen acres more, making a total of sixty-five acres. All these rich acres were put into cultivation except those near the buildings. A filling station was built where the students who had cars could buy their gasoline at cost.⁹

Besides himself, Mr. Nixon had six other teachers to help him with the school work. Thus the Academy grew under his leadership from a very small school which had been closed because of lack of interest, to a strong Academy. The spiritual and missionary side of the school had also grown remarkably.¹⁰

The mission students had grown in number from about six to over fifty. If a student felt in his heart that he wanted to preach and wanted to come to the Academy to prepare, his age did not matter with Mr. Nixon. He made room for all of

⁹Ibid., pp. 18-19.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 20.

these students to come, and he gave them all the chances possible for them to succeed in their work. He asked for nothing except a testimony of their desire. Some married students came to school with large families and had to start in the A B C's. Through the help, careful training, and leadership of Mr. Mixon and his helpers, they succeeded.¹¹

The Period from 1930 to 1935

After the resignation of Mr. Mixon in 1930, A. S. Newman, a graduate of Louisiana College and of the Baptist Bible Institution, was elected principal of the Academy. He moved on the field and took charge August 1, 1930.

Evil days had fallen upon the Academy again because of the depression. It had been necessary for the school to go in debt and the depression made it hard going. Things looked dark again. There was much fault finding, and criticism of the leaders who happened to be in office. There were many troubles and misunderstandings. The faculty was disorganized and things in general confusion. The school had a debt of approximately four thousand dollars and a bank balance of ninety-eight cents. This condition, with the depression in full blast, called for much faith and courage in the new principal. These he did not lack.

From the very first day A. S. Newman administered to the

¹¹Ibid.

school the first dose of his leadership, the school took on new life. In spite of the fact that there was less money coming in to run the school, he began to pay on the debts of the school little by little. He ran the school and by September 1, 1932, he had paid all the debts of the school, all current expenses, and had a bank balance of seventy-two dollars. He went about stopping all possible leakage and was untiring in his pleadings with the faculty and students to practice the most rigid economy.¹²

If any of the students misunderstood him at first, in his fight to save the school, they soon saw his love for the school and the French people. He led the school out of darkness in two years. Great emphasis was placed on the spiritual side of the school life. The missionary spirit which had temporarily slackened was revived by A. S. Newman and his consecrated teachers.¹³

During the first year of A. S. Newman's principalship the faculty was composed of R. K. Ogden, Sadie Caine, Miami Leblanc, Christy Wyatt, and Gladys Hayes. The next year G. G. Casselman replaced R. K. Ogden, Emma Mae McCowley replaced Sadie Caine, and the next year Frances E. Broyles replaced Emma Mae McCowley. This efficient faculty brought the school into a very commendable condition. Every teacher was a Baptist and a college graduate. A. S. Newman received the

¹²Ibid., pp. 21-22.

¹³Ibid., p. 22.

degree of Doctor of Theology while he was head of the school. Another thing worthy of notice about this faculty is that all except one were graduates of the Baptist Bible Institution. They were all missionary in spirit.¹⁴

After A. S. Newman took charge of the school many improvements were made. Three new cottages were built on the property, and he also bought five additional acres of land. Truck farming was developed to such an extent that the school nearly fed all the students from what it produced. Much canning was done for the school in the summer time under the direction of Mrs. Newman. Students, single and married, were required to labor in the field as work for part of their board or to make provisions for their families.¹⁵

The school was taken out of the State Co-operative Program in 1932. To pay for the salaries of the teachers and all the running expenses of the school, A. S. Newman had but five thousand dollars a year given to the school by the Virginia Woman's Missionary Union through the Home Mission Board. Whatever expenses the school had above this amount was paid through personal gifts from the people.¹⁶

The Period from 1936 to the Present

In 1935 A. S. Newman resigned as principal of Acadia Academy and Dr. Alfred Schwab was elected principal. Dr. Schwab is a graduate of Louisiana College and of Southern

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 24.

Baptist Seminary. Both Dr. Newman and Dr. Schwab and their wives used their particular talents in the development of the school. It is impossible to say that either of them has been more useful than the other. Each has been necessary in his day and the school was enriched by all.¹⁷

Dr. Alfred Schwab, superintendent, and G. G. Casselmann, principal, were aided by a competent teaching force in the school work at Acadia Academy. In 1936 the total number of students was 105, the majority of whom were either preparing for the ministry or to do mission work. Concerning the work of the school Dr. Schwab writes:

During the year 1936, several thousand dollars were spent in new buildings and in repairing property on our campus. In the summer of 1936 a six-apartment house was built at a cost of approximately two thousand dollars. It is now free of debt. A central garage was built with scrap lumber. This garage houses twelve cars. A barn, caring for ten cows, was built for the married students. A pressing shop was built as a matter of convenience and to prevent fire. Recently a dish-washing shed has been added to our kitchen. We are now completing the job of building concrete sidewalks between all our main buildings. The school has no indebtedness of any kind. We attempt to live within our income. By rigid economy we are able to keep our heads above the water.

Approximately one hundred churches in Louisiana are served by former Acadia Academy students. The founder and pastor of the First Baptist Church of Valparaiso, Chile, is a former student of the Academy. All the French missionaries of either the Home or State Mission Boards, except Lucien C. Smith, received their pre-college training in our school.

Reverend Jack Shaw, one of our students, has led the people in the Toole mission to build a chapel. Interested friends in this neighborhood have donated the money. Our students have assisted in the erection of

¹⁷Jenkins, op. cit., p. 119.

the building which is being occupied at present. For two years they met in a home and many were converted. In one family four generations have been converted.

John A. Walker, another student, has been pastor of the Prudhomme Church all this year. This new church, located four miles from the school, pays Brother Walker fifteen dollars a month and supports all missionary causes. The pastor and other students visit in many homes of Roman Catholics, reading the Bible and teaching them.

Reverend Stafford Hebert, who graduated here last year, is now in Louisiana College and making the honor roll. He is only nineteen years of age, and married. Men of this type are our hope in the future for French missions. The uneducated pioneer cannot do the work. When Brother Hebert found that he could not pay rent for a house at Louisiana College, he scrapped up lumber and built a trailer house. He will be a second Lucien Smith, we hope. Several of our last year's graduates are doing well in various colleges.¹⁸

The Home Mission Board has helped to provide a teaching force for this Academy since its organization in 1917. More than half of the students of the various nationalities are preparing for some line of Christian service, and while attending the Academy they are getting practical training and experience in mission work in the various parishes of southern Louisiana.

The enrollment grew to 110 students during the session for 1939 and 1940, forty-six of whom were ministerial.

The student body consisted of the following nationalities: French, German, Italian, Indian, and Spanish. These students and teachers, under the leadership of Dr. Schwab, preached weekly in thirty churches and mission stations,

¹⁸"Reports of Committees," Minutes, Southern Baptist Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1937, p. 70.

traveling in four directions a distance of one hundred miles from the Academy. They were especially active in Avoyelles, Acadia, Jefferson Davis, Allen, Evangeline, and Iberia parishes.¹⁹

Dr. Joseph T. Fielder was elected principal of Acadia Academy in 1941 to succeed Dr. Schwab. Much personal work was done during his first year of service. Dr. Fielder gives the following report for 1942:

Acadia Baptist Academy has seventy-one acres of land in the midst of a rich rice farming section, eight miles from the Church Point, Louisiana. On the beautiful campus are twenty-four frame buildings, consisting of classrooms, dormitories, store and student cottages.

The Academy operates a three-fold program for the full twelve months of the year. The work program enables students to earn from one-third up to two-thirds of the board and room expense. The boys cultivate a farm of about thirty-five acres and a garden of eight acres, care for the school campus and livestock. The girls do the work in the dining hall, and kitchen, also help in canning food from the garden.

The school maintains a complete standard high school and in addition offers work in the grammar school grades for special students. Registration for this year shows seventy-six in high school and twenty in grammar school.

The mission program includes two types of activities, namely, a few places where pioneer work is being done in homes, and work in mission stations which has been established and is being supervised by nearby churches. There are five pastors of half-time churches going out from the academy each Sunday.²⁰

The Home Mission Board continues to pay salaries of two workers at Acadia Academy. Rev. Eddis Savoio, one of the Bible teachers who is supported by this board, has charge of

¹⁹Ibid., 1940, p. 272.

²⁰Ibid., 1942, p. 285.

much of the mission work done by the students in that section.²¹

The enrollment dropped to seventy at the beginning of the 1944 session of the Academy. So many of the young men have gone into the armed forces, and this accounts for the decrease at the school. The school has had a struggle to keep from going into debt this last term because of the increase in cost of running expenses.

However, quite a number of improvements are being made in spite of these adversities. The Bible department has been expanded. Up until this year at Acadia Academy Bible has been more or less a survey of the whole book, distinctions in courses being based mostly on position in the Old or New Testament. The courses were Bible I, including Genesis to II Chronicles; Bible II, including Ezra to Malachi; Bible III, including Matthew to Acts; and Bible IV, including Romans to Revelation.

Upon recommendation of the trustees individually, and because of a deeply felt need for information in the equipment of the workers on the field, classes have been organized in three new lines.

All these classes are well attended this year and are increasing in size.²²

²¹Ibid., 1944, p. 287.

²²Baptist Message, November 8, 1944, p.1.

Rev. H. C. Price assumed the post of superintendent of Acadia Academy in March, 1945. He comes well recommended to fill this important place. He is a man of good education and ability as an executive.²³

Progress is already being made in repairing the property. Some new equipment in the kitchen and dining hall is being rapidly assembled and will add much to the attractiveness and convenience of the school.²⁴

A number of the ministerial students have regular churches and several missions are held each week by the missionary and ministerial students.

From now on, students will be admitted to the Academy only on previous application and substantial recommendations. It is the desire of the school that the churches and pastors recommend students of character, consecration, and with the determination to take advantage of opportunities offered. The Academy is not equipped to care for boarding students under fourteen years of age.²⁵

As stated by the charter, the object of the Academy is as follows:

"The object and purpose of this corporation shall be to own, and operate, and conduct an academy, high school or schools in or near the town of Eunice, Louisiana, and foster Christian Education, in all of its branches in the State of Louisiana, under the auspices of the Baptist denomination." Others have asserted that its purpose is "to carry on a full course of high school instruction, together with whatever

²³Ibid., March 22, 1945, p. 1.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 7.

grammar school work that might be required by those who plan to do Christian work, and to carry on a definite mission work among the French-speaking people." It also aims to give adults a second chance to get a high school education.²⁶

Since directed study is effective study, all of the study periods at Acadia Baptist Academy are supervised by some member of the regular faculty. All the boarding students attend a study period in the library each night and each student has a period in the library during the day. Since the classes are small, the work in them is highly individualized.²⁷

Weekly reports concerning the progress of each student are sent to the office. Report cards with a record of the work done by the student are mailed out to the parents or guardians at the close of each six-weeks' period. There are four ranks of grades, namely, A (superior), B (above average), B (average), and D (below average). All lower grades are classed as failures.²⁸

Those who expect to continue work in a college are required to present seventeen units of credit, one of which is physical education. The other required units are English, four; mathematics, three; science, one; social science, two; including one in civics and one in American history. One year in Bible is required for a diploma from Acadia Baptist Academy. A record of good conduct and high moral character

²⁶Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, p. 4.

²⁷Ibid., p. 7.

²⁸Ibid.

is desired of those who are given a diploma.²⁹

This is the only academy in the Southern Baptist Convention to train French converts. The school is now a fully accredited senior high school, meeting all the requirements of the State Department of Education.³⁰

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p. 4.

CHAPTER V

PRESENT LOCATION AND SIZE OF ACADIA ACADEMY

Location

The whole French section of Louisiana is located in one of the richest and most beautiful parts of our country. There is a great future for that section of Louisiana, because of its rich soil, climate, and natural resources. The only reason it is not now one of the leading sections, not only of the state but also of the South, is that those who have to do with it are themselves undeveloped. The soil and climate permit the growth of almost anything. Many of those uneducated people have a fortune without much effort and with little ability on their part. The rest of the world is yet to hear of this section of Louisiana.¹

Acadia Baptist Academy is located seventy miles south of Alexandria, Louisiana, seventy miles east of Lake Charles, and one hundred miles west of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It is midway between Crowley and Opelousas, Louisiana, and in the center of Acadia Parish. It is eight miles from Church Point and Eunice is only nine miles northwest of the Academy. It may be reached on the Southern Pacific, Texas and Pacific,

¹Aguillard, op. cit., p. 25.

Frisco, and Rock Island Railroads. It is only fifteen miles north of the Old Spanish Trail which passes through the town of Rayne, Louisiana, directly south of the Academy. A large fine gravel road that runs between Eunice and Church Point passes right through the center of the Academy land. The school can be seen from many miles around as it is on a hill. It can be easily reached in a short time from any of the towns mentioned above.²

Buildings

There has been a large growth in the buildings and equipment along with the growth of the student body. There are now twenty-four frame buildings consisting of classrooms, dormitories, store, garages, administration building, and cottages for students and faculty members.³

The administration building is a two-story frame structure, fifty-six by sixty-eight feet, having seven classrooms, a study room to accommodate two hundred pupils, and a chapel that will seat three hundred people.

The girls' dormitory is a two-story frame building, well built of the best materials, having a reception room, office, and rooms with baths for thirty-five girls. One of the teachers acts as dean of women and helps in every way to care for the girls.

²Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, p. 4.

³Minutes, Southern Baptist Convention, 1942, p. 285.

The boys' dormitory was made possible in the summer of 1926 through a donation of five thousand dollars by Mrs. Etta McAlpine of Opelousas, Louisiana, a loyal friend of the Academy. This building has rooms and baths for thirty men. It is also a two-story frame building. A man teacher is in charge of this dormitory.

The dining hall is one of the newest buildings at the school. It is well equipped, cool, and beautiful inside and out. It seats more than sixty people; most of the serving is done by the girls who work for part of their board. Much of the food is produced on the Academy land.⁴

There are eleven cottages for the married students. They are from two to six rooms in size. They are all well made and comfortable, having electricity and running water. These are given the married students free of rent. There are also four cottages for the teachers, and a beautiful home economics cottage.⁵

In the summer of 1936 a six-apartment house was built at a cost of approximately two thousand dollars. It is now free of debt. A central garage was built with scrap lumber. This garage houses twelve cars. A barn large enough to care for ten cows was also built for the married students.

There is a high school building with two large rooms. Strong oak chairs with large right arms are used for desks.

⁴Aguillard, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

⁵Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, p. 5.

The school also has a filling station for the use of the school cars only. The building has been used as a store and as a branch post office.⁶

Land

The school owns seventy-three acres of some of the best land in Louisiana. In 1917, the beginning of the Academy, twenty acres of land was given by the Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church for a site on which to build a school. When T. E. Nixon came to the school as principal, he bought two more tracts of land adjoining the twenty acres already owned by the school. During A. S. Newman's term as principal, six acres more were bought. This land is level and non-washable.⁷

Thirteen acres of this land is occupied by the campus, and the remaining acreage is divided into a garden of six acres, a pasture of seventeen acres for the upkeep of the livestock, and thirty-seven acres of crop land, this being cared for by the students.⁸

Finances

In 1917 the Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church gave twenty acres of land on which to build a mission school and five thousand dollars on a building.⁹

In 1919, through the help of Dr. G. H. Crutcher, the

⁶Minutes, Southern Baptist Convention, 1937, p. 261.

⁷D. A. Youngblood, letter to the writer, July 10, 1945.

⁸Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, p. 5.

⁹Ibid., p. 4.

Home Mission Board provided seven thousand dollars a year for teachers' salaries. Fourteen thousand dollars were raised to build a girls' dormitory and three cottages. There was a period when, because of financial distress, the Home Mission Board discontinued its help and the Louisiana Mission Board carried on the work of the school.¹⁰

The Home Mission Board is now paying three thousand six hundred dollars per year on the salaries of the teachers from a designation of five thousand dollars made annually by the Virginia Woman's Missionary Union from their March Week of Prayer offerings.¹¹

It costs \$214 per pupil annually to operate the Academy. Louisiana Baptists pay all of this except the three thousand six hundred dollars received yearly from the Virginia Woman's Missionary Union.¹²

When it was apparent that the income of the State Mission Board had decreased to such an extent that there would not be sufficient funds for the Academy, the school was taken out of the Co-operative Program and given permission to go afield for whatever funds were necessary for its support. A regular part of the planned work of the Louisiana Woman's Missionary Union is that of providing boxes of clothing and food for the students. Many of the associations send canned

¹⁰Jenkins, op. cit., p. 116.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Baptist Message, November 9, 1944, p. 7.

goods and even livestock and chickens every fall. All the work on the campus being done by the students, the school operates very economically.¹³

Other Property and Equipment

Acadia Baptist Academy owns seventeen fine purebred Jersey cows. These cows furnish milk for the boarding hall and also furnish employment to boys who wish to work their way through school.

Water is pumped from a deep well on the campus by an electric pump and windmill. Electricity is furnished by the Gulf State Utilities.¹⁴

¹³Jenkins, op. cit., p. 117.

¹⁴D. A. Youngblood, letter to the writer, July 10, 1945.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORKS AND ACTIVITIES OF ACADIA ACADEMY

This chapter deals with the works and activities of the Academy, considering first a brief biography of each principal of the school from the time the Academy was opened to the present date. The second part deals with the curriculum of the school. The third deals with the various activities participated in by the student body. The last part of the chapter considers some of the advantages and influences of the Acadia Academy.

Principals

J. H. Strother. -- Reverend J. H. Strother, pastor of the Queensborough Baptist Church of Shreveport, Louisiana, was elected principal of Acadia Baptist Academy in 1917. He was a graduate of Louisiana College. He served as principal of Acadia Academy until 1920.¹

L. U. Comolander. -- Reverend L. U. Comolander was a graduate of the Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans. He was a consecrated man and a good worker. He served as principal of Acadia Academy for three years and resigned.²

¹Aguillard, op. cit., p. 15. ²Jenkins, op. cit., p. 117.

T. E. Nixon. -- T. E. Nixon of Pineville, Louisiana, was elected as principal in 1924. He had a degree from Louisiana College.

T. E. Nixon was a builder, teacher, and a walking adding machine. He had a rubber patience which was often stretched to its very limit in his dealing with the students and the financial problems. His leniency in dealing with many of the very ignorant new students saved their usefulness in the Christian work and kept them in school until they made good ministers of the Gospel. He served as principal of Acadia Academy until 1930 and then resigned.³

A. S. Newman. -- A. S. Newman, a graduate of Louisiana College and of the Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, was elected principal of Acadia Academy in 1930. He received the degree of Doctor of Theology after he became head of the Academy.⁴

Dr. Newman was an educator and a man of ability. His administration proved his ability as an executive and also as an educator. He lived and talked for these French people in and out of school. He spent many of his Sundays in some French section trying to read the Bible to them in their homes.⁵

There was no little and unimportant thing with him on the mission field or in the administration of the affairs of

³Aguillard, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴Ibid., p. 21.

⁵Ibid., pp. 22-23.

the school. He resigned in 1935.⁶

Alfred Schwab. -- Alfred Schwab, a graduate of Louisiana College and the Southern Baptist Seminary, was elected principal of Acadia Academy in 1935.⁷

Some improvements were made during Dr. Schwab's administration. Three thousand dollars were spent in new buildings and repairing the property on the campus. Concrete sidewalks were built between all the main buildings. By rigid economy Dr. Schwab kept the expenses of the school within the income. He resigned in 1940.⁸

Joseph T. Fielder. -- Joseph T. Fielder came to Acadia Academy as principal in 1940. He is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University.⁹

Dr. Fielder is a man of marked education and ability. This is shown in his work with the students at Acadia Academy. During his term as principal the Academy operated a three-fold program for the full twelve months of the year. Much personal work was carried on by the mission students under his excellent leadership. He resigned from the Academy in 1944.¹⁰

Eddie Savoie. -- Eddie Savoie, a graduate of Louisiana College, served as principal of the Academy the first part of

⁶Ibid., p. 24.

⁷Jenkins, op. cit., p. 119.

⁸Minutes, Southern Baptist Convention, 1937, p. 70.

⁹Acadia Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, p. 5.

¹⁰Minutes, Southern Baptist Convention, 1944, p. 285.

the 1944 term. He did fine work while he was acting as principal. He is a Bible teacher in the school.¹¹

H. C. Price. -- H. C. Price, Th. M., assumed the part as superintendent of Acadia Academy in March, 1945. He seems thoroughly capable, utterly devoted to the task, and is a tireless worker. He has the utmost confidence of all the people. The local attitude toward the Academy is splendid. The physical plant of the school has been remarkably improved, and the spirit of the school is great.¹²

Library

The school has a very good library of one thousand volumes which afford opportunity for reference work, collateral, and other readings. These helpful religious books are an aid to the preachers in their work. One of the students works for part of his board by acting as librarian.¹³

Curriculum

The course of study is the same as the public school system. Nothing below the sixth grade is taught except for special mission students who have felt the call for special religious work. They are cared for in extra classes. Many times there have been men and women in those classes who were as old as thirty-five years of age. Some started in the

¹¹D. A. Youngblood, letter to writer, May 28, 1945.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., July 10, 1945.

first grade. Even though they started in these low grades, advanced in age and having large families, some have graduated and are working in the best French churches.¹⁴

In addition to the regular high school course the student must have Bible study to graduate. The Bible department has been expanded during the 1944-1945 term. Up until this term at Acadia Academy, Bible has been more or less a survey of the whole book, distinction in courses being based upon position in the Old or New Testament. The courses were Bible I (Genesis through II Chronicles), Bible II (Ezra through Malachi), Bible III (Matthew through Acts), and Bible IV (Romans through Revelation). The new courses are Old Testament I, Old Testament II, Gospels and the Acts, and Epistles and Revelation.¹⁵

Another attraction of the Academy work is the music. An efficient teacher is in charge, making it possible to have as good music as could be had in any other school. It is given free to all mission students and their families. A small tuition is charged to outside students. Private lessons may be had for instrumental music. No credit is given for church music; however, it is taught to those who are interested.¹⁶

A high school laboratory furnishes opportunity to do

¹⁴Aguillard, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁵Baptist Message, November 9, 1944, p. 1.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 2.

the work necessary for all sciences taught in high school. During Dr. Newman's term of service as principal, much improvement was made in the laboratory equipment.¹⁷

In 1944, the school curriculum consisted of nine separate departments, namely, Bible, English, social science, natural science, mathematics, foreign language, home economics, commercial courses, and music.¹⁸

Four years of work were offered in Bible. Old Testament I, or the story of the Hebrew people, was offered the first year; Old Testament II, the second year; Gospels and The Acts the third year; and the Epistles and Revelation the fourth year.¹⁹

Four years were offered in English. Such as grammar, literature and speech the first two years, composition and American literature the third year, and composition and English literature the fourth year.²⁰

The natural sciences included general science the first year, biology the second year, and chemistry the third year.

Social sciences were commercial geography, commercial civics, general history, American history, economics, and government.²¹

¹⁷Aguillard, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁸Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, p. 10.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

Four years of work were offered in mathematics. Mathematics was offered the first two years and algebra and plane geometry the third and fourth years.

Two years of French and two years of Latin were offered, Latin being offered the last two years.

Two years were offered in home economics. Cooking and sewing were both taught.

The branches taught in the commercial department were shorthand, bookkeeping, and typing.

The course of study in music consisted of private lessons in instrumental music, beginners' course in theory, advanced course in theory, and choir leadership in church music.²²

Student Activities

Every day begins with faculty prayer meetings. All classes open with prayer. The chapel hour has grown into a very important and distinctive institution. For thirty minutes each day faculty members and students enjoy singing, Bible study, family talks, short sermons, or a program of entertainment and instruction. Prayer meetings are held in each dormitory daily.²³

Each Tuesday evening is what is called a Mission Band meeting, when all of the students who have volunteered for

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 6.

special services come together to hear and to give reports of their religious activities during the previous week. At some of the meetings inspirational talks are heard. It is always a high hour and one can hear all kinds of almost unbelievable stories and experiences had on the mission field. Visitors are always invited to these meetings and often catch the missionary zeal of this group.²⁴

Each Wednesday evening the entire student body attend the regular prayer service at Pilgrim's Rest Church, which is located on a twenty-acre piece of ground right off the campus of Acadia Academy.

Regular prayer groups are formed in each of the dormitories for daily prayer and meditations.²⁵

The Woman's Missionary Society composed of the women on the campus and the Young Women's Association enlisting the grown girls are active on the campus. There are both the Royal Ambassadors and the Girls' Auxiliary meetings for the children who live on the campus. These are all church activities.²⁶

Each Thursday evening the preacher boys are called together to discuss problems relative to their work as pastors or mission workers. Good fellowship, helpful information, and spiritual inspiration are the rewards for attending these meetings.²⁷

²⁴Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

At the beginning of the fall semester the student body elect their own officers and give them the power to formulate regulations to direct and control the conduct of the whole community. This gives an opportunity to develop citizenship and leadership.²⁸

Most mission students are taken in the mission bus and are carried to different mission points as far as thirty miles from the school. Mission work begins on Friday and goes on through Sunday night. Students take their lunch and go in groups to different towns and country places to spend the week-end on the field. Every student is expected to take part in the missionary activities of the school.²⁹

There is also much physical labor going on all the time. Most of the mission students work for part of their board. Some work in the dormitories, dining room, schoolrooms as janitors, library, and some take care of the livestock, doing the milking and feeding. Most of the land is cultivated and that requires much work. This work is done by the students. Most of the married students have some kind of crop.³⁰

Advantages and Influences

Acadia Baptist Academy is a mission school. Missions is the chief purpose for its existence; the other things are

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

secondary. It was founded for the purpose of bringing the Gospel to over half a million French Catholics in southern Louisiana. The school takes in and trains workers for any field of mission. Many times the mission students are almost equally divided between French and English, with a small number of Spanish, Italian, and German. Missionary activities are well directed by an efficient member of the faculty. Plans are made and the field is considered as to its advantages and disadvantages. The worker is helped in every way possible to make a success of his particular field.³¹

Acadia Academy has had a great influence in southwest Louisiana. Located in one of the roughest and most backward sections of southern Louisiana, the community is now one of the best and cleanest.³²

The Academy has grown to be highly appreciated and respected by nearly all the people, regardless of their religion. Today the credit of the Academy is good everywhere.³³

Before the Academy was founded there was in that section of the state many communities that had never heard of the Bible. Many people who are not Baptists commend the marked change the Academy has brought. Not only in southern Louisiana but also throughout the whole state the school has

³¹Aguillard, op. cit., p. 33.

³²Ibid., p. 36.

³³Ibid., p. 37.

quicken the spirit of missions.³⁴

The Academy offers some unusual advantages to the students who attend. The expense of going to the Academy is much lower than in most schools.

Association with devout Christian teachers and sincere Christian students is a distinct elevating influence.

No one is embarrassed because of age. In many cases grown men with families are in the same classes with younger pupils.

Acadia Baptist Academy is a school of a "second chance." The men and women who dropped school several years ago can come here and make a second beginning with ease and comfort.

The special courses in French and English Bible, in vocal and instrumental music, in religious training, and in practical mission work, all offer splendid opportunities.³⁵

Although the school is yet rather young, it has spread its influence far and wide. Graduates from the Academy hold positions in many institutions in this and other countries. Acadia Baptist Academy students have enrolled in the Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, Southern Baptist Hospital, Louisiana College, Southwestern Seminary, University of Cincinnati, and the Hamburg Seminary in Hamburg, Germany. A large number of public school teachers in southern Louisiana

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945, pp. 6-7.

are graduates of the Academy. Some of the mission students are going to the foreign fields.

For twenty-seven years Acadia Baptist Academy has been the center and inspiration of French missions.

Deeply spiritual in its atmosphere, though at the same time intensely practical in its operation, it has sent out hundreds of consecrated men and women.³⁶

³⁶Aguillard, op. cit., p. 38.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Acadia Baptist Academy has had a struggle in finance and enrollment since it was established in 1917. In 1923 the school was on the verge of being closed because the finances of the school were at a low ebb. The finances of the school reached a low point again when the depression started in 1930. It had been necessary for the school to go in debt to the amount of four thousand dollars and the depression had made it hard going. Under the leadership of Dr. A. S. Newman it was soon out of debt and things began to look better for the growth of the school.

Acadia Academy is needed because of the need that the school meets in the lives of its constituency. The majority of the French preachers have been converted after they were twenty years old, many after they were thirty. Their scholastic needs cannot be met in the public school. Their preaching would be ineffective if they had to spend the week days in classes with the children of their community. Most of them must be taught to read French, the language which they speak. Some do not know how to read anything, and are given private lessons. Church activities are new to all of

them. There is no background and no precedent to guide them. Individual responsibility is a new idea. The Bible is a new discovery and they need careful guidance in its study. All of these needs can only be met in a Christian school designed specifically to meet them.

We also need the school because there are so many thousands of French people who can neither read nor speak English. These will be ministered to only by students of this school. Their ministry reaches people in all sections of Louisiana. We need it because it is the center from which young Christians, having been prepared by their teachers, can go on with their testimony. We need it because the French preachers must be taught the elementary truths of the Bible. These truths can be presented only by well trained teachers. The evaluation of the school is found in the lives of the students and the results of their missionary endeavors. Many churches have been organized through the efforts of the teachers and pupils from the Academy.

The church at Church Point, Louisiana, owes its existence to the work of Mary Kelly, who was a student at Acadia Academy. The church has had a steady growth, and all of its pastors with the exception of one have been students in the Academy.¹

The church at Krotz Springs, Louisiana, is another illustration of the value of the missionary work of the

¹Jenkins, op. cit., p. 119.

Academy. Henry Winn first preached there while he was a student at Acadia Academy. A church was organized and later, under the leadership of St. Clair Bower, a church building was erected and dedicated free of debt. Except for St. Clair Bower, all the pastors of this church have been students of the Academy.²

Reverend John and Adea Vidrine, D. McGee, E. Y. Soileau, Berkman Deville, Maurice Aguilard, Vena Broussard, and other French missionary workers have been trained in the Acadia Academy.³

W. J. Westberry became interested in a mission school for the French people of southern Louisiana, and in 1917 he sponsored the movement whereby Acadia Baptist Academy was established as a high school for these people.

Westberry became the financial secretary of the Academy in 1917 and served well until 1919, when he resigned; however, his interest in the school and its works never diminished. It has been through the devotion to the school of many faithful friends and principals and their ability as business men that Acadia Baptist Academy has been saved thus far.

Acadia Baptist Academy has at the present time property valued at about \$60,243, according to the latest auditor's

²Ibid., p. 120.

³Ibid., p. 118.

report.⁴

The curriculum of Acadia Academy has been planned to meet the demand of those who attend. It offers work for those who have dropped out of school and wish a "second chance." These men and women may come here and make a second beginning with ease and comfort. No one is embarrassed because of age.

The student body has various forms of activities to engage in at Acadia Academy. There are the ministerial meetings, the mission band, prayer meetings, church activities, the student council, and various class activities.

The school is now a fully accredited senior high school, meeting all the requirements of the State Department of Education. The work that Acadia Baptist Academy offers is accepted by all the standard colleges of Louisiana and of other states as well.

The outlook for Acadia Academy seems very good at present, provided the enrollment in the school continues to increase or at least to remain steady and appropriations continue as they have in the past. With the crops and gardens raised on the land, the gifts and appropriations made by Louisiana Baptists, the school will be in a very good condition, financially. The possibility for the appropriations to continue is favorable due to the fact that Louisiana Baptists

⁴Baptist Message, November 9, 1944, p. 8.

are out of debt and the incomes are increasing.

It has been suggested by Dr. Fielder that a ten-year program of development be set up and that a goal of two hundred students should be attained.

Acadia Baptist Academy serves a wide area over southern and central Louisiana, a few coming from California and Oklahoma; but the greatest percentage of the students come from Church Point, where the school is located, and nearby communities. This was true in the early history of the Academy, and has varied but little to the present time. It seems reasonable to conclude that this will be true in the future.

This institution seems to be very valuable for the educational and spiritual development of all those who attend, as well as a great influence on the lives of those who live in the community where it is located.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Aguillard, Maurice, Acadia Academy, New Orleans, Baptist Bible Institute, 1933.
- Chambers, H. E., History of Louisiana, 2 vols., Chicago, American Historical Society, 1925.
- Christian, John T., A History of the Baptists of Louisiana, New Orleans (privately published), 1923.
- De Pratz, Le Page, The History of Louisiana, London, T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1774.
- Gayarre, Charles, History of Louisiana, vol. I, New Orleans, F. F. Hansell Brothers, 1903.
- Jenkins, Mary Lou, Around the World in Louisiana, New Orleans, Louisiana Baptist Missionary Union, 1937.
- King, Dorothy E., Phases of Bayou Life, New Orleans, Tulane University Press, 1935.
- Perrin, William H. (editor), Southwestern Louisiana, New Orleans, Gulf Publishing Company, 1891.
- Saxon, Lyle, Old Louisiana, New York, Century Company, n. d.
- Scroggs, William O., Rural Life in Lower Mississippi Valley about 1803, Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, VIII, 1913-1914.

Pamphlets

- Smith, T. Lynn, Farm Trade Centers in Louisiana, 1901 to 1931, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, Louisiana Bulletin No. 234, 1933.
- Tinnin, F. W. (editor), Louisiana Baptist Message, Shreveport, 1944-1945 editions.

Bulletins

Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue, 1944-1945.

Minutes, Southern Baptist Convention, 1937 to 1944.

Letters

H. C. Price.

Cecil Roberson.

D. A. Youngblood.