1940: Last Year Home

Stories of the Heritage Families of Camp Polk and Peason Ridge

Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk
and the
Heritage Family Association

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Edited by

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This book is dedicated to those who have passed this way before:

To the Native Americans who taught us that land does not belong to us; but rather we belong to it.

To the Heritage Families, the men, women, and children whose lives were forever changed as a result of their displacement from the land they formerly occupied in preparation for the construction of Camp Polk.

To the Soldiers who train, serve, and tread this land and deploy to fight and win the nation's wars, safeguard mankind, and preserve our freedom to sustain this nation as one nation, under God, and indivisible.

To the community in whose arms we entrust our families' security, enrichment, and well-being, and for providing the human capital to embrace, construct, and sustain a partnership that includes the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

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Preface

At this moment you, as a reader, are passing through a portal into a world you may know nothing about unless you are a Heritage Family member or closely associated with one. This depiction of local history relates an untold story through the eyes of a small group, though significant in number, of American citizens who lived in west-central Louisiana as the clouds of threat drifted over the United States just prior to WWII. This group, by description, lost everything through no fault of their own as national interests overwhelmed them. Little did the inhabitants along Martin Creek, Dowden Creek, Bayou Zourie, Drakes Creek, Whiskachitta Creek, Birds Creek, Six-Mile Creek and some of their tributaries understand that a pull chain was already wrapped around their ankles. They would soon be yanked into a new social and financial environment, many bereft of home, job, pantry, or adequate finances and without any assistance—a disaster of considerable magnitude to the citizens involved.

These people, mostly ignored in history, essentially became collateral damage of war before any hostilities involving American citizens actually occurred. They had chosen the lifestyle of their ancestors, subsistence farming, in quiet, self-contained, rural communities. Many were land owners, almost all were tillers of the soil. Their ancestors had come "west" by wagon train, horse and wagon, horseback, and afoot, a tough, determined people. Members of what is often called the Upland South Culture─a widespread group extending from the East Coast across much of the Southeastern U.S. to East Texas─these early arrivals instilled in their families an attitude to never "cry uncle." These latter generations carried on that attitude.

Behind a screen of headline grabbing events in the outer world, the latest generations steadfastly raised their children, worked diligently on their farms, sold their excess produce in town on Saturdays, and attended church on Sundays, their day of rest. They buried their dead, with infants, youths, and young mothers frequently over represented in community cemeteries. Much of their land had been in their families for generations. Only family was more important than land, for land was their security, their grocery store. They or their ancestors had homesteaded their land in many instances, some purchased land, and others used land owned by absent timber companies who seemed not to care. This is the backdrop for the Heritage Families living in rural west-central Louisiana in 1940.

Unexpectedly, land ownership, occupancy and happenstance of location left the Heritage Families exposed and vulnerable in the lead-up to WWII. In late 1940 through 1941, the dark clouds of threat turned into reality, first in the form of disruptive military maneuvers, then the "exodus." The military needed large amounts of land to train soldiers for the impending WWII. To fulfill their needs, the government turned to a legal but dreaded process of "eminent domain." Property owners were given a date to vacate and a financial offer. They were then expelled whether they accepted the settlement or not. The non-landowners had no legal standing and received no compensation. The removal process conducted by the government tested the mettle of these families. They mustered all their survival instincts, loaded up, and moved out.

This book tells their story. It is written with a focus on the people who lived on the land that ultimately became Fort Polk and Peason Ridge. These Heritage Families are memorialized by the Fort Polk

Heritage Program. Their personal, true stories bound in this document solidify their place in history. The year 1939 recorded the invasion of Poland by Germany. That event, with absolute surety, at double speed, brought astounding change to this group of people—people who had established communities, carved out farms, built schools and churches and lived within a culture that demanded self reliance and a responsibility for personal survival. They lived without electricity, telephones, running water, or indoor sanitary facilities. They were a people of many talents. They were always prepared to defend themselves, their family, and their honor, and they soon proved their loyalty to country as well, sending their sons and daughters to fight on land and sea and through the air.

Through short stories and oral histories captured directly from living Heritage Family members, the joy, love of family and land, heartache, pain, sense of loss, all penetrate the reader's calm. During the mandatory exodus, some left passively, some left in tears and outward anger, some said it was the best thing to happen to them, and some turned to collecting family history to maintain family ties. The exodus brought to an end regular access to their beloved land and cemeteries, establishing a permanent disconnection with past family history. They were faced with a daunting task of building a new life in new surroundings. Some never recovered.

Soon, buildings disappeared, brush covered abandoned home sites, saplings filled old fields, grave markers rotted away, causing lost identifications and locations, and older family members carried memories to their graves. This prior world faded away. Heritage Families were left only with their memories. Yet Heritage Folk are still deeply connected to land and cemeteries. They thrive on visitations to a home site or cemetery. One sees a variety of responses while standing on "sacred ground," a home site or gravesite. Tears are common. Distant stares and long, quiet pauses indicate a mental return to the past, thinking of mom and dad, or maybe the old swimming hole with the rope swing. Like grizzled veterans of war, some are reluctant to speak of the past.

My father, a veteran of WWII, was a man who rarely spoke of his past. He and I sat in the shade of his huge holly tree just before he died. My mother had died 17 months previously on her 66th birthday. Like so many of his generation, he shunned self importance and seldom discussed any part of his early life. However, that day he was talking about what he had experienced during his lifetime. He was very pleased that he had been blessed to live during a time that spanned the first flight of the Wright brothers to the first landing on the Moon. Little did he envision what would come from those activities and the speed with which America would change. Memories of those events somewhat shaped his last days, but in today's world, those points in history are little discussed and are quickly fading as important.

Maybe living on the banks of Whiskachitta Creek, listening to the clanging of the bell cow as she led her herd from the lot for the day's grazing, the scuffle of the goats leaving the barn loft headed for their favorite browse, the crow of the rooster calling his harem off the roost, and the song of the mockingbird as the sun rose above the trees wasn't such a bad lifestyle after all.

You are invited to read on and enjoy the trek, for the Heritage Folk wish to share their stories, whether "Old Paul," "A Horse for Vernon: The Last Cavalry Charge," or another, each seeps with emotion. Given a chance, talk to a survivor.

Marrion Monroe Cryer, Jr., "Skip" to friends and family

Acknowledgements

The genesis of this book began with a realization on the part of Fort Polk and the Heritage Family Association that a significant gap existed in the historical record of Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes in regard to the beginnings of Camp Polk. Previous works, notably *A Good Home for a Poor Man: Fort Polk and Vernon Parish, 1800-1940* (Smith 1999), chronicled the history of Vernon Parish from its establishment through creation of Camp Polk, and *A Soldier's Place in History* (Kane and Keeton 2004) told the history of the Installation and its role in global affairs in the succeeding decades. However, largely absent in historical volumes was the story of how a sizeable group of subsistence farmers who owned and occupied these lands was removed and their communities dismantled for the creation of Camp Polk, beginning in 1940 through 1942.

This book seeks to help fill that gap, and to provide a glimpse of life as it was for the families living on the land that became Camp Polk and Peason Ridge Artillery Range, including parts of the Vernon District of the Kisatchie National Forest. Most importantly, this book helps to give a lasting voice to these displaced families, who are now justly recognized and honored as the Heritage Families of Camp Polk and Peason Ridge.

It has been my great pleasure to work on this volume, and in the process to learn about these families and their history. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Charles Stagg, Chief of Fort Polk's Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, for the opportunity to be involved in this project and for his confidence in allowing me to do so. It should be said that it was his vision to tell the story of life "on the range" in the spring of 1940, and without that vision, the project would not have come to pass. I also wish to offer a heartfelt thanks to Marrion Monroe "Skip" Cryer, Jr., for his dedication to this book and tireless support in its preparation. It was Skip's research, coordination, fact-checking, and often his personal thoughts shared with me that provided substantial improvements and inspiration for the book. Finally, I wish to thank my co-editor and author, Leslie Barras, for her clear thinking and impeccable writing skills; the other chapter authors of this book—Brad Laffitte, Scott Faris, Rickey Robertson, Ted Hammerschmidt, and Gene Haymon—for their thoughtful writing, historical expertise, and commitment to the project; Leslie Martinez for her excellent document layout, cover art, and patience with endless revisions; and last but not least, the many family members who contributed to the book for their willingness to share their stories.

In this second edition, we have corrected missing citations, typographical mistakes and other errors identified after the first printing. We have taken much effort in the following pages to identify and correct known errors and omissions, and to be complete and accurate in the portrayal of facts, the identification and spelling of family and place names, and the attribution of source material. Of particular interest to Heritage Family members is the consistent and accurate use of names. However, we recognized that through the passage of time and the disappearance or lack of reliable original records, some names have been obscured, and the historic name and spelling is uncertain. In other instances, multiple names—such as "Whiskey Chitto," "Whiskachitta," and "Ouiska Chitto" exist for the same community, component, or geographic feature. Where errors and omissions remain, please forgive us.

Stacy Basham Wagner, February 2015

Part 1
TELLING THEIR STORIES

The following chapters tell stories of the land, the Heritage Families, and communities of Camp Polk and Peason Ridge: from the felling of the virgin longleaf pine forests near the turn of the 20th century, in Chapter 1; the records of the 1940 Census in Chapter 2; subsistence farming and the Upland South Culture in Chapter 3; to the arrival of the U.S. Army in 1940 for the Louisiana Maneuvers, and the "exodus" of the Heritage Families from the land in Chapter 4. And finally, in Chapter 5, a reconciliation and a looking ahead to find new connections is offered.

Chapter 1 by Stacy Basham Wagner[1]

THE LAND: A PLACE CALLED HOME

1. Introduction[2]

> *When we change the shape of the Land, we alter the contents and contexts of our collective, familial, and personal memories. Yet, stories can preserve both mythic and familiar elements of geography even when the physical features are forgotten, buried, or obliterated. And more than this: the stories can bring these elements back. If the Land can be preserved long enough for its stories to be told, and retold, perhaps we all—as custodians of both place and memory—stand a chance at real preservation.*
>
> — Ari Berk, Ph.D., Professor of Folklore and Mythology, Central Michigan University

Some people, without even knowing it, form a bond with land. Through living closely with the land over time, a person may come to understand it deeply, and to cultivate an intimate sense of its terrain and its ways. By living with the land in such a manner, an attachment often arises that can go beyond the merely sentimental. In coming to know a place deeply, we ourselves can be changed by the land. In coming to know, to feel the swells of the hills and the curves and forks of the creek, the smells and colors of the soils, the sound of the wind in the trees, and the trill of the birds in the morning, these elements of place become imprinted on hearts and minds. Our connection to the land permeates us and becomes a part of who we are.

Many authors have written of the attachment that often exists between people and land. In the essay, "Landscape and Narrative," from his 1989 book *Crossing Open Ground*, American writer and conservationist Barry Lopez describes two kinds of landscapes, the landscape outside of the self, and the landscape within. Lopez sees these two landscapes as strongly interrelated. The external landscape is "the one we see—not only the line and colour of the land and its shading at different times of the day, but also its plants and animals in season, its weather, its geology, the record of its climate and evolution." For Lopez, the second landscape "is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape" (Thornton 2010: 130-131). He writes of the connection between the two, saying that "[t]he interior landscape responds to the character and subtlety of an exterior landscape," and

[1]Environmental analyst and advocate of wildlands, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc

[2]The ideas presented here were influenced by personal communications by Skip Cryer and other Heritage Family contributors to this book, and works by Cobb (1959), Chawla (1986), Sobel (1990), Sebba (1991), Marcus (1992), Fullilove (1996), Kellert (2002), Pyle (2002), Schauffler (2003), Taylor (2008), and Semken and Brandt (2010).

that each of us is "influenced by where on this earth one goes, what one touches, the patterns one observes in nature—the intricate history of one's life in the land."

Authors such as Lopez, Wendell Berry, Terry Tempest Williams, Edward Abbey, and father of the conservation movement, Aldo Leopold, to name a few, have discovered "that they share a deep emotional and physical connection with the landscape, which manifests itself both in the language and content of their writing" (Ibid.). Writers such as these (along with many human geographers and sociologists) suggest that attachment to a place, especially when formed in childhood, can hold a special depth of meaning that persists throughout life, shaping values and moral views, and creating a sense of rootedness, belonging and identity. Children—unlike preoccupied and concept-oriented adults—can experience the landscape with all of their senses and make it their own: creating secret hideouts and rendezvous spots, making rope swings from muscadine vines, and sharing favorite fishing holes. Attachments to the land from one's youth and special places within it can be intense, and when such connections are torn asunder, whether through removal from a childhood home or community or alteration of the land itself, a feeling of being unmoored and displaced can persist for the balance of one's life.

This chapter seeks to take a panoramic view and to convey a sense of the natural and cultural landscape of Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes prior to the establishment of Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range, and of the profound changes that occurred within the region in the decades preceding the Army's arrival. It draws upon historic records and other accounts of Louisiana's lumber boom, the open-range era following the cut-out of the longleaf pine forest, early reforestation efforts, and creation of the Kisatchie National Forest and Camp Polk to tell a part of this story: that when men take it upon themselves to so utterly and so rapidly transform a landscape, it not only has irreversible ecological consequences, but human ones as well.

2. Louisiana's Longleaf Pine and Lumber Boom

2.1 A Forest Primeval

> *Of all the tottering thrones of to-day none is more shaky than that of King 'Pinus palustris,' who is ruling in the last decade of greatness of one of the world's grandest kingdoms. The history of that kingdom is the story of the climax and decline of the great forests of southern long leaf yellow pine. It has not been many years since those magnificent southern forests stood silent and intact. Now it will not be long before the noise and bustle of the last big logging operation will die away, leaving behind destruction and desolation, except for a few scattered tracts of virgin timber and scant reproduction* (Hartman 1922:63).

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Gulf Coastal Plain, including the area that became Camp Polk and Peason Ridge, has been dominated by longleaf pine *Pinus palustris*) woodlands for at least the past 5,000 to 7,500 years (Van Lear et al. 2005:151). Shaped by frequent fires ignited by lightning and set by Native Americans, the virgin longleaf pine forest stretched from east Texas to southern Virginia, and extended into the Piedmont and beyond. These venerable pines were often 150 to 200 years old and were nothing like the thin plantation-grown pines seen today, but instead stood thick-trunked, grand, and towering. Ear-

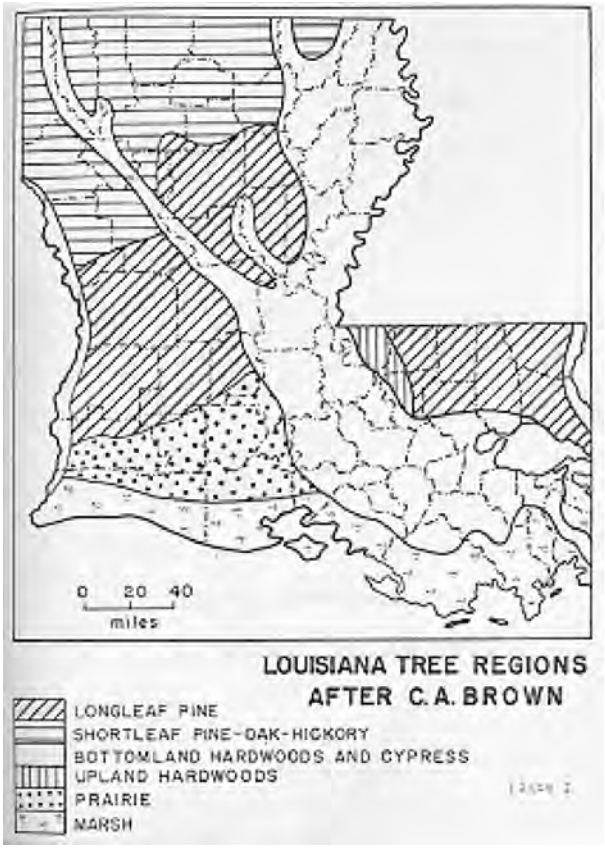


Figure 1-2.1. Pre-settlement forest regions of Louisiana. Source: Stokes 1954.

ly European settlers arrived in west-central Louisiana in the late 18th century and found a primeval landscape of rolling land, dissected by narrow streams, and covered by pine forests little changed in millennia. Carpeted with pine straw, with little under-growth, and sturdy trunks and branches high overhead, the longleaf pine forests were open and park-like, growing for mile after mile in vast uninterrupted stretches of almost pure stands.

The longleaf pine forests stood thick and tall through succeeding decades, as possession of southwest Louisiana changed hands from Spain to France and the United States, and westward colonization began. The population of Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes remained low through the antebellum period (Smith 1999:44-49), and those making a passage through the virgin longleaf pine forest spoke of it with an abundance of superlatives. Settlers and travelers through the area during the mid and late 19th century likewise described seemingly endless forests with trees often exceeding three feet in diameter, soaring 100 to 150 feet tall, and stretching fifty feet to the first limb (Smith 1999:83). In her 1892 journey through Vernon Parish, Catherine Cole[3] spoke of "the most magnificent stretch of unbroken pine forest on the continent" and the "scented, far-off forests of Vernon," and also:

> *Here is a pine forest in all its splendor. It would seem that one could mow the trees down like grain if one just had a scythe big enough. During my second day's ride of thirty-five miles I measured haphazard along the roadside many of the pine trees, and the smallest girth I found was nine feet-two inches* (Field 1892:169).

In 1919, geographer F.V. Emerson likened the longleaf pine forest to "the arches of a cathedral." He went on to say that, "A drive through the virgin long-leaf pine forest will long be remembered" (Emerson 1919:81). This was certainly the case for Walter Cole of neighboring Jasper County, Texas, who in 1992 at 103 years of age "recalled the ancient longleaf forest from his boyhood" Sitton and Conrad 1998:5-6):

> *It'll never come back like it was when I's a boy. When I was a boy I could ride a horse a hundred miles cross country through Louisiana and Texas in virgin timber, pine timber. And it was longstraw, we called it longhaired pine—longleaf pine. It was two-thirds heart, fine timber, wasn't a limb on it*

[3]Catherine Cole is the pseudonym of Martha R. Fields, who, working for the New Orleans Daily Picayune, traveled across the parishes of Louisiana in 1892 via buggy and other modes of transportation. Interestingly, in her story about Vernon Parish, after describing the beauties of the pine forest, she mentions land speculators working in Leesville and notes that 7,000 acres of land nearby were listed for $2.50 an acre.

Figure 1-2.2. Longleaf pine often grew in pure, park-like stands. Settlers talked of how they could easily drive a wagon or buggy through the forest. The trees grew slowly, adding perhaps one quarter inch in diameter per year, requiring 250-300 years for the development of a trunk diameter of thirty inches. Source: Stokes 1954:n.p.

> *for fifty feet. You could see a deer a half mile across the pineywoods. I've cut a-many a one. I've sawed trees I had to ring saw; I'd walk around em to saw em down—saw em all around and wedge em over. And when they hit the ground, you'd hear em three, four mile* (Ibid.).

Beginning perhaps prior to the 1840s and continuing through the postbellum years, relatively intensive logging occurred locally along the Sabine and Calcasieu Rivers, as well as along their tributaries, including Bayou Anacoco, Whiskey Chitto, and Bundick Creeks (Smith 1999:123). Logs were cut in the fall and winter and rafted down the Sabine and Calcasieu Rivers to mills and ports in Orange, Texas, and Lake Charles during the spring rises. It has been reported that in 1885, a single rise in the Calcasieu carried between forty and fifty thousand logs southward, and that old settlers told of seeing log rafts up to one and one-half miles long on the Sabine made up entirely of longleaf pine (Stokes 1954:n.p).

In spite of this early logging activity, the longleaf forests of southwest Louisiana remained largely unchanged through the close of the 19th century. Yet by the late 1920s, the land of Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes and for tens of miles beyond would be denuded of its once great forests, vast and majestic in their beauty and extent. Thus the landscape left behind by the Heritage Families in the 1940s—left behind as they were forced to enact a diaspora soon after the U.S. Army's arrival—was far different from the land found by their parents and grandparents. Ironically, it was in part this very alteration to the landscape that allowed the coming of the U.S. Army and led to the severing of family ties to the land.

Figure 1-2.3. Cutting longleaf yellow pine in the possession of the King-Ryder Lumber Company near Bon Ami, LA (a subsidiary of the Long-Bell Company headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri). Source: LOUISiana Digital Library.

Figure 1-2.4. Virgin longleaf pine stand near Neame, Vernon Parish, LA. Taken by J. G. Peters, 1904. Original caption stated "Note scrubby condition of trees." Known locally as the Delta Land and Timber Company, the Central Coal and Coke Company (4 C Co.) opened a sawmill at Neame in 1898, immediately after completion of the Kansas City Southern Railroad through Vernon Parish. The mill at Neame burned in 1925 and was moved to Carson in Beauregard Parish. No structures from the mill town remain, but two cemeteries are located nearby. Sources: Wise 1971:49; Smith 1999; NARA 2014.

Figure 1-2.5. Pickering Lumber Company, Vernon Parish. Taken by E. J. Davison, 1903. Original caption: "Skidding Longleaf Pine logs out of the woods using Big Wheels." Source: NARA 2014.

Figure 1-2.6. Carson, Calcasieu (now Beauregard) Parish. Taken by J. C. Peters, 1904. Original caption: "A skid wagon loaded with longleaf pine logs. A method of skidding logs, used either for short logs or long hauls." With the advent of steam logging, "[o]nce a man became part of the steam logging, he was considered superior to the poor logger with mule teams." Note: the northern portion of Calcasieu Parish, where the Carson mill was located, was incorporated into Beauregard Parish in 1913. Sources: Wise 1971:12; NARA 2014.

2.2 Land Speculation and the Logging Boom

The story of how the great longleaf pine forests of Louisiana were lost in a mere two to three decades has its roots in the complex socioeconomic and political history of the post-Reconstruction period. As described by historian Donna Fricker (Fricker undated:1), factors including changes in federal land policy that made large tracts of timberland available at extremely low prices; an economy based on raw materials extraction; a push for industrialization in the South fueled largely by northern capital; exhaustion of forests in the Northeast and Midwest; and the expansion of railroads within the state all helped to spur industrial-scale lumbering in Louisiana.

Beginning as early as 1877, Northern lumber barons and land speculators began buying up thousands of acres of timberland in Louisiana, made available by the federal government at bargain basement prices (Smith 1999:114-15). A 1913 report by the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor found that sixty-five individuals and partnerships had purchased 1,000 acres or more within the area encompassing Vernon Parish and the surrounding parishes, with a total of 1,021,000 acres acquired at $1.25 an acre; three of the sixty-five had purchased more than 100,000 acres each, and 11 bought from 20,000 to 60,000 acres (Ibid.). Land changed hands quickly and ownership became concentrated among a few wealthy individuals and companies, often connected to one another.

Expansion of railroads also played a critical role in Louisiana's industrial logging boom. Between 1880 and 1910, almost 5,000 miles of railroad track were laid across the state (from 652 miles of track in 1880 to 5,554 in 1910) (Fricker undated:8). The Kansas City Southern Railroad began operating in Vernon Parish in 1897, and even as railroad tracks were laid, the mills sprang up along the main line (Smith 1999:116). From the main railroad line, branch lines were rapidly constructed into remote areas of forest and "[f]rom the turn of the century until the late 1920's, Vernon Parish forests echoed with the sounds of chopping axes, shouting men, crashing trees, braying mules, and snorting steam engines" (Ibid.). Said writer, naturalist and Georgia native Janisse Ray (1999:99), "Railroads were to pines what they were to buffalo: the means to extinction." In Vernon and surrounding parishes, this was largely true.

At least five large sawmills were operating in Vernon Parish by 1910 (see Table 1-2.1). In addition to these large mills, a number of intermediate-size and smaller mills also operated within the parish during the period of intensive logging, as well as preceding and anteceding this time. With capacities upwards of 100,000 to 450,000 board-feet per day, the amount of timber processed through these mills was truly staggering. Some of the big mills could clear-cut the virgin timber of an entire section of land in less than two weeks (Stokes 1954:n.p.). In the Peason Ridge area, the Peavy-Wilson mill began working in approximately 1918 and was also an enormous operation with a daily capacity of over 200,000 board feet (Smith 1999:22).[4] How many pine trees were removed and processed by these mills? A complete figure is unknown, but it is estimated that in its lifetime, Fullerton Mill alone cut 2.25 billion board feet and consumed 4.2 million trees (Smith 1999:119).

Logging and operating the mills required a substantial labor force. To support the mills,

[4]The Peason Ridge area derives its name from a concatenation of Peavy and Wilson, the last names of the mill owners.

Table 1-2.1. Partial list of large mills (100,000 board-feet and greater annual capacity) operating in Vernon and Sabine Parishes during the industrial logging boom, locally ca. 1900 –1930. Where blank, information is unknown/not readily available. Ranges in mill capacities and employment are due to variations among sources. Sources: Block 1996:6, 11, 15, 107, 109, 149, 153, 178, 181; Block undated; Burns 1979:199; Robertson 2001; Smith 1999:116-22; Stokes 1954:n.p.; Wise 1971:12-13, 48-49.

Mill Name	*Parish*	*Approx. Dates (Start – End)*	*Approx. Daily Capacity (BF)*	*Approx. Workers*
Cravens	Vernon	1905 – 1925	200,000	275
Fullerton	Vernon	1907 – 1927	350,000 – 450,000	660
Kurthwood	Vernon	1919 – 1929	180,000 – 300,000	
Neame	Vernon	1898 – 1925	200,000	500
Nona	Vernon	1899 –	100,000 – 200,000	370
Peavy-Wilson	Sabine	1918 – 1934	200,000	200 – 450
Pickering	Vernon	1900 – 1926	150,000 – 200,000	500
Slagle (White Grandin)*	Vernon	1919 – 1930	200,000	
Vernon Parish Lumber Co.	Vernon	1919 – 1929	300,000	

*Reported in some sources as "White Gandlin."
BF = board-feet

company towns were constructed to house workers and their families, many of whom were locals (both whites and "Negroes") but some of whom came from northern states, Europe, and even Mexico (Stokes 1954:n.p.; Smith 1999:113). The mill towns sprang up rapidly, yet most were orderly and attractive and often contained greater facilities and services than available elsewhere to the local population. Common amenities included schools, churches, boarding houses, medical care, a fully stocked company commissary, electric lights and running water, drug stores, barber shops, post offices, and sometimes even a movie theater.

Fullerton Mill, of which stories abound, was established in 1906 by the Gulf Lumber Company and was the largest sawmill west of the Mississippi.[5] Located in the southeastern portion of Vernon Parish within the Vernon District of the Kisatchie National Forest, the mill was said to have been situated within some of the best and most dense longleaf pine. It was also said to have been "one of the most picturesquely beautiful mill towns" in Louisiana (Burns 1979:203), with well-laid out streets, comfortable homes, a deluxe hotel, shopping center, hospital, concrete swimming pool, and three-story elementary and high schools. Heritage Family member Garsie James, interviewed in 2014 at the age of 97 (see text box on page 12), was born in the town of Fullerton where his father worked at the mill on a "carriage."[6] Near the time that Fullerton Mill closed, the James family moved to the Whiskachitta Community, where the timber had already been cut out.

Local residents not employed at the mills were very aware of the logging operations surrounding their homes and farms. Their attitudes toward the industrialization of the once

[5]Fullerton Mill had an annual capacity of 120,000,000 board feet and an output of 350,000 board feet every 10-hour shift (Burns 1979:199).
[6]A carriage is a car-like piece of equipment that was pushed by a crew of several men back and forth, past the saw as slabs of lumber were sawed off with each pass. Now cut to the right thickness, the slabs were then transported by conveyor to other saws that cut them into the right width and final length (Smith 1999:126).

The Going Thing

Stacy Wagner (SW): *Tell me, what did your dad do?*

Garsie James (GJ): *He worked on that, you know, they had a carriage they called it. They put them logs on it, would run by the saw and saw the lumber. Well he worked on that carriage.*

SW: *And when the mill closed did your family stay there or what did they do?*

GJ: *They moved. We moved about… up in the rifle range.*

SW: *So you moved from Fullerton further north on to the…*

GJ: *I don't even remember us moving. I was that young. But my dad bought a place on, have you heard of Whiskachitta?*

SW: *Yes sir.*

GJ: *Well that's where we lived, right there.*

SW: *So your dad worked in the mill itself? He wasn't involved in the logging operations, he worked inside the mill itself?*

GJ: *He was inside the mill.*

SW: *So then when the mill closed you moved up to the Whiskachitta area. Did your dad talk about the forest and how it used to be, or your mom?*

GJ: *Oh, yeah.*

SW: *Do you remember any stories that he would tell?*

GJ: *It was humongous timber. All I remember is my dad had a little ol' T-Model truck. We was on our way to Fullerton with a load of watermelons and there was a car load of young people passed. And they was a 'hoo-rawing' us as they passed, you know. That made my dad mad and boy here he went. He was going to run them down.*

SW: [Laughs]

GJ: *It had a front tire that had a solid inner tube in it.* [Laughs] *And that thing come off and we run in the ditch.*

[Laughter]

SW: *And what happened to the watermelons?*

GJ: *Well he got it fixed and went on with the watermelons.*

SW: *I try to imagine what the forest was like before it was cut and what the people felt about the forest. Did your parents talk about what the forest was like or what they felt about it before it was cut?*

GJ: *Yeah, they talked a lot about it being so large and wondering about when that tree was a little thing. That was no telling how many years back. I know they talked a lot about that.*

SW: *Well your dad obviously made a living at the mill. Were they sad to see the forests cut, or did they see that as a good thing to help their economic situation?*

GJ: *Yeah, the way they talked that was the going thing, you know, a job at that mill. I reckon that it was something else, that timber, and no telling when that tree was a little thing. Could be say a hundred years….*

Interview with Garsie James (excerpt), 2014, as told to Stacy Basham Wagner

Figure 1-2.7. Boys playing marbles in the schoolyard, Fullerton, Louisiana, 1918. The elementary school appears in the background on the left. Source: Selena White Johnson.

quiet forest were likely mixed, but Otis Dunbar Richardson, son of the auditor for the Gulf Lumber Company at Fullerton Mill, provides some insight into their hospitality. Obliged by his father to "learn the lumber business from the stump up," Richardson worked as a teenager in 1915 at a range of jobs in support of logging and mill operations and later wrote of his experiences (1983:192-201). He tells of how, when the timber was exhausted within reach of the main line of the logging railroad, survey crews would map a route to extend the main line further into uncut timber. As he and other members of the survey crew from Fullerton Mill moved deeper into the woods, Richardson writes that the local residents "down to the dogs and babies" knew who they were and what they were doing, and received them "as neighbors." Richardson praised the "hard-working and prudent" inhabitants of the "back-country" whom he encountered. He described a generous lunch of "soda biscuits, fried pork, yams, country molasses, and collard greens," and the clean beds provided to the survey crew by the Boyd family in the hamlet of Cora, when the crew was unable to return to Fullerton for the night. (Richardson 1983:194).

The mill towns existed for the singular purpose of feeding the mill, and like the mills themselves, when the timber played out the towns were dismantled and moved, or left to become ghost towns. In his 1957 paper "Lumbering and Western Louisiana Cultural Landscapes," George A. Stokes mapped the rapid rise and demise of sawmill towns in western Louisiana (Figure 1-2.8). The change in the number of active mill towns over time in western Louisiana is plotted in Figure 1-2.9. By 1933, most of the large mills had closed and the towns gone, many having lasted only 15 to 20 years.

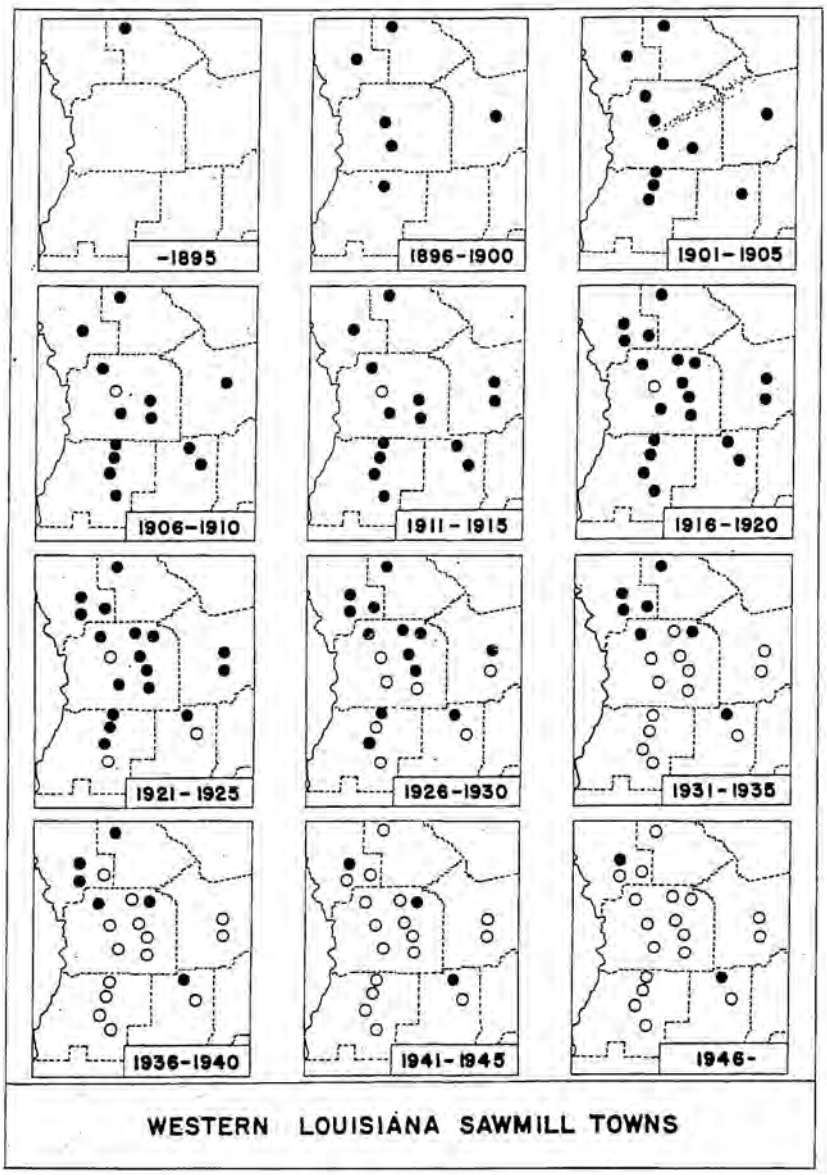


Figure 1-2.8. "A map series illustrating the rapid increase in the number of western Louisiana sawmill towns after 1895 and their equally rapid disappearance. The twenty settlements shown represent only a portion of the total number established in the area by lumber companies." Dark circles represent active sites and open circles represent abandoned sites. Source: Stokes 1957:252.

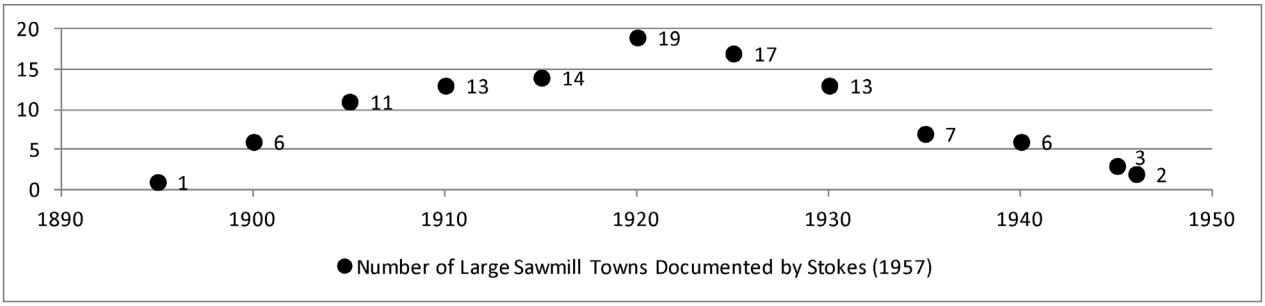


Figure 1-2.9. The number of large sawmill towns operating in western Louisiana, 1895-1946, based on data reported by Stokes (1957). Large mills were generally defined as those cutting 100,000 board-feet or more per day. Adapted from original by Dr. Charles Stagg (2013).

Figure 1-2.10. Ruins of the Fullerton Mill. Taken by Allen Luey, 1937. Source: NARA 2014.

Figure 1-2.11. Ruins of the sawmill at Slagle, LA. Taken by Arthur W. Hartman, 1935. It has been reported that the White Gandlin ("Grandin") Lumber Company at Slagle opened around 1920 with lands purchased from the Jay Gould estate at $9.20 an acre, and that the mill operated until around 1930. Sources: Smith 1999:121; NARA 2014.

Figure 1-2.12. Large longleaf pine logs "ready to go onto the carriage and be converted into timbers suitable for heavy construction." "The log carriage, which carried[d] the logs to the band saw, [was] a ponderous piece of mechanical equipment manned by a crew of four to six workmen. Source: The Long-Bell Lumber Company 1920: 17-18.

Figure 1-2.13. Steam skidder and crew loading logs in west Louisiana, undated. Logging crews were often racially mixed. Richardson (1983) reported that "Negro youth[s]" on mules were responsible for clamping the logs to heavy tongs at the end of the steam skidder cables. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

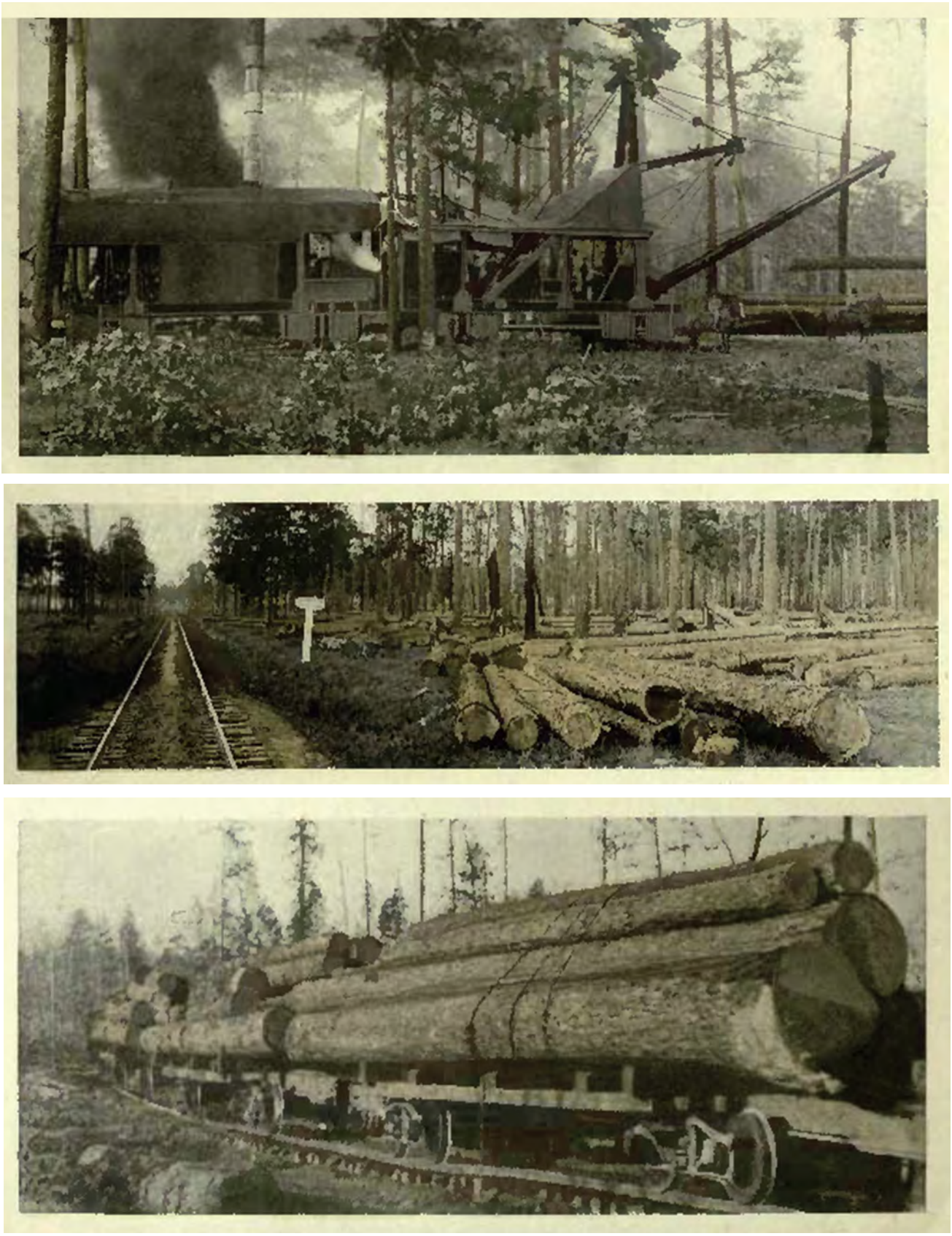


Figure 1-2.14. Top, a four-line skidder and loader handling logs at the rate of seventy million feet a year; Middle, longleaf pine logs assembled for loading; Bottom, logs on the way to the sawmill. Source: The Long-Bell Lumber Company (1920).

3. Impacts of the Cut-Out and Get-Out Era

The destruction of the longleaf pine forest in Louisiana and its impact has been well chronicled by foresters, geographers, historians, and ecologists alike. Charles Stagg, Chief of Fort Polk's Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, eloquently recounts the history and fate of the virgin longleaf forest in Vernon and surrounding parishes as both a scientist and a multi-generational resident of southwest Louisiana (see text box page on page 19).

Donna Fricker thusly summarized the effect of the lumber boom in Louisiana:

> *The lumber boom's impact on Louisiana is seemingly beyond exaggeration. Fueled largely by out-of-state capital, the lumber boom fundamentally changed the look of the state. With a policy of 'cut out and get out,' priceless natural resources were lost by the millions of acres. Large sections of the state, in a relatively short period of time, became vast 'stumpscapes' of barren cutover land as rapacious mill owners moved on to yet another stand of virgin timber elsewhere in the country. Some 4.3 million acres of Louisiana virgin timber had been clear cut – a land area roughly the size of the state of New Jersey.*
>
> *As George Alvin Stokes aptly concludes in his 1954 dissertation ('Lumbering in Southwest Louisiana'): 'The rapidity with which big-time lumbering had entered Louisiana was matched by the speed of its departure.' The early to mid-1920s is generally given as the ending date for the great lumber boom, for it is then when almost all of the big mills had run out of timber and closed down* (Fricker undated:1).

In writing about the rapid rise and fall of the mills (and the rapid destruction of the forest), former Louisiana State University library director Anna C. Burns said the following:

> *The reaction of most local people was equally shortsighted. The natives welcomed the mills, for it was their first opportunity to have steady-paying jobs. For hundreds it was the first cash income they had ever seen. The company towns provided community life and social opportunities they had not enjoyed on their scattered subsistence farms. In Louisiana, the woods workers were mostly married men whose families lived with them, following them from one mill to another* (Burns 1981:5).

Lumbermen described the area of land lying between the Red River to the east, the Sabine River to the west, the belt of shortleaf pine to the north, and the Gulf Coastal Plain to the south and including Calcasieu, Rapides, Beauregard, Vernon, Allen, Jefferson Davis, Acadia, and Evangeline Parishes as the "Calcasieu District."

In 1922, George Hartman, writing of the Calcasieu District, said: "It is in this district that some of the heaviest stands of long-leaf timber are found and from here comes the best and strongest grades of this species of pine." He described the logging operations occurring in the Calcasieu District at the time and eulogized the forest's demise:

> *Truly the sing of the saw is the death knell of these kings of the forest, and the day is not far distant when we can sing no longer as the poet who sang:—*
>
> *This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,*
> *Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight*
> *Stand like Druids of old, with voices sad and prophetic.*
> (Hartman 1922:68) (quoting from "Evangeline," by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

The Long View of Landscape Changes

It has been said that no one can properly appreciate the present unless he understands the past. Along that line then, if we are to better understand what we have attempted to capture within the pages of this book of the spring of 1940, it will be necessary to condense the long past into a few paragraphs that will necessarily be too simplistic and too generic.

In the late sixteenth century, when European man arrived for the first time in western Louisiana to observe and make historical records of what appeared before his eyes, the landscape he saw was dominated by the Longleaf Pine forest. Had it been possible to take an aerial photograph—let's make it a color photograph since an imaginary photograph is relatively inexpensive to take—the photo would have shown one continuous, dark green, blanket of tall Longleaf Pine trees completely covering and shading all the gently sloping sandy hills. And, had it been possible to peer beneath the tree canopy, we would have found that the long ridgelines were dissected by beautiful, small, sandy-bottomed perennial streams that meandered this way and that way as they ran down toward the Gulf of Mexico.

Had the landscape always looked that way? Probably not. According to the literature of American natural and human history, the earliest human inhabitants of our southeastern coastal plains arrived about 12,000 years ago. These people were nomadic, met their lifestyle needs by following and exploiting migrating herds of large herbivores, and lived in a grasslands dominated landscape for several thousands of years. At the risk of oversimplification, we can say that the landscape surrounding these nomadic hunters would have appeared as a rolling sea of tall grasses interspersed with those winding streams. The streams were bordered by long, thin, mixed pine and hardwood forests standing within and clinging to the edges of the stream bottoms.

After the decline of the big game populations caused by climatic changes or over-hunting, or both, it became necessary for human culture to change substantially and shift from hunting toward a more localized, agriculturally based lifestyle. Over an extended period of time, perhaps several thousand years, villages and small agricultural fields were established within the linear forests bordering the perennial streams. And, fire was the primary tool used by Native Americans for clearing crop lands within these linear forests. Because Longleaf Pine is adapted to survive fire and is favored in competition with other trees for selection by fire survivability, the Longleaf Pine became the dominant tree in a fire climax forest which expanded away from the streams and filled the burned prairies. Thus, as a result of the frequent and purposeful application of fire by Native Americans, the southeastern coastal plains landscape was transformed over time from a vast sea of prairie grassland to a vast blanket of Longleaf Pine forest.

Even the arrival of the more technically minded European settlers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could not substantially change the basic character of the Longleaf Pine forest. A Confederate Soldier who participated in the Battle of Mansfield in 1864 remarked in his diary that after he had traveled down from Mansfield and then past Anacoco, he entered the pine forest and quickly became depressed with its gloomy monotony. His route of travel took him diagonally across the land that became Fort Polk. Because of the massive sizes of individual pine trees and the lack of large mechanical harvesting equipment, the Longleaf Pine forest in this part of Louisiana resisted any large scale clearing until the late nineteenth century. Of course, the Longleaf Pine forest was not a monoculture: stream bottoms were filled with mixed pine and hardwood trees, small towns and hamlets were connected by country roads winding through the pine forest, rural residents had cleared small plots in the forest to establish vegetable gardens, some small farmers cooperated and cleared larger areas for hay fields, and one could find relict prairies still dotting the pine forest. But the vast Longleaf Pine forest in our part of the world stood essentially intact throughout the eighteenth century and most of

Continued

The Long View of Landscape Changes *(continued)*

the nineteenth century until the interstate railroads began to crisscross the southeastern states after the Civil War.

By the middle 1890's, railroads had joined all the southern states and also connected them to the industrial northern states. The Longleaf Pine forest of west Louisiana was now available for economic exploitation: the land the pines were growing on was cheap, Northern industrial money was ready for investment, the trees were finally accessible by railways, and there was a strong demand for dimensioned lumber for construction of homes and commercial buildings. All along the major railroads, smaller railways branched off to local lumber mills (also known as "sawmills"), and from each of those sawmills, still smaller company railways called "trams" led into the forest, or section of forest, providing sawn trees for that mill. One historian mentioned that along a 50 mile stretch of major railroad in east Texas there was a total of 15 sawmills each with scores of miles of its own spider-web-like trams.

In this region of Louisiana (considering the regional area to include the parishes of Allen, Vernon, Beauregard, Rapides, Natchitoches, and Sabine), large scale timber harvesting began in 1895 with one mill operating in Natchitoches Parish. By 1900, there were two mills in Vernon Parish, and one each in the other parishes except for Allen which had none. By 1910 Vernon had four operational mills. The industry grew year by year with a peak number of 19 regional mills operating in 1920. In 1920, within Vernon Parish alone, seven large sawmills were operating fulltime. As the last of the trees supplying a mill were cut out, that mill would close and its associated mill town would disappear with the former workers and residents seeking employment elsewhere.

The history of the Fullerton Mill (1907–1927) is well documented and is informative of a way of life that has vanished as completely as that of the nomadic hunters. During the period 1895 to 1940, large mills which had operated within and near Fort Polk and Peason Ridge included Cravens, Pickering, Fullerton, Peason, Kurthwood, Neame, New Llano, Nona, Slagle, Pitkin, and Alco. Although a generality, it is fair to say that an average sawmill of the period 1895 to 1935 in this region would have controlled and harvested 50,000 acres of mature pine forest, employed 400 workers, supported a company town of 1300 people, lasted for 20 years, and then completely disappeared in about 18 months—roughly the same period of time that it took to construct the mill and its mill town.

Substantial efforts to mitigate the impacts of the loss of the forest began in 1928 with the establishment of the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana. Within Vernon Parish some 84,000 acres of cutover land had been acquired by the US Forest Service by the end of 1939. Several federal programs to provide employment began as early as 1933 and lasted until 1943: these programs included the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration.

The first aerial photographs of the Fort Polk area were taken in the middle to late 1930's by the Soil Conservation Service. In the early 1990's the US Forest Service contracted with the forestry department of a major university to analyze these aerial photographs and estimate the percentage of forest that had been removed by the industrial "cut out and get out" operations. The answer was that 93 percent of the original Longleaf Pine forest canopy had been cut out. In the Fort Polk area, the Forest Service has been able to identify only about 40 acres that may represent an uncut remnant of the virgin forest. Amazingly, within only 40 years, the period of time between 1895 and 1935, industrial man had removed a forest which had taken nature and agricultural man over 10,000 years to establish.

By Dr. Charles Stagg, Chief, Fort Polk Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, Fort Polk, LA

Skip Cryer, whose family came from the Whiskachitta Community, also recalls the land as it was after the "cut-out and get-out" period. He asks the question, who will wait for Mother Nature to rebuild?

Stokes (1954:n.p) reported that "[b]y 1938, seventy percent of [Vernon Parish] had been clearcut, ...and natural forest regeneration had been largely ruined by the steam skidders," used to drag logs to the rail lines, and "which destroyed uncut trees." Sitton and Conrad (1998:196) similarly described the damage wrought by steam-powered logging in East Texas, writing that "[a]fter a timber crew had passed through a longleaf forest, little remained." All but the smallest trees were cut for saw timber, and what young trees remained were mostly damaged by their falling brethren or destroyed by the logs pulled by the skidder. Environmental damage was lasting due to gouges cut into the sandy soil by skidding the huge logs; when the next big rain came, the loosened soil washed away and choked the creeks (Ibid.).

Figures 1-3.1 and 1-3.2 depict the landscape of the area that became Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range, based on aerial photos taken in 1939, more than ten years after the close of almost all of the area's large mills. The images depict a land barren of trees aside from the mixed pine and hardwood timber left standing in the drainages of large creek bottoms such as Bayou Castor, Whiskey Chitto ("Whiskachitta"), and Little Sandy Creeks.

We can only speculate on how living among the towering longleaf pines may have affected the inner landscape of the settlers of this land, or how the destruction of the virgin forest was perceived by their descendants. And how was the longleaf pine forest itself viewed by early residents? Did they see it as deep and formidable, a thing to be conquered and tamed, or sheltering, beautiful, and valuable in its own right? Did the parents and grandparents of today's Heritage Family members lament the loss of the pine forest? Or perhaps did they,

Mother Nature Will Never Rebuild

In a few years the lumber companies left town with much wealth but left the landscape in total destruction. Erosion started, springs dried up, vegetation changed, streams filled in and flow diminished. The water table fell. I remember the fall cover of bluestem and quail hunting, the sky glowing at night for days as the annual 'burning' occurred regardless of land ownership, cutover laying black, and huge stumps everywhere. A few slow matches and a strong north wind was all that was required to rapidly scorch thousands of acres without detection.

Crosby [Naval Stores, Inc.][1] *later opened a turpentine plant in DeRidder and the dozers and stump haulers got busy--another destructive endeavor.*

The burning now is a more controlled activity due to a vast reforestation program, a generation change, new trespass laws and legal liability laws. The stumps are gone. But Mother Nature will never rebuild the original ecology. The first harvest in the modern system of 'improved pines' occurs at 10 years of growth. I have young longleaf (long straw to old folk) pines still in the grass stage after 9 years.

Who will wait for the necessary 200-400 years?

By Skip Cryer (2014), Heritage Family member

[1]The Company was later renamed Crosby Chemicals, Inc. The turpentine plant in DeRidder, LA, was sold to MeadWestvaco Corp. in 1977.

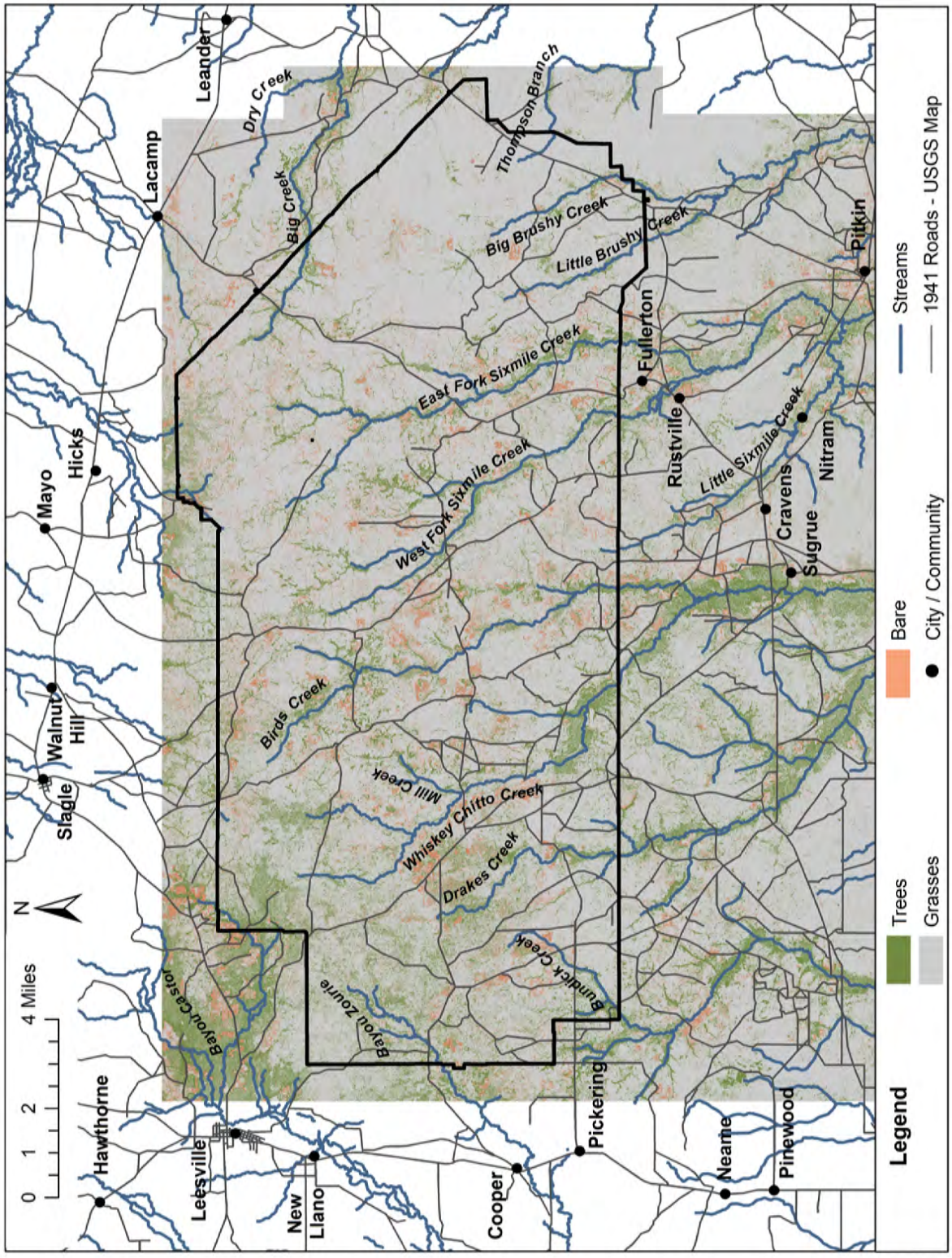


Figure 1-3.1. Land cover map of the Camp Polk acquisition area based on classification of cover types from 1939 aerial photos. Major streams and roadways from a 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map of Vernon Parish are shown for reference. Source: Dwayne Hightower, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2014.

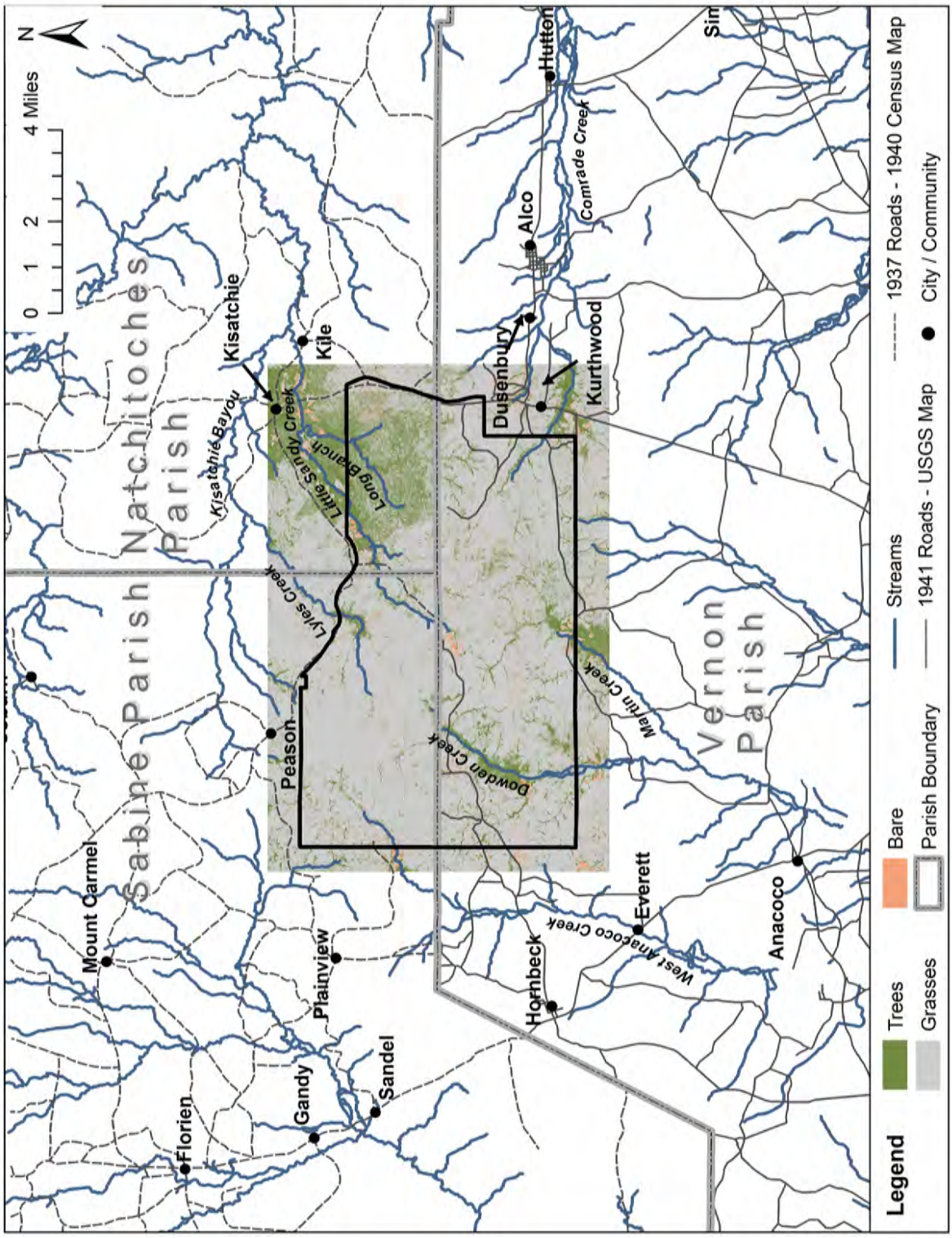


Figure 1-3.2. Land cover map of the Peason Ridge acquisition area based on classification of cover types from 1939 aerial photos. Major streams and roadways from a 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map of Vernon Parish and 1937 maps used for the 1940 Census are shown for reference. Source: Dwayne Hightower, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2014.

Figure 1-3.3. Cut-over land in Vernon Parish, LA. Taken by John T. Cassady, 1946. Original caption: "This is an area of clearcut longleaf pine land on which no seed trees, seedlings or small trees were left. Thus nothing grows here except grass, a few weeds and rarely a shrub. A nearly pure grass type." Source: NARA 2014.

Figure 1-3.4. Cut-over land in the Kisatchie National Forest. Taken by Arthur W. Hartman, 1935. Original caption: "Shows smattering of seedlings from the very poor seed trees left after power skidding. These trees were no doubt unmerchantable at the time of cutting." Source: NARA 2014.

Figure 1-3.5. Railway connecting Camp Polk and Camp Claiborne in Vernon and Rapides Parishes, respectively, ca. 1942. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA..

Figure 1-3.6. Early photo from the Kisatchie National Forest, labeled "devastation from timber and mining activities," undated. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

like the timber barons, simply see the forest as a commodity to be exploited? Did local residents, as Anna Burns suggested, see the cutting of the forest primarily as a means to improve their socio-economic situation? The answers to these questions are complex and not easily understood through our 21st century eyes, but we can assume that in ways both subtle and overt, the trajectories of the lives of the Heritage Families were forever changed not only by the U.S. Army, but by the saw.

4. Open Range, Reforestation and the Creation of the Kisatchie National Forest and Camp Polk

4.1 Pineland Becomes Open Range

I should understand the land, not as a commodity, an inert fact to be taken for granted, but as an ultimate value, enduring and alive, useful and beautiful and mysterious and formidable and comforting, beneficent and terribly demanding, worthy of the best of man's attention and care... [My father] *insisted that I learn to do the hand labor that the land required, knowing—and saying again and again–that the ability to do such work is the source of a confidence and an independence of character that can come no other way, not by money, not by education*
—Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound*, 1970.

When the mills of southwest Louisiana closed and the lumber companies moved westward to the next virgin forest, they took with them employment and income and left behind a ravaged, cut-over landscape and impoverished communities. As in other places across the pineywoods, left behind were "dead mill towns, dying railroads, undeveloped road systems, a decreasing population, an eroding tax base, and plummeting property values" (Sitton and Conrad 1998:200). Vernon Parish went from being one of the wealthiest parishes in the state during the 1920s, to one of the poorest in the 1930s (Smith 1999:114). Coupled with the rapid loss of prosperity from the lumber industry was the financial crash of 1929 and the ensuing economic depression. Much of the rural population of Vernon Parish and surrounding parishes was left to return to subsistence farming as a way to support their families.

When the lumber barons moved west, they not only moved or abandoned the mill towns, but often abandoned the land as well. Trade journals of the day show organized efforts to market cut-over Southern pinelands for agriculture and to lure new farmers and homesteaders as potential buyers.[8] But the pineland soil, especially that of Vernon Parish, was infertile and would support little commercial agriculture. To avoid payment of taxes on cut-over land that now held no value, timber companies let ownership of their land lapse to the state or sold it to the federal government, ultimately paving the way for the creation of the Kisatchie National Forest and Camp Polk.

With the timber gone and the land unfenced, some farmers turned to raising cattle, sheep, and hogs, and grazing them on the "open range." Louisiana's stock laws of the day,[9] as well as longstanding tradition, prescribed that livestock could roam free and graze on all open land, regardless of ownership. The livestock owned by most of the rural subsistence farmers

[8]The first issue of Cut-Over Lands was published in April 1918 in St. Louis, Missouri, billing itself as the only paper "Devoted to the conversion of cut-over timber lands to and their most productive use for farming, stock raising, fruit growing and kindred purposes."
[9]Louisiana's first state-wide stock law was passed by the legislature in 1954. Act 202 amending R.S. 3:2801-2807 prohibited owners of livestock from allowing them on the state's major highways, which were defined as having a traffic count of more than 1000 vehicles per day. Violations constituted a misdemeanor and penalties were specified. The act also authorized police juries to pay for fencing the affected highways and provided an appropriation of $100,000 to the Department of State Police to defray the cost of administering the law for a two-year period. Source: http://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/lalrev/vol19/iss3/14/.

would have included chickens, a plow horse, a few milk cows with calves, and possibly one or more mules. These animals would be kept close to the farm, and some farmers would also have had small herds of free-roaming hogs, cattle, or goats to supply themselves with meat. But other farmers maintained larger herds of cattle, sheep, and hogs for sale that were turned loose to graze and root on the free range. Historic agricultural extension agent records pro-

Open Range, Open Conflict—Stock Owner vs. Land Owner

'When I was young I could get up in the morning, saddle my horse, ride in any direction I chose and never cross a fence.'

This is heard when talking to elderly gentlemen about their early days. There were few fences while herds of horses, cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats wandered the landscape regardless of land ownership. Each stock owner had a State registered, unique pattern for marking, cuts or brands, on each animal to ensure that all parties could determine ownership of roaming stock. 'Brands,' especially those of major stock owners were well known and carried a lot of weight in a community. Altering a brand and claiming ownership was a potentially deadly activity. Rustling of any form was a serious offense.

When the Federal government owned the vast areas of undeveloped land 'open range' made sense. Later these vast areas were owned by large, mostly absent landowners. Ownership changed but the view remained. Lumber companies seemed not to be concerned. Barbed wired was not even invented until the 1880s. As areas became more populated, more conflict occurred over loose stock issues. However, it was not until late in the 1900s when stock laws were finally modified to change legal responsibility. These early laws and attitudes were mostly still in effect in 1940. Engrained culture is difficult to modify.

Initially, there were no laws except the common law that had developed during the settlement of the eastern and southeastern United States and that was imported with pioneers from those areas. Early stock laws passed by the Louisiana legislature established rules which were rather simple and that were biased in favor of the stock owners. Stock owners need not have fences to contain their animals, and if a landowner wanted to keep stock owned by others off their property it was their responsibility to build fences for that purpose, not the stock owner. In letting livestock run free, owners were essentially immune, relieved by law from liability for havoc created by animals they owned.

Trespass laws have traversed a similar evolution, beginning with the principle that humans could go where they needed without worrying about violating the law. Today, trespass laws have morphed to the opposite position, such that a person can enter another person's property only with permission. The new generation of stock laws and no trespass laws are now firmly entrenched, though not always followed.

The open range era was quite different from today. Then, annual, uncontrolled woods burning, lost fields of corn, potatoes, and peas, uprooted kitchen gardens, fateful auto accidents, seriously hurt people, health issues, conflict, all could be attributed to habits and beliefs formed around open range stock management. Now, the subsistence farming and open range ranching culture has essentially passed. There is no longer a supply of what once was called open range. The owners of stock are held accountable for damage and the owners of land are protected by law from damage and trespass. The rules have changed from fences built to repel stock to fences built to contain and control stock. With the disappearance of open range came greater safety and security, but some would say also the loss of our own freedom to roam.

By Skip Cryer (2014), Heritage Family member

vide some insight into the numbers of free-ranging livestock in Vernon Parish in the years prior to creation of Camp Polk. In 1938, Vernon Parish agricultural agent Leonard Murrell noted the importance of the wool growers' association to local wool growers, who each made more than $20,000 per year from this source. His 1939 report identified the importance of beef cattle and sheep in local farming operations because of the low costs on the range. The following year he inventoried "23,624 head of cattle, mostly beef, and 23,104 head of hogs" (*Leesville Leader* 1964).

Rickey Robertson tells a sentimental and dramatic story of how Heritage Families at Peason Ridge maintained traditional grazing lands, both before and after the "cut-out and get-out" era. According to his account, more than 10,000 acres at Peason Ridge were set aside for grazing, sometimes forcibly (see text box on page 29).

In spite of cherished custom and advantages to some individuals, the policy of open range resulted in numerous problems from economic, public safety, and ecological perspectives. Free-roaming hogs in particular posed a problem for potential forest regrowth and restoration. The hogs preferred longleaf seedlings to other pine species because of their long, succulent roots, and their survival depended on the ability to scavenge, eating anything from small mammals, eggs and lizards to tree bark (http://www.thepineywoods.com/wildhogsM07.htm). A report from the early 1900s by W. R. Mattoon, a U.S. Forest Service forester, "observed that hogs killed 8,320 two-year-old longleaf pine seedlings per acre at rates estimated from 200 to 400 per day at an experimental restoration site at Urania, Louisiana" (Ibid.). The hogs "roamed the [cut-over pinelands] at will and were seldom confined by any type of fence"; in fact, the hogs were usually fenced out rather than in (Ibid.).

Figure 1-4.1. Advertisement from the 1918 inaugural issue of Cut-Over Lands for the proceedings of a conference held April 1917 in New Orleans, LA. Source: Cut-Over Lands, April 1918, Vol. 1, No. 1.

In order to protect their gardens and orchards, "the subsistence farmer[s] built rudimentary rail or picket fences to keep roaming stock out" (Cryer 2014). Humorous stories (or not so humorous at the time) were told of how the forage inside the fence was always more attractive to grazing animals than the food available on the other side. Picket fences would have a hinged gate, and if the gate was left open or unlocked, the occupants of the home would often find a yard full of livestock, happily consuming their tasty vegetable garden.

Along with the perception that timber company and public lands were common pasture came the practice of annual burning to "green up" the range. The rural families routinely lit grass fires in the spring in the belief that burning increased forage for their live-stock and

The Grazing Lands of Peason Ridge

Beginning in 1818 my ancestors and other hardy folks began to settle in what is now known as Peason Ridge. This land has great historical value and has many stories of the people who settled there. When they first settled the land and began farming and raising livestock, they had many neighbors from nearby Native American tribes, such as the Caddo, Adais, Hasinail, Ais, Natchitoches, and Petticaddo tribes living throughout the area. Eagle Hill, located here, is known as one of the largest Indian sites in western Louisiana. Eventually there were a total of 29 homestead families and many sharecropper families residing on Peason Ridge. And eventually the Indians dwindled away leaving the settlers to their farms.

When these settlers first arrived on Peason Ridge they found virgin forests, cleared highlands where crops of various types could be planted, and there were deer, bear, turkey, and other animals for food. As these settlers began farming, they worked hard to survive. Besides farming, these settlers brought in livestock which included cattle, horses, mules, sheep, and goats. Water was plentiful for the livestock, along with plenty of rich grass to provide forage for these animals. Having vast herds of livestock had a two-fold meaning. The livestock could be sold to provide much needed cash monies and they were a food source for the settlers. But these settlers brought a tradition with them, all the way from England many years before, concerning their grazing lands.

The Peason Ridge settlers had a special area for all the livestock to graze. They set aside a total of 16 sections of land where no one was allowed to settle or farm. This tradition was brought from England from the days where landowners set aside specific areas for livestock to graze and policed the lands to keep the serfs from settling there. On Peason Ridge, if anyone started to camp or to build in the grazing area, the men would mount their horses, ride over for a visit, and give the 'squatter' the information to pack up and be gone in a few days. This was especially prevalent during the great westward migration in the 1870's and 1880's. If the intruder had not left the grazing lands in 3 days, the men would again mount up and would ride over to have a talk. This time it was different. The intruder would be looking down the barrel of several Winchester rifles and was advised to be gone by daybreak the next morning. Looking down the barrel of a Winchester rifle would definitely make up a person's mind for them!

There are many stories where the settlers had to fight for their land, crops, and animals. Many of those coming through the livestock grazing area were 'jayhawkers and outlaws.' These undesirables would attempt to steal livestock and forage from the settlers. But these settlers fought back, kept their farms, buried their dead after these fights, and continued their way of life. The settlers kept the old English tradition of setting aside and policing the grazing lands until the U.S. Army purchased all the lands from the ancestors of these first settlers beginning in 1941. As the families were displaced from their farms and homesteads, many families ended up leaving livestock on the open grazing range. These lands were special to the people but also even to the animals. A way of life and a lifelong tradition came to an end.

My family was blessed to actually have use of the old grazing lands after the families were moved out. My father, along with other cattlemen from our area, was allowed use of the range for livestock grazing. As a boy I have seen 2,000 to 3,000 head of cattle grazing on Peason Ridge. My father ran nearly 700 head of cattle on Peason Ridge until 1995 when the Joint Readiness Training Center requested that the cattle be removed. And where were the best lands for our stock to graze? Yes, the old grazing lands that had been set aside so many years ago by our ancestors. These 16 sections of land are still remembered by the Heritage Families of Peason Ridge and will always be a vital part of our history.

By Rickey Robertson (2014), local historian and Heritage Family member (see Part 2 for the complete story)

Figure 1-4.2. Aerial photo of cattle herding, Natchitoches Parish, undated. Source: Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Natchitoches Chamber of Commerce Photograph Collection, folder 4).

Figure 1-4.3. Damage to longleaf pine sapling in Kisatchie National Forest by free-roaming hogs. Taken by John T. Cassady, 1946. Original caption: "Chandler Tract. Longleaf pine sapling 5 ft. high destroyed by pineywoods rooters. Most of the lateral roots dug up. Bark peeled from them and part of tap root. Note depression caused by rooters." Source: NARA 2014.

"killed the snakes and ticks." In Vernon Parish, "[s]etting fires became a traditional way of life, especially for the cattle and sheep men whose stock roamed at large" (Burns 1981:13).

Fires were a natural part of the longleaf forest ecology and a part of its evolutionary history; indeed, the longleaf forest was a "fire climax" ecosystem that over its evolution was shaped and maintained by frequent low- and moderate-intensity surface and understory fires. Because the historic fire interval was short, fuel loads remained low, preventing crown fires and

Vernon Parish 1940

Around 1900 wealthy timber speculators moved into Vernon Parish's natural wonderland of Southern Yellow Pine forests and began 'clear cutting' the timber and 'cutting out' in the early 1930s. Cutting out had, perhaps, an unintended double meaning—they 'cut out' the timber and 'cut out' of the area; that is, they abandoned the land. The huge sawmills and turpentine camps were closed, and speculators left barren land and no vision for its future except payment of taxes. The land lay open and unused by its owners.

Into this vacuum moved the small subsistence farmers and stockmen. They had always used the open range, but the forest yielded little forage for livestock. Now that the timber was gone, grass began to grow. The farmers now had better resources for their horses, cattle, sheep and goats.

The landscape was littered with the residue from the fallen trees and the stumps that had nurtured them. The left over wood (known as lighter wood) and the stumps were rich in resin that was highly flammable.

The local farmers mistakenly believed that their livestock benefitted more if the old grass was burned just before the spring grass came out, so they deliberately burned some or all of the range each year for the next 30 plus years. By 1940, most of the timber refuse was burned away, along with the underbrush and pine seedlings that were trying to emerge.

The stumps were still there and each spring the fresh green grass served as background for the black stumps. The burning also enhanced the growth of wild azaleas (aka, honey suckle), huckleberry and other plants that benefitted from the burning. This beautiful sight was greatly enhanced by the size and height of the sloping hills that one could see for miles.

In the 1940s, the government began trying to prevent and control woods fires through use of fire towers. These towers were manned, and the person in the tower reported large plumes of smoke or fires he could observe; then crews were sent to control the fire.

In the late 1940s, a new industry came to the area. A distillation plant was built in Allen Parish to render pine stumps into naval stores—turpentine, paint and medicine. The plant hired contractors who bought the stumps from landowners, removed them from the ground, and brought them to the plant. Most contractors brought in the largest bulldozers available at the time. Some stumps were so large they could not be removed in this manner and had to be blown-out with dynamite. Most of the stumps were too large and heavy to be handled after extraction, so holes were bored into them and dynamite was used to blow them apart. Virtually all the stumps in the region were removed to the distillery in Allen Parish.

Eventually a 'stock law' was passed and the open range was no more. Most of the uncontrolled burning was stopped. Now there is limited controlled burning and a few rogue fires, and the underbrush, vines, briars and Southern Yellow Pines began to thrive.

By Don C. Marler (2013), Heritage Family member (see Part 2 for the complete story)

allowing growth of fire-resistant longleaf pine seedlings (Van Lear et al. 2005:154). But the intensive logging operations of the early 1900s left few longleaf seed trees (called "mammy" trees by some saw crews) for regeneration, and the skidding of logs and burning of heavy slash piles from logging operations left few surviving pine seedlings. The land once covered by mighty longleaf pines became mile after mile of charred stumps.

Heritage Family member Don Marler shared memories of Vernon Parish in the early 1940s and of riding along ridgeline roads in the spring of the year, after the range fires had been set to stimulate the appearance of fresh tender grass for the sheep and cattle. To his then-young eyes, the hills looked beautiful and clean with their cover of bright green grass and black stumps as far as he could see. Finally, even the stumps were removed for production of naval stores (products from pine sap), stripping away the last remnant of the virgin longleaf forest (see text box on page 31).

It was within this backdrop that early reforestation efforts in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes began.

4.2 The Early Days of the Kisatchie National Forest and "Burnin' Vernon"

In spite of the reckless cutting of the Southern pine forests by the industrial mills, voices were raised in the name of protection and restoration. Creation of the Kisatchie National Forest began in the 1920s following prolonged efforts by conservationists such as Caroline Dorman and Henry Hardtner,[10] and a complex series of state and federal legislation. Approval was gained in February 1928 for the first three purchase units[11] within the Kisatchie, consisting of 50,000 acres that became the Kisatchie District in Natchitoches and Vernon Parishes; 75,000 acres that became the Catahoula in Grant and Rapides Parishes; and 50,000 acres in Vernon Parish (Burns 1981:10-12). Though this 175,000 acres was only a fraction of the 565,000 acres recommended for purchase by the U.S. Forest Service, it was a start. The first actual property deed was signed almost two years later in December 1929 "for 9,643 acres obtained from [the] Long-Leaf Lumber Company for $3.25 an acre" (Ibid.). The first land purchase in the Vernon District began in 1933, by 1938 the size of the Vernon District increased when the U.S. Forest Service was able to purchase 36,000 acres of Gulf Lumber Company lands, including the town of Fullerton (Burns 1979:207; Smith 1999:173). By 1940, the Kisatchie National Forest held approximately 500,000 acres across central and western Louisiana.

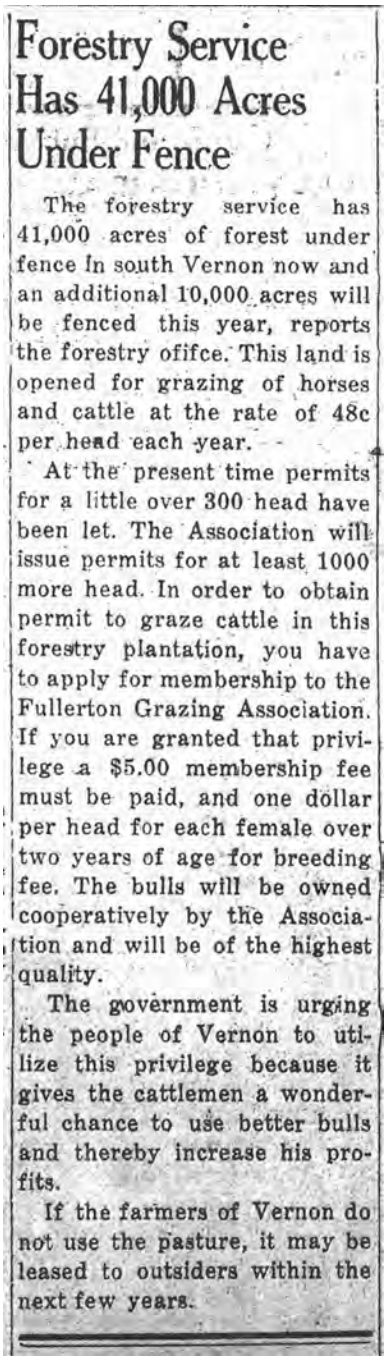
As land was purchased, the U.S. Forest Service began the monumental task of reforestation. And with purchase and reforestation came efforts to curb wildfires and to fence the land from free-ranging livestock. In these endeavors, the traditional belief that public lands are open for grazing and the practice of annual burning posed significant problems for the nascent Kisatchie National Forest. By 1941, about half of the Vernon Unit was fenced to keep out "hogs, sheep, and goats, and was open for cattle and horse grazing only on a fee basis" (Weltner 1942, 1:2). But ownership of livestock, especially cattle, and access to open grazing land was seen as key to making a living

[10]Caroline Dorman was a school teacher from Kisatchie who worked "indefatigably" to preserve the "Kisatchie Wold," and failing that, to promote reforestation of Louisiana's cut-over pine lands. Henry Hardtner was a native of Pineville, and the owner of a sawmill in Urania. He was also an ardent supporter of Southern yellow pine reforestation (Burns 1981: 8-9; Smith 1999:135).

[11]Approval of National Forest purchase units required concurrence of the National Forest Reservation Commission, composed of the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, and War, as well as two Senators and two Congressmen (Burns 1981:10). The purchase units were (and are) the boundaries within which the U.S. Forest Service may buy land, with at least fifty percent of the lands inside the purchase units having to be owned by the federal government in order to qualify as a National Forest.

in Vernon Parish. "A man can't get along in this country without a little stock" was a typical comment (Ibid.). Thus, the attempts of Forest Service personnel to erect fences along boundary lines and to exclude livestock from pine seedling regeneration areas were met with resistance and sometimes even hostility by the local residents. The fire control problem became so pronounced in Vernon Parish that the area became known as "Burnin' Vernon."

In the early days following creation of the Kisatchie National Forest, it was crucial to win over "the local citizens who for decades had done much as they pleased with livestock, 'trespass,' hunting, timber, and fire on what had now become government land" (Burns 1981:32). With concerns regarding wildfires escalating, in 1940-1941, the Forest Service commissioned a study to help them understand the attitudes and actions of local citizens with regard to woods arson and "encroachments" on National Forest land. The report, by George Weltner, pointed to long standing patterns of land use and cultural factors underlying conflicts over fencing and woods burning (Fried 2011:45). In Vernon Parish, Weltner wrote, the "land owned frequently represents only a small fraction of land used" and "the unbroken tradition of the economic use of this land by non-owners had probably transformed what was originally simply 'freedom' to use into 'right' to use" (Weltner 1942, 1:14, and cited in Fried 2011:45-46).



Forestry Service Has 41,000 Acres Under Fence

The forestry service has 41,000 acres of forest under fence in south Vernon now and an additional 10,000 acres will be fenced this year, reports the forestry ofifce. This land is opened for grazing of horses and cattle at the rate of 48c per head each year.

At the present time permits for a little over 300 head have been let. The Association will issue permits for at least 1000 more head. In order to obtain permit to graze cattle in this forestry plantation, you have to apply for membership to the Fullerton Grazing Association. If you are granted that privilege a $5.00 membership fee must be paid, and one dollar per head for each female over two years of age for breeding fee. The bulls will be owned cooperatively by the Association and will be of the highest quality.

The government is urging the people of Vernon to utilize this privilege because it gives the cattlemen a wonderful chance to use better bulls and thereby increase his profits.

If the farmers of Vernon do not use the pasture, it may be leased to outsiders within the next few years.

Figure 1-4.4. News article, July 10, 1940. Source: Leesville Leader.

Attitudes toward the unfenced and uncultivated land retained many of the characteristics of frontier attitudes toward public domain. Said Weltner, "[i]n the minds of many, it still belonged to God and the people" (Weltner 1942, 1:14). Before the land was fenced, people were free to "travel through the forest and use it to hunt, fish, graze livestock, and harvest wood. But now, with the fence and new rules, things were different" (Fried 2011:45). As stated by one resident:

> *You'd better not get caught inside* [the Forest Service fence]. *It isn't a free country like it used to be. Even outside the fence they'll stop you and ask what you're doing. Never used to be like that. People never thought nothing of a man travelling the woods, less'n they were makin' homemade whiskey and he was a stranger and maybe lookin' for a still (Weltner 1942, 1:15).*

Given the recent economic struggles, distrust and other "harms" experienced by the local population, it was not altogether surprising that 79 percent of those sampled saw the Forest Service fences unfavorably, and that 65 and 91 percent felt that the fence had harmed them or others, respectively (Weltner 1942, 1:18-26, and Fried 2011:46).

Residents interviewed by Weltner (1942, 1:16) also spoke of changes in ownership of large tracts of land due to speculation and cor-

porate ownership, and they criticized the logging methods and the plundering of the forest by the corporate mills, including the waste caused by the steam skidders and the failure to leave seed trees. They predicted that the forest would be "cut clean" again, and directed disapproval at the U.S. Forest Service for planting of slash pine, believing that it would not make good timber (Weltner 1942, 1:31).

As summarized by Fried (2011:46), Weltner's recommendations to the Forest Service focused on improving public relations through building personal relationships and understanding local culture, attitudes, and values—values such as a deeply held attachment to land, a highly affectionate attitude toward children, patriotism, and religious belief, a strong sense of pride, personal autonomy, and a love of personal freedom. As one Vernon Parish farmer said:

> *People here will do anything for you if you come up and ask them in a nice way. But if you start talking high and mighty, they'll tell you pretty quick to go where it doesn't snow. A ranger who comes out acting thataway will get the seat of his pants burned off before he gets back home* (Weltner 1942, 2:1).

Interestingly, Weltner also advised the Forest Service to consider a "cooperative" burning program to benefit grazing conditions and public relations. In 1941, consensus within the U.S. Forest Service on the benefits of fire for silvicultural purposes in Southern pine forests was then only beginning to take hold.

4.3 The Civilian Conservation Corps and Camps F-4 and F-2

Much of the real work of reforestation on the Kisatchie—and that of fire control—was accomplished with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Now legendary for their historic work in state and national forests and parks, road building, and other civil projects, the CCC was established in March 1933 by President Franklin Roosevelt for the purpose of providing work to unmarried men, ages 18-25, from families who were on public or private relief during the Great Depression.

President Roosevelt Proposes a Civilian Conservation Corps

I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control, and similar projects. I call your attention to the fact that this type of work is of definite, practical value, not only through the prevention of great present financial loss, but also as a means of creating future national wealth.

This enterprise is an established part of our national policy. It will conserve our precious natural resources. It will pay dividends to the present and future generations. It will make improvements in national and state domains which have been largely forgotten in the past few years of industrial development.

More important, however, than the material gains, will be the moral and spiritual value of such work. The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving public and private relief would infinitely prefer to work. We can take a vast Army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings. We can eliminate to some extent at least the threat that enforced idleness brings to spiritual and moral stability. It is not a panacea for all unemployment, but it is an essential step in this emergency.

Excerpt from President Franklin Roosevelt's March 21st, 1933, address to the 73rd Congress (Roosevelt 1933)

The CCC was a major element of President Roosevelt's New Deal, creating unskilled manual labor jobs for conducting natural resource conservation and development projects on public and private lands in every state and territory.

Nationally, the U.S. Forest Service sponsored most of the CCC camps, but the War Department was given responsibility for constructing and operating the camps, as it was the only agency capable of doing so on short notice. The camps were organized and run like U.S. Army infantry companies, though no military drills were conducted. Regular Army officers were in charge of each company or camp, and a clear chain of command was established, including a commanding officer, executive officer, a camp surgeon, and a mess/canteen officer (Phillips undated). Army personnel and resources were used to feed, clothe, house, organize and transport the young CCC recruits. The War Department was also responsible for discipline, conditioning, education, medical care, and welfare. However, the Forest Service or other sponsoring agency was responsible for directing the actual projects and tasks performed by the CCC workers.

Initially, noncommissioned officers were drawn from the regular Army, but they were later replaced by "local experienced men" (LEMS), called "long eared mules" by their fellow workers. The LEMs, who served as foremen, were generally older and as their designation implied, were experienced and knowledgeable about the types of work conducted at the camps (Ibid.).

In Louisiana, CCC companies were established within District E of the Fourth Corps Area of the U.S. Army, which was headquartered at Camp Beauregard near Pineville (Barnett and Burns 2012:3). Multiple camps were established within the state over the life of the CCC. Camp F-4 (named Camp Vernon) was established in the fall of 1933 on the Vernon District of the Kisatchie National Forest, adjacent to Little Cypress Pond.[12] Two companies operated at the camp; the first was Company 276, whose members came mostly from New York and New Jersey. When enrollment ended for most of the members of Company 276, Company 5405 was established as a replacement (Barnett and Burns 2012:20). Many of the original Company 5405 members came from Georgia, but over time they were in turn replaced by enrollees from the local area (Ibid.).

Garsie James of the Whiskachitta Community was among those local recruits who worked at Camp F-4. Garsie recalls that he signed up on January 6th in 1939 and that he worked in the CCC for two and a half years, before leaving in 1941 to work at Camp Polk on construction of "motor sheds." According to Garsie, the CCC camp included:

> *four barracks, recreation hall, and a kitchen, and an office building, and then the dispensary…. and then they had the headquarters office and the kitchen barracks or cook shack. Well it wasn't no shack, it was a big thing. Then they had the barracks for the cooks and they was, I don't know, 4 or 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10… They was about 10 or 15 buildings there.*[13]

Garsie describes his duties at the camp as follows:

> *Well the first three days I planted trees, then they took me off of that and trained me to run a motor grader, motor patrol. Then they took me off of that and the guy that was driving the fire truck, his time was up so he didn't re-*

[12]Each of the CCC camps was designated by a letter and number to indicate its classification based on land ownership or type of work. The letter "F" signified work on Forest Service lands.

[13]The original Camp F-4 barracks were canvas tents, but most Camp Vernon buildings were replaced in the fall of 1938 with a new generation of prefabricated facilities, including a recreation hall and a dispensary that were described as the best of their kind in the district (Barnett and Burns 2012:21).

enlist, so he got out and they put me to driving the fire truck a week on and a week off. Boy that was… that just suited me.

Men signed up for six-month periods, with the option to reenlist. Recruits received a salary of $30 each week, and $25 of the total was directed to a designated family member. In addition, recruits received food, clothing, shelter, medical, and dental care. Early in the program, clothing was leftover from World War I and was described as coming in only two sizes, "big and bigger" (Bates undated). However, the food was good. And plentiful. A recruit from a Louisiana camp recalled that "We were about 100 pounds when we went in there. It wasn't long before we gained 15 pounds apiece. You could eat a full meal there" (Barnett and Burns 2012:8).

The camps also provided for the workers' social, educational, and spiritual lives:

CCC workers were free on weekends, unless inclement weather during the week held up work that had to be made up. But normally, Saturday was devoted to activities such as sports, choral practice, movies, dances, and even running the camp newspaper. Most camps held about four dances annually, with women invited from surrounding communities and with music often furnished by camp swing bands. To the consternation of local males, CCC crews seemed to have some money in their pockets for soft drinks, popcorn, and a movie, and were considered well dressed in their uniforms. Dances, then, were frequently interrupted by forest fires set to ensure the CCC crews were called to fight fires instead of dancing with the local girls (Ibid.).

Perhaps a similar situation pertained to "movie nights" (see text box on page 37).

Accomplishments by the members of the Vernon Camp were significant. Company 5405 conducted forestry work, including tree planting, fire prevention, and fire suppression. As reported in the official 1939 annual for the CCC District E, Fourth Corps Area, and cited by Barnett and Burns (2012:20), most of the local CCC workers had strong interest in their forestry work "because," as one worker stated, "we live near here, and for miles around here the land is barren as a result of the ruthless cutting of pine trees. Someday the work we are doing here is going to pay us far greater dividends than the pay we now get." The crews from Company 5405 planted over 24 million pine seedlings within about 20,000 acres, and watched over an area of about 108,000 acres (Ibid.). The CCC planted pines on 31,000 acres of cutover land in Vernon Parish (Wise 1971:12), and most of this work would have been accomplished by Company 5405. The work of the 276th and 5405th would also have included construction of fire towers and many miles of fire breaks, plantation fences, telephone lines, and good quality roads. Indeed, many of the roads and firebreaks built by the CCC are now Forest System roads that are still used on a daily basis by people living in and around Vernon Parish. The achievements of Company 5405 are remarkable in their own right, but all the more so when one considers that a large fraction of their time was spent putting out fires, as noted by Smith (1999:136) and surviving Heritage Family and CCC member Garsie James!

In the Peason Ridge area, CCC Camp F-2 was located in the Kisatchie National Forest south of Provençal, Louisiana. This camp was established by CCC Company 1477, which was organized at Fort Barrancas, Florida, on April 28, 1933 (Barnett and Burns, 2012:23). The camp was later occupied by Company 1491, which was organized at Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, on May 17, 1933, and was

comprised of 188 recruits from north Louisiana (Barnett and Burns 2012:16-17). Robert Bates of Leesville described his work at this camp, called Camp Kisatchie:

> *I volunteered for the C.C. camp in the fall of 1934 and went to Brookhaven, Mississippi. In October of 1935, I was transferred to the Forestry Camp at Provencal, Louisiana. The entire area looked like a barren desert to me. There were no trees anywhere. Nothing but 'Sagegrass and Black Stumps' were to be seen. You could almost see 20 miles in all directions* (Bates undated).

Provencal Camp was a tree planting camp.

The Sunday Night Picture Show

Stacy Wagner (SW): *So you mentioned that you were driving a fire truck. Did you help put out fires?*

Garsie James (GJ)*: Oh yes, woods fires, and the head man over it, and there was six that rode on a truck and of course there was always someone setting the woods a fire. So we had to go and put them out, and then we had what they called a fire detail that there was about 12 men to the detail. They followed the fire truck out and then* [in] *other words what they called 'mopping it up,' they followed the fire truck. If they missed a little fire, well they'd come and put that out. They was on a fire detail for maybe a week other than the fire truck crew. I was on the fire truck crew and I was on one week and off a week, and there was people that if they got it in for the CCCs, well they'd set a fire out there. Especially on Sunday nights they'd have a picture show.*

SW: *Where was the picture show held?*

GJ: *Pardon?*

SW: *Where did they have the picture shows?*

GJ: *Out on the side of the hill. They had chairs out there and benches.*

SW: *And a screen?*

GJ: *Everybody in the country they'd come, you know. If they got something wrong that they didn't like the CCCs, well they'd get the movie going and they'd go set a fire. The details and the fire truck crew, it got them out of the way.*

SW: So they would set fires during the movie?

GJ: *Oh yeah, they'd set them anytime.*

SW: *So I guess there must have been a lot of fires. Did they happen on a weekly basis?*

GJ: *Well, yes and no. They came along pretty regular. Well, you didn't know for sure that they did set it, but you know it didn't catch a fire out there…*

SW: *By itself. So you said that sometimes people had something against CCCs. Did they dislike the idea of reforestation or what did they dislike about the CCCs?*

GJ: *Well no, I don't know. Maybe they had something against one of the boys. Now maybe we'll just get him out of the movies. Now you didn't see them do that, but you know that fire didn't just catch.*

SW: *By itself.*

GJ: *By itself.*

SW: *So you didn't get to see the ending of a lot of movies.*

GJ: *No.*

Interview with Garsie James (excerpt), 2014, as told to Stacy Basham Wagner

Figure 1-4.5. Civilian Conservation Corps Camp F-4, Kisatchie National Forest, Vernon Parish. Taken by James D. Nellis, 1935. Original caption: "View of company street, Camp F-4, Leesville, La. Recreation hall extreme right, barracks middle right, mess hall end building, Army office, middle left." Source: NARA 2014.

Figure 1-4.6. Stuart Nursery, Grant Parish, LA . Taken by M. A. Huberman, 1935. Original caption: "Final seeding in shortleaf beds." Source: NARA 2014.

Figure 1-4.7. Stuart Nursery, Grant Parish, LA . Taken by Paul S. Carter, 1935. Original caption: "CCC spreading seeds on tarps in sun to dry; bridge from curing sheds to extractory." Source: NARA 2014.

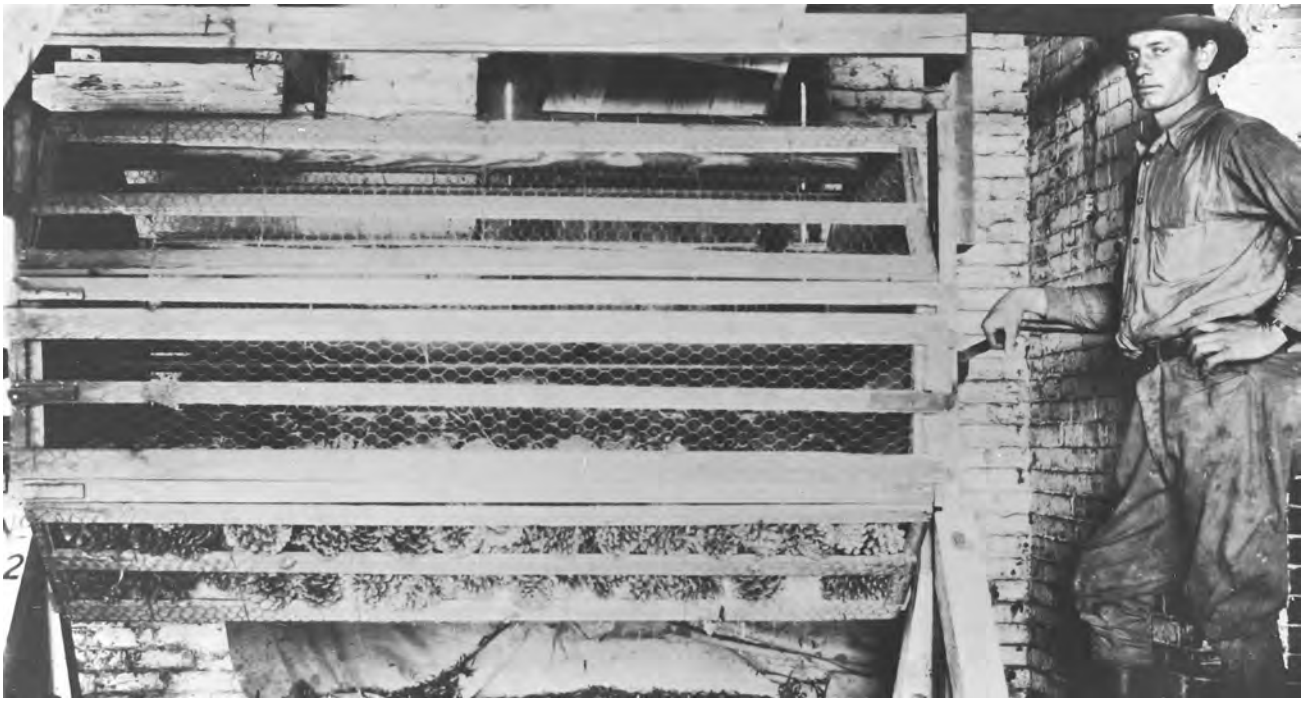


Figure 1-4.8. CCC worker and pinecone shaker for extracting seeds, probably at the Stuart Nursery in Grant Parish, LA, ca. 1935. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Bates further described how the CCC crew members conducted the work of planting pine seedlings:

We used 'V-type' formation (similar to flying formation of geese) for the Planting Crew. The LEAD man set the pace. When we finished our row, every man set his planting bar 6 feet from the next and we rested for awhile. Inspectors were particular about roots being straight and keeping the roots damp at all times. Because of that, I think we got good survival. Each man usually planted between 1,000 and 2,000 trees per day.

In mid-1935, Company 1477 was reassigned and moved to a site near Pollock, Louisiana, near the Stuart Nursery (Barnett and Burns 2012:23-24). This relocation meant that Company 1477 would become integral to operation of the nursery—one of the largest in the U.S.—and all phases of seed collection, processing and storage, seedling culture and propagation, and planting. "The CCC workers of Company 1477 were the caretakers of 25 million seedlings yearly" (Ibid.). Many of the company members received technical training from a staff of nursery scientists of the Southern Forest Experiment Station, and their work "played a role not only in growing and planting trees but also in the development of the nursery technology used across the South in reforestation efforts" (Ibid.).

Because planting of seedlings was a key job for CCC workers on National Forest lands, the work of Company1477 at the Stuart Nursery gave them special honor in the history of the CCC. The labors of CCC Companies 276, 1477, 1491, 5405, and others can be seen across the Kisatchie National Forest today.

As I had a small part in helping to bring the forest to where it is today; I would like to ask everyone to help preserve the Forests for future generations to use. Today things look better (Bates undated).

The CCC proved to be one of the most popular programs of the New Deal, and it made significant contributions to the social and economic welfare of its members and their families, as well as providing long-lasting and important conservation benefits to the nation's natural resources. The training that the CCC workers received also helped to prepare them for military duty, as many of them went on to serve in World War II. But the CCC was not a permanent program, and the United States' entrance into the war brought an end to the CCC in 1942.

The build-up toward the war also brought the U.S. Army to western Louisiana for a purpose beyond its support that had been so central to the CCC. Unknown to residents at the time, the arrival of the military for the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1940 would bring a new Army camp to the cut-over pinelands, farms, and fields of the region. Like the coming of the timber barons a few decades hence, the coming of the Army would soon mark the end of one era and the start of yet another for Heritage Family members.

5. Conclusions: Times of Change

It is said in the Vernon that once you drink the water of Whiskey Chitto Creek you never again wander very far or very long.
— George Weltner (1942)

The beautiful and once vast longleaf pine forests of Louisiana and the Southern United States could not withstand the onslaught of industrialization and opportunism that swept the country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But forces beyond the apparent greed of the mill owners, and the economic desperation and hopes for a better life of rural farmers were at work in the United States and abroad. These

forces would bring unprecedented change to the Heritage Families of Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes.

Figure 1-5.1 records some of the milestones in the history of western Louisiana and the United States during the period from 1870 to 1950. The timeline of events speaks to the tremendous scope of changes occurring during this time.

With the coming of the industrial logging boom to western Louisiana, local residents were rapidly and forcefully propelled into the 20th century. The region experienced a dramatic boom in population, with a near doubling between 1890 and 1900 (a 75 percent increase) (Smith 1999:139). "This growth continued with a 98 percent increase between 1900 and 1920," and residents of once slow-paced Ver-

Astride Two Worlds

We live in a unique time. I ask you to join me for a few minutes in a consciousness raising review of our position in history. We are in perhaps the fastest changing society in history. I will soon be 78 years old and many of you are at that age plus or minus a few years; therefore, by telling my personal experience I feel confident I speak for you.

I grew up during a time when horses and wagons were as common as cars as a means of transportation and working the farm; a time when coal oil (kerosene) lamps and pine-knot fires were the only sources of light we had at night; a time when there was no electricity, running water, indoor toilets or telephones; a time when the few of us who had radios took the truck or car battery out of the vehicle at night and used it to power the radio; a time when we considered the radio a wondrous machine; a time when medicine was very primitive and there were usually no resources to purchase the care that did exist; a time when few private citizens owned even a manual typewriter. Many of the tools we used had been basically unchanged for centuries; they were adapted to the tasks at hand. The axe, for example, evolved from the Stone Age. The blacksmith shop existed for millennia; today it is gone.

During WWII all that began to change slowly; we began to get electricity with the accompanying appliances such as refrigerators, air conditioning, lights and television. Indoor plumbing, telephones and automobiles became common. At approximately the midpoint of my life, change exploded, being ignited by the availability of the in-home computer to all. Without computers we would not have wireless/satellite services for our T.V., phones, the internet, etc., etc.

These developments mean that almost all of the old tools, modes of transportation, communication, power for work and way of life are obsolete. They were made obsolete in a breathtakingly short time, but obsolete they are. No other generation has faced this much change in such a short time; indeed, the changes of the last 50 years are greater than that of all time past together.

Where does that leave us? It leaves us astride two very different worlds. It means that we are the change agents; we brought about these changes and we have some responsibility for bridging the gap between these two worlds. It means it is up to us to preserve artifacts and knowledge of the past and assure that future generations are not deprived of access to that knowledge. Having such knowledge is a great benefit in many ways, not the least of which is to maintain perspective of how society progressed as it did.

By Don Marler, Heritage Family member (2010)

Note: This essay was originally published in the Hineston Chronicles in March 2012 (http://hinestonchronicle.wordpress.com/2012/03/01/vol-i-no-2/) and is used here by permission.

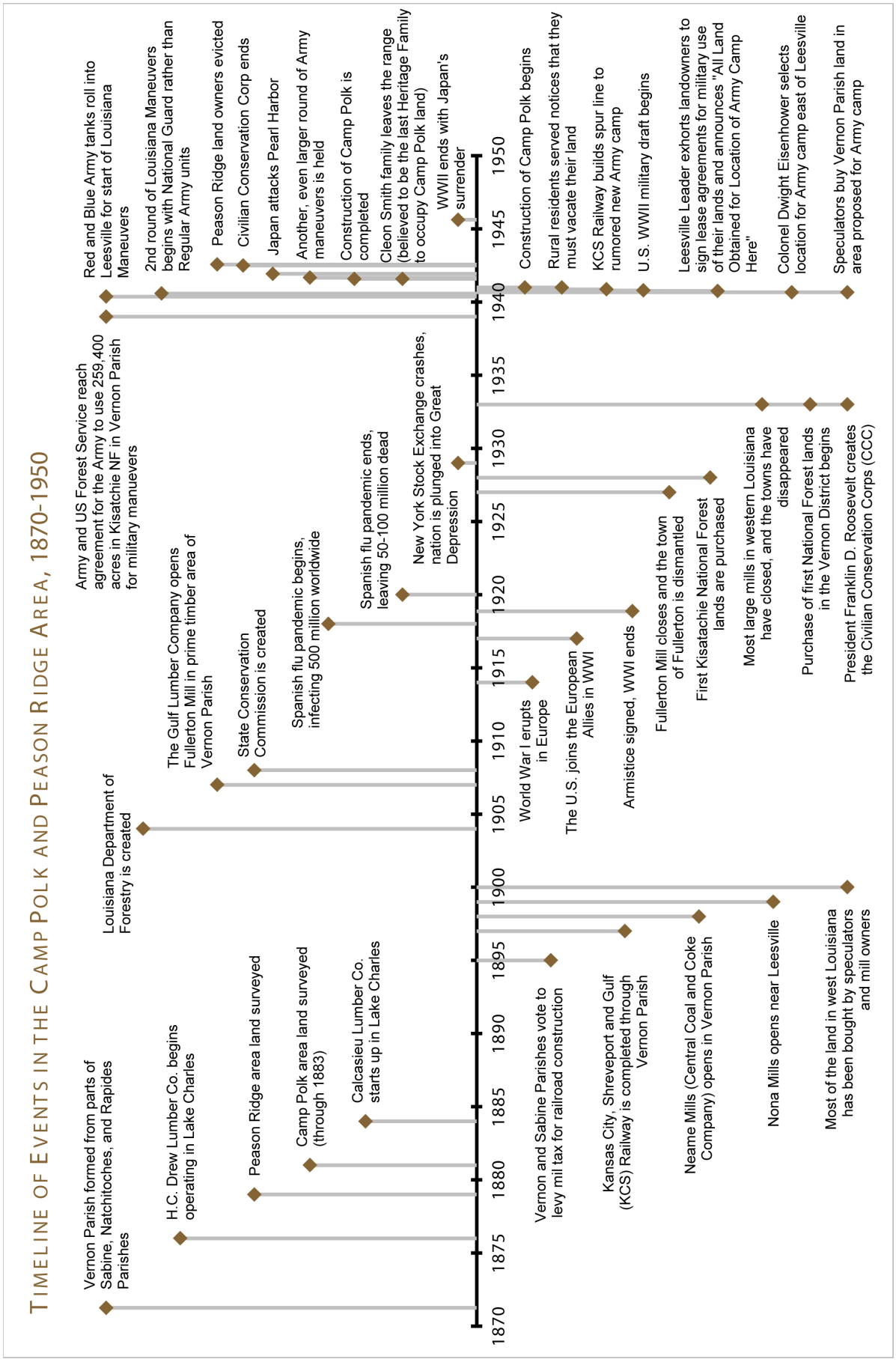


Figure 1-5.1. Timeline of events in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge area, 1870-1950.

non Parish found themselves at the center of "one of the largest industries in the United States" (Ibid.). The logging boom faded just as rapidly as it had begun, but it had already brought with it exposure to the wider world and, increasingly, the processes of modernization and globalization.

How did these changes affect the Heritage Families who were living on the land that would become Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range? Contemporary U.S. Forest Service social research scientist Daniel Williams offers some insight in his writings about the connection between place and identity (Williams and McIntyer 2000:392-394). Williams describes how modernity and globalization have brought important changes to the way we experience a sense of place and self. In earlier eras, our identities, social customs and traditions, and our commerce were largely shaped and constrained by local conditions. But in the modern era, accumulations of capital wealth freed markets and production from the constraints of place and began to transform places around "the logic of market economics," with deep implications for both nature and society (Ibid.). Our view of nature shifted from one encompassing a sense of awe and mystery to one of a commodity to be exploited. Socially, traditional norms and standards of behavior became increasingly unmoored from place and replaced with a smorgasbord of meaning and ideas from the global marketplace. With modernization and globalization come gains in material wealth and greater personal autonomy and freedoms, but also a compression of our sense of time and space, a break down in the protective social framework of community, a dislocation of self from place, and individuals increasingly "left to themselves to construct meaning and identity" (Ibid.).

In hindsight it can be seen that the cutting of the longleaf pine forest also made western Louisiana a favorable training ground for Army infantry units and paved the way for a more direct type of dislocation for Heritage Families. Construction of an Army camp in Vernon Parish and a training area in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes would lead to permanent removal of these families from their land and homes.

In spite of these changes, or perhaps because of them, we long all the more for a sense of connection to place and, for some, a return to the land. We seek to recapture something of our past, a place of collective memory, while at the same time finding new and meaningful ways to define home, place, and identity.

Perhaps the quotation above from Weltner was right, and in our hearts we will not stray far or long from that place called home.

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Chapter 2 by Leslie Barras[1]

CENSUS RECORDS, LAND OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPATION FROM 1940: FAMILIES LIVING AND WORKING ON THE LAND

1. Introduction

Figure 2-1.1. Census poster. Source: www.census.gov.

One of the ways in which the founders of this nation planned to empower citizens was to count every person and then to use the count to determine representation of the people in Congress. The U.S. Constitution provides for this count—the Census—every ten years. In spring 1940, the 15th such enumeration began across this country. For privacy reasons, federal law restricts publication of the results of each Census until the date that begins 72 years after each ten-year enumeration. The U.S. Census Bureau released the detailed records of the 1940 Census on April 2, 2012 (National Archives and Records Administration 2012). At that time, Fort Polk, Louisiana, initiated a project to capture 1940 Census data on the Heritage Families living on the land that would become the Installation. The project was completed in early 2013 and created an extensive spreadsheet of Census data about the Heritage Families (called the "1940 Census Heritage Family Table"), as well as narratives from the Census results that include community summary information for Leesville and 19 unincorporated community areas (Fort Polk 2013). Much of that detailed Census data is synthesized here.

In early 1940, Vernon Parish was on the verge of the Louisiana Maneuvers, the establishment of Camp Polk, and this country's entry into World War II. The enumeration wrapped up in mid-April 1940. On May 15, 1940, tanks of the Red and Blue Armies rolled into Leesville as part of the Army's maneuver training (Kane and Keeton 2004:7). At this time, Vernon Parish had 19,142 residents and the only incorporated city was Leesville, with a population of 2,829 (U.S. Department of Commerce 1943).

The 1940 Census provides a snapshot of the 2,401 people (549 households) living within or near the area that was shortly to become Camp Polk and the portions of the Kisatchie National Forest that would be used for military purposes. The enumeration also documents 647 people (147 households) living within or near the area that became Peason Ridge (including portions of Sabine and Natchitoches Parishes). Appendix A contains a list of the 344 discrete surnames associated with the 696 fami-

Figure 2-1.2. Transcription of Census data using a keyboard punch ca. 1940. Source: www.census.gov.

[1]Cultural Resource Consultant, Orange, TX.

lies (encompassing 3,048 people total) in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas that would be acquired by the U.S. Government (the acquisition areas) or used for training in the Kisatchie National Forest in Vernon Parish. The list includes families in owner-occupied and tenant-occupied dwellings (see more discussion on land occupancy in Section 3 below).

The public release of the 1940 Census was eagerly anticipated in part because it marked the first expanded questionnaire, a consequence of the federal government's interest in evaluating the population a decade into the Great Depression. The first enumeration in 1790 included only six questions (gender, race, household head, the relationship of free white males and females to the household head, and the number of slaves, if any). The 1940 enumeration expanded and revised the list of +30 questions from the 1930 enumeration regarding income, highest education achieved, employment status (including weeks of unemployment), the location of each person in 1935 (to measure migration), the value of homes, monthly rental rates, women's birthrates, and wage and income withholding under the new Social Security Act of 1935.

As a result of the types and numbers of questions asked in the 1940 Census, a more detailed picture of family life—especially with respect to living arrangements, economic status, and educational attainment—can be reconstructed. This chapter provides home, personal, educational, and occupational information from the 1940 Census for the 696 families whose lives were dramatically affected by the establishment of a military installation in the midst of farms and fields in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes.

As the sections below describe, family groups were of a traditional nuclear type, e.g., a pair of adults and their children. One of the best indications of this nuclear family arrangement is to compare the number of housewives (705) to the number of families (696) in the acquisition areas, an almost one-to-one match. Similarly, the number of working men (743) compared to the number of families (696) is also fairly close (in several farm households, sons were also listed as working on the farm, which explains most of this difference). Almost 27 percent of the 3,048 individuals in the acquisition and training areas were children less than 14 years of age (see Section 7 below). About 21 percent of all households in these areas were renting, with the majority of renters located either next to extended family groups or in the Fullerton area (see Section 3 below). Four black households were enumerated in the western-southwestern Camp Polk area, and two black households were enumerated in the Peason Ridge area (see Section 5 below).

2. The 1940 Census in Vernon Parish

On April 2, 1940, Frank Joseph Beeson, the field enumerator of Vernon Parish Enumeration District (ED) 58-14, stepped up to his first house in Dido, in the far southeastern corner of the Parish. He was 19 years old and had attended one year of college. In order to land a coveted Census job, he passed a test to qualify as an enumerator, attended training in Natchitoches, and swore to uphold his office. Over the next month—through May 3—Mr. Beeson wound his way north from Dido, visiting households in the communities of Pitkin and Fullerton and the unincorporated areas in his District. In all, he visited 324 households and enumerated 1,458 people. About one-third of the land that he traveled would shortly become Camp Polk and the military use areas of the Kisatchie National Forest.

Figure 2-2.1 depicts the boundaries of the

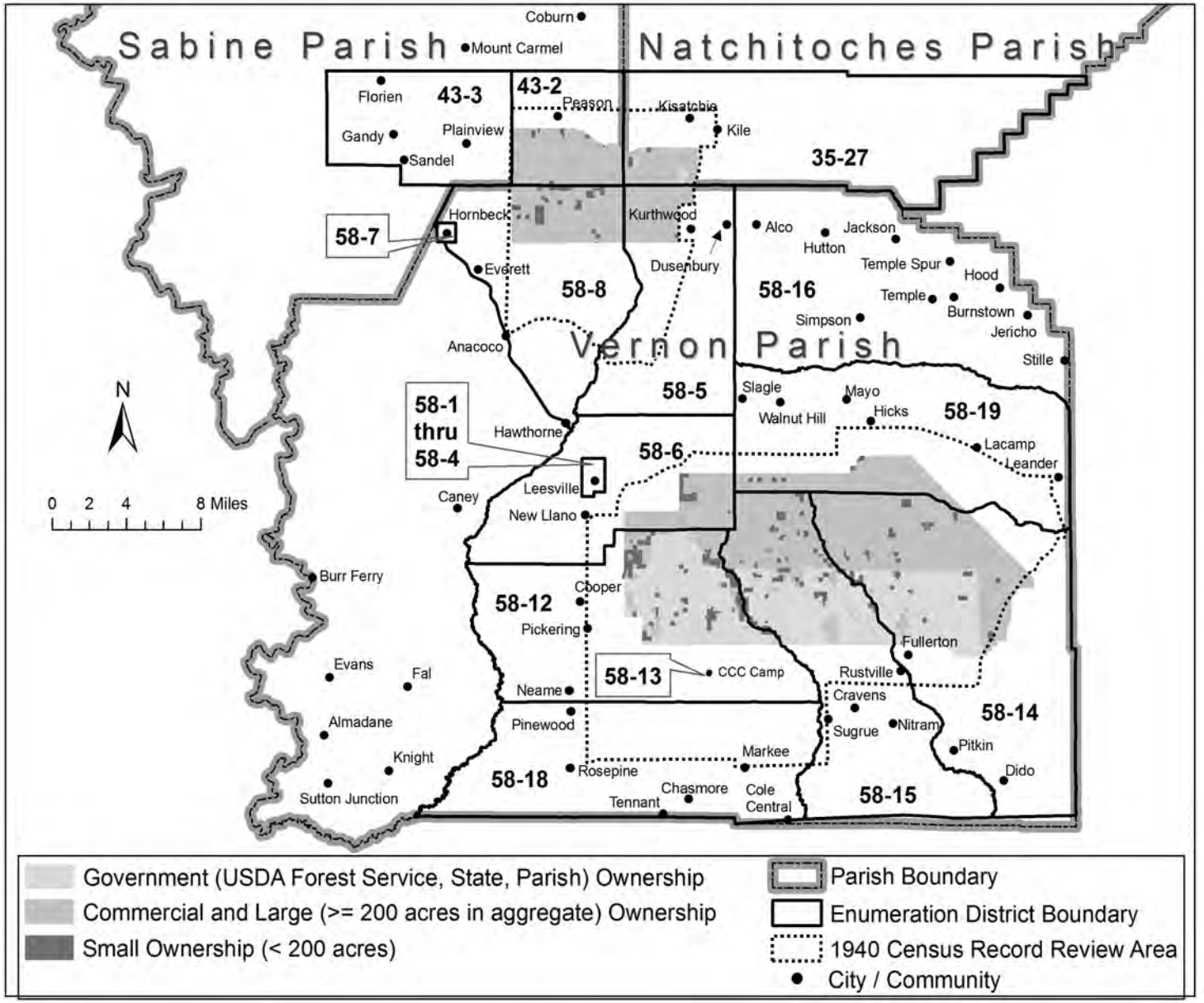


Figure 2-2.1. Enumeration Districts of the 1940 Census that overlapped the land acquisition areas for Camp Polk and Peason Ridge. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

1940 Census enumeration districts that overlie the acquisition areas. Figure 2-2.1 also depicts the boundaries of the Camp Polk, Kisatchie National Forest, and Peason Ridge areas within which the people that are described in this chapter were living.

As Mr. Beeson worked his way along local roads, other field enumerators fanned out in the areas shortly to be occupied by Camp Polk and Peason Ridge: Charlton Lawson in ED 58-15 ("Whiskachitta" area); Burt A. Adams in ED 58-12 (West Camp Polk area); Archie J. Williams in ED 58-6 (Northwest Camp Polk area); Dowell H. Breazeale in ED 58-19 (North Camp Polk); Van M. Lee in ED 58-8 (South Peason Ridge area in Vernon Parish); Gilmer M. Leach in Sabine Parish ED 43-2 (Northwest Peason Ridge, Peason-Eagle Ridge area); and Roy S. Wise in Natchitoches Parish ED 35-27 (Northeast Peason Ridge, Kisatchie-Kile area).

Mr. Beeson and the other field enumerators were given strict orders to "[v]isit every house, building, tent, cabin, hut, or other place in which any person might live or stay" (U.S. Department of Commerce 1940:1). Each carried large sheets of paper (called "Population Schedules") to record information by hand, forty persons per page and thirty-four questions for every man, woman, and child living in the house. In addition, for every forty persons, two individuals were asked another sixteen questions, designed to compile information about veterans in the household, Social Security withholding, and, for women, the age of their first marriage and the number of live births they had given. (See Section 4.4—Women's Work at Home—below for information on the Census results for these last two questions asked of women.)

Figure 2-2.2. 1940 Census enumerators in the field. Source: www.census.gov.

Field enumerators were partly selected because they were from the area they enumerated and, therefore, were assumed to know families and roads. Enumerators were instructed to identify house addresses and street or road names. However, none of the houses in these rural areas of Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes had addresses. Very few roads were named. As a result, it is difficult to precisely locate most of the families that were counted, although they were supposed to be counted in order of visitation and no one was supposed to be skipped, even if they were not at home initially.

Figure 2-2.3. 1940 Census enumerators in the field. Source: www.census.gov.

If a reader knows where the Albert and Lou Jeter family in Fullerton (ED 58-14) lived, for example, it might be possible to construct a "picture" of the road because the Census sheets record that Mrs. Cappie Matthews (a widow)

What roads were named in the 1940 Census in the acquisition areas?

Then:	Now:
SH 118/Leesville-Pitkin Hwy	LA 467/LA 10
Whiskey Chitto Rd/SH 257	Part of LA10
SH 510/E Cooper Rd	PR 36/Jeane Chapel Rd
LeBlue Rd	Lebleu Rd
Pinewood Rd	PR 744
SH 39	LA 117

Figure 2-2.4. Examples of roadway names in 1940.

and daughter Mary were visited just before the Jeters and that the Joseph and Gertrude Jeter household were visited just after. Similarly, there were no roads named in the Peason area of Sabine Parish (ED 43-2). However, if one knew where the Andrew and Ethel Bridges family lived, then one could determine that the W.H. and Kate Haynes household was visited just before the Bridges and the O.A. and Ettie Belle Robertson household was visited just after. Tracing the Census results in this way (before and after a known location) would start to fill in the picture of the families that lived on the unnamed routes in Fullerton, Peason, and other acquisition areas.

Where roads are named in the Census, one caution is that road names have changed in Louisiana since 1940. In particular, state roads that were numbered in 1940 (called "State Highways" or "SH" in the 1940 census) were renumbered in 1955 as required by Louisiana law. The table above cites examples.

3. Land Ownership and Occupancy

Based upon archival maps of the War Department, it is possible to reconstruct information about who owned the land that was acquired for Camp Polk and Peason Ridge. Heritage Family members today note that formal land ownership was commonly in dispute during this time, particularly between lumber companies and local families. As explained below, however, the question of who lived on and worked the land is a different matter.

Figures 2-3.1 and 2-3.2 depict land ownership within the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge acquisition areas, respectively. Within Camp Polk and the military-use areas of the Kisatchie National Forest (113,221 acres total), 53 percent of the property was owned by commercial interests, mostly timber; 40 percent was owned by the U.S. Forest Service; 6 percent was owned by private individuals in less than 200-acre tracts each; less than 1 percent was owned by private individuals in greater than 200-acre tracts each; and less than one percent was owned by the State of Louisiana. Three 1940 Census enumeration districts make up most of this Camp Polk area (ED 58-12, 58-14, 58-15). Within the areas acquired or used for Camp Polk military training, 2,401 people were enumerated in 549 households.

Within Peason Ridge (33,628 acres total), 94 percent of the property was owned by commercial interests, mostly timber; 5 percent was owned by private individuals in less than 200-acre tracts each; 1 percent was owned by the U.S. Forest Service; and less than 1 percent was owned by Vernon Parish. Four 1940 Census enumeration districts make up most of this Peason Ridge area (ED 58-5, 58-8, 35-27, 43-2). Within or near the areas acquired for Peason Ridge, 647 people were enumerated in 147 households.

It should be noted that the total of Peason Ridge Heritage Families stated above is probably overestimated, particularly in Natchitoches Parish. The portion of Natchitoches Parish that was acquired for Northeast Peason Ridge is not

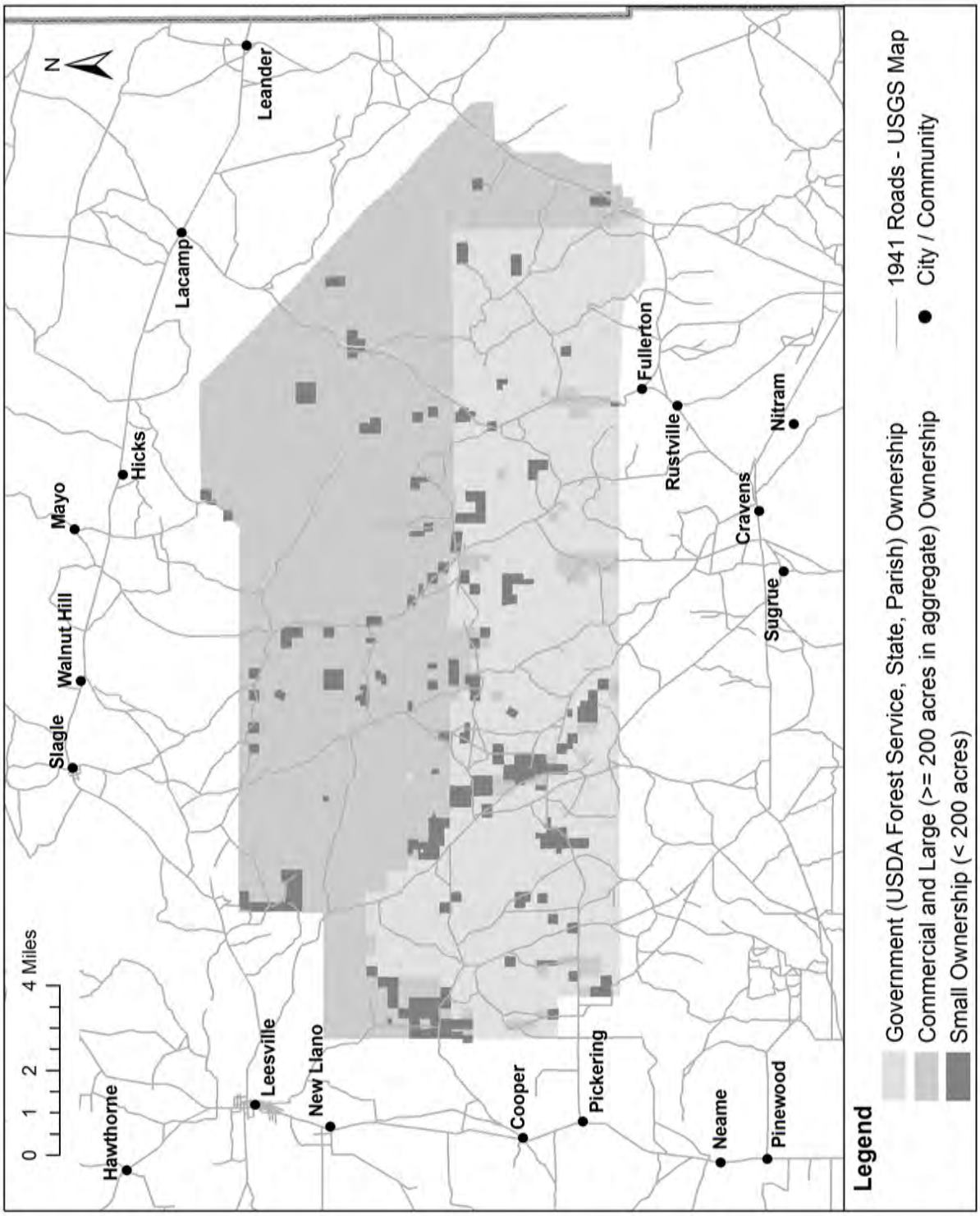


Figure 2-3.1. Land ownership within the Camp Polk acquisition area, 1941. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

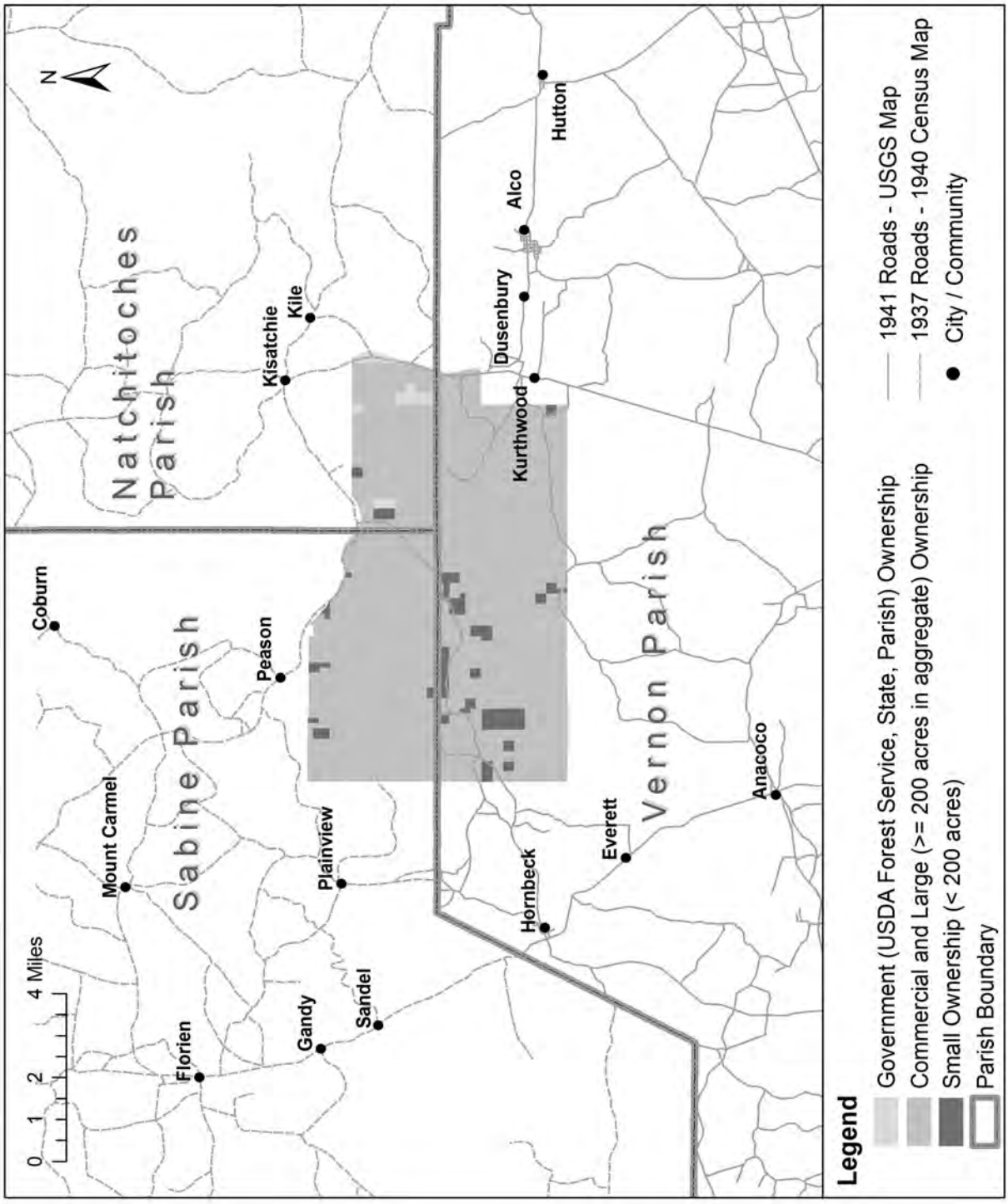


Figure 2-3.2. Land ownership within the Peason Ridge acquisition area, 1941. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

well described in the 1940 Census instructions. Much of this southwestern portion of the Parish was identified as "Kisatchie," which has elsewhere been described as an unincorporated community "approximately nine miles long and two miles wide" during this period (Smith 1999:176). Because of the lack of more precise information on the Kisatchie community, including homestead information and oral histories, the Heritage Family estimate may be overstated in this particular area. At the same time, Heritage Family members have found that the 1940 Census omits some households, including families who were living in what is today within Fort Polk.

One goal of this book is to produce more information that may help to better define the pre-Camp Polk occupation in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes.

Prior to the release of the 1940 Census results in April 2012, Fort Polk's Heritage Family initiative estimated that approximately 300 families (with 255 distinct surnames) were believed to have been displaced as a result of the Army's establishment at Camp Polk and Peason Ridge and thus had to rebuild their lives (Strickert and Hudson 2007:3). Many local residents believed that this number was low. Even some of the Heritage Family documentation published by the installation noted that it was likely that tenants or homesteaders who were living on land owned by others were also displaced (Ibid.:4).

The 1940 Census sheds new light on this issue. The federal government's records identify as "displaced" those households in which families owned their homes. However, of the 549 households within Camp Polk, 126 families were listed as "renting" (609 people total), about 23 percent; with respect to Peason Ridge, 28 families of the 147 households were renters, about 19 percent. Overall, the original estimate of 255 distinct surnames is expanded to 344 distinct surnames based upon the 1940 Census records as reflected in Appendix A. With respect to the Camp Polk area in particular, Fort Polk had previously estimated that 202 distinct surnames were represented by the displaced families (Ibid.:Appendix A). Now, there are 338 distinct surnames in the Camp Polk area based upon the 1940 Census. Of the total of 338, 221 are newly identified Heritage Family surnames and 117 are previously identified Heritage Family surnames (85 previously identified Camp Polk displaced-family surnames were not identified in the Camp Polk area during the 1940 Census). Of the 221 new surnames, the majority of these households self-reported to the Census that they owned their property; about 27 percent self-reported as renters.

The Census enumerators were required to record information about whether a family owned their home or "rented," even if the rental was for no money. As the discussion below explains, and as noted by Heritage Family members today, the notion of "renting" is not necessarily the same as we understand today, in terms of a formal lease agreement, monies paid, and the like. Instead, "renting" in 1940 may have captured a variety of living arrangements that reflected particularly the economic uncertainty of the times. The living and work-

What was a monthly rental rate in April 1940?

In addition to free rent "for working the land," rates varied widely in Vernon Parish. The lowest average monthly rent was in the Whiskachitta area, at $2.46. The Fullerton area average monthly rental rate was $4.16. In contrast, 57 percent of the dwelling units in Leesville were rental units, at an average monthly rate of $10.71. Source: U.S. Department of Commerce 1943:Table 5.

ing arrangements are likely to have reflected immediate and extended family co-occupancies on land, company housing (e.g., Ross Gravel Company housing near Fullerton), sharecropping, or availing oneself of a vacant home for a period of time.

The Cleon Smith's family story as told by Vernon D. Smith (see Part 2) is illustrative of the unsettled nature of the times. Vernon Smith recalls his family living in the community of "Whiskachitta" in the spring of 1940; however, Cleon Smith, his wife Jane, and their child Vernon were not identified in the enumeration records. After the family moved at the Army's insistence, they first went to another location on "Whiskey Chitto" Road (the road name used in the 1940 Census, also spelled as "Whisky Chitto" Road in the Census) and then "5 miles away" (nine households by the 1940 Census records) to James L. Smith's house (Cleon's grandfather, Vernon's great-grandfather), also on "Whiskey Chitto" Road. Their third move in the span of a year took them out of Camp Polk, to Pickering.

With the exception of the Fullerton area, it appears that many renters were either farming on land owned by another family member or were "renting" on family lands while the head of the household was in emergency relief work, particularly WPA road construction. Heritage Family members have mentioned "squatters" in oral histories. In the Census records, self-identified "renters" are listed as either paying an identified rental rate or as "working on the land." However, it is not possible to determine, nor is it clear based upon these records, whether these households were actually paying rental monies to a landlord or were living on

Cash Crops

Cotton was grown by many as a cash crop. Often the up-coming cotton crop was used as collateral for credit to buy the fertilizer, seed and other supplies needed for the spring planting. A lien was placed on the crop and if it was a bad crop year little would be left after the debt was paid off.

Cotton was the main source for money for school clothes and needs for the up-coming winter. It was a time for celebration to have a bale of cotton free of debt.

Watermelons and other produce was peddled for a little extra income. Dad would take a load of watermelons, tomatoes, string beans and corn when there was a good crop to the Quarters in the T-Model and the people would converge on it and everything would be sold out in a very short time. Corn was a favorite but usually scarce, the season being so short. Of course, most of the corn had to be reserved for bread and feed.

Most of the time the produce money was spent at Lopar O'Banion's store on the way home for necessities not produced on the farm: coffee, sugar, rice, etc. Don't forget a bottle or two of Garrett snuff!

Dad grew fine watermelons but could not compete with Uncle Matthew Cryer; he was rightly known as Watermelon King of Vernon Parish.

Marie Cryer White ~1944
Leesville Photography Studio

Figure 2-3.3. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member (See Part 2 for her stories)

the land without authorization.

The following households provide just a few examples of the co-location of families and extended family living arrangements. Segments of Jeane Chapel Road (identified as a WPA road in the Census sheets) and "Whiskey Chitto" Road (identified as a C.C.C. road in the Census sheets) were located in ED 58-12. Home ownership was high along these portions of both roads. Of the 23 families counted on "Whiskey Chitto" Road, only one was renting. W. Murphy (23 years old) and Marnie Eddlemen (also 23) were renting ($3 per month) from his parents, James H. and Alice Eddleman (farmers), who lived next door in a house they owned. W. Murphy was listed as having been a laborer at an oil refinery (probably in Port Arthur, Texas) for 28 weeks in 1939 at high wages ($655). However, by April 1940, he had been unemployed for 24 weeks and had moved back home. The elder Eddlemen's household included daughter Velma (18, in high school), son Wiley (28, unable to work), his wife Iona (15), and their 1-year old daughter Wilene; a 14-year old married niece (Lucille Turner, husband's whereabouts unknown); and a 19-year old hired hand (Clyde Jeter).

On Jeane Chapel Road, Frank Massey (29) and his wife Hazel (23) and their 3-year old daughter Frankie were renting a place next to his parents for $2 per month. His parents, M.C. and Addie Massey, owned their house. Their household included daughter Merle (24), her husband Stacil (28), and their three children. Both Frank and his brother-in-law Stacil were employed in WPA road construction.

Other examples of extended family co-locations exist throughout the acquisition areas. The largest family enclave (8 separate households) appears to have been that of the Talbert family, located between Whiskachitta Creek and Little Six-Mile Creek. S.A. Talbert (80 years old, widowed, with sons Henry (54) and Kelly (45) also at home) lived next to sons Elijah (wife Jennie), John D. (wife Elizabeth), William D. (wife Nina), Lewis (wife Anne), and Walter (wife Ella). Close by were Louis (57) and his wife Della (55) and Tom (61) and his wife Stella (36). All these Talberts were farming. William D. and Nina were renting for "0$" per year.

The Fullerton area (a geographically dispersed area) had the highest percentage of renters. Most were farming families that were renting for $5 per month (e.g., Harold and Willie Pelt, Arthur and Alice Pelt, Bud and Ida Pelt, Frank and Gladys Calhoun, Louis and Levie (misspelled "Levy" in the Census) Sweat, Joseph (misspelled "Joseth" in the Census) and Gertrude Jeter, Charlie and Mary Brack, and Sam and Vernie Sweat). In addition, the Ross Gravel Company operated a large gravel pit area to the west of Fullerton and apparently ran a company town for its workers. Almost all were renters, from "free" to $5 per month.

One possible explanation that has surfaced regarding property rentals relates to timber lands. The idea is that the timber companies may have allowed farmers to stay on timber lands as a precaution against illegal logging and that a minor rental payment was imposed in order to avoid claims of adverse possession by farmers. Generally, this theory does not seem to explain the majority of rental households within the acquisition areas, which, as stated above, appears to have been family-related. Additionally, article 3500 of the Louisiana Civil Code in effect at the time established the period to acquire rights in surface "immovables" (real property) in Louisiana through "acquisitive prescription" at 30 years, a lengthy period. Thus, adverse possession is less of a threat to property owners than in other states with relatively short adverse possession periods.

4. Occupations and Income

4.1 Occupations

Figure 2-4.1. Bertha May (nee Self) and Joseph Madison Bolgiano. In 1940, the Bolgianos were farmers near what is now the Tank Trail Road in the North Fort Polk area. They were one of the few farmers in the area that had cash income ($200) in 1939 from crops. Source: www.flickr.com (Vernon Parish Library).

Most men in the acquisition areas were farmers or farm laborers. Most farmers worked for themselves and did not receive or report income, although some money was raised from "cash crops." Farm laborers were generally reported as unpaid. The 1940 Census lists 10 women in the Camp Polk acquisition area and two women in the Northeast Peason Ridge acquisition area as farm operators, almost all of them widowed. A few daughters that were living at home with parents in these acquisition areas (in the age range of 18 to 20 years) also worked on family farms as unpaid laborers.

Camp Polk. Of the 2,401 people in the Camp Polk acquisition or training area, 609 total were employed in the occupations listed below (569 men, 40 women, or about 27 percent of this area's population). Among the employed individuals, the nature of their work was as follows:

60%	Agriculture (farming)
24%	Government (most in New Deal employment, primarily road construction)
5%	Wood (logging, mill work, box factory worker)
3%	Private construction (including Ross Gravel Co. workers)
3%	Domestic (housekeeper, laundry in-house or for private families)
3% total	Automotive, oil, restaurant, tavern/night club, doctor, retail workers
1%	Railroad (telegraph agent, section foreman, laborer)

Peason Ridge (Vernon Parish). Of the 212 people in or near the South Peason Ridge acquisition area in Vernon Parish, 65 total were employed in the occupations listed below (62 men, 3 women, or about 30.6 percent of this area's population). Among the employed individuals, the nature of their work was as follows:

Figure 2-4.2. WPA road construction in the Kisatchie National Forest. Source: LOUISiana Digital Library.

75%: Agriculture (farming)
22% Government (most in New Deal employment, primarily road construction)
3% Logging, mud mill grinder

Peason Ridge (Sabine Parish). Of the 88 people in the Northwest Peason Ridge acquisition area in Sabine Parish, 26 total were employed in the occupations listed below (24 men, 2 women, or about 30 percent of this area's population). Among the employed individuals, the nature of their work was as follows:

65%: Agriculture (farming)
8% Wood (log camp driver, hauling pine for the Alco Lumber Co.)
8% Private construction (truck drivers)
8% "New workers"
<3% (each) Civilian Conservation Corps, school bus driver, general store clerk

Peason Ridge (Natchitoches Parish). Of the 347 people that are believed to have been in or near the Northeast Peason Ridge acquisition area, 105 total were employed in the occupations listed below (88 men, 17 women, or about 30 percent of this area's population). Among the employed individuals, the nature of their work was as follows:

Figure 2-4.3. New Deal sewing project, Louisiana. Source: LOUISiana Digital Library.

60% Agriculture (farming)
10% Wood (logging, saw mill work)
10% Education (principal, teachers, bus drivers)
9% Government (most in New Deal employment, primarily Civilian Conservation Corps work)
2% (each) Private construction, railroad, grocery stores, "new workers," unspecified

4.2 Income

For approximate comparison purposes, $1 in 1940 is roughly equivalent to $16.40 in 2013, when measured as a "standard of living" rate (a measurement of purchasing power using the Consumer Price Index). The 1940 Census capped the highest recorded annual salary or income at $5,000, equivalent to $82,000 in 2013.

Generally, only non-farmers had reported income (wages and salaries). An exception was professionals, such as Dr. James W. Jeane, the physician that lived in Whiskachitta. He was 70 years old in April 1940 and reported no income as a self-employed doctor. In an oral history (2008) Mr. Almon Johnson recalls a story that his dad paid the country doctor "with chickens, one or two"—after the doctor delivered Almon at the Johnson's home.

Most unskilled, non-farm work paid $200 to $300 per year ($3,280 to $4,920 in 2013 dollars). Much of the New Deal work paid these amounts in wages to laborers for less than a full year's work.

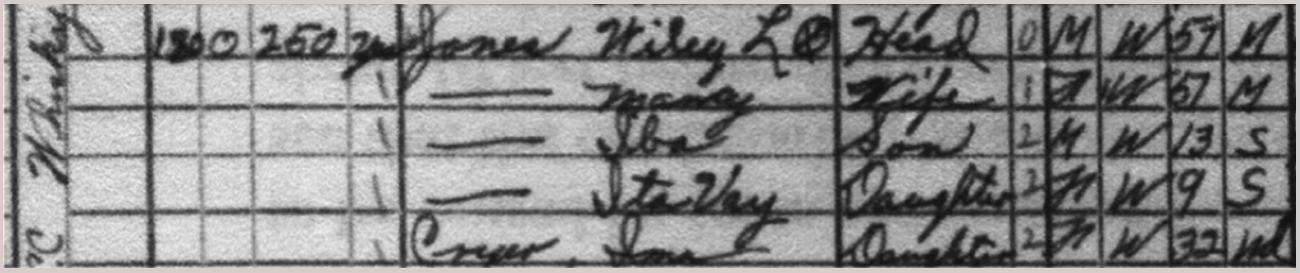
Fifteen families in the Camp Polk acquisition area reported 1939 earnings in excess of $1,000 for the year. The Oakes family, with the highest income total ($1,956), included several earners: father William L. (a farmer) who re-

Home Demonstration Club and the WPA

In 1937, the Home Demonstration Club came to our area to teach a variety of home crafts: pine straw basketry, embroidery, scrap piecing, recipes and such. Ima Jones Cryer was our instructor. She had been taught to conduct these demonstrations by the Home Demonstration Agent. I was a child but I made a pine straw basket and did embroidery, maybe something else. They also had a program for families to use their scrap cotton to make beds—ones that didn't have cotton beds, too. They would go somewhere in Leesville and help in the bed making process.

Also, when what we called the CCC Road was built, the work was done by the WPA workers. So many men needed jobs and they could use such a few each man would get only a few days along. It was a blessing during those lean years tho.

Note: In the 1940 Census (see below), Ima Jones Cryer (a widow) was living at home with her parents Wiley L. and Nancy Jones on "CCC Whisky Chitto Road." She had two years of college education.



By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member, and Leslie Barras, Cultural Resource Consultant

ported $206 in 1939 income; daughter Edna (28 years old, three years of college) was a teacher who reported $900 in 1939 income; and daughter Beulah (25, three years of college), also a teacher, reported $850 in income in 1939.

The highest single wage earner in the Camp Polk acquisition area was Glen C. Liby (married to Sara F., both with two years of college) who earned $1,920 in 1939 as a telegrapher agent for a steam railroad. The Liby couple lived in the Fullerton area. Pearl Beeson Lawson (34, two years of college) was the highest female wage earner in the Camp Polk acquisition area: $1,080 in 1939 as a social worker for the "welfare department." She and her husband Charlton were living with Pearl's widowed father, J.A. Beeson. The U.S. Postmistress in Fullerton, Ora Diabon (40), had the next highest 1939 salary ($406).

Among workers who received an income or wages in the Peason Ridge acquisition area, the highest earners were generally government workers or logging industry workers. In the Northeast Peason Ridge area (Natchitoches Parish), Duard H. Anderson was the highest earner, making $2,400 in 1939 as a log woods foreman. He reported a 66-hour workweek the week before the 1940 Census in April. Several households were highly paid renters in this area, all employed in the public school system: Bennie C. Norsworthy, principal ($1,800 salary); David Calhoun, agricultural teacher ($1,850 salary); and a group of female teachers living together that collectively earned $3,431 in 1939.

In the Peason area in Sabine Parish, 24-year old H.L. Goins (married to 17-year old Mildred) was the highest earner, making $1,120 annually as a school bus driver. Elmer Browning (22, married to 23-year old Beatrice McCollough Browning) was the highest private sector earner ($600 income in 1939 as a "cater-

pillar" driver at a logging camp).

Roy Brister (33 years old, married to Vida Brister), a log woods cutter in South Peason Ridge, was the highest wage earner in this area ($750 income). Joy Snell (20 years old, high school graduate) was the highest female wage earner. In 1939, she made $960 as a stenographer for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She was enumerated living at home in the South Peason Ridge area with her parents M.M. and Maggie Snell, farmers.

4.3 New Deal Employment

Twenty-one percent of the employed men and women in the Camp Polk acquisition area and eleven percent in the Peason Ridge acquisition area were employed in "emergency relief" work when the 1940 Census was taken. These jobs were provided by New Deal programs enacted by the U.S. Congress in the early-to-mid 1930s in response to the Great Depression.

The New Deal employed individuals throughout Vernon Parish in the Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, National Youth Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and the Public Works Administration. Wages were around $10 per week, regardless of position. However, the supervisors (leaders, foremen) were often hired for a 48- to 52-week work year, while laborers, ditch diggers, and like positions were hired to work only part of a year.

Works Progress Administration. Road and bridge construction provided the highest number of jobs in Vernon Parish to black and white men. Positions included laborers, water carriers, fire watches, night watchmen, timekeepers, cement mixers, heavy equipment operators, and various supervisory positions. In the Camp Polk acquisition area, 87 of the 101 WPA workers were laborers. The rest included truck drivers, foremen, shovel men, and a powder man, grader man, ax man, tractor driver, carpenter, and night watchman. Seven WPA workers were located in the Peason Ridge acquisition area, one laborer and six road shovelers.

WPA work also included "public activity" projects (adult education teachers, bookbinders), research projects (historians), and "welfare" projects (seamstresses, school lunch servers, and public health and hospital workers). Although the WPA hired women in Leesville and other parts of Vernon Parish to carry out public activity and welfare projects, no women in the Camp Polk acquisition area were in WPA employment. At the time of the 1940 Census, one woman in the South Peason Ridge area taught in the adult education program: Ethel Snell (a 50-year old with a high school education) who made $420 in 1939 for 32 weeks of work.

Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC hired men for reforestation, soil conservation, fire watches, and associated road construction. One of the largest and most productive camps (F-4, run by an Army lieutenant as the 5405th Company) was located in the south Kisatchie National Forest, Vernon District, along what is today Forest Road 471. However, by 1940, the camp was reported as "unpopulated." Twenty-one (21) men in the Camp Polk acquisition area were listed in the Census as employed by the CCC in reforestation and two in road construction. In the Peason Ridge acquisition area, seven men held CCC jobs (leader, assistant leader, driver, cook, mess hall worker, laborer, ditch digger).

Mr. Almon Johnson (born in the Mill Creek area)(2008): *When we was so hungry and starved. I went and joined what they called CCC Civilian Conservation Corps, when I*

was young, and I got $9 a month and Grandma Nash, her and momma split the money so they'd have food to eat.

National Youth Association. The N.Y.A. work primarily targeted young women and men in their late teens to early twenties. Some of the work was similar to the WPA work (e.g., seamstresses, bookbinders, school lunch servers). However, several workers were listed as employed at an unidentified "college" in Vernon Parish. Two of these college workers (both men) lived in the Camp Polk acquisition area (an office typist and a waiter in a dormitory). One other young man in the Camp Polk acquisition area worked as an N.Y.A. carpenter.

Eight young adults were employed by the N.Y.A. in the Peason Ridge area, which is relatively high for the population density. Five were young men working in construction (carpenters, carpenter helper). Two 18-year old twins (Edna V. and Elma F. Dowden) were employed as N.Y.A. waitresses in a dining hall. One woman, Rillie Sanders, was employed as an N.Y.A. seamstress at wages of $320 in 1939. She lived with her husband, M.C. Sanders, in the South Peason Ridge area.

4.4 Women's Work at Home

Of the 2,401 people that are believed to have been in the Camp Polk acquisition area, 551 women were homemakers, about 23 percent of the residents. In the Peason Ridge acquisition area, the numbers and percentages of homemakers were: South Peason Ridge (51 women, 24 percent); Northeast Peason Ridge (82 women, 24 percent); and Northwest Peason Ridge (21 women, 24 percent).

Women's responsibilities were endless, including cooking, cleaning, gardening, taking care of children, and generally making do with the resources and materials that were available.

Mothers Were the Original Recyclers

AS: It was back in the days where you picked up inner tubes on the road when people would have a flat and leave them laying there. That my mother cut it about a half an inch and made our bras, made our slips, made our panties.

Q: Used the tubing for like the elastic in the clothing?

AS: Yes. That's why we saved the inner tubes.

Q: I wanted to make sure we got that corrected on the tape. Your great-grandchildren would be believing that you wore a bra made out of a rubber tube. But it would be used for the elastic?

AS: Yes, it would be used for the elastic.

Q: Where'd she get the fabric from, the material?

AS: Well, back whenever I was coming up, you bought fertilizer in cloth sacks. And Old Black Joe, and he would be sitting on your chest one time fiddling and the next time on the dress he'd be on your back. And that's how our clothes was made, the last four of us children at home. And, momma would go out and pick little red berries, I don't know what they were called, and she made dye and that's how she would dye our clothes.

Figure 2-4.4. "Old Black Joe" was trademarked in 1936 by the Armour Fertilizer Works for its 100-pound burlap bags of fertilizer. Source: www.liveauctioneers.com/item/4229328.

Interview of Adel Nash Swain (2008), Heritage Family member, Fullerton Community, by Ellen Ibert, former Fort Polk Cultural Resource Specialist

Dollie Haymon Mayo Wilcox (known as "Mrs. Dollie") grew up in the Mill Creek community outside Fullerton. As she recalled in an oral history (2008) taken before her death in December 2012, *my mother (Viola Haymon, married to Willie Lee) was a doctor, she was a cook, she was a nurse, preacher, prayed for all of her children to turn out good. I can just remember so many things that she was so good at.*

Based upon the 1940 Census information, the average age of first marriage for women in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge acquisition and training land areas was 19.1 years of age, with the youngest 14 years of age at first marriage and the oldest 31 years of age at first marriage. Women in these areas averaged 4.55 live child births according to the Census information.

4.5 Vernon Parish at Large

At the start of the 1940s, Vernon Parish was still in transition from old to new, from oxen drivers and Victrola repairers to oil company "lease solicitors" (i.e., land men) and Chevrolet auto dealers. Enumerators of the 1940 Census were instructed to record the type of employer, as defined in the newly constituted Standard Industrial Classification system of the time, rather than by company name. This approach was intended to achieve consistency across the U.S. in the analysis of occupations. The disadvantage to this uniform approach is that names of companies are not reflected in the individual Census records. Fortunately, some enumerators disregarded instructions and, as a result, we have a better picture of employment and community life.

Specific companies that were identified throughout Vernon Parish as employers included four railroads (Kansas City Southern, the Red River and Gulf Railroad, the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railroad, the Wabash Railroad); six lumber companies (Alco Lumber Company, Anderson-Post Hardwood Company, Foote Lumber Company, Hillyer Lumber Company, Weber-King Lumber Company, White Grandin Lumber Company); three construction companies (Dysora Construction, H.C. Price Pipe Construction, Ross Gravel Company); two auto companies (Ford Motor Company, Chevrolet Motor Company); three oil companies (Cities Service Company, Gulf Oil Company, the Texas Oil Company); as well as Schlitz Beer, H.S. Kress Company, and Western Union. Traveling salesmen and salesladies were employed by several companies in Vernon Parish, including the Watkins

Salesmen: Watkins, etc.

Several salesmen came through the community on a regular basis; 'Namely' The Watkins Man and the Raleigh Man. I think most everyone was partial to the Watkins Man. He sold extracts, pie fillings, etc, but the most popular item was the Watkins liniment. Printed on the bottle was: 'For external use only' but it was used for colds, stomach, etc. A general 'cure all.' It was really hot. Magazine sales people came thru often. They would take a chicken as payment for a subscription. I remember one of them was 'Farm and Ranch.' Also, someone came thru wanting to work on Mom's sewing machine. No one dared put a hand on her sewing machine. For that I am very grateful.

Note: The "Raleigh Man" that Mrs. White recalls was most likely William M. Wisby. In 1940, Mr. Wisby (53 years old) lived with his wife Emma and their children in a house they owned in the area between Whiskachitta and Little Six-Mile Creeks. Mr. Wisby reported a 50-hour workweek the week before his household was counted in the Census.

By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member, and Leslie Barras, Cultural Resource Consultant, Orange, TX

Company (purveyor of soaps, cleaners, personal care products, and baking materials), Raleigh Company (tobacco products), Carnation Milk Company (dairy products), and *Farm Life Magazine.*

Steven Smith (1999:113,122) reports that after the mammoth effort to harvest and mill longleaf pine in the early 20th century, 16 of the larger lumber mills had closed by 1933, with about 9 left in 1939. By 1940, logging, milling (saw mills, planer mills), and turpentine production still employed a relatively substantial number of men throughout the Parish at relatively high wages for the time. Self-employed loggers could make $800 to $2,400 a year; saw filers and sawyers at mills could make $800 to $1,700 a year; truck drivers, from $500 to $1,000 a year; and mill laborers from $300 to $500 a year.

Blacks and whites were employed in all aspects of the industry based on the 1940 Census records. Black men were typically employed in unskilled or semi-skilled positions, including laborers, wood stackers and loaders, string tyers, pond tenders, log swampers, tong hookers and setters, edgermen, fire watches, and turpentine box pullers, dippers, and chippers. White men were generally in the higher paid positions involving crafts or trades work (e.g., millwrights, boilermakers), machine operation (e.g., skidders, saws, kilns), supervisory roles (e.g., foremen, mill managers), and office/professional work (e.g., clerks, bookkeepers, auditors, company doctors, salesmen). White men were also employed in the same unskilled work positions identified above as the black men, including sinker raisers and mule skinners.

Within the Camp Polk acquisition area, 30 men were still in timber-related employment in April 1940: two in logging, 27 in mill work, and one a box factory worker. Within the Peason Ridge acquisition area, 13 men were in timber-related work mostly in Sabine and Natchitoches Parishes (in logging, log hauling, and saw mill work).

Transportation was changing, too, throughout the Parish. One individual in the Slagle area reported to the Census that he drove oxen to transport logs. However, the automobile had clearly made inroads into Parish life. Automobile sales dealerships (Ford, Chevrolet), gas stations (Gulf, Cities Service), and mechanic's garages were located primarily in Leesville. Within the Camp Polk acquisition area, three men reported auto-related jobs: a filling station owner, a filling station attendant, and a mechanic at a garage. No auto-related employment was reported in the Peason Ridge area.

Railroads had laid tracks in Vernon Parish by the very late 19th century and remained relatively large and lucrative employers for salaried and wage earners (white and black) along the K.C.S. line and other railroad lines (Red River and Gulf Railroad in the northeastern part of the Parish and Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railroad in the southeast). The higher-paid railroad positions of section heads, foremen, brakemen, conductors, locomotive engineers, mechanics, and telegraph operators were occupied primarily by white men. Black men tended to be hired primarily as car knockers, section hands, grade builders, tie makers, or in steel gangs.

Within the Camp Polk acquisition area, six men were employed by the "steam railroad" (mostly laborers, 1939 income from $242 to $720). The only railroad-related employment reported in the 1940 Census in the Peason Ridge area was in the Kisatchie community in Natchitoches Parish (a laborer and a teamster on the "railroad grade," reporting 1939 income of $550 and $450, respectively).

5. Race

The written record of African-American history in Vernon Parish is sparse. As of the 1940 Census, 12.6 percent of the Parish was black (2,420 residents). The majority of blacks lived in Leesville (784 residents), just outside the city limits in Hells Bay (117 residents); Alco (517 residents); Hood's Camp (a turpentine camp near Temple) (127 residents); Kurthwood (108 residents); Hutton (59 residents); Hawthorn (47 residents); Stille (28 residents); Temple (22 residents); Peason area (11 residents); Baker's Camp (a logging camp in the far southwestern part of the Parish, near present-day LA 464) (3 residents); and Rosepine (2 residents)(Fort Polk 2013). The rest of the black residents lived throughout the Parish, often near each other, such as the four households described below. Although not within the acquisition area, there were another four African-American families living near Pickering, along US 171 and on Hunt Road (which may have been west of US 171 and southwest of Leesville).

Of the 2,401 individuals in or near the Camp Polk acquisition area, 18 residents were black. The four black households were all located in ED 58-12 to the east of Pickering (Figure 2-2.1), on "Highway" or "Road" 257, which is today part of LA 10. The Hentons and the Dickersons lived near each other, and then farther along Route 257 the Hickmans and Anderson Lee were neighbors (all based upon visitation order). All four families owned their house.

The Henton family was headed by Rufus (65, a farmer), Batrice (55, his wife), Polite (31, a son, identified as "feeble minded"), Rufus, Jr. (20, a son in 11th grade), Jessie (18, a son working on the farm, had never attended school), Johnice (16, a daughter in 7th grade) and Ben Chory, farm laborer (Rufus's 38-year old son and Batrice's step-son). The Dickerson family, next in visitation order, was headed by George (79, a farmer), Odesa (35, his wife), H.T. (17, George's son, farm laborer with a 1939 income of $50), Lela May (7, their daughter, in 1st grade), and George, Jr. (2, their son). Anderson Lee was a 60-year old farm laborer that lived alone. His neighbors, the Hickman family, were siblings. The household consisted of Clarence (24, a farmer), brother Eddis (22, a farm laborer with a 1939 income of $200), sister Nellie (18, clothes washer for a private family), and sister Mary Scott (43, a widow and the homemaker). Mary's son Clyde (15) was reported as in 3rd grade and also worked on the farm.

Two black families (the Loves and the Greens) were enumerated in the Peason area (see text box on page 65).

6. Education

At the time of the 1940 Census, the mandatory school attendance age in Louisiana was 6 through 13. (As a note, the Census instructions considered individuals 14 years of age or older as eligible for the labor force.) Elementary school was first through eighth grades. High school was ninth through twelfth grades. College included four years of undergraduate school. Based upon the 1940 Census information, the average number of years of school attendance for residents of the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge acquisition and training land areas was 6.3 years for men and 6.9 years for women.

Within the acquisition areas, the population of youth and young adults that were enumerated as a "student" varies widely in terms of age and level of schooling. Although enrollment eligibility started at 6 years of age, very few 6-year olds were in school. Elementary school and high school students could span substantial

African-Americans in the Peason Community

In the following excerpt of an October 2013 article on "African American residents and Workers of Peason," historian Rickey Robertson describes the black enclave that existed at the Peavy Wilson Lumber Company in Peason, and then after the mill closed around 1935:

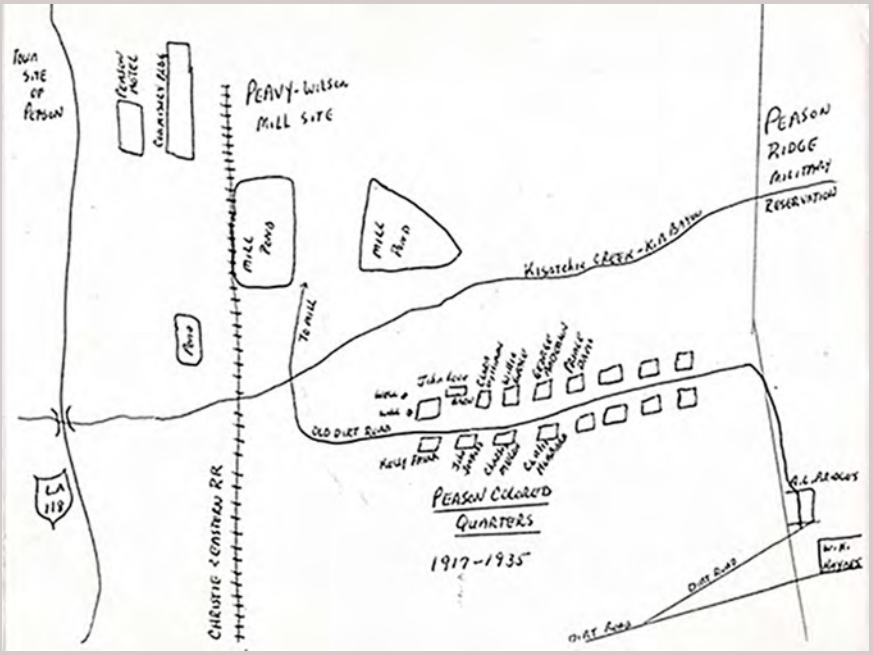


Figure 2-5.1. Sketch of Peason and the 'Colored Quarters,' by Rickey Robertson. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

As was the normal in the south during this time period of 1917 to 1935, the black workers and families were segregated and lived in what was known as the Peason Quarters. The black families paid a monthly rent of $3.00 per month for their company owned houses. The black workers and their families also traded at the Peavy Wilson Commissary in the mill-town. The first black child born in Peason was the child of Carrie Blinks. The quarters were located away from the main town of Peason and a road led from the mill, by the mill ponds, across Kisatchie Creek and Kib Bayou, on to the quarters. The remains of this old road exist to this very day and I have found the location of the quarters and house sites. I have attempted to locate by name as many of the original Black Families who lived and resided at Peason and have compiled a partial listing of these.

Figure 2-5.2. Photo credit: Rickey Robertson. Source: www.sfasu.edu/heritagecenter/8376.asp.

The last Black Family at Peason was John and Vina Love. They lived in the first house on the left as you arrived at the quarters. When the mill closed in 1935 all the workers, both white and black, scattered to other mills to find jobs, with some of them traveling to Holipaw, Florida with the Peavy Wilson Company. But Uncle John and Aunt Viney as they were known, stayed on at Peason and bought a small tract of land where they lived. My Grandfather, Ora Robertson and my Grandmother Ettie Bell Robertson, along with Mr. and Mrs. Andrew L. Bridges, were close friends of this dear family. My father, Bud Robertson, always talked of Uncle John and Aunt Viney, and how they would come to their farm and help my grandparents kill hogs, can fruit, make jelly and jam, and harvest the crops. And as neighbors and friends my family would go and help Uncle John and Aunt Viney. And till my Dad died in

continued

African-Americans in the Peason Community *(continued)*

2003, he always talked how he and his family loved Uncle John and Aunt Viney. And Andy Bridges, son of Mr. A.L. Bridges, speaks also so favorably of these two older black neighbors. Isn't this the way we are supposed to live as neighbors and friends, no matter what color our skin may be?

The 1940 Census records enumerated two remaining African-American families in the Peason area: the Greens (identified as living in the same house on April 1, 1935) and the Loves. "Hause" (sp?) Green (50 years old, born in Louisiana, 2nd grade education) and his wife Lucy (48 years old, born in Louisiana, 5th grade education) headed an extended family that included their daughter Helen (14, in second grade); son Linard (13, not in school, 1st grade listed as his highest grade completed); three grandchildren, none of which were in school – Bonnie May Green (11, 3rd grade listed as her highest grade completed), James Loyd Green (7, no formal education), and Charlene Green (2); and Onise Edward (39, 7th grade education), listed as "stepfather" with spouse location unknown.

John Love (71, born in Mississippi) and his wife Vinnie (55, born in Alabama) ("Uncle John and Aunt Viney" in the excerpt above) and their daughter Climer (sp?) (16, 5th grade completed but not in school) were enumerated immediately after the Green family. The Loves were identified as having lived in Sabine Parish in April 1935, although not in the house in which they were enumerated for the 1940 Census. This information is consistent with the possibility that John and Vinnie Love had purchased property during the mid-1930s where they lived when he worked for the lumber company, but may have moved to a tenant house by 1940. Also, their location in the 1940 Census is not near the Robertson family or the Bridges family: the Bridges were the 16th household visited in Peason by the enumerator; the Robertsons were the 24th household; and the Loves were the 48th household. (John Love appears to have passed away in January 1949 and is buried at Garden of Memories Cemetery, a large African-American cemetery, near Leesville. Burial records for Vinnie and Climer could not be readily found.)

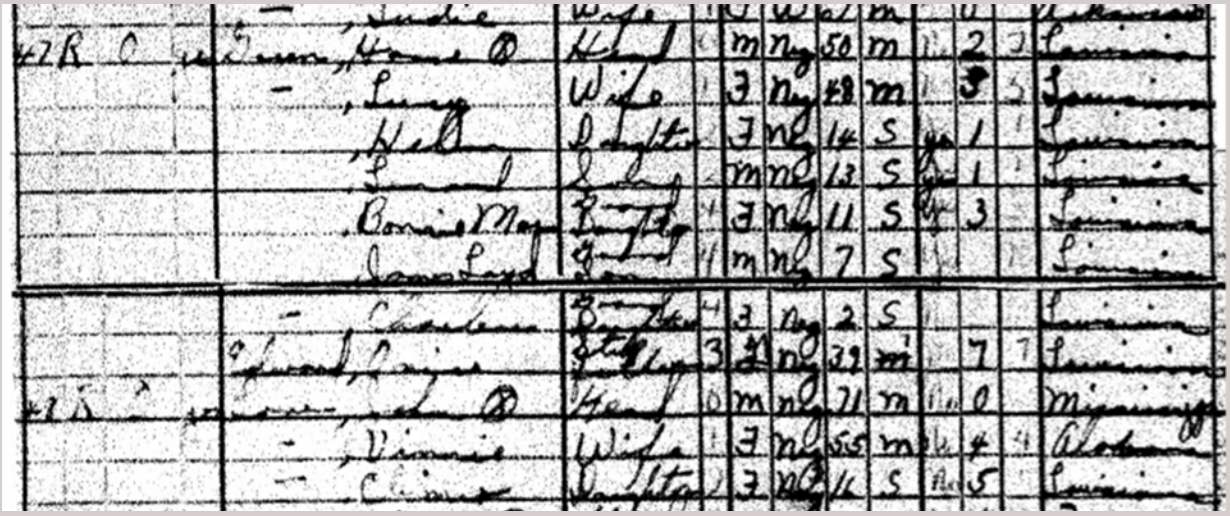


Figure 2-5.3. 1940 Census entries for the Green and Love families, Peason. Source: www.census.gov.

In April 1940, Hause Green, John Love, Onise Edward, and a white neighbor, T.H Rose (69), were each working as paid farm laborers at rates that equated to $350/year for 50 weeks of work. All three households were also listed as renting for "0" dollars per year. On either side of these three households, in visitation order, were farmers: J.C. and Winnie Slaughter (owned their home valued at $500) and W.L. and Manda Murray (owned their home valued at $700). It is therefore, possible, that the three farm labor families were tenants on one or the other farms.

By Rickey Robertson (2013), Heritage Family member, and Leslie Barras, Cultural Resource Consultant, Orange, TX

Olene Haymon Don Jean Monroe Cryer Winston Jeane

Figure 2-6.1. Some first-grade students of Alyce M. Haight, Pickering Elementary (1941-42). Source: www.flickr.com (Vernon Parish Library).

age ranges. For example, two 13-year old girls in the Peason Ridge acquisition area were in high school, while two 15-year olds were in 5th and 6th grade. In another Peason Ridge area, a 21-year old was in twelfth grade.

In the 549 households in the Camp Polk acquisition area, 597 individuals were identified as students. Four hundred eighty-nine (489) of these students were in elementary school (6 to 17 years old). Ninety-nine (99) youths (13 to 21 years old) were in high school. Nine (9) young adults were in college (19 to 24 years old).

In the 47 households in the South Peason Ridge acquisition area, 53 individuals were identified as students. Thirty-seven (37) of these students were in elementary school (7 to 17 years old). Fifteen (15) youths (15 to 21 years old) were in high school. One individual was in the first year of college, a 23-year old. Of the 19 households in Peason in Sabine Parish, 25 youths were identified as students: 19 in elementary school (7 to 16 years old) and 6 in high school (14 to 19 years old). In Northeast Peason Ridge, 106 students were enumerated: 62 in elementary school (6 to 19 years old); 41 in high school (13 to 19 years old); and 3 in college (20 to 24 years old).

Among residents 25 years of age and older within the Camp Polk acquisition area, 8 percent had not attended school; 66 percent had completed some level of elementary school education; 24 percent had completed some level of high school education; and 2 percent had completed some level of college education. Among residents 25 years of age and older within the Peason Ridge acquisition area, 5 percent had not attended school; 57 percent had completed some level of elementary school education; 33 percent had completed some level of high school education; and 5 percent had completed some level of college education. With the exception of Dr. Jeane in Whiskachitta, almost all of the college attendees or graduates were public school teachers (women and men).

7. The Children

In this section, "children" includes babies and small children from 0 years and up and that were not enumerated as enrolled in school when the 1940 Census was taken. Generally, this group ranges from less than a month old through 6 years old. However, older children that were eligible for school, but that were not in school during the Census, are included in these "children" numbers.

In the 549 households in the Camp Polk acquisition area, there were 404 children from less than one month old to 12 years old. In total, about 17 percent of the individuals enumerated in the Camp Polk area were children under school age or not in school.

In the 147 households in the South Peason Ridge acquisition area, there were 38 children from less than one month old to 9 years old. In Northeast Peason Ridge, there were 40 children from less than two months old through 6 years old in the 81 households. Northwest Peason Ridge households included 13 children from less than two months old to 4 years old in the 19 households. In total, about 14 percent of the population in the Peason Ridge acquisition

Figure 2-7.1. Children posing along a gravel road in the Camp Polk area. From L to R: Maxine Smith, Ed Nixon, Shelby Monk, Gene Monk. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

area was children under school age or not in school.

If one includes all children below the age of 14 (the legal employment age), approximately one-third of the Heritage Family members enumerated in April 1940 were children. In addition to attending school when they were old enough, children's lives were busy with helping on the farm, playing, and exploring.

If you were old enough to eat a potato, you were old enough to pick one up. Harold Johnson, Bird's Creek Community (2013).

Reatha Ann Smith Deason, Big Creek community (2007). *A goat would go to the backside of that field and hang her head in the wire and I was always the one that had to go unhang it. The only thing I hate worse than goats it's two goats. I hate goats.*

There are many Heritage Family members who are now in their mid-70s to mid-80s that were children at the time Camp Polk was established. Their direct memories of the turmoil and disruption to their families and friends have been documented in the Oral History project undertaken by Fort Polk.

8. Conclusions

The 1940 Census has significantly expanded our understanding of the Heritage Families. In total, 696 families (3,048 people) were living in or near the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge acquisition areas. Almost a quarter of households were "renting," often from an adjacent family

Last Babies Born on the Range?

Among the last babies born in the Camp Polk area before acquisition are five that were less than one-month old at the time of the April 1940 enumeration:

Verssia Jeane Cryer, child of Beatrice (18) and Luther (22) Cryer, living with Beatrice's parents Charlie H. and Maudie B. (erroneously entered as "Nacidie") Bass on "Hwy 257 – Whiskey Chitto Road." Verssia is listed as a "grandson" of the Basses, but also as a "female." The elder Basses and a later son of Beatrice and Luther (Alton Ronald "Duck" Cryer) are buried at Drakes Fork Cemetery, near Cravens. No additional information has been found regarding Verssia Jeane Cryer or her parents.

Donald Ray Goines, son of Ruthie (28) and Frank (25) Goines, living with Ruthie's parents G.H. and Lizzie Locke. No road is given, but their location was in ED 58-15 (central third of Camp Polk/Kisatchie National Forest). Mr. Goines was reported to be living in the Graybow community near DeRidder in early 2013.

Dalford ("Sonny") White, son of Louie V. (23) and Bertha Cloud ("Bertie") (18) White. The Whites had a one-year old daughter, Margalee ("Margie"). They were living "rent free" next to his parents, Robert F. and Texana Calhoun White, in ED 58-15. Louie V. and his parents are buried at Gravel Hill Cemetery. Bertie Cloud White (who subsequently married three times) is also buried at Gravel Hill. No additional information has been found on Dalford White.

Nona Doyle, daughter of Minnie Lee Droddy (18) and Tillie (37) Doyle (sometimes "Doyal"). There were four other daughters and one son in the household from Tillie's previous marriage to Evie Mae Caples (who died April 25, 1939): Dorothy (11), twins Ruby Lee and Opal Lee (9), Billy Fay (6), and son Willard (1). The Doyles were located in ED 58-15. A grave marker in the Gravel Hill Cemetery identifies Nona Mae Doyle, daughter of Tillie and Minnie Lee, as born Jan. 20, 1941 and died May 1941. These dates are inconsistent with her birthdate recorded in the Census.

Infant Johnson (probably George Milford), son of Lela (27) and George (34) Johnson. There were three daughters in the Johnson household: Pauline (7), Zenobia (6), and Nola Faye. (2). The Johnsons were living in ED 58-14, which is the far eastern section of the Camp Polk acquisition area. Mr. Johnson was reported to be living in Florien as of 2010.

There were no children born in April 1940 in the Peason Ridge area (Sabine, Natchitoches, and Vernon Parishes). The youngest child appears to have been in the Peason area (ED 43-2). Two-month old "Dale" Bridges (listed as a girl, her name is actually "Gaile"), the third daughter of A.C. (27) and Edith (21) Bridges. Her sisters are listed as Elane (4) and Gwendolyn (1). As of early 2014, Gaile Bridges Westfall was reported to be living in Weeki Wachee, Florida.

By Leslie Barras, Cultural Resource Consultant, Orange, TX

member. More research, including evaluating the Census information together with oral histories and other resources, would shed more light on the factors that promoted an apparent fluidity of households moving within the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge acquisition areas prior to the Louisiana Maneuvers.

Households were traditional nuclear families. Women worked as homemakers in the broadest sense, including raising children, making the food, making many home products (such as soap), cleaning inside and out (including the outhouses), tending gardens and orchards, taking care of the sick, and working in the fields. Fathers primarily worked the land as subsistence farmers (growing food and feed

crops, plowing fields with horses, and raising chickens, hogs, sheep, cattle, and goats), often with the help of sons and daughters. Men who worked for wages were generally employed in New Deal emergency relief work or in the remnants of the timber industry.

About one-third of the population was children under the age of 14. In general, boys and girls attended an average of 6 years of school (first grade through sixth grade). They were needed at home to help with chores and in farm work and schools were often relatively far, requiring either a long walk to-fro or a long bus ride.

Although there was movement of families in and out of the acquisition and training land areas as Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range were established, overall, most people had been born in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes, as had their parents and grandparents. At one level, households were self-sufficient in that they grew their own food and made most of what they used to live. However, the living arrangements in "communities" (a self-identifying label) demonstrated a high level of economic interdependence in times of need, as well as socially and culturally.

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CHAPTER 3 by Brad Laffitte[1]

THE SUBSISTENCE FARMING LIFESTYLE: AN OVERVIEW OF FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CAMP POLK AND PEASON RIDGE AREAS AROUND 1940

1. INTRODUCTION

The settlers and Heritage Families of Vernon and southern Sabine and Natchitoches Parishes, Louisiana, were a hardy, individualistic, and self-sufficient lot, beholden to no one, yet knit tightly together by kin and community. These families shared a subsistence farming (or literally, farming for survival) lifestyle with deep roots in the Upland South cultural tradition. Their ancestors—primarily lowland Scots and Scots—Irish, mixed with English and Germanic peoples traveled in the 18th and 19th centuries from western Virginia, the Delaware Valley, and southern Pennsylvania, down the Appalachian chain, then southward and westward into Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas, and throughout the Southeastern United States (Smith 1999:203). They brought with them their Upland South cultural traditions, including a world view and way of life embodied by highly adaptable, independent pioneers and subsistence farmers.

Historic evidence indicates that the early settlers of the piney-wood lands destined to become Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range largely were White Anglos who had migrated from northeastern Louisiana or the southern tier of the Gulf States (Smith 1999:89-90). By 1940, Census records suggest that these then cut-over lands were home to perhaps no more than 700 families, scattered along and farming the first terrace of land on stream bottoms such as Whiskey Chitto ("Whiskachitta" to locals), Birds, and Six-Mile Creeks. Some of these families with economic means purchased their land, while others rented, "squatted," or lived for free on land owned by lumber companies or the government. Regardless of economic status, their shared Upland South heritage not only tied them together, but strongly tied them to the land.

Also spotted across the landscape of the Camp Polk area were numerous small communities knit together by social, cultural, and family ties. Some of these "Heritage Communities" were historically identified with and held together by institutions, such as a country school, church, or post office, while others arose and were centered round familial connections. Although much of the story of these Camp Polk and Peason Ridge Heritage Families and communities has been lost to time and the passing of generations, this chapter tells a piece of their history and gives a glimpse into "life on the range" in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes in spring of 1940.

2. HERITAGE FAMILY COMMUNITIES

The term "community" can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The word may suggest family and friends, a neighborhood, or other social connections. The word may also imply a broader shared connection to a geographic area such as the use of the same communal institutions. A community can also be simply defined to include all people living within a given area and/or sharing similar lifestyles or cultural traits. All of these definitions are applicable to the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas in 1940.

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Regardless of varying definitions, all communities transform and change through time. Community changes may occur quickly or slowly with the breakup of families, extension of families through intermarriage, and expansion of settlement areas. Cultural and technological changes as well as outside influences may impact community boundaries and cohesion/dissolution, and result in overlapping boundaries and shared connections with other communities. The term "community," as stated within this chapter, loosely means settled areas connected through ties between family, friends, and neighbors who generally use the same regional communal institutions for education and religion.

A total of 27 communities (17 on Camp Polk and 10 on Peason Ridge) and 13 sub-communities (8 on Camp Polk and 5 on Peason Ridge) have been identified using historic maps and data from Heritage Family informants. Historic aerial photographs from the mid-1930s indicate a total of over 300 sites featuring a structure (structural areas) for the Peason Ridge and Camp Polk areas. However, more homesteads and structural areas were probably obscured by vegetation and poor image quality, or were not in existence in the mid-1930s.

Figures 3-2.1 and 3-2.2 depict the approximate boundaries of the communities believed to exist in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas, circa 1940. The community boundaries depicted in the maps are loosely defined and provide a general spatial reference for the stories of Heritage Families discussed in later sections. The community locations in Figures 3-2.1 and 3-2.2 were generated using data from a series of historical maps,[2] aerial photographs from the 1930s, land ownership data, and Heritage Family informants. Features such as schools, churches, historic post offices, settlement, and major community locations were used as community center points, and walking distances from local homesteads to the community center point(s) were used to create buffers to approximate community boundaries. Community boundaries were further modified through discussion with Heritage Family members.

Figures 3-2.3 and 3-2.4 identify land ownership categories and community features in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas in 1940. By that year, there were no longer any post offices operating within the lands that would become Camp Polk or Peason Ridge, and most mail was routed through Leesville (Smith 1999:167-90). However, two schools and three churches—the Big Creek and Whiskachitta Schools, and the Zion Hill Church, Big Creek Baptist Church, and Mill Creek Pentecostal Church—are believed to have remained active within the modern installation boundaries. By 1940, no schools or churches were active within the area that would become the Peason Ridge Artillery Range, and school age children living in the area likely attended neighboring schools such as the Kistachie and Oak Grove Schools.

These figures help to illustrate an important awareness: in spite of being described by a friend of Dwight D. Eisenhower as a place "where I don't think any human beings have been for 50 years" (Anderson and Smith 2003:478), the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas were populated, not merely by the occasional homesteader, but were in fact home to established communities, some of which had existed for decades and many with long-standing schools, churches, and other institutions. What cannot be illustrated on these maps are the connections among friends and family members within these communities. These bonds of community provided essential support in both times of need and times of celebration. And yet all too soon these bonds would be severed.

[2]Historic maps include the map used in conducting the 1940 Census, dated 1937, and the 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map for Vernon Parish.

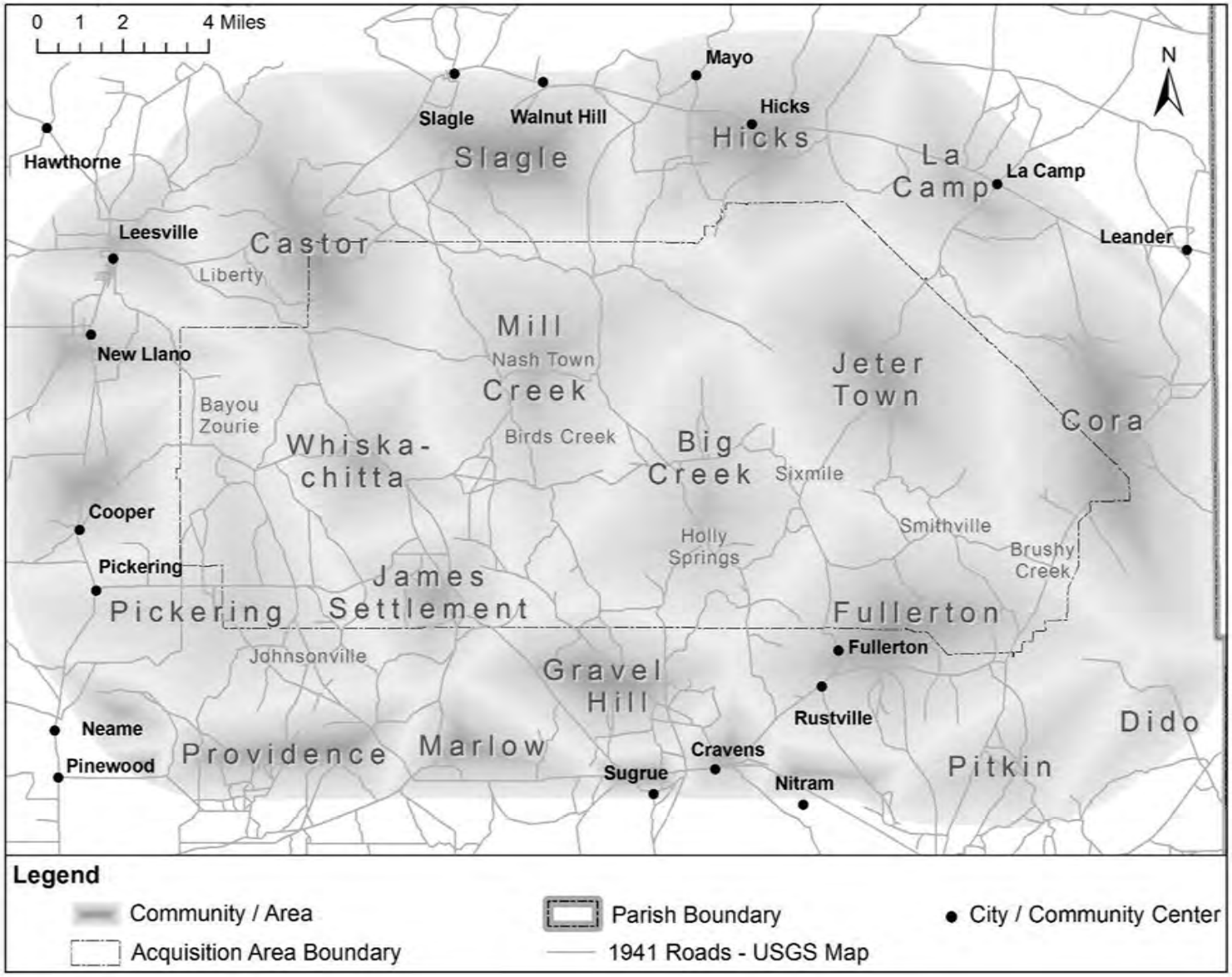


Figure 3-2.1. Communities within and adjacent to the Camp Polk acquisition area, ca. 1940. Constructed based on historic maps used in conducting the 1940 Census (dated 1937) and the 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map for Vernon Parish, and Fort Polk-validated data. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

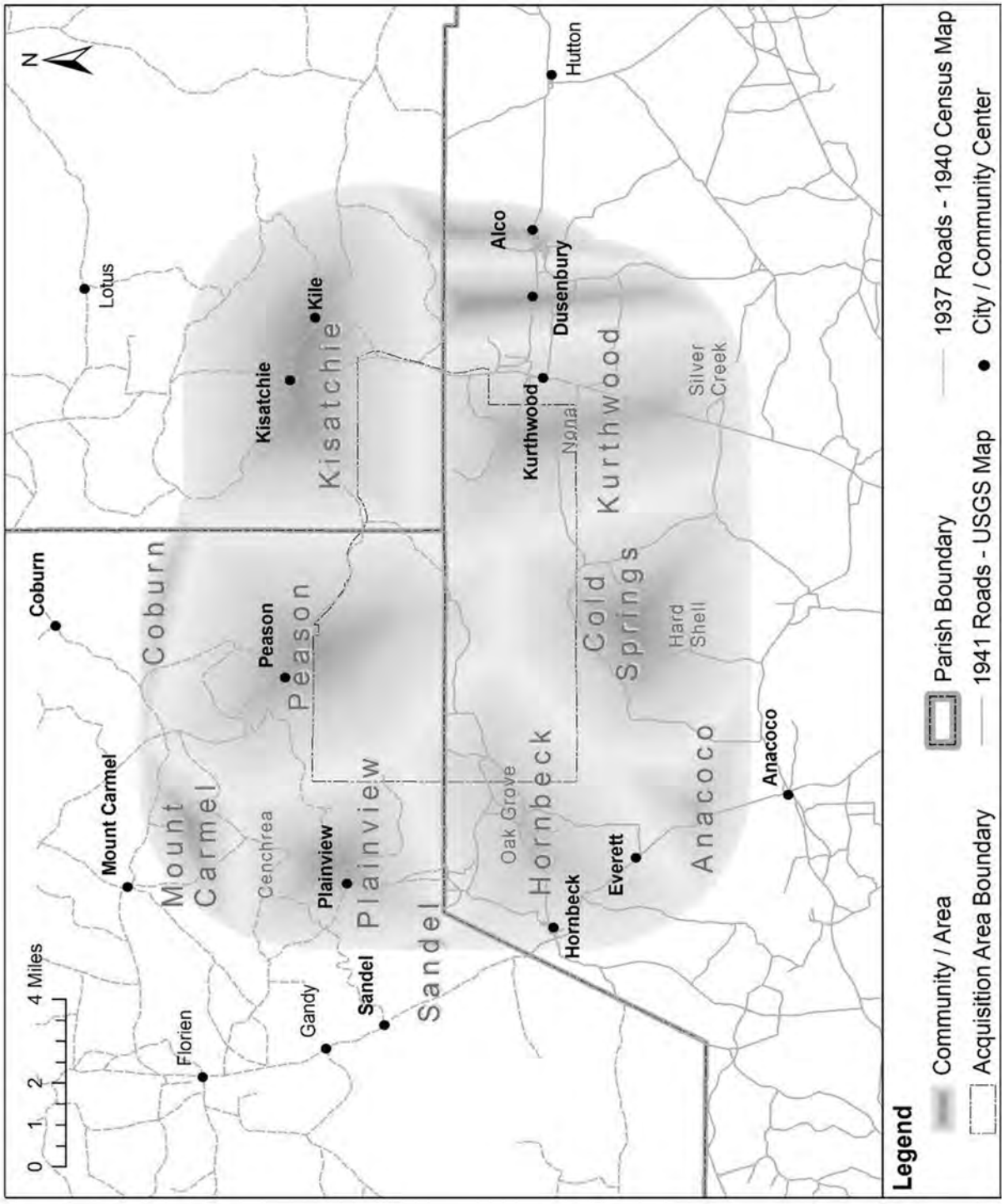


Figure 3-2.2. Communities within and adjacent to the Peason Ridge acquisition area, ca. 1940. Constructed based on historic maps used in conducting the 1940 Census (dated 1937) and the 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map for Vernon Parish, and Fort Polk-validated data. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

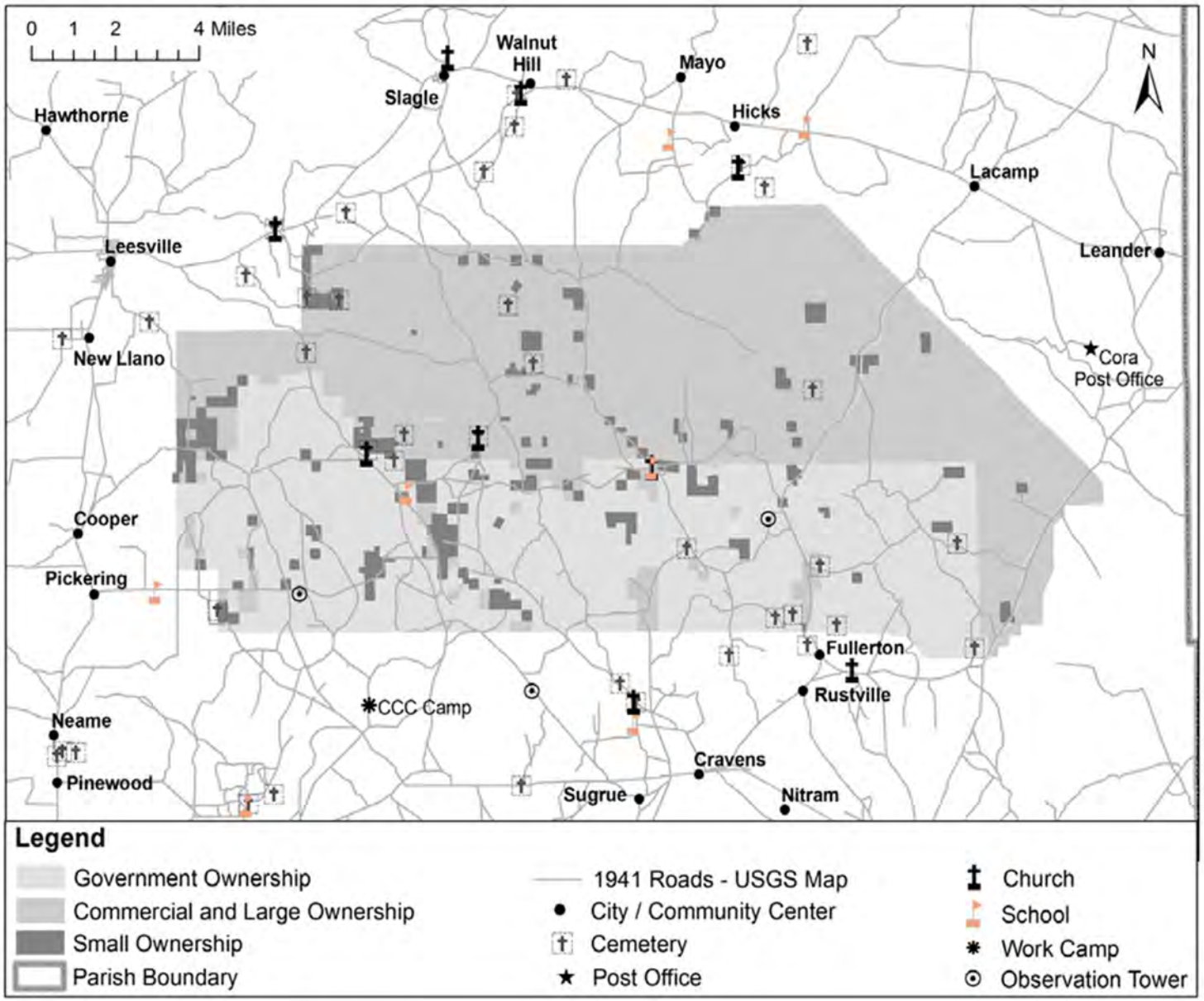


Figure 3-2.3. Community features within and adjacent to the Camp Polk acquisition area ca. 1940, including schools, churches, and cemeteries. Constructed based on historic maps as of 1937/1941, War Department Land Ownership maps from the period, and Fort Polk-validated data. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

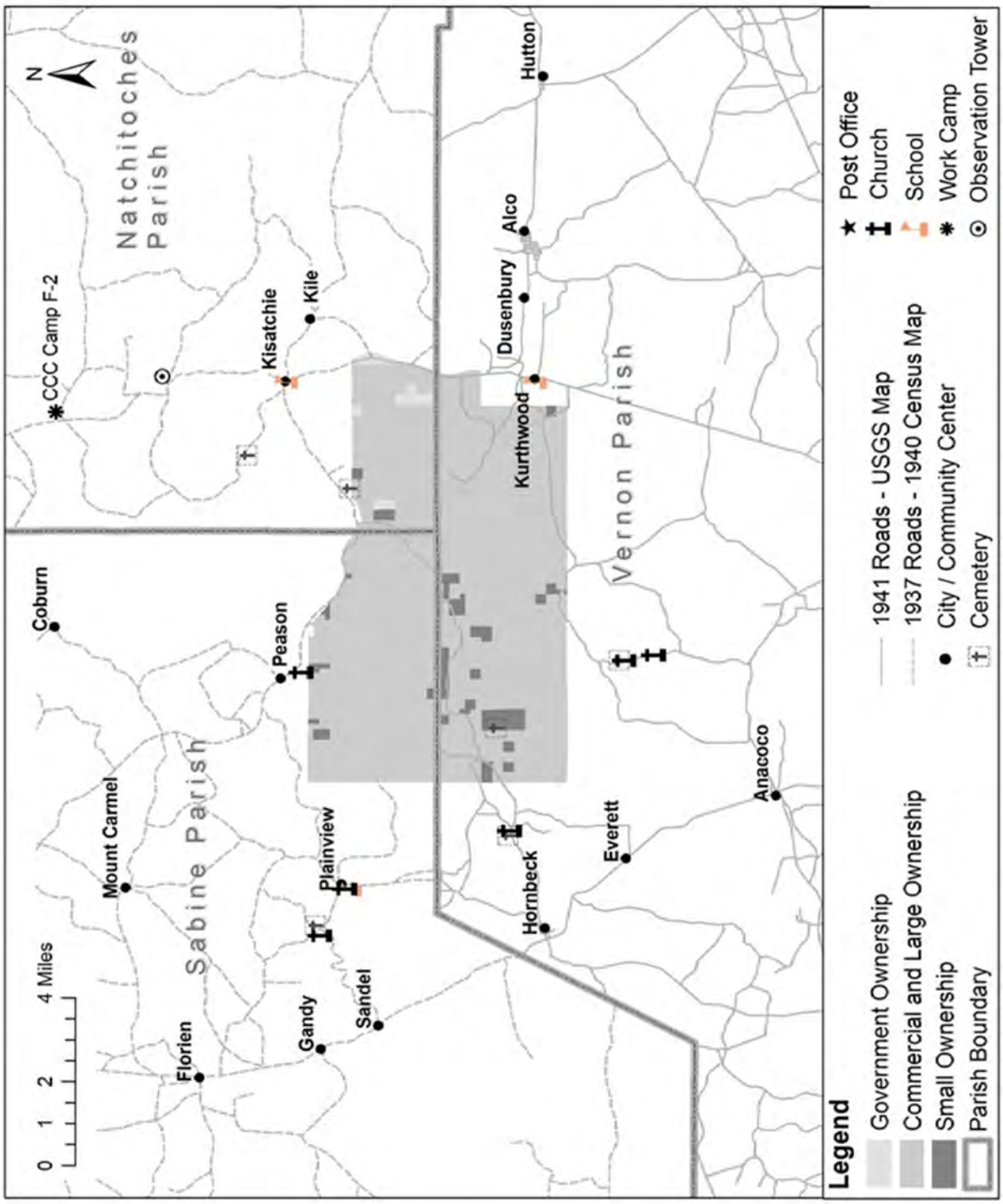


Figure 3-2.4. Community features within and adjacent to the Peason Ridge acquisition area, ca. 1940, including schools, churches, and cemeteries. Constructed based on historic maps as of 1937/1941, War Department Land Ownership maps from the period, and Fort Polk-validated data. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

3. A Life of Few Luxuries

Figure 3-3.1. Vernon, Maydella, and Versie Bass on wash day. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

To gain an understanding of what community might have meant to the Heritage Families of rural Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes, we must first transport ourselves back in time to an earlier era. Imagine being transported back to 1940 to a rural farm house without electricity or running water. Phones are available in larger towns, but no service is provided in the nearby area. A grocery store is located in Leesville, at least 5 to 20 miles away depending on where you live (and seemingly much farther because of the poor condition of roads), but the store only contains (and most people can only afford) basic items such as sugar and flour. Together we would be required to use ingenuity and rely on our neighbors for assistance with day-to-day tasks required for survival: transportation, growing crops and raising livestock, building a well for water, and maintaining a homestead.

The overall impact of living without current technologies and luxuries is often overlooked in modern society. The absence of electricity for Heritage Families meant no lights, air conditioners, clothes washers or dryers, televisions, computers, blow dryers, toasters, microwaves, and an assemblage of other items. Little work was accomplished after sundown because the only light was a coal oil lamp. The lack of running water and plumbing meant no indoor bathroom facilities, showers, faucets for washing dishes, or water hoses for tending gardens and flowers. Water was hauled from a well and clothes were cleaned on a washboard and hung on a line to dry. Other items we now take for granted that were unavailable to Heritage Families include refrigerators, pasteurized milk, and boxed meals. Meals were prepared without frozen foods (i.e., from "scratch") and cooked on a wood burning stove. Most clothing was sewn instead of store-bought. The lack of sunscreen lotion in a landscape with little shade resulted in a constant need to cover exposed skin, even during the hottest summer months. The absence of telephones meant emergency phone calls could not be made when a truck broke down. Communication was usually by word of mouth and mail service.

Figure 3-3.2. Floyd Monk, Neal Burns, and Sherman Monk picking cotton in the Six-Mile Community, ca. 1937. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Homestead Archaeology and "Recycling" at Fort Polk

The vast majority of homestead sites on Fort Polk contain very little evidence of structural remains or associated artifacts. The most common reason for this lack of evidence can be linked to a historic mentality of reuse and survival. The term "valuable" applied to small items such as nails, bricks, and wood, just as much as it applied to beds, chairs, ovens, vehicles, and other large items. Oral histories and historic documents indicate many Heritage Family members deconstructed and moved buildings, continuously reused construction materials, and salvaged all items that could be put to use at a later date. Archaeologists are usually left with bits and pieces of trash and overlooked artifacts. However, this lack of evidence still tells a story of the resourcefulness of the Heritage Families.

In the words of Marie Cryer White:

The word 'recycle' had never entered our vocabulary but we understood 'reuse.' Nothing was thrown away until all possible reuse was exhausted. After the men and boy's denim overalls were patched and repatched and completely unusable the legs were cut off and rolled up very tight to make smoke to use as mosquito repellant. This was effective, portable, and of course, cheap. Granny Cryer [Missouri Elizabeth Whitley Cryer] *could make a smoke that lasted for several 'sessions.' It would be crushed out and saved for another time (of course bedtime came earlier for everyone then). At times we had to use smoke to be able to fish, the insects were so bad. Dry cow chips were good for smoke also and most times readily available.*

By Brad Laffitte, Lead Archeologist, Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, Fort Polk, LA, and Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member (see Part 2 for her stories)

Poor economic conditions of the times and the absence of modern technologies resulted in a much heavier physical workload for adults and a longer job list for children. Subsistence farming involved a never ending list of chores: feeding animals, milking cows, picking cotton, plowing fields, tending crops, maintaining and repairing structures and fences, transporting cotton or other goods into town, canning foods, butchering animals for food, smoking meat, shelling peas or shucking and grinding corn, splitting wood for heating the house, and cooking food in the wood burning oven.

Parents of infants and toddlers did not have access to baby formula, locks to keep babies out of cabinets, pre-made baby food, disposable diapers, or modern medicines. Parents often kept young children occupied with wooden toys and homemade dolls. Toddlers and older children played outside and around the house. Meanwhile, their parents multi-tasked by cooking, cleaning, tending the fields, taking care of livestock, and conducting other chores, all with a watchful eye on their brood. Families with older children could enlist siblings to assist in caring for infants and toddlers, but newly established families faced the challenges of parenthood without modern conveniences.

Children of the family helped with any number of tasks before and after school, which included washing clothes by hand and hanging them to dry, helping sew or mend clothes, making butter or soap, drawing water from the well, gathering eggs, collecting firewood, and other chores as assigned. Children would also be responsible for helping to plow rows and plant fields, as well as picking vegetables, shelling peas, shucking corn, grinding corn into cornmeal, and assisting with the canning and preservation process. Picking cash crops, such as cotton, may also have been included in the children's "to do" list. In many instances, these chores had to be completed in

combination with homework:

> *Well sometime before we went to bed [homework would be done before bed]. And we marvel nowadays at about the fact that all that we had was that little old coal oil lamp. And how in the world that lamp could be over on this side of the room and me sitting over here* [on the other side] *how I could do my homework, I'll never know. Now you think you're in the dark completely* (J.C. Bridges 2007).

While children's chores were not necessarily "back breaking," the combination of tasks resulted in a very tiresome day of work. Sylvest (2008:253, 255), for example, describes keeping the lawn clean of grass, which would quickly overtake the garden if left unchecked. Another chore often assigned to children was sweeping the yard:

Figure 3-3.3. Jack, Dempsey, and Wilma Craft Haymon splitting wood. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

> *You see back there now we all try to have the most beautiful lawn of grass that you could have. In those days you were looked down upon if you had grass in your yard. You swept the yard…you kept all the grass out. Now flowers was fine and my mother liked to have a lot of flower beds and grow a lot of flowers, but all the areas where flowers didn't grow…* (J.C. Bridges 2007).

In sum, the subsistence farming life revolved around a physically demanding and unrelenting work schedule that required "know-how" and a diverse skill set to make do with available resources. Community members were highly self-reliant and valued their independence, yet most were more than willing to lend a hand when someone was in need, as each realized that they themselves might need a helping hand one day to secure the well-being of their families.

4. Heritage Family Homes and Farms

For most Heritage Families that owned their land, as well as some that did not, development of their homes and farms was a process filled not only with hard work and determination, but also with love. For many families, this work represented the planning, investment, and labor of a lifetime, and, in some cases, that of generations.

Figures 3-4.1 and 3-4.2 show the locations of home sites believed to exist in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas in the late 1930s to 1940. Within the land that would become Camp Polk and the northern portion of the Vernon District,[3] the locations of 101 Heritage Family home sites have been confirmed on the basis of historic maps and field verification, and the positions for at least another 47 home sites have been tentatively identified. On Peason Ridge, 31 historic home site lo-

[3]The Vernon Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest, now known as the Vernon Unit, was later combined with the Evangeline Ranger District to create the Calcasieu Ranger District. With the creation of Camp Polk and authorization of military use, the northern half of the Vernon District became known as the Intensive Use Area (IUA), and the southern half of the Vernon District became known as the Limited Use Area (LUA). Heritage Families were removed from the lands purchased by the Army beginning in 1940 as well as from the IUA of the Vernon District; however, private landownership and occupation continued in the LUA through the present.

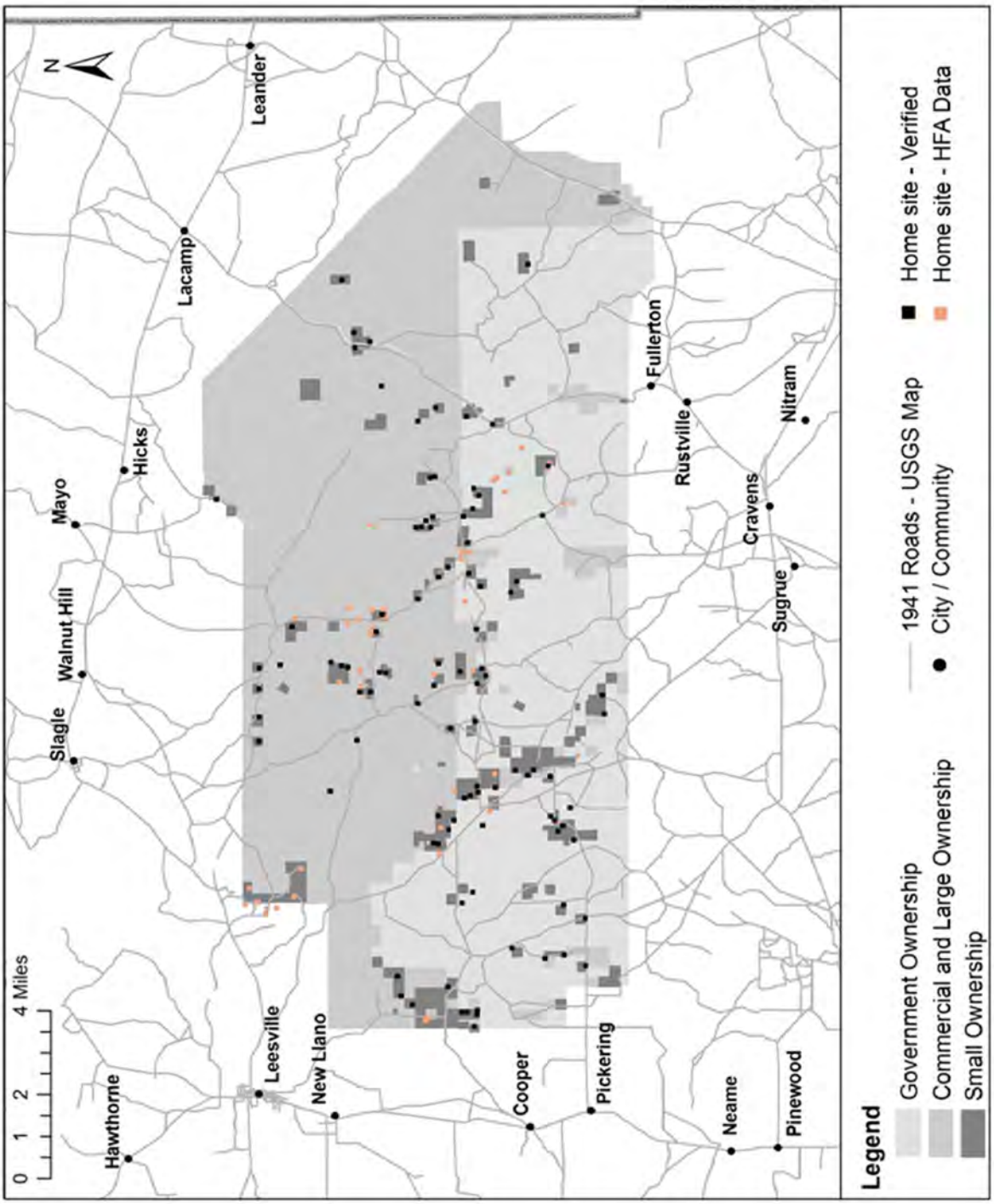


Figure 3-4.1. Home sites within and some immediately adjacent to the Camp Polk acquisition area, including sites verified by Fort Polk Heritage Program staff and those provided by Heritage Family Association (HFA) members, but awaiting field investigation or lacking field evidence to date. Period of home site establishment and use is unknown, but most verified locations are believed to be present in the late 1930s to early 1940s. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

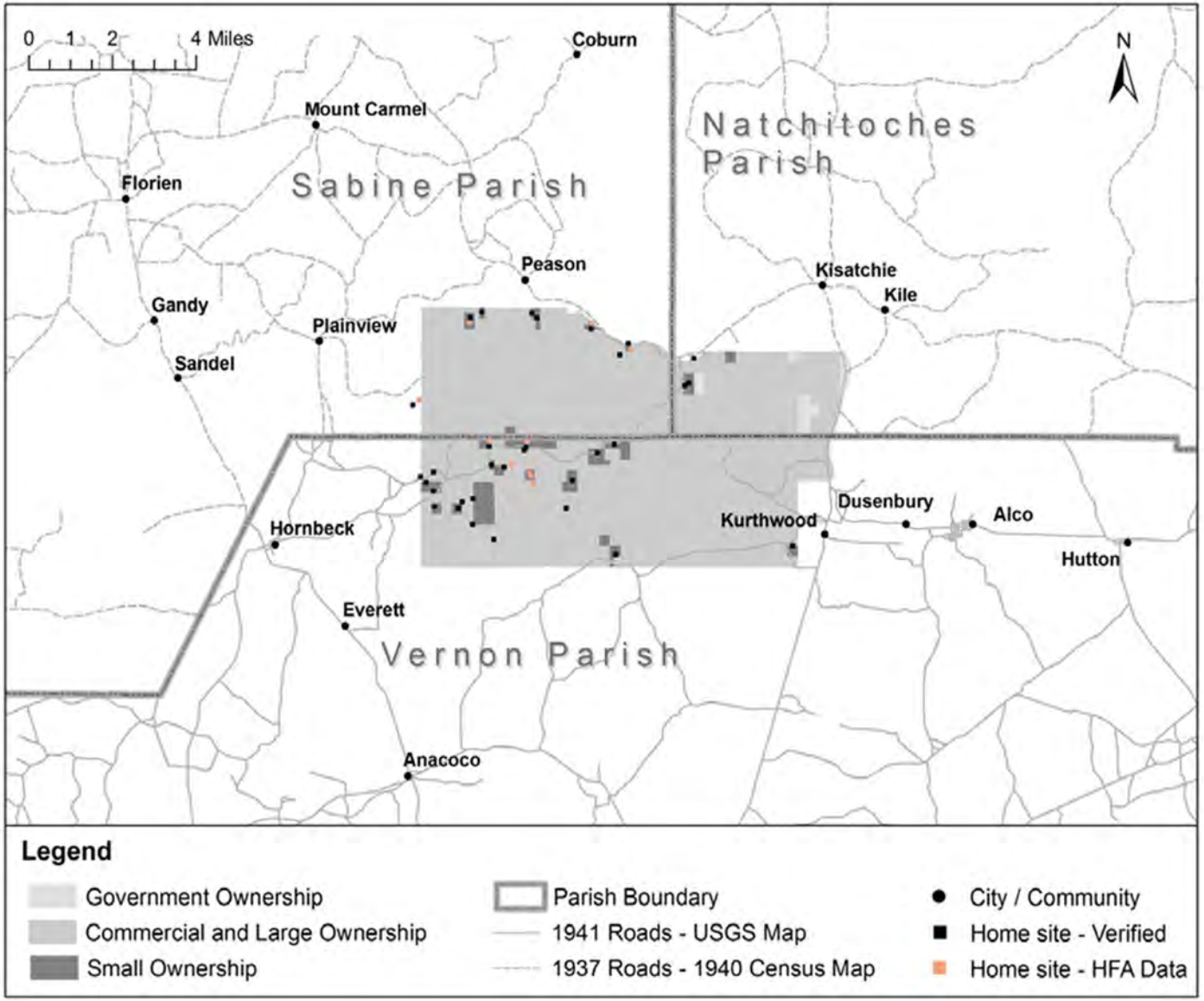


Figure 3-4.2. Home sites within and some immediately adjacent to the Peason Ridge acquisition area, including sites verified by Fort Polk Heritage Program staff and those provided by Heritage Family Association (HFA) members, but awaiting field investigation or lacking field evidence to date. Period of home site establishment and use is unknown, but most verified locations are believed to be present in the late 1930s to early 1940s. Source: Wagner, Robert, and Dwayne Hightower. Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. 2013. Landscape Community Analysis.

cations have been verified, and at least another 10 home site locations are suspected to have existed.

A large majority of the farms that existed in the 1930s in Vernon Parish were small in size: big enough to support a family but small enough to be worked by a family as well. Steven Smith (1999: 147) reports that in 1940, 50 percent of the farms in Vernon Parish were 20 to 49 acres in size, 23 percent were 50 to 99 acres, and only 12 percent were 100 acres or larger. Within the Camp Polk area in 1940, farms tended to be smaller still, with 33 percent being less than 20 acres in size, 38 percent between 20 and 49 acres, and just 28 percent being 50 acres or larger.

On Camp Polk, home sites were clustered predominantly along the Whiskachitta, Birds and Six-Mile Creeks. On Peason Ridge, home sites clustered mostly along the headwaters of Anacoco and Martin Creeks in the southwestern portion of the area. The location of the Heritage Family home sites and farms were largely dictated by the availability of water and land fertile enough to grow crops, and secondarily near roads (Smith 1999:207). Fields were generally located near the first or second terrace above streams, and home sites were typically located slightly above on the "noses" or side slopes of ridges overlooking the drainages.

4.1 Home Site Construction and Farm Operation

The operation of a farm required the construction of a home as well as several associated buildings. An outhouse was generally on one side of the house while a well was located on the opposite side, but both structures were in fairly close proximity to the house due to their frequent usage. Flowers and ornamentals were near the homestead in most instances and perhaps within a fenced-in area surrounding the house. A short distance away from the house one may have found a barn, chicken house, blacksmith shop, hog pen, corn crib, smokehouse, and a number of other outbuildings associated with farming and livestock.

House construction techniques varied, but one of the most common architectural styles of the time period was the double pen dogtrot house. Dogtrot houses were constructed with a central passageway separating two living areas or "pens." Dogtrots typically evolved from small cabins over time as family size increased. One of the main jobs of a dogtrot house was to channel wind and cool air through the central passageway. Windows and doors were normally aligned to better increase airflow. The function of this architectural design was especially important during the hottest summer months. Some dogtrot houses continued evolving and sometimes took on "L" shapes as additional bedrooms were added.

For the Heritage Families, their gardens were their grocery stores. In their gardens they planted much of the same vegetables that might be seen in a traditional Southern garden today: corn, beans, blackeyed or purple hull peas, cucumbers, onions, carrots, cabbage, greens, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, okra, squash, and watermelon.

> *As for growing up, this stood out in my mind. My Daddy* [John Fedrick Craft, called John F.] *had a grist mill. This was his Saturday job. People would bring their corn to grind into corn meal. They gave part of the meal to him as pay to grind the corn. So far as I know there was no one else that had a mill in the neighborhood. It wasn't a big operation but on Saturday, Homer* [son, Homer Craft] *and Daddy would grind the corn and Mother* [Mary Ella Cryer Craft] *would sack the meal* (Tressie Irene Craft Chitty 2014).

The vegetables that were not consumed immediately were canned or jarred and preserved for future usage. Corn was an essential part of the

Like Brown Patches on a Green Quilt

Local farmers would have been plowing their fields at this time of the year, turning up the light brown soil, dreaming of and praying for the improbable, but perhaps possible, perfect alignment of spring and summer rains that would produce bumper crops. An aerial view would have shown the Cryer, James, Haymon, and Jeter family farms appearing like isolated, brown colored patches here and there on a bright green quilt of new grass.

The family farms, averaging about 40 acres in size, lay across the landscape in a particular pattern: these small farms were arranged linearly along the major streams. Aerial photos of the 1930s show the cleared patches of individual farms lying fairly close to the streams on the first, second, or third terraces back from the stream. The fields were sited atop terrace soil that was more fertile than that along the sandy ridgelines. In terms of spatial arrangement, the farms were located between the streams and the ridgelines, the main roads were located on the ridgelines, and the farms were placed close enough to the streams to allow cultivation of the terraces.

Certainly, proximity of the home to the stream for water and fishing was important. But most important of all was the excavation (by human-powered shovel) of a "dug well" next to the home to provide a permanent water source. The water table could be reached within about 50 feet of digging anywhere along the terraces; whereas, had the home site been placed up on the ridgeline, the water table could not have been reached with a dug well.

To our knowledge, all farmers in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas depended upon natural rainfall for irrigation of their crops. One photograph in the Heritage Family archives shows a corn field which had not received the dreamed for, perfect alignment of seasonal rains. The picture shows a corn field with more skips than stalks, premature heading caused by prolonged drought, and dying young plants that will grow no higher in the rows.

By Dr. Charles Stagg, Chief, Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, Fort Polk, LA

subsistence diet in the absence of refrigeration. Extra corn was used to create cornmeal, which supplied the house with cornbread for the entire year (Sylvest 2012:38-39). Extensive planning and hard work was dedicated towards ensuring food was on the table year round without having to purchase any supplies other than the basic staples from local stores. Many homesteads also contained fruit orchards and much of the produce from those trees and bushes would also be preserved.

Most of the soil in the Camp Polk area is considered to be infertile, but Heritage Families learned to work the land as best as possible. Horses, mules and teams of oxen were commonly used to drag plows and prepare fields for planting. Store-bought fertilizer was sometimes used, but many other families primarily used animal manure (or a combination thereof) since they could not afford to purchase fertilizer from the store.

Subsistence farming also meant tending to livestock such as chickens, hogs, cattle, goats, horses, and other animals. Cows supplied milk and butter, and any surplus of milk was often used to make cottage cheese or sour cream. Cows were sometimes used as payment on loans or provided to a neighboring family to ensure the children of that family had enough milk. Cows were rarely slaughtered since the large amount of meat would spoil if not quickly consumed by the family. Chickens were used for their eggs and meat, as well as for barter at local stores or with neighbors (Sylvest 2008:75-79). Hogs were used for both their meat and flavoring. Hog lard was

used to season dishes, while hog meat (ham, bacon, sausage) was cured and placed in a smokehouse, which kept the meat safe from spoilage for one year.

Subsistence farmers showed much ingenuity in designing farm structures and choosing materials. Farmstead support structures, for example, were commonly rodent-proof due to the construction techniques used. Sylvest (2008:251) describes building a rodent-proof corn crib in the late 1930s by placing the floor five feet above the ground surface and covering each supporting

Spring Planting

This Spring Day in 1940 likely was the same as the days of many springs past; the future could not be seen. Spring is the start of the renewal cycle - the awakening. The birds, bees, blossoms and yearnings all come alive. The rule was to 'plant after the last frost.' And, it was said that 'if the corn tasseled by the fourth of July, it would be a good crop.'

On this day, new land would be cleared, 'turned over' and disked to let lay in rest for a short period prior to being rowed for planting and cultivation. Crops were planted on either 'rows' or 'hills' with the middles being wide enough for the plow horse to cultivate. The families planted high yield efficient crops so the entire plant could be harvested for human or animal consumption. Sweet potatoes, peanuts, corn, Irish potatoes and peas were primary field and cash crops. The seeds were largely saved from the last crop harvested. The sweet potatoes and potatoes (mostly the red variety) would be put out to start making 'eyes.' From these sprouts, slips or draws, were cut and planted. If the sweet potatoes had weevils, new slips would have to be obtained.

Most farms were worked by the men and older boys doing the plowing and the women and younger children doing the planting. The gardens were watered from a bucket and dipper when the little plants were seen wilting. Many of the small plants were given a little water daily until the root system developed if the rain was scarce. The entire family stood guard over the plants to keep insects, birds, cows and raccoons away.

Figure 3-4.3. Ely Hall and Truit Huggins conversing in the fields, Six-Mile Creek Community. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

These were subsistence farms. Primarily the food was grown for home consumption and to feed the support animals. At harvest time, the extra would be taken to town and to neighbors to be bartered or sold for staples and cash.

Only after the field and garden work was done, could the kids play.

My father told me that after the gathering of crops and fattening of hogs all summer, just before the school session, that they would take hogs to Leesville and sell them to get staples and school clothes. He said his mother would buy him five new shirts for school. Much to his dismay, all of the shirts would be just alike.

By Jim Huggins (2013), Heritage Family member

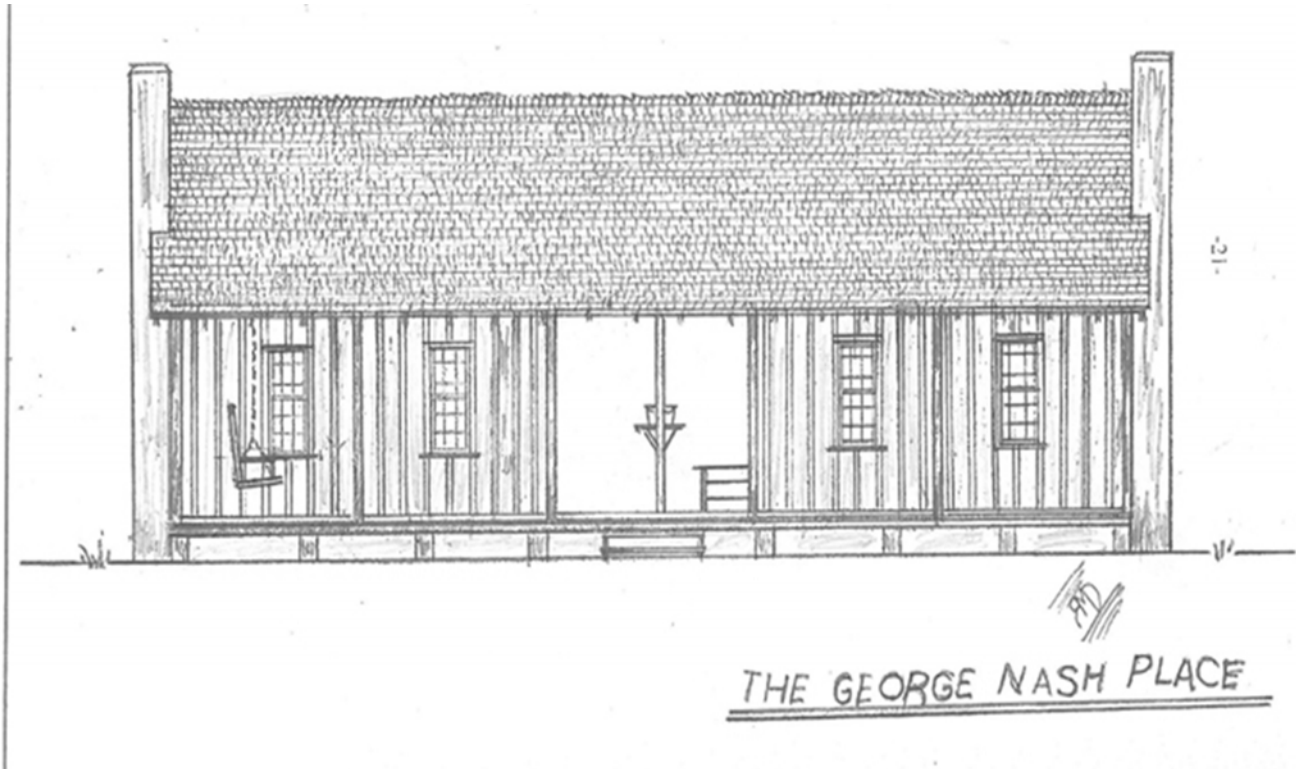


Figure 3-4.4. The George Nash homestead exhibiting the double pen dogtrot style. Sketched as recalled by Roy McDaniel, Jr. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Figure 3-4.5. Azzie Haymon, ca. 1930. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

wooden pier with a five-gallon can turned upside down so rats and mice could not climb into the building.

Home repairs and other maintenance and household needs were often resolved through the three "Rs": reuse, recycling and resourcefulness. Improvisation was an essential component of the culture. For example, hay baling wire was commonly used as a fastener and to accomplish minor repairs until a more permanent solution could be found. Materials were often repurposed for personal and household use, such as burlap (for clothing) and string from flour sacks (for fishing line and hanging meat) (Sylvest 2008:240-246).

4.2 Subsistence Farming and an Extra Fifty Cents

Locally, subsistence farming was the most common form of work in 1940 and many men who farmed had to find outside work for cash income. Many Heritage Families not only pro-

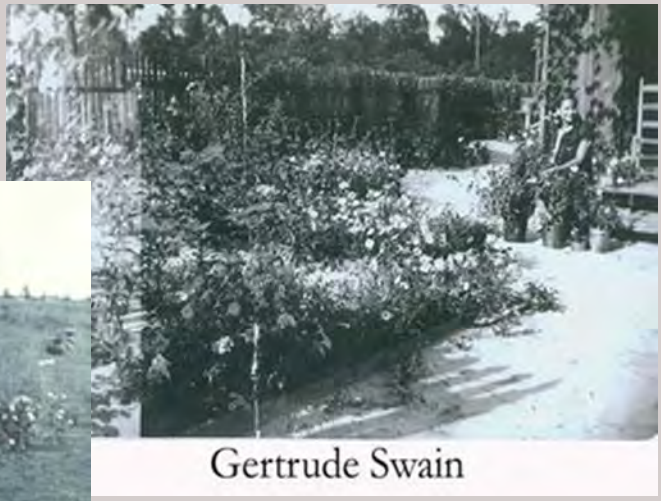
What Do Plants Tell Us About Heritage Homestead Sites?

Most historic homesteads contained Heritage shade trees, fruit trees, and shrubs or flowers. The identification of vegetation that indicates the likely presence of a homestead is called a "vegetative signature." Fruit trees and orchards were common at many homesteads and could provide income when families canned and sold their extra produce. Several of the plants listed below have been identified during field investigations at Fort Polk and Peason Ridge or through oral history research. While the occurrence of particular native plants and even some non-native plants does not provide definitive evidence, the presence of these plants often suggests the location of an historic homestead, especially in instances where plants are aligned or are located outside of their natural environment.

Non-Native Trees, Shrubs, Flowers, Vines, Herbs	
Live Oak	Sweet Shrub
Crepe Myrtle	Bridal Wreath
Pear	Epazote, Worm Weed,
Peach	Mexican Tea
Chinaberry	Thuja
White Mulberry	Gardenia
Black Walnut	Gladiolus
Fig (oral history interview)	Seven Sister Rose
Jonquils (oral history interview)	Cactus
Apple (oral history interview)	Dusty Miller
Chicksaw Plum (often called plum)	Yellow Bamboo
Wisteria	Chinese Privet

Native Trees and Shrubs
Large Oaks (mostly red or post oak)
Hickory
Sycamore
Red Cedar
Catalpa
Pecan

By Dr. Charles Allen, Senior Botanist, Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division (ENRMD), Fort Polk, LA, and Brad Laffitte, Lead Archeologist, ENRMD, Fort Polk, LA



Gertrude Swain

Vinie Huggins Hall

Figure 3-4.6. Heritage landscapes. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

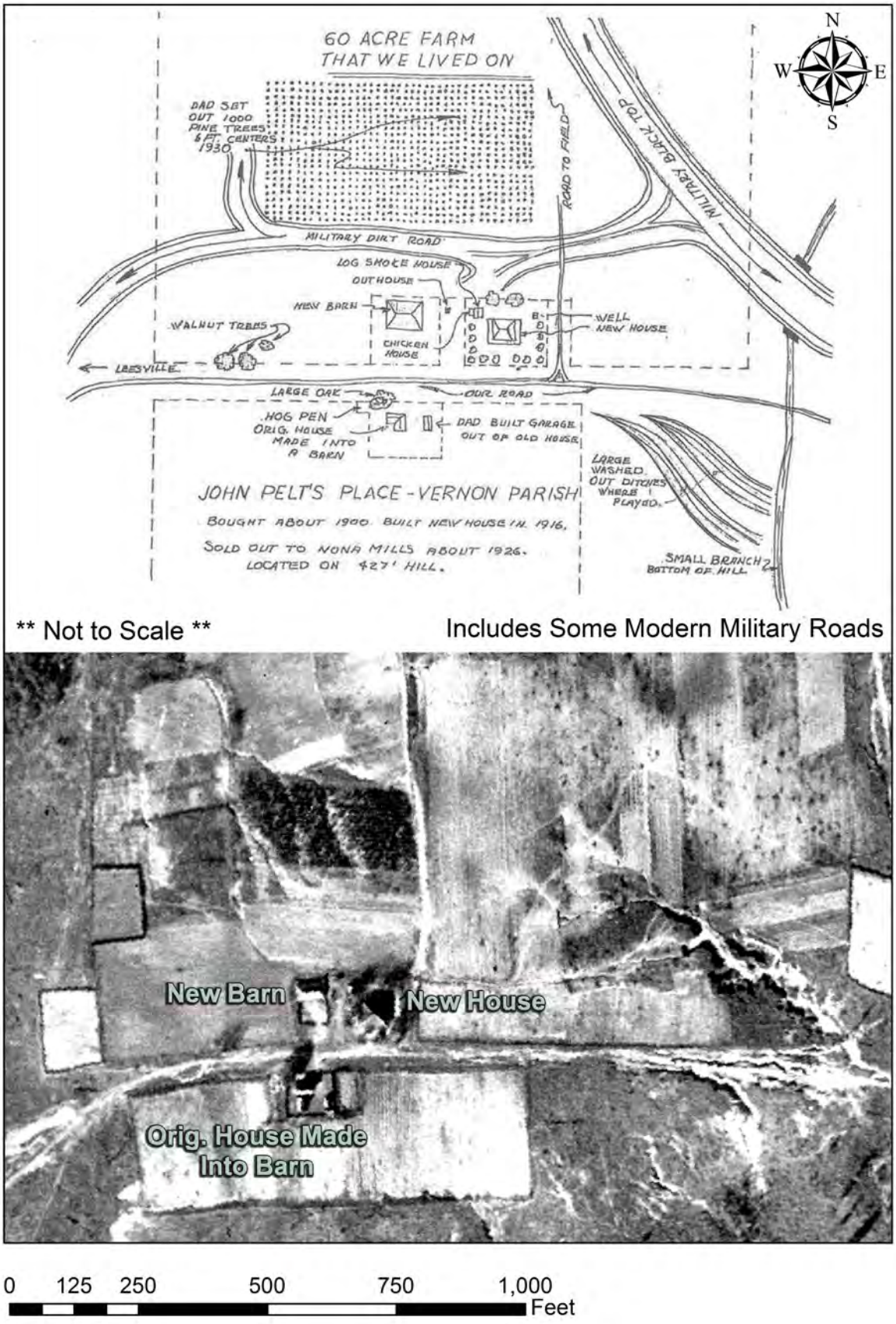


Figure 3-4.7. Top (sketch) - Layout of the John Pelt homestead as remembered by Roy McDaniel, Jr. Below (photo) - Aerial image from the mid-1930s showing the John Pelt homestead and associated structures. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

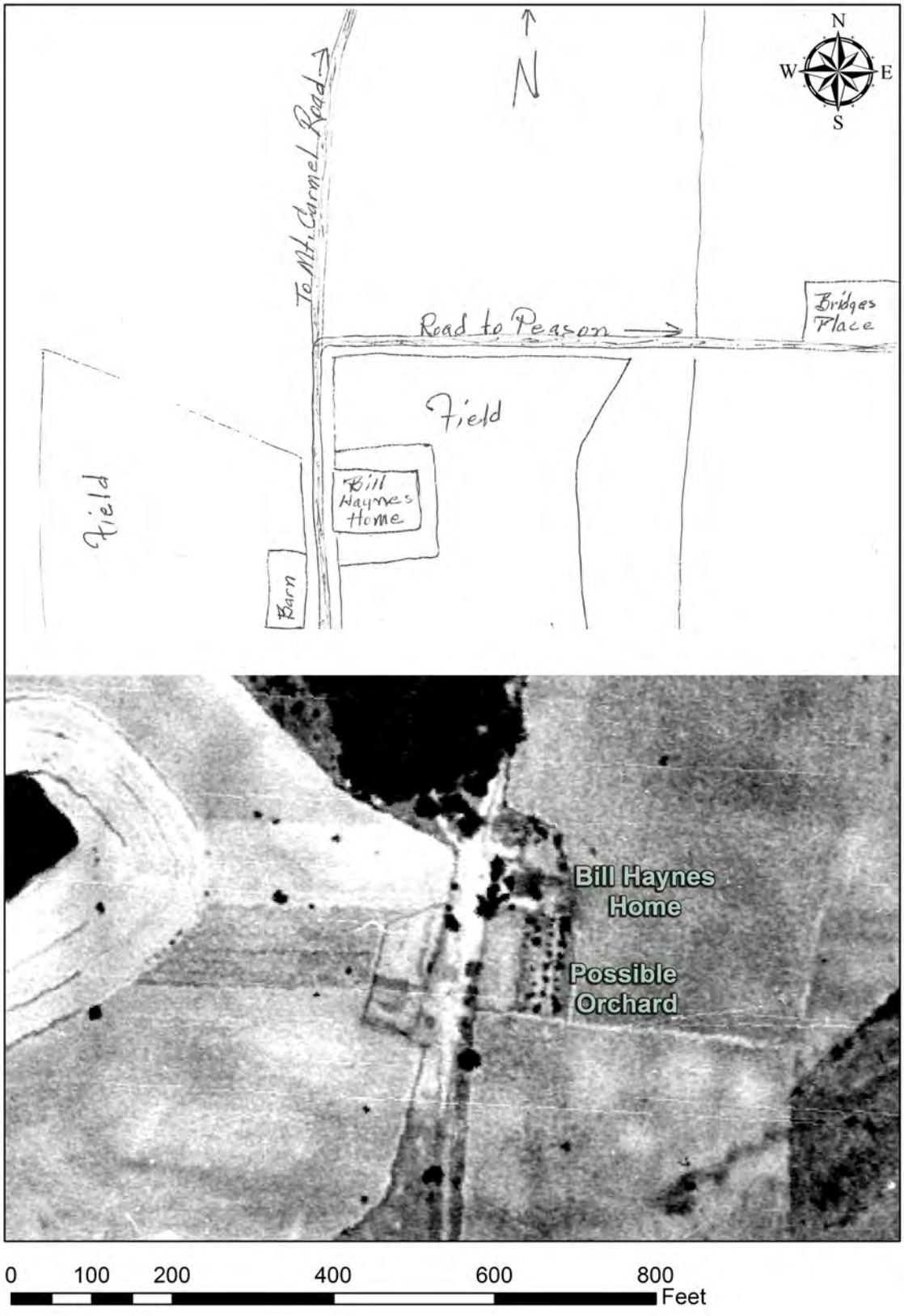


Figure 3-4.8. Top (sketch) – Layout of the Bill Haynes homestead by Rickey Robertson and A. L. Bridges (not to scale). Below (photo) – Aerial image from the mid-1930s illustrating the homestead location, fencelines, fields, and several rows of trees that appear to indicate the presence of an orchard. Note that some features/ structures may be difficult to see or may not have existed at the time the photograph was taken. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

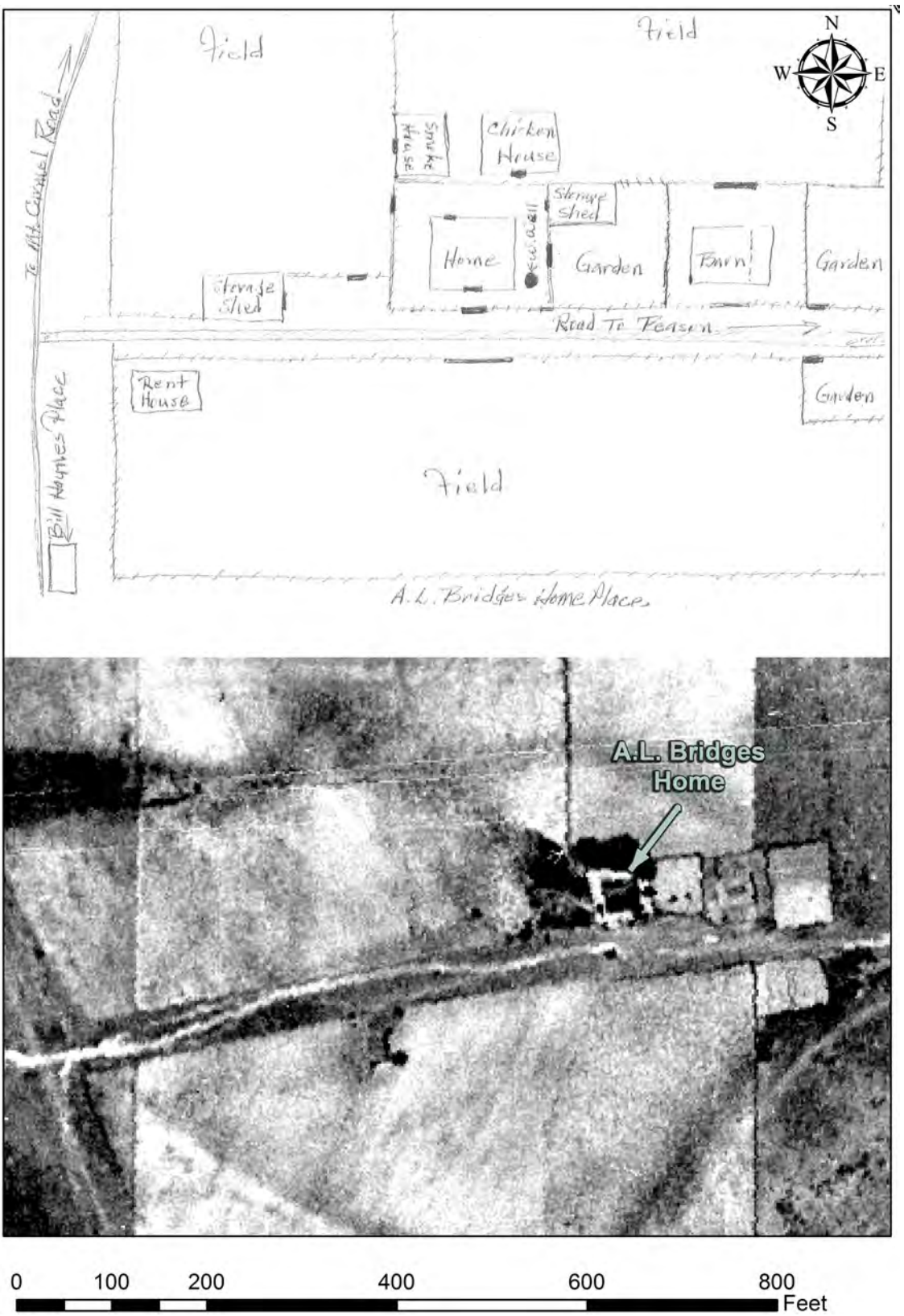


Figure 3-4.9. Top (sketch) – Layout of the A.L. Bridges Homestead by Rickey Robertson and A.L. Bridges (not to scale). Below (photo) – Aerial image from the mid-1930s illustrating the homestead location, fence-lines, fields, and other features. Note that some features/structures may be difficult to see due to tree cover and the poor quality of the historic images, or they may not have existed at the time the photograph was taken. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Figure 3-4.10. Laura Cryer and daughter Vergie. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

duced enough food for their family but also grew cash crops to supplement income. Most Heritage Families farmed their land using the labor of their own families and relatives, but owners of larger "general" farmsteads required hired help. As one Heritage Family member recalls:

> *...in the times we'd get through with our work…the small fields…and people like the Sneed farm over there that had to have a lot of help to be able to manage their…we would hire out with them to make a little money. Now I can recall that he'd hire my dad, my older brother, and myself, and my dad would get a dollar a day, and my older brother would get 75 cents, and I'd get 50 cents…better than nothing, but the thing was every time they hoed a row, so did I…so he's getting a bargain with me!* (J.C. Bridges 2007).

In addition to crops grown for consumption, some items, such as peanuts and sugar cane, were used for both consumption and profit. At Peason Ridge, John Brown operated a syrup mill at his homestead on Martin Creek. Mr. Brown crushed and ground his sugar cane and that of his neighbors in order to make syrup.

> *In my growing up, my Dad* [John Fedrick Craft] *also had a cane mill where we made our own syrup. The mill was located a ways behind our house. There was a creek or branch where he put the cane mill. So he had water as he needed it. It was always exciting to see the vat where the syrup was boiling. When ready, the syrup would be canned. I would like to have a can now* (Tressie Irene Craft Chitty 2014).

Cotton and sugar cane were common cash crops grown by Heritage Families. In 1940, Vernon Parish collectively produced a large number of different cash crops. Census data indicates that cotton acreage in 1940 was half of what it was in 1930, but the number of bales produced remained nearly the same. Steve Smith (1999:149) suggests this "boost" in productivity may be related to the promotion of fertilizers to grow crops. Other vegetables, crops and herbs could be used to supplement income such as canned peaches and snakeroot. Snakeroot was used to make medicine, and collecting it provided additional income to families.

The 1940 Census captures data on employment, but other forms of income and ingenuity are not recorded. Some Heritage Families worked side jobs or had hobbies that turned into extra income, and those side jobs are not recorded in the Census survey. For instance, someone talented in arts and crafts, or knowledgeable about vehicle repair, could make extra income using those skills. A Heritage Family member from the Peason/Plainview community, for example, recalls his dad working multiple jobs (for more discussion on types of work see Chapter 2):

> *Yes, he worked some* [other than subsistence farming]*...he'd go to work for whoever was building that road, work for them some. Dif-*

Figure 3-4.11. Elijah Haymon working a horse-drawn plow. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 3-4.12. Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon and Dot Atchetee processing cane for syrup, 1941. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Snakeroot Digging Time

Digging snake roots was not a leisure activity. First it was very difficult finding the stuff and then when you found one; you had to be very careful how you harvested it from the ground. It sold by the pound but the problem is it sold by the dried pound. Once we dug up the snake roots, put them in our carrying bags, we then walked for miles back to our home, carrying these heavy bags of snake roots over our shoulders. It was hard work indeed. In fact after a week of digging snake roots we were happy to be back in the fields working the crops. Once we got the snake root home, then we had to sort it out into piles, lay it out in the sun, and dry the roots of all moisture. Once it was dried, then we tied strings around it, sort of making it into a small bale of snake root, somewhat like one would make a bale of hay today. I think today the root sales for like $115.00 per pound. That sounds like a lot of money, and we certainly did not get that kind of money in 1940, but the real problem is that it took a lot of snake root to make a pound of dried snake root, ready for the market. I figure it took me at least two days to get enough of it to make a pound.

By Gene Haymon (2013), Heritage Family member, as told to him by his uncle, Arthur Haymon (WWII Vet), Birds Creek Community

ferent things, we worked a lot in the woods... logging, pulpwood, piling, we cut trees and in my younger years we hewn cross ties with a broad axe (J.C. Bridges 2007).

Extra money, when there was any, was often used to purchase necessary items from the Sears and Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and Spiegel catalogs. Several family members have recalled the excitement that ensued upon arrival of catalogs in the fall and spring.

Figure 3-4.13. James Swain was an excellent basket maker. His baskets could be gifted on special occasions or sold for extra income. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

As the country slowly began to rise from the Great Depression in 1940, the Heritage Families survived through sheer work ethic, but for most families, the only "true profit" was survival, as very little money was generated through all the hard work:

...money was scarce, we didn't have any, I've seen the time when my dad maybe had a quarter and he'd talk to my mother about what they absolutely needed to buy with that quarter because that's all there was (J.C. Bridges 2007).

5. Community Bonds and the Milestones of Life

Community bonds were essential in Upland South Culture and especially prevalent in the Camp Polk area. Communities were often closely tied by familial relationships and were sometimes centered round a matriarch or patriarch.[4] Neighbors and family members came together to help one another in times of need and to celebrate in times of joy. All the major milestones

[4]Steven Smith (1999:212-213) describes the Jetertown community in the northern portion of the land acquired for Camp Polk as being centered round a patriarch, Henry Jeter.

in life – birth, marriage, death—and all occasions in between were cause for gathering together to rejoice, mourn or provide support. Two Heritage Family members from the Big Creek Community recall people lending assistance during times of need:

> *She* [Heritage Family member's mother] *visited the sick and helped take care of them. I can remember going to take care of Uncle Washy Brack, and I wasn't very old, maybe 15, 16. And when he was so bad off with high fever, I went out in the corner of the yard and broke me a limb off it and came back and asked Aunt Liz if she had a clean cloth and I made what we called swabs. I never seen a swab and didn't know anything about one of them and I just had the knowledge to fix it and use cold water which helped and eased his breathing and his mouth was so dry. Like I said everybody helped each other. When we all got the measles different ones would come and help out and cook for us. One lady'd come every day but she wouldn't take her coat in the house. She'd hang out outside and because she didn't want to take the germ home with her* (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).
>
> *If someone needed help, well, we would just go and help. Well daddy would go and my older brother and after I got big enough, well we just all go and do whatever was needed to be done. You know, if we needed help, they* [community members] *would come help us…and sometimes people would get sick. Well they didn't lose no crop because they got sick because the community made their crop for them* (Leon Swain 2008).

Storms and accidental fires occasionally damaged or destroyed homes and other buildings, resulting in a need to repair or rebuild structures. Sometimes these events would bring together the entire family to work and restore what was lost. Other community members would also lend a helping hand. One Heritage Family member from the Jetertown Community recalls the aftermath of one such event:

> *…in 1933, April 1933, our house burned and everything we had, clothes, the works* [burned]*…the only thing we had, each one of us, I had two older brothers and me, was the clothes we had on. And all of momma's pictures of all her young girl days, all burned and it just tore her all up. I mean, she just went to pieces, lost her health…but, from that then we came back. My dad bought a house about 5 or 6 miles from where we lived, and him and my 2 older brothers tore it down, hauled it in a horse and wagon, back up here to Six-Mile* [Creek]*, and rebuilt it. And made a crop that same year…* (James Jeter 2008).

Community members often provided help to one another for managing free-ranging livestock. In the 1930s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture initiated an effort to eradicate "cow fevers," which resulted in the creation of dipping vats containing creosote. Cows would be rounded up and sent through these concrete dipping vats to be coated with creosote for the purpose of killing ticks and preventing disease. Families often needed help from others to accomplish this task.

Family members and neighbors also banded together to assist one another with butchering and filling up their smokehouses with pork for the winter:

> *…my daddy did* [slaughter hogs]. *He was an expert at it. People would come and help* (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

On occasion, neighbors joined together to implement "community improvement projects."

When Heritage Family members were overcome by illness, accident, or age, families and community members were often directly involved in burials, including construction of coffins, creation of headstones, and excavation of the graves.

Dipping Cows, Typhoid Shots, etc.

In the years 1936-1939 several things went on that affected the area as a whole. Some Federal Agency made a decree that all cows had to be dipped for fever ticks. Dipping vats had to be built and that took material and expertise, lacking in the local vicinity. Someone came in to demonstrate, probably a Fed.

Herding range cows into pens was a tremendous undertaking; most had never been penned at all. Schedules had to be worked out for each herd. Some tempers flared but nothing serious. It's a wonder!

Then one summer everyone, adults and children, had to have a typhoid vaccination; this was a series of three shots—a week apart, I think. Dr. Jeane was swamped for quite a while.

Saga of the Dam That Wasn't

One summer; it must have been about 1936, several men in the community built a dam on the branch in the front of our house, two or three hundred yards above the crossing. It was quite an engineering project; they worked several days on it. It was going to provide fish and recreation—a big community betterment project.

This fast flowing little stream was too much for this little dam, especially if there was rain run-off. Surrounding hills drained into it. Anyway, when they checked the project sometime later it had 'blown'—timbers and debris scattered downstream. Oops, there went 'Another Million Kilo-watt Dam!'

By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member

Funerals and Their Preparation (adapted)

My first memories of funerals started in 1937 when I was almost 6 years old. My mother and I were walking to my grandmother's home early in May; we were hurrying as we approached my Uncle George and Aunt Oda Cryers home. I always enjoyed our little visits, when we passed their home because I would get to see my two cousins, Marie and Dudley. They were also my two best friends; also my mother was always so happy after visiting with her sister.

When we arrived at the Cryer home, we learned that Aunt Oda was seriously ill and that Dr. Jeane was not expecting her to regain consciousness. He was sitting with her seeing to her comfort.

We walked on to Grandma's house which would normally have been a happy time for me, but this visit to my grandmother Davis' home was the worst experience of my life. My mother and grandma tried to explain funerals, death and hereafter, plus what the community would do for the bereaved family. It all was so confusing, I had many questions.

When my uncle Willie G. Davis came in (he lived with my grandmother) I approached him with many of my questions. 'Hold up, not so fast, let me tell you about funerals and how they are handled by the whole community.'

When there is a death in a family the whole community (friends and neighbors) gather around the bereaved family to help them by assisting with all things that must be accomplished before the funeral, which is normally conducted approximately 24 hours from the time of death.

Continued

Funerals and Their Preparation *(continued)*

'Uncle Willie, what has to be done before the funeral?'

Uncle Willie explained that for preparation of the body, normally three or four of the oldest active women in the community will bathe and ready the deceased for burial, decking them out in their finest garments. Nickels will be placed on their eyes to insure they will stay closed (the nickels will be removed when rigor mortis is complete). Another problem is many corpses have a gaping mouth. This is corrected by tying a scarf under the chin and over the head tight until rigor mortis is completed.

'Next the attending ladies will remove a door from the least used room in the house and place a ladder-backed chair at each end of the door, forming a platform. Then the door is covered with a bed sheet to display the body for viewing, and they will place a coal-oil lamp at the head of the corpse.

'Normally while the body is lying in state, Kate Jasmine (gardenia), if available, would be placed around the body to soften the odor that accompanies an un-embalmed body.

'While the body is being prepared for burial, three to four of the best wood-workers in the community will build a wooden casket using pine or cypress lumber to contain the body.

'The features of the casket are governed by the amount of money available at the time of the death. The most common casket will consist of a simple pine box, but built with excellent workmanship. The more affluent family would use rolled cotton quilting tacked inside the coffin, and covered with white, grey or black sateen cloth adding a pillow of the same color, possibly adding brass hinges and carrying handles.

'Graves are dug within the first 12 hours after death, weather permitting. The size of the grave is dictated by the size of the deceased. A rule of thumb would be 6 feet x 3 feet x 6 feet for average dimensions, with the walls of the grave opening being reduced at the 4 feet level by 4 inches all around the perimeter so boards could be placed over the casket to keep the dirt from falling directly on the casket when the grave was covered.

'When possible, Vernon, all of what I just told you is completed the first day and then that evening everyone would come back with covered dishes and most would stay for an all night vigil and wake.

'I forgot to tell you about a grave marker, every community has someone who makes wooden grave marker. The man in our community is the same person that cuts your hair, Murphy Eddlemon.'

My mom was a nervous wreck. We spent the night with grandma, and we did not know if Aunt Oda was alive or dead.

We start on our walk back home and this was the longest walk I ever had. When we reached Aunt Oda's home we found that she had just passed, and people in the community were already stopping by and offering their services. The community acted just like Uncle Willie had told me it would; they took care of everything.

Life was so saddened for a long, long time, but after a few months the hurt was not so great. Marie and Dudley spent a lot of time with us (my family). This helped them with their grief and really helped my mother. Gradually after about 4 months my cousins and my mother started to smile and laugh again.

Time heals a lot of hurt. But after 76 years, writing this story has been very saddening to me.

By Vernon D. Smith (2013), Heritage Family member

Adapted with permission by Stacy Basham Wagner Environmental Analyst, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. (see Part 2 for the original story)

Community and Family Gatherings

The subsistence farming lifestyle necessitated a closer family and community environment. Several Heritage Family members recall family and community gatherings during a time when everyone knew everyone else.

I remember too, on the 4th of July, every year, all of the family, I'm talking about grandpa's people, you know, and all the children and everybody, we would get together and we would go up on the creek somewhere and we'd just have a big outing, big fish fry. We would fish, well some of the men and boys that was big enough. They would go the night before and they would set out lines, you know and catch all the fish they could. And then we'd fish in the morning time when we all got up there, and we would have a big dinner on the ground (Leon Swain 2008).

Sometimes they'd [community members] *all gather up and do this* [butchering, cooking, and eating] *and sometimes they just do it on their own, each one, on their own. But when they killed the beef... all the family and the friends would gather round and take part of it. Because they didn't have no way of keeping it. There's not no refrigerator, nothing like that. So they just had to eat it, you know what I mean. You couldn't keep it. Unlike hogs, they would salt them down and smoke it and they could keep that good. But they didn't do the beef that way* (James Jeter 2008).

...most of it was box suppers with the pies. That was the main one [social/church gathering]. *And we had a singing convention, and I went down and sang in school.* (Flaudie May Monk Nixon 2008).

Figure 3-5.1. The Monk family picnicking. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Range Mail—Rain or Shine

The importance of mail delivery to our area cannot be over stated. Mr. Homer Gandy was our mail man for most of the time of my memory. A Mr. Merchant took over the route shortly before the 'exodus.' Mr. Gandy probably retired.

Much shopping was done by mail and it was an exciting event when the new catalogs came in. Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and Spiegel were the main general merchandise ones. All the seed catalogs were very important. Ordering seeds and planning for the next spring planting was a winter time pick-me-up.

Mr. Gandy did personal favors beyond his official duties. While waiting for the mail one time, I lost one of the three cents Dad had given me to mail a letter. I knew I was...in trouble but Mr. Gandy told me 'never mind.' Of course, he supplied the penny and posted the letter (First Class postage for a letter was 3 cents).

Mr. Gandy would drop notes off for us and friends with the condition they couldn't be sealed (and they were to individuals along his normal route).

There are many examples of the importance of the RFD Postal System to all our community.

By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member

Marie and I were talking about Homer Gandy, our mail carrier. I guess they got vacations every year, but rain or shine he was on every day except at vacation time. Mr. Columbus James [Christopher Columbus James] *brought the mail while Mr. Gandy took his vacation.*

By Tressie Irene Craft Chitty (2014), Heritage Family member

...they just built a pine box and wrapped grandpa up and put him in it and buried him. Didn't have no casket… (Leon Swain 2008).

Well, when someone died, there was no such thing as a funeral home or anything like that. The men would make the casket. My mother she would always go and help out. She'd put the black…they'd always put black around the boards and put little rosettes sometimes (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

6. Medicine and "Country Doctors"

Medical knowledge and technologies available to most Heritage Families were considerably more primitive than those available today. There was a much greater risk of dying from an infectious disease or illness, such as pneumonia, that is considered easily treatable today. The infant mortality rate was also much higher, as were the risks to mothers during childbirth. In 1940, for instance, the infant mortality rate was almost 7 times higher than present (47 deaths per 1,000 live births versus 6.87 per 1,000 live births in 2005). Neonatal and postneonatal mortality rates were also much higher than in the present (Kung et al. 2005:12).

He [Marion Monroe Whitley] *married Luvicy Elizabeth Hall when she was 15 years old… Marion and Elizabeth had seven children but out of seven only two survived. They raised their oldest son James Thomas and their youngest son Athern Therman. The five that died are buried at Zion Hill cemetery and so is the oldest son Thomas and his wife Cora Jeane Whitley. Cora was the daughter of J. W.*

Dr. James W. Jeane: A Local Legend

The history of Dr. James W. Jeane consists of a mixture of oral history interviews and a variety of historical documents and accounts with varying degrees of information. These resources portray the story of a man who maintained a thriving medical practice and who was well known throughout the Camp Polk region.

Figure 3-6.1. Dr. James W. Jeane. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Dr. Jeane attended medical school in Memphis, Tennessee in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In 1901, at the age of 31, he returned to Vernon Parish and began his medical practice. He is reported to have delivered almost 1,500 babies between 1906 until 1947 based on records from his medical journal. Dr. Jeane was also a part-time minister at the Mill Creek Pentecostal Church and is reported to have provided beds to those too sick to return home. He would regularly barter with people who did not have enough money to pay for his services and stay at patient's homes overnight to assist with complications of child birth.

The 1940 Census indicates Dr. Jeane lived in Enumeration District 58-12 (CCC Whisky Chitto Road – in the Whiskachitta Community). Six individuals are reported to have lived with him or at least were at the house at the time the Census was taken: Laura Jeane (wife); Sheldon Jeane (son); Nancy Jeane (daughter-in-law); Freda Jeane (granddaughter); Odesa Haymon (granddaughter); Rufus Murrey (hired hand). Dr. Jeane was 70 at the time of the census and is reported to have attended college for five years. Sheldon, Nancy, and Odesa went to high school, which may have indicated the importance Dr. Jeane placed on education. Sheldon is listed as the farm operator and Rufus (hired hand) is listed as a laborer who lived in Shreveport in 1935.

Dr. Jeane's medical records were consulted to determine how many babies he delivered in 1940. A list of 39 babies was compiled and the parent and/or baby names were tied to the 1940 Census under the assumption that few of the 39 families would have moved immediately before or after April 1940 (when the census was taken). The data indicate several instances of multiple babies being born on the same day. In fact, on June 23, 1940, Dr. Jeane assisted in the birth of three babies from the James, Brewer, and Allen families. The families of two of these babies were located in Enumeration District 58-12 (Whiskachitta Community) and the other family could not be located in the census data.

Almost one-third of the families identified in Dr. Jeane's medical journal were renting at the time the Census was taken. Some were "renting for free" or "renting for $1". These renters usually had lower incomes and probably bartered with Dr. Jeane for his services. Dr. Jeane's approximate service area in 1940 included Enumeration Districts 58-12, 58-14, 58-15, 58-18, and 58-19, which encompassed all of Camp Polk, most of the Vernon Unit of the Kisatchie National Forest, areas just east of Rosepine, and beyond the northern boundary of Camp Polk near Highway 28.

By Brad Laffitte, Lead Archeologist, Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, Fort Polk, LA

Figure 3-6.2. Titus McKee on grandfather's porch. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Jeane (Clarriece Whitley Rector 2013) (see Part 2 for her stories).

For these reasons, the presence of "country doctors" was an important unifying factor within the Camp Polk area: medical assistance was a common community need. Historic rural communities relied on local doctors for treatment of common diseases, illnesses, minor medical procedures and surgeries, and childbirth. Most major medical cases were referred to other physicians, but country doctors were responsible for treating the basic medical needs of a large number of patients spread out over an extensive rural landscape.

House calls were common in rural areas during the early part of the 20th century, which required doctors to know the roads and homesteads of community members. These doctors were often ill- equipped in comparison to modern standards, but they made the most of their tool kits, knowledge, and experience. Doctors that serviced these rural areas often accepted any form of payment or trade and sometimes provided help free of charge.

One of the best known doctors in the Camp Polk area was Dr. James W. Jeane. Dr. Jeane was born in 1870 in Calcasieu Parish. He married Laura Cordelia in 1890 in Vernon Parish and left soon thereafter for the University of Memphis where he attended medical school. Dr. Jeane graduated in 1901 and returned to Vernon Parish to establish a medical practice. He was a devoted community and church leader at the Mill Creek Pentecostal Church where he periodically preached, led prayers, and conducted funerals. Heritage Family members remember Dr. Jeane as a selfless and compassionate doctor who would ride his horse day or night to see any patient who needed medical attention.

On Peason Ridge, Dr. Penn K. Snell had a medical practice that covered Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes in the 1920s and 1930s until the time of his death in February 1934. He was also a teacher at Oak Grove School. Dr. W.T. Franklin served as a doctor at the Peavy-Wilson Lumber Mill from about 1929 until 1935 when the mill closed. He moved to Anacoco and continued to assist those in need in the Peason Ridge area (Rickey Robertson 2013).

The "country doctors" assisted in the birth of many babies and often stayed overnight to ensure both mother and baby remained in good health. Full-time parenting began shortly after the doctor departed. There are multiple stories about Dr. Jeane. Clarriece Whitley Rector recalls the following stories about Dr. Jeane, her grandfather:

> *I know of another time when he* [Dr. Jeane] *delivered a baby that was very, very small. I'm sure that it must have been premature. He had my grandmother take a shoe box and line it with cotton and they put the baby in it. Then he assigned his daughter Estelle Jeane Shauer* [Shaver] *the job of caring for it. It was times like this that they would keep them warm by*

placing them in the oven of the stove.

One time they had a storm at Whiskeychitto. I'm sure it was what we call a tornado. The storm hit Mr. Henry Eddlemon's home. He had a son named Wiley and the storm drove a piece of wood through Wiley's leg so they came quickly to get Dr. Jeane to save his life. Dr. Jeane laid him on the dining room table and sawed his leg off. All that Doc had was a little whiskey and ether to give him for the surgery but everything turned out good and Wiley lived to be an old man (Clarriece Whitley Rector 2013).

Figure 3-6.3. Dr. Penn K. Snell and Dyses Ragan Snell. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

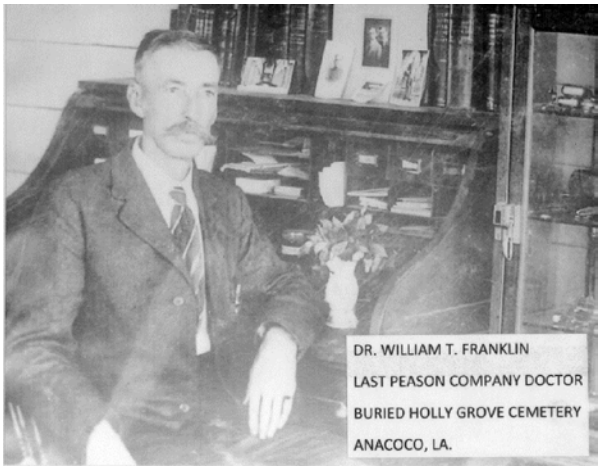


Figure 3-6.4. Dr. William T. Franklin. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

7. Church and Religious Traditions

Churches in the Camp Polk region were primarily based in Protestantism, and they developed in proximity to more heavily settled areas of the landscape and in association with strong family and community relationships. In 1936, most members of Vernon Parish churches were Southern Baptist or "Other" Baptist (Smith 1999:192). In all, 15 churches are believed to have been in use during 1940 in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas (9 in the Camp Polk area and 6 in the Peason Ridge area). However, there is some uncertainty about the history of these churches. Table 3-7.1 provides an overview of churches believed to be present in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas in the 1940 timeframe and the communities with which they were associated.

Construction of churches in the Camp Polk area stemmed from early settlement and growth of related social and religious networks. Sometimes a community figure would donate an acre of land and/or materials for the purpose of constructing a church (Sylvest 2008:185). The frequency of church service varied depending on the community and whether or not a minister could be obtained to preach. Some churches held weekly services, while others only convened once or twice a month. Religion was closely tied to the culture and community. Several Heritage Family members recall routine Bible reading and prayers at night and before each meal. Another common practice of the time was to conduct baptisms in

Table 3-7.1. Churches believed to be active in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas, ca. 1940, based on the 1940 Census map, 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map, and/or oral histories.

Church Name	***Community***	***Area***
Cold Springs Baptist Church	Cold Springs	Peason Ridge
Bonnett's Chapel	Cold Springs	Peason Ridge
Oak Grove Church	Oak Grove	Peason Ridge
Unknown Church	Plainview	Peason Ridge
Unknown Church	Plainview	Peason Ridge
Pine Grove Church	Peason	Peason Ridge
Ebenezer Baptist Church	Hicks	Camp Polk
Walnut Hill Pentecostal Church	Slagle	Camp Polk
Unknown Church	Slagle	Camp Polk
Castor Baptist Church	Castor	Camp Polk
Unknown Church	Fullerton	Camp Polk
Big Creek Baptist Church*	Big Creek	Camp Polk
Gravel Hill Church	Gravel Hill	Camp Polk
Mill Creek Pentecostal Church**	Mill Creek/Whiskachitta	Camp Polk
Zion Hill Church*	Whiskachitta	Camp Polk

*Churches located within modern installation boundaries.
**Some Heritage Family members remember this church as Gourd Neck rather than Mill Creek Church.

Figure 3-7.1. Baptism in the Calcasieu River, ca. 1900. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Table 3-7.2. Active cemeteries within current Camp Polk/Peason Ridge boundaries, ca. 1940, based on the 1940 Census map, 1941 U.S. Geological Survey map, and/or oral histories.

Cemetery Name	*Community*
Harriett Gill	Castor
Self/Cavanaugh	Castor
Burns	Bayou Zourie /Whiskachitta
Woods	Mill Creek
Haymon/Watson	Mill Creek
Mill Creek*	Whiskachitta/Mill Creek
Zion Hill	Whiskachitta
Brack/Hunt	Whiskachitta
Davis	Whiskachitta
Sarver	Pickering
Holly Springs	Holly Springs
Smith	Six-Mile
Smith/Maddox	Smithville
Fullerton East	Fullerton
Fullerton West	Fullerton
Fullerton North	Fullerton
Crowder	Fullerton/Pitkin
Sermon	Fullerton/Pitkin
Dolly Gill	Providence
Merritt	Hornbeck
Unknown**	Fullerton
Unknown**	Fullerton

*Some Heritage Family members remember this cemetery as Gourd Neck rather than Mill Creek.
**These two "unknown" cemeteries have not been identified on the ground to date.

nearby creeks and ponds:

> *...that was the place* [Swains Mill Pond on Six-Mile Creek] *the church used to baptize people. It was a really nice spot for something like that…lots of people were baptized there. They'd have revivals. That was the main place to baptize* (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

Most church congregants lived in nearby areas. Church was primarily about worship, but it was also an important social gathering point for friends and family. For example, "dinner on the grounds" was a common occurrence at many community churches. One Heritage Family member recalls one such occasion at Mill Creek Pentecostal Church:

> *We would all have dinner on the ground maybe once or twice a month. And we went to church Sunday, Sunday night and Monday night and it was usually on the Sunday evening when we'd all get together at church and spread out on a bench…* (Adel Nash Swain 2008).

Many church congregations and community members organized cemetery cleaning days once or twice a year:

> *Once a year…in the summer. They'd have what they called a cemetery working. Everybody that had people, family, that was buried there they'd meet and clean the cemetery off…* (Garsie James 2008).

A total of 22 cemeteries have been identified within Camp Polk and Peason Ridge boundaries (including U.S. Forest Service lands) (see Table 3-7.2), but many more exist outside of present-day installation boundaries. Heritage Families often buried their loved ones in their fields or by prominent natural features, such as oak trees. These burials were often memorialized with temporary markers that are no longer visible. Many of these


(30)

Graveyard Working

There will be a grave yard working at Zion Hill Cemetery on Saturday, November 23rd. Everyone interested are invited to come and bring dinner and tools to work with.

MRS. W. L. JONES

Figure 3-7.2. Leesville Leader article, dated Nov., 21, 1940.

Figure 3-7.3. Fullerton Pentecostal Church, Fullerton Community, unknown date. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

small "family" cemeteries exist throughout the landscape today, but are difficult to detect due to the disappearance of markers, lack of protective fencing, and the passing of people knowledgeable of their locations.

> *...when we were little kids, the whole community, would just have a day or two a year that we'd do that* [take care of Holly Springs Cemetery]. *And we'd take hoes and we'd take every bit of the grass off. Take a wheelbarrow and haul it outside…we would have food, well, old man Frank Bass, he lived just a little ways from the cemetery there and we would have to go down there and get water, you know. Somebody, just one or two would go down to his house and get a bucket full of water and everybody'd get a drink and after a while we'd do it again. That's the way we cleaned off the cemetery* (Leon Swain 2008).

Religious practice extended beyond church in the form of Bible study when families could not regularly attend due to workload, health, or transportation issues. Religious holidays, such as Christmas, strengthened social connections and provided excellent occasions to meet with local families. For example, on Peason Ridge, William Haynes would invite all his neighbors to his house for homemade eggnog. The number of Christmas presents given and received was smaller in 1940 when compared to today due to economic differences, but maintaining the Christmas tradition was important, nonetheless. One

Heritage Family Cemeteries

The word "cemetery" comes from the Latin "coemētērium" and ultimately from the Greek "koimētērion," or "room for sleeping." History has recorded twenty cemeteries on Camp Polk and Peason Ridge, with the earliest burials dating to pre-civil war era. Those with stone grave markers usually bear an inscription with the deceased's family name, perhaps an epitaph, and the date of birth and death. It is the dash—the space between the birth and death dates—that represents the deeply personal story of that departed family member. Collectively, we call that story "family heritage."

Some of the early resting places of our deceased Heritage Family members were associated with their community churches such as Zion Hill, Mill Creek, or Holly Springs. Three cemeteries in the Camp Polk area are located proximal to former sawmill towns such as Fullerton. Others were borne out of necessity and established on family lands to provide 'sleeping chambers' for deceased loved ones. These cemeteries might include the Merritt, Woods, Haymon/Watson, Smith, Sirman, and others.

In the 1930's and earlier times in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas, headstones were fashioned out of available materials, or a headstone could be purchased if the family had the economic means. Times were hard and cash was scarce. Wood burial markers tended to be the least expensive to prepare but were the least durable in the environment, and so might not stand the test of time. A section of cemetery that lacks a visible marker today may nonetheless serve as final resting place for some of our ancestors. The Sarver Cemetery has examples where a collection of cobblestones have been arranged to mark historic graves. The Brack Cemetery includes the only metal historic marker. Man-made cementitious material was heavily used in Zion Hill and Haymon/Watson Cemeteries to record the burials of dozens of Heritage Family members. The Haymon/Watson Cemetery depicts many examples of turpentine shards that were broken and incorporated into headstone markers, perhaps as a clue to the past work of the deceased. While iron fences are uncommon artifacts in these rural cemeteries, both Davis and Fullerton East Cemeteries have examples of ornamental ironworks associated with burials.

Ornamental plantings are prevalent in the rural cemeteries on Fort Polk and Peason Ridge. A sentinel oak tree, a 'Seven Sisters' rose, a Camellia, cedar, or other perennial plantings collectively serve to signal the presence of something special, a final resting place for a departed loved one.

A walk down a single row in one of these cemeteries punctuates how difficult the times must have been. With little access to modern medicine, the numbers of infant and child deaths seems staggering by today's standards. Personal history, as well as our own heritage, is indelibly etched in each stone.

This heritage included a special connection to church and to the cemeteries. Graveyard workings were managed by the church, the family, or the community. An example of one of those workings is shown in the "Leesville Leader," a weekly paper in production back in 1940. It alerts readers to a Saturday grave yard working at Zion Hill Cemetery, along with dinner on the grounds. That need for an old fashioned grave yard working, for community involvement, and dinner on the grounds persists today.

As part of its Cultural Resources Heritage Program, Fort Polk has recently undertaken a project to help locate historic gravesites and to maintain the cemeteries established long ago on the lands that became Camp Polk and Peason Ridge. The Installation and Kisatchie National Forest Cultural Resources specialists have used non-invasive ground penetrating radar to search for and locate past burials, and thus have helped identify the final resting places of several Heritage Family members. This work not only honors those family members long departed, but perhaps of equal importance, it helps to uphold and restore a connection between our past and our present.

Ted Hammerschmidt, farmer and facilitator, DeRidder, LA

Heritage Family member recalls the excitement of Christmas:

> *Well we had a little ol' tree. I remember the first time we had a little tree, my brother he must have been about 10 or 12 years old. He found a little ol' tree that he thought was real pretty and he brought it and he fixed it and we tied little pieces of ribbon stuff or pieces of scraps of materials to make a chain out of. You know you cut those things out of paper and glue them and make a chain and make it look like decoration. It wasn't very big but what little we had we put under there…they* [parents] *usually went and got us some kind of apples and oranges and we had one each in our stocking…Mama used to make popcorn balls* [for Christmas]… (Jessie McWilliams 2008).

Another Heritage Family member recalls similar experiences:

> *…we'd just have a big dinner, and sometimes we'd get some kind of a little old present or food, or apple or orange or something like that…we did have one sometimes* [Christmas tree] *and we would make them paper chains… make it* [paper chains] *all different colors and put it on there* [the Christmas tree]. *And we'd save them gum wrappers, you know they used to put them in that foil wrapper. Well we'd save them or them girls would and then we'd get them old sweet gum balls and they'd wrap them around it and that was something they could hang on their tree…didn't have no ornaments that you'd go to the store and buy…* (Leon Swain 2008).

8. Schools of the Camp Polk/Peason Ridge Area

Smith (1999:194) lists schools located in Vernon Parish in 1930-1931, but many of these schools were consolidated and abandoned by the 1940 timeframe. In 1940, multiple schools in rural Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes remained within or nearby local communities. A total of 12 schools dating to the 1940 timeframe have been identified through historical maps and informant interviews (8 in the Camp Polk area and 4 in the Peason Ridge area). Table 3.8-1 summarizes school locations and community affiliation.

The typical school day of 1940 did not consist of the current standardized curriculum. Teachers had considerable flexibility in their teaching styles and methods. In fact, many teachers faced the challenge of small school buildings and classrooms with several age groups in one room. Disciplinary punishments were often more stringent than today and included discussions with parents who were often the teacher's neighbors, friends, and/or relatives. A typical school lunch might consist of biscuits and bacon leftover from breakfast and a baked sweet potato or boiled egg (Sylvest 2008:91-92).

Many children walked to school, but some were able to ride in a vehicle or bus. A "bus" was often a flat-bed truck containing benches and some form of cover to provide shelter from inclement weather.

> *Sometimes we did* [walk to school], *and sometimes we rode a school bus. When I started the school, we lived at the old place, before we had moved, and there was a feller down there by the name of Jim McKee and his son, he had a buggy, and his son drove that buggy and we rode that buggy to school, the first part of the year that I started. And I said I rode to school in a one horse school bus. You know, one horse power school bus* (Leon Swain 2008).

The subsistence farming lifestyle often dictated when children could attend school, as children were often needed to help with planting and harvesting of crops and other duties. Adolescent aged children in particular missed school because their help was needed at home or in the

History of the Kisatchie Schools

In 1848, the first Kisatchie Union School was established and was located about four miles from the present school site. One of the teachers was Charlie Clark. Kisatchie School was established in 1862 at the present day site of the building. In 1890, the Shilo School, organized as a private school, was established and the classes were taught by Sam Self. It was located about three miles west of the present building.

In 1912, all three of these schools consolidated, and the present day Kisatchie School Building and site is the product of that consolidation. With the consolidation there were now enough students to have a small high school, and in 1913 the Natchitoches Parish School Board liked the school and the growth of it and accepted it into the parish school system.

With a growth of students, by 1920 it was known that a larger building was needed. From some records it was noted that around 1922 the people of the community gathered together and started the process of making homemade bricks to build the school with. Now remember, these were not skilled brick manufacturers. Everyone helped, from the children to the men and women. While the community was making bricks, longleaf pine lumber was cut at the Peavy-Wilson Lumber Company mill in nearby Peason for use in the building. By 1922, the school building that is standing today was completed. The school was the pride of the Kisatchie Community. By 1927, the school was accepted into the Louisiana Education System and had its first graduating class of five students, and in 1929 the Kisatchie High School Indians were the State Champions in basketball.

But by 1931 repairs were needed for the present day building. As you look at the present building you can see that it has a stucco exterior. What had taken place was that all the handmade bricks had begun to deteriorate and break apart. Architects came up with a design to save this building by placing a stucco covering all over the exterior of the building. And guess what? It worked because the building is still standing!

Sadly, in 1962 Kisatchie High School was consolidated with Provencal High School. With a total of only 47 children in the 12 grades, it was not feasible to continue using the school. As with all rural communities, the church and the school, along with a country store are the most important establishments located there. A way of life and a way of education came to an end.

By Rickey Robertson (2013), Heritage Family member, edited by Brad Laffitte, Lead Archeologist, Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, Fort Polk, LA

Figure 3-8.1. Left – Kisatchie School in 1948. Right – Kisatchie School as seen today. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Table 3-8.1. Schools in the Camp Polk/Peason Ridge area, ca. 1940.

School Name	*Community*
Oak Grove	Oak Grove
Plainview	Plainview
Sunny Hill	Kurthwood
Kisatchie	Kisatchie
Unknown School	Hicks
Unknown School	Hicks
Gravel Hill School	Gravel Hill
Davis Mill School	Providence
Pickering High School	Pickering
Whiskachitta School*	Whiskachitta
Big Creek School*	Big Creek
Pitkin High School**	Pitkin

*Schools present within current installation boundaries.
**Pitkin High School is outside the study area and installation boundary, but has been mentioned in many oral histories as having existed in the 1930s and 40s.

Teachers Appointed For Vernon Schools Session of 1938-39

Superintendent of schools, T. L. Harvey, announced today the list of teachers in the parish schools for the Session 1938-1939, as follows:

LEESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL:
A. H. Nanney, S. A. Hicks, Lyons Palmer, J. J. Hicks, Jr., Wood Osborne, Faribee Self, Jeannette Pollard, Vivian Redding, Johnnie Fisher, Jewel Peace, Margaret Ferguson, Emma F. Turner, Pearl Peace, A. L. Temple, Vernis Sims, Rose Fay LeCaze, Ruth Winters, Ruth Mansinger, Marie Jeane, Estes Leach, Beulah Hicks, Clara Winfree, Nina Maude Clifton, Maxine Bryant, Blanche Bush, Evelyn Anderson, Eunice Peace, Emma V. Turner Cabra, Laura Lyles, Thelma Stephens, Ellen Cline, Doris Cole, Jeanette Stephens.
Julia Scoggins, Music Supervisor.

PICKERING HIGH SCHOOL:
G. W. Bass, Voila Turner, J. P. Mathis, Mattie Hicks, C. A. Rogers, Ida Stephens, Gertrude Hemperly, Beulah Oakes, Ima Jeane, Ruth Hunt, Pearl Bonham.

EVANS HIGH SCHOOL:
Dae Hinson, Monte Hinson, Mary Kate Bailes, Eula Mitcham, W. B. Darnell, Leta Simmons, Alice Haight, Juanita Harvey, Mattie Davis, Elsie Harvey, Denise Barentine, Lillie Harvey.

ROSEPINE HIGH SCHOOL:
Alwin Parker, Myrtle Barley, Myrtle Fisher, Jewel Brown, F. G. Stringfield, H. Y. Scoggins, F. N. Beckcom, Oneida Burgess, Tera Hollifield, Lucille Nash Ruth Owens, Marta Lee Cupit.

ORANGE HIGH SCHOOL:
Curtis Bradshaw, J. F. Watts, Ollu Hinson, Eula Lee Basco, G. E. Rogers, Troy Morrison, A. C. Williams, Lena Craft, Mabel Morrison, Mamie Conerly, Gladys Shirley, Mamie Koonce, Bertha McRae, Nettie Turner.

HORNBECK HIGH SCHOOL:
I. B. Cloessner, J. C. Cavanaugh, L. C. Ford, Helen Bradshaw, W. C. Dees, Mollie Self, Alma McInnis, Joe Belgiano, Ethel Palmer, Velma Rayburn, Joeline Robinson, Lola Hughes, Inez Beckcom, Ada Farris.

SIMPSON HIGH SCHOOL:
S. G. Arnold, Kendreth Parker, Raymond Brown, E. E. Parker, Myrtle Busch, E. L. Jeane, Lee Welch, A. J. Bracklin, Douglas Williamson, Russell Jackson, Dola Mae Stephens, Velma Eyland, Ray Jackson, Bessie Parker, Victoria Jackson, Ruby Johnson, Georgia Jackson, Bonnie Burns.

PITKIN HIGH SCHOOL:
Wallace Hill, D. W. Ayers, Kade McInnis, Marietta Cain, Delia Palmer, Irene Welch, C. F. Hoglan, W. T. Johns, J. E. Hinson, Janie Johnson, Harry Stanly, E. G. Braddy, Beulah Talbert, Edna Oakes, Eva Chaney, Mrs. J. E. Hinson, Bertha Howard, Margaret Goleman, Lillie Sigler.

KURTHWOOD SCHOOL:
H. A. Fisher, Mrs. J. P. Simmons.

COLE CENTRAL SCHOOL:
Una Goins, Mabel Bray.

FLACTOR SCHOOL:
Joe Grant, Beulah Bryers.

WHISKACHITTA SCHOOL:
Edlo Bray, Ethel Bray.

BIG CREEK SCHOOL:
John R. Mayo, Fred Sigler, Ruby Folson.

SLAGLE SCHOOL:
Pearl Lanier, Nina Cavanaugh, Marie Nolen, Geneva Bivens.

LEANDER SCHOOL:
O. E. Welch, Joshua Peavy, Mrs. O. E. Welch, Eva Davis.

ALCO SCHOOL:
Adron Temple, Ethel McDonald, Effie Glass, Ada Johnson.

GRAVEL HILL SCHOOL:
N. B. Mayo, Estelle Roberts, Marie Sullivan, Delia Sigler.

Figure 3-8.2. School appointments in Vernon Parish for the 1938-1939 school year Source: Leesville Leader, August 11, 1938.

Figure 3-8.3. Jerry McKee's bus was known as the "Singing School Bus," because he kept hymnals in the seats and had the children sing until they were home. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Wild Hog Saga and School Upgrade

In Before renovations and upgrades at Whiskachitta School, wild hogs presented such a problem it was almost impossible to carry on regular school activities. When the school bell was rung for recess or lunch the hogs would come running and squealing from all directions. They knew that bell meant there would be scraps (if they were lucky possibly the whole lunch) from those dinner buckets. Edna Davis was bitten on the leg by one and the injury was really bad for quite a while. Everyone was concerned. Aside from danger of personal injury, the hogs slept under the school house, producing filth and fleas.

Hogs died under the school house during the summer. They had depended on the children's lunches for nine months and died waiting for the bell to ring. (Even hogs die when the handouts cease). Evidently no responsible person had checked out the situation before school opened. Mr. Bray and the older boys removed the carrion and used disinfectant. We smelled creosote for a long time.

The problem was eliminated in the summer of 1937 when a strong fence was built with a stile over it instead of a gate. At the same time, the school was repaired and repainted. The floor was either replaced or repaired.

Looking back, I am sure Edna getting injured and dead hogs under the school was the motivation for the upgrade.

By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member

Figure 3-8.4. The Gravel Hill School in the Gravel Hill Community, 1907. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Whiskachitta School Burns – The End of an Era

Figure 3-8.5. The Whiskachitta School, ca. 1937. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

The government-forced exodus of people from the 'range' for the construction of Camp Polk in 1941 would certainly have brought an end to the long legacy of Whiskachitta schools. However, the school's final demise predated this historic move of citizens from the land that would become Camp Polk. The school burned on November 9, 1940, a Saturday night, bringing a sudden and final end to education in the Whiskachitta Community and surrounding area. The school was active until it burned. The students were immediately transferred to Pickering and other surrounding schools.

The two-room Whiskachitta school pictured is the last in a series of schools at differing locations which served the parents and children of the area since the 1800s. This school was built on the same location and foundation and replaced the Whiskachitta Consolidated School, which burned November 10, 1930.

The photo (ca. 1937) depicts a school building which may seem forlorn and abandoned. According to oral interviews, the school had fallen into disrepair in the mid-1930s. However, about 1937, the School Board authorized the repair of the building and grounds. Hogs had become a serious nuisance, actually biting one young student and causing a severe infection. Repairs included painting, replacing damaged boards and flooring, eradicating infestations of fleas, and removing carcass remains from diseased hogs. At this time a hog proof fence was constructed around the building. Rather than a gate that could be left open, a stile was built for students and teachers to cross the fence. The school grounds included a baseball diamond and basketball goals.

Continued

Whiskachitta School Burns *(continued)*

Below is a partial list of students attending the Whiskachitta School, ca. 1940, provided by Marie Cryer White. According to Edlo Bray, his wife, Ethyl, was the last teacher.

Lula Smith	Dudley Cryer	Huey Haymon	Jewel Davis
Jesse Lee Smith	Marie Cryer	Albert Haymon	Jesse Lee Davis
Johnie Rae Smith	Vervil Johnson	Lula Haymon	Edna Davis
Jean Smith	Nadine Johnson	J. Y. Haymon	Evelyn Davis
Lillian Jeane	Bethel Hall	Woodrow Haymon	Winfred Davis
Marie Jeane	Burniss Hall	Delca Haymon	Dalton Bailey
Norma Lee Jeane	Harold Hall	Kirby Haymon	Maurice James
Clifford Jeane	Velma Eddlemon	Paul Thornton	Ella Faye James
Malcolm Jeane	J. W. James	Paulis Thornton	Carolyn James
Doris Marie Jeane	Loraine Bass	Travis Thornton	Alfred Carroll
Norma Lea Jeane	Nadine Bass	Agnes McKee	? Barrington
Milford Ray Jeane	Dorothy Haymon	Benard McKee	Horace Cryer
Frankie Shavers	Lena Haymon children	Floy Haymon	Harlis Cryer
G. W. Shavers	Verna James	Phoeby Haymon	Opal Cryer
John D. Shavers	Harley Turner	Ruthie Nash	Pauline Cryer
Merle Bray	Bill Turner	James Lee Cooper	Doris Cryer
Shirley Ashmore	Odessa Turner	Floyd Lane Cooper	Tressie Craft
Agnes McKee	Lucille Turner	Kenneth Dale Calhoun	Irene Jones
Iona McKee	Willie Vernice Haymon	Bertie Mae Calhoun	Iba Jones
Evalie Locke	Dorothy Lea Haymon	Myrtie Bell Calhoun	Ida Vey Jones
Alma Lou Locke	Huey P. Haymon	Vinson Calhoun and	Huey Jeane
J. C. Locke	Rose Haymon	Dempsey Calhoun	Glen Jeane
Alvin Locke	Joyce Haymon	Howell James	John Smith
Edgar McKee	Oscar Haymon	Ruth James	Hazel Smith
Laveda Locke	Arthur Haymon	Frank Kenneth Weeks	Vernon Smith

By Skip Cryer (2013), Heritage Family member

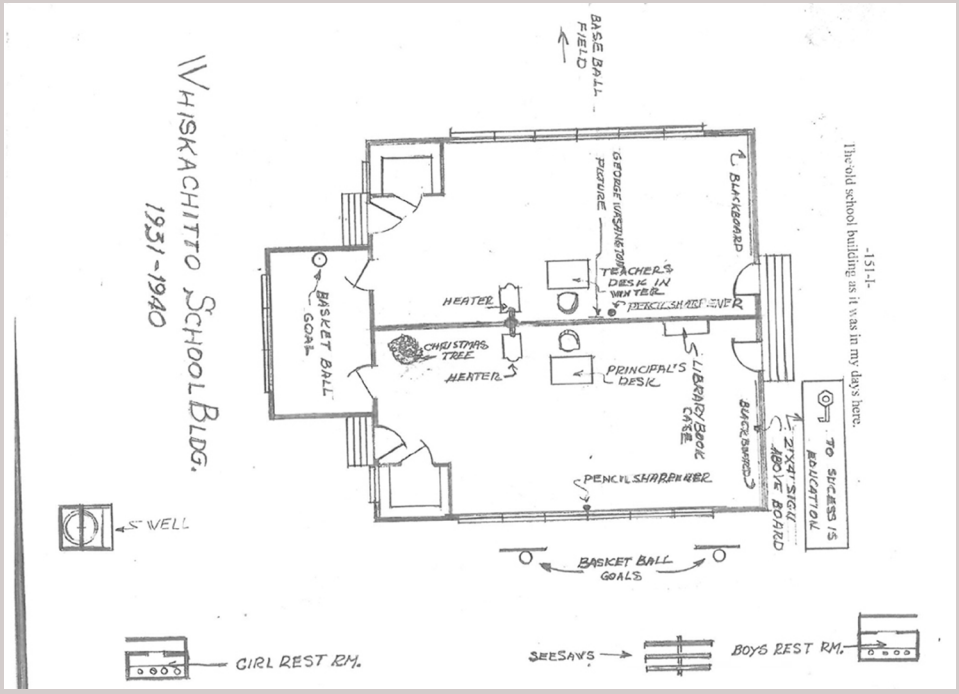
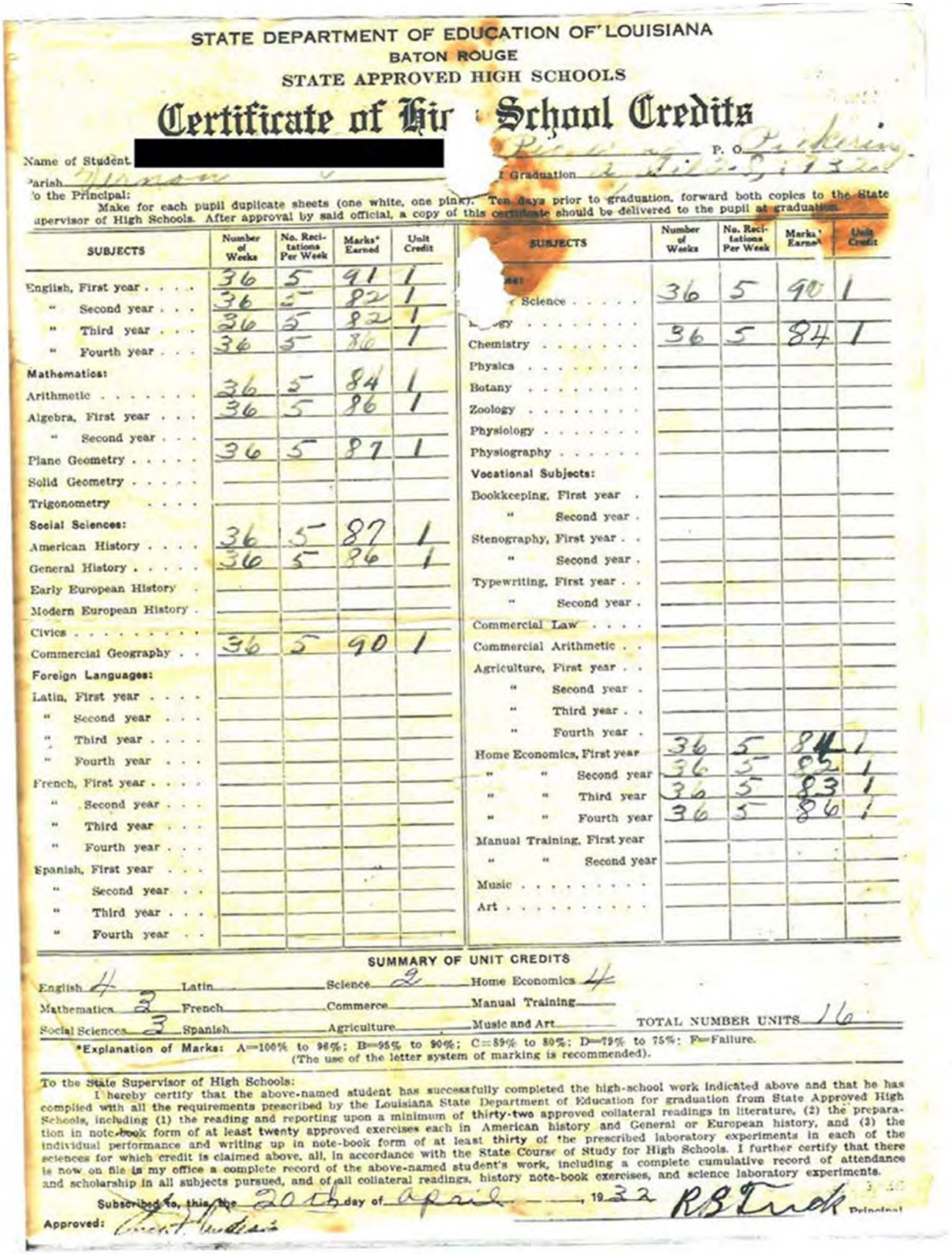


Figure 3-8.6. The Whiskachitta School, as recalled by Roy McDaniel, Jr. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF LOUISIANA
BATON ROUGE
STATE APPROVED HIGH SCHOOLS

Certificate of Hi[illegible] School Credits

Name of Student [redacted] P. O. Pickering
Parish Vernon [illegible] Graduation [illegible]
To the Principal:
Make for each pupil duplicate sheets (one white, one pink). Ten days prior to graduation, forward both copies to the State Supervisor of High Schools. After approval by said official, a copy of this certificate should be delivered to the pupil at graduation.

SUBJECTS	Number of Weeks	No. Recitations Per Week	Marks* Earned	Unit Credit
English, First year	36	5	91	1
" Second year	36	5	82	1
" Third year	36	5	82	1
" Fourth year	36	5	86	1
Mathematics:				
Arithmetic	36	5	84	1
Algebra, First year	36	5	86	1
" Second year				
Plane Geometry	36	5	87	1
Solid Geometry				
Trigonometry				
Social Sciences:				
American History	36	5	87	1
General History	36	5	86	1
Early European History				
Modern European History				
Civics				
Commercial Geography	36	5	90	1
Foreign Languages:				
Latin, First year				
" Second year				
" Third year				
" Fourth year				
French, First year				
" Second year				
" Third year				
" Fourth year				
Spanish, First year				
" Second year				
" Third year				
" Fourth year				

SUBJECTS	Number of Weeks	No. Recitations Per Week	Marks* Earned	Unit Credit
[illegible] Science	36	5	90	1
[illegible]gy				
Chemistry	36	5	84	1
Physics				
Botany				
Zoology				
Physiology				
Physiography				
Vocational Subjects:				
Bookkeeping, First year				
" Second year				
Stenography, First year				
" Second year				
Typewriting, First year				
" Second year				
Commercial Law				
Commercial Arithmetic				
Agriculture, First year				
" Second year				
" Third year				
" Fourth year				
Home Economics, First year	36	5	84	1
" " Second year	36	5	82	1
" " Third year	36	5	83	1
" " Fourth year	36	5	86	1
Manual Training, First year				
" " Second year				
Music				
Art				

SUMMARY OF UNIT CREDITS

English 4 Latin [illegible] Science 2 Home Economics 4
Mathematics 3 French [illegible] Commerce [illegible] Manual Training [illegible]
Social Sciences 3 Spanish [illegible] Agriculture [illegible] Music and Art [illegible] TOTAL NUMBER UNITS 16

*Explanation of Marks: A=100% to 96%; B=95% to 90%; C=89% to 80%; D=79% to 75%; F=Failure.
(The use of the letter system of marking is recommended).

To the State Supervisor of High Schools:
I hereby certify that the above-named student has successfully completed the high-school work indicated above and that he has complied with all the requirements prescribed by the Louisiana State Department of Education for graduation from State Approved High Schools, including (1) the reading and reporting upon a minimum of thirty-two approved collateral readings in literature, (2) the preparation in note-book form of at least twenty approved exercises each in American history and General or European history, and (3) the individual performance and writing up in note-book form of at least thirty of the prescribed laboratory experiments in each of the sciences for which credit is claimed above, all, in accordance with the State Course of Study for High Schools. I further certify that there is now on file in my office a complete record of the above-named student's work, including a complete cumulative record of attendance and scholarship in all subjects pursued, and of all collateral readings, history note-book exercises, and science laboratory experiments.

Subscribed to, this the 20th day of April, 1932 R B Tuck Principal
Approved: [illegible]

Figure 3-8.7. Overview of subjects taught and the grading system at Pickering High School in 1932. Many of the same subjects would have been taught in 1940. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

fields. Therefore, many families faced a conflict between help on the farm and education for their children:

> *We went to school after we got, in the winter months now, we went to school after we got the crop gathered. Because we had to help gather the crop in order to have food to eat. And then after we got the crop gathered and all the sugar cane stripped, topped, cut, carried to the mill and ground, and made syrup...then about January we got to go to school from January until May* (Adel Nash Swain 2008).
>
> *...sometimes we'd have to lay out of school, harvest time you know...* (James Jeter 2008)

The average student enrollment, per school, for all White Vernon Parish schools in 1930-1931 was 150, with an average of just over six teachers per school. African-American schools in Vernon Parish in 1930-1931 enrolled an average of 59 students per school with each school having an average of two teachers. Enrollment numbers for 1940 for Vernon Parish have not been identified.

Figure 3-8.8. Floyd Monk playing basketball for Big Creek School in 1930. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

In 1940, educational administration was formal and structured in Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes. Teachers, bus drivers, and associated educational workers were among the highest paid individuals in Vernon Parish according to the 1940 Census. T.L. Harvey was the Superintendent for Vernon Parish in 1940 and he was in charge of appointing teachers to schools for one year terms. Therefore, many school teachers came from outside communities and did not necessarily live close to their school (see Figure 3-8.2).

As is today, the country schools attended by Heritage Families also provided a setting for social and recreational interactions among children and their families. For instance, Big Creek School had a basketball team that routinely played Gravel Hill School. Practices and games provided students with the opportunity to interact with one another. Recess time also gave students the ability to play games such as marbles or hide and seek:

> *We played ball, played marbles, and sometimes we played a game that we called deer and dog. Some of us would run through the woods and the others would chase us and you know, sometimes we'd be three or four hundred yards from the school house when the bell rang...* (Leon Swain 2008).

9. Recreation and Entertainment

Subsistence farm families of the Upland South culture got a well-deserved break from work through recreation and entertainment. Several Heritage Families contained one or more people who could play musical instruments such as guitars, fiddles, and pianos. In the Jetertown Community, for instance, one Heritage Family member remembers four of his eight brothers playing the fiddle. Another Heritage Family member re-

Figure 3-9.1. Left - Unidentified man. Right - John Swain playing fiddle. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 3-9.2. Thomas Shankle and Esma Shankle, Courting Day 1934. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

calls her family playing several instruments:

> *My daddy played fiddle. When I was six years old, I started playing the guitar. And my brother played the fiddle and my momma played the accordion. And my sister, she could play the guitar a little bit, but she didn't like it too much. And my brother, he was a champion fiddler. Brother'd fiddle, you know, and every country dance in the country, they'd drive 20 miles to get John to play the fiddle at that dance. Course they paid him for it you know* (Elly Mayo Swain 2008).

On Peason Ridge, a Heritage Family member recalls many family members playing fiddle:

> *Uncles on dad's side* [played fiddle] *and dad he wasn't musically inclined but my grandpa Dowden was a fiddle player, his brothers were fiddle players, and then I had an uncle or two who played fiddle and guitar* (William E. Dowden 2007).

Music and song often led to country dances. Family members recall country dances where they made peanut candy, praline balls, and played games. Another Heritage Family member (Mill Creek Community) also recalls dances being held at different houses. On Peason Ridge, families would sometimes gather on Saturday afternoons and evenings to sing and play music using guitars, banjoes, and fiddles. The event, called a "Chivaree," would give young men the opportunity to "court" their girlfriends and dance with them. Sylvest (2012:94-96) recalls attending a bridge dance at Vowell's Mill (Provencal area) at the age of eight. The dance consisted of guitar and fiddle playing along with a chicken fry. Gravel was swept off the bridge to create a smooth "dance floor." Barns were sometimes used for dances during inclement weather.

Figure 3-9.3. Left to Right: Pearl Legg, John Tom Hall. and Elizabeth Whitley. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Children too young to participate in dances could still be exposed to music at home through their parents. Families fortunate enough to have a radio or Victrola could listen to music anytime; the Victrola record player had to be carefully "wound up" by a hand crank for the turntable to work. Family and friends would often congregate on the front porch of a neighbor who had a battery-powered radio and listen to the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday evenings. These social gatherings took place in communities located within the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge area:

> *And he* [Uncle Albert Cryer] *bought a radio, battery power you know. And our front porch on Saturday night would be loaded up with people to listen to Grand Ole Opry. Cause… very, very few people ever heard of radio* (Fred Cryer 2008).

Hunting and fishing were also important recreational pastimes, as well as subsistence activities. One Heritage Family member recalls his dad hunting squirrels and other small game on Peason Ridge, but according to interviews with Heritage Family members, deer were scarce and were rarely hunted by 1940 due to the lack of cover after the pine forest was cut. In the Big Creek Community, a Heritage Family member recalls quail hunting and cooking after the hunt:

> *People would come all the way from Shreveport down there to hunt quails in that country* [Camp Polk area]. *They would rent your old plow horse to ride, and quail hunt. There was quail everywhere down there, there was lots of them. And it was open country, you know, it was easy to hunt them…most of the time the way we got them, we trapped them. We had an old trap, made it of wood, just stacked it up you know…pieces of wood, lumber. And I don't remember how we built the old trigger now, but anyhow we put corn in it and lay it up on that trigger and when they get up there to get that corn they'd trip it and it'd just fall*

Figure 3-9.4. Vaughn Nixon, Jr., going fishing at the old Fullerton Mill Pond. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

down and trap them inside and we'd catch sometimes four, five, or six at a time. Course they was everywhere, they wasn't a problem to get them…she'd [interviewees' mother] *just fry it* [quail] *like chicken.* (Leon Swain 2008).

In the Big Creek Community, a Heritage Family member recalls her experiences with fishing:

Every fall we'd go fishing and hunting. We'd take the bed, the mattress and rake up leaves and put quilts over it and us kids would have the best time! My daddy and uncle would go hunting and set out hooks. We used to do that when we had a revival going at church and we'd all go back and check the hooks after church (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

Heritage Family members in the Jetertown and Peason Communities, respectfully, also recall fishing in the local creeks:

Fishing was good in that creek [Six-Mile], *small catfish and trout, and they* [family] *would go over, and go over to the creek and pitch a camp and set out hooks. And they'd perch fish…* (James Jeter 2008).

All we had to do was get our fishing pole and go down to little old branch or creek and catch all the fish you wanted…(William E. Dowden 2007).

The creeks and ponds were used for swimming as well as fishing. Kids working the fields during the hot summer months often needed to cool off in the nearby creek or pond. Olea Haymon Fletcher remembers going to a nearby swimming hole in the Big Creek/Mill Creek Community. One Heritage Family member recalls coordinating visits to the swimming hole and other destinations via "hollering":

…the Haymons live across from us about a mile and we could holler and they'd holler back to go and meet at the swimming hole or go to church…we'd go and swim and there'd be alligators in there but that didn't bother us at all. We'd scare'em out! (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

Figure 3-9.5. Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon on Six-Mile Creek, summer 1936. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 3-9.6. Jimmy and Kenneth Shavers, mid-1930s. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 3-9.7. The Masonic Order on Peason Ridge sometime during the days of the Peavy-Wilson Lumber Mill (1917-1935). Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Figure 3-9.8. Lou Brown and her mother posing with a baby doll (near the Martin Creek/Cold Springs Community). Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Quotes on Recreation Throughout the Camp Polk/Peason Ridge Area

…daddy's brother would come every once in a while and he had four, five or six children, and daddy would build up what you call a bonfire, it wasn't a big fire, and we would sit out there and when we knew that they were coming we would roast peanuts, parch peanuts, and we'd have parched peanuts and momma would make praline balls and we'd all have a wonderful time. We'd jump rope mainly at dark. Cause that's all that you could, the light of the fire, you could see really. We had a wonderful time growing up…hunting, fishing, my daddy and his brother would tell [tell stories by the bonfire]. *And my mother would get in on it sometimes…* (Adel Nash Swain 2008).

We didn't have no games to play except ball. We liked to play ball. We'd get us a ball, somebody'd have a ball and we'd get us a stick or something and they'd throw that ball we'd hit it and run, you know, to base, first, second, and third base, and then home plate. That was, back them days it was called…town ball. And every Sunday they was young people…I mean teenagers, you know, they'd gather up across the road…and play ball. And momma'd cook a dishpan full of cookies. They'd know that Aunt Polly'd cook them cookies. And they'd come by and momma'd say to them cookies here now if you all want them, if my dishpan comes back scratched, I'm gonna scratch your you know what. That dishpan come back looking just like it left…(Elly Mayo Swain 2008).

On a steep bank across the branch to the front of our place grew a grape vine in a very high tree that afforded much entertainment for us kids. It was really a high flyer; would go out over the branch—high up. Granny Cryer thought it was too dangerous and proceeded to eliminate that danger. She brought her axe and chopped it off as far she could reach. Several times we pulled it down and kept swinging but that didn't last; she kept cutting 'til we ran out of vine (Marie Cryer White 2013).

Sunday Afternoon Horse Races

One of the favorite activities for the boys in Whiskeychitto and Big Creek communities were the horse races that were held on Sunday afternoons. These races were not the formal races one would attend today but they were horse races for sure.

Most families attended church at least once a month. They would have loved to attend weekly back in 1940, but the problem was finding a preacher to conduct the services. Most of the churches were lucky to find a circuit riding preacher and this person was always so busy that most of the time he could only come once per month. Hence, most churches had preaching services only on a monthly basis.

The boys of the community would always saddle up their horse to ride to church on Sunday. The horse races sort of developed out of the necessity to ride a horse to church. As boys will be boys they started bragging about how fast their horses were and bets would be wagered on who could win the horse race. So while the ladies in the church were getting after service dinners ready for the old fashion dinner on the ground activities, the boys would be outside setting up the horse races. The boys of Lonnie Haymon would wager that their horses were faster than the boys of Azariah Haymon or the boys of another family would do the same until the horse races became a big event on Sunday afternoon after church.

As it turns out, Oscar Haymon, the son of Lonnie Haymon, had acquired a palomino mare and after a year of working with her had broken her to ride. It did not take long for Oscar to realize that this little mare could really run. Every chance he had that was free from work, he was working with his mare to perfect her running abilities.

On this particular Sunday afternoon at church he had waged with all the boys that his mare could not only win the race but that she would win it by a quarter of a mile. The other boys at church took him up on his wager and knew that now they were going to win at this bet!! The boys set up the race track on the old road that ran from Boyce, Louisiana all the way to Six Mile that just happened to come by the church house. They set the imaginary track up for a mile race. They posted several boys at quarter mile intervals on the road to verify the winner.

Oscar took turns with his palomino mare racing each of the boys that afternoon and as it turned out his little mare beat each and every horse that got on the track by over a quarter of a mile!! The reputation of this little racing mare traveled throughout the community and boys would come for miles around to put their horse to the test only, to find out the little mare made them eat her dust like a giant Texas dust storm!!

Figure 3-9.9. The Haymons – father and son. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Gene Haymon (2013), Heritage Family member, as told to him by his uncle, Arthur Haymon (WWII Vet), Birds Creek Community

Figure 3-9.10. John C. Leonard visiting his grandfather's homestead on Martin Creek, Peason Ridge. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Those children who worked the fields most of the day still had some opportunities for nighttime recreation. Family dogs provided an opportunity for evening play and also guarded the garden from pests. Other forms of recreation might involve something as simple as catching fireflies and other bugs:

> *And we would catch the little fireflies and put them in a bottle you know, keep them around, a jar...you could get a fruit jar and put on it. But you know I don't see any of them anymore. Back then, they* [there] *were lots of them...on a good night they were everywhere* (Leon Swain 2008).

A lack of imagination and free time away from chores were the only limitations on the number of games and activities that children could create. Many children played games such as marbles, but items lying around the yard could be turned into a game just as easily. Self-reliance and resourcefulness were instilled at a young age. This, coupled with a strong sense of familiarity and trust among community members, meant that older children were allowed to roam widely with little supervision. Parents did not worry about their children walking two miles down the road to play in the woods with neighbors. Children travelled the roads, tramped and rode the woods on foot or horseback, swung on vines, played in the backside of fields, hunted and fished, and generally created their own entertainment, all without constant parental supervision.

Adults often found entertainment in visiting with family, friends, and neighbors and talking about the weather and other current events. Funny stories and moments would often arise during these conversations. Many of the men living on Peason Ridge during the time of the Peavy-Wilson Mill Town (1917-1935) belonged to the Masonic Order and would attend and sponsor meetings. Masonic meetings continued after closure of the mill town and are still commonplace today in the Camp Polk area.

10. Transportation

Most Heritage Families either walked or rode horseback to get to and from various destinations. Wagons and buggies were often used to get to and from church (Sylvest 2008:199). Children often walked so much that:

> *That was one of the hardest things for us to do was keep shoes. We wore those shoes out walking in sand and everything* (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

Hauling materials, such as cotton, to town was often accomplished by loading them in a wagon pulled by a horse. However, by 1940, many families owned or could gain assistance from neighbors with a vehicle when they needed to transport materials:

> *We had a horse and a wagon…we didn't own*

Arnold Family Tragedy

My Grandfather, Monroe Arnold first married my Grandmother's Sister, Ellen Haymon. They had one daughter named Lena.

One day they were traveling from Fullerton to Pitkin. For some reason my Grandfather, Monroe, was riding a horse and Ellen was driving a horse and buggy with Lena, who was an infant. They were traveling the East Fullerton road. The horse ran away with the buggy and Ellen couldn't control him. He ran down the road for some distance. Just north of the Harvey Gipson place the road crossed a little clear-running stream. At that crossing the horse ran off the road. The buggy struck a large pine tree stump. The impact suddenly stopped the buggy, throwing Ellen forward just as the horse was jerked backward on his haunches, crushing Ellen underneath the horse and killing her. Lena, the baby, survived.

Monroe Later married Nancy Ann Haymon, Ellen's sister. They had four children, my mother Gussie Lee, being the oldest.

By Harold K. Davis (2013), Heritage Family member

Figure 3-10.1. John Brown riding his mule Molly to bring in sugar cane for use in the syrup mill. Note the vehicle in the background. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

an automobile. And so, every bit of our transportation we furnished ourselves. Now I have known of occasions for certain things that maybe somebody came and had a truck if you needed something hauled…somebody used to come with a truck sometimes and load that cotton on the truck and haul it to Florien [to the cotton gin] (J.C. Bridges 2007).

He [interviewee's dad] *had a little flatbed truck...that's what he carried cotton in. And he had a wagon behind it and if we had too much for the little truck then he carried the wagon"* (Adel Nash Swain 2008).

Ownership of a vehicle, however, could present a challenge to some families due to the fact that parts and maintenance could be costly. Some families, therefore, owned vehicles that were unreliable or inoperable due to lack of maintenance.

Passenger trains were still a significant form of regional or long distance transportation, but rural community members would have to ride to the nearest train station in Leesville or another nearby town. However, most Heritage Family members did not venture too far from their homesteads due to the cost of an extended trip and busy work schedules.

Figure 3-10.2. Many Heritage Families still had a wagon they used in 1940. Pictured here are Frank Wiley and granddaughter Jonee Connell. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 3-10.3. Some families used vehicles to haul cotton or relied on others who had vehicles. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

11. Rural Patriotism and Skepticism

The Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas produced several past generations of war veterans and patriots, including many veterans of the Civil War and First World War. The quiet, rural lifestyle appealed to many veterans who chose to make this area their permanent home. Then, as today, in Vernon and surrounding Parishes, veterans were well respected and there was strong support for the military.

However, many Heritage Families maintained distrust for the government despite an overwhelming sense of patriotism and duty. This distrust of the government/outsiders may have stemmed from leftover sentiments from the Civil War and Reconstruction era (e.g., "carpetbaggers") or unpleasant past experiences with the legal system and government offices.

A general attitude of suspicion toward outsiders and a dislike of publicity, both characteristic of the Upland South culture, may also have contributed toward distaste for government interaction. Some heritage families may have had a sense of separation from the government due to the self sufficiency of their families and the hard work they personally invested in their farms and fields. This dichotomy of emotion between patriotism and distrust continued into future generations where many Heritage Families proudly served their country while still maintaining a distrust of the government. Historically, the main point of suspicion and concern was that the government was going to interfere with the rural lifestyle and/or take the farms and homes they had worked so hard to improve.

Figure 3-11.1. Marrion Monroe Cryer, Sr. (center), and fellow soldiers pose for a picture by their horses. Mr. Cryer was a career soldier who joined the Army in 1924. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

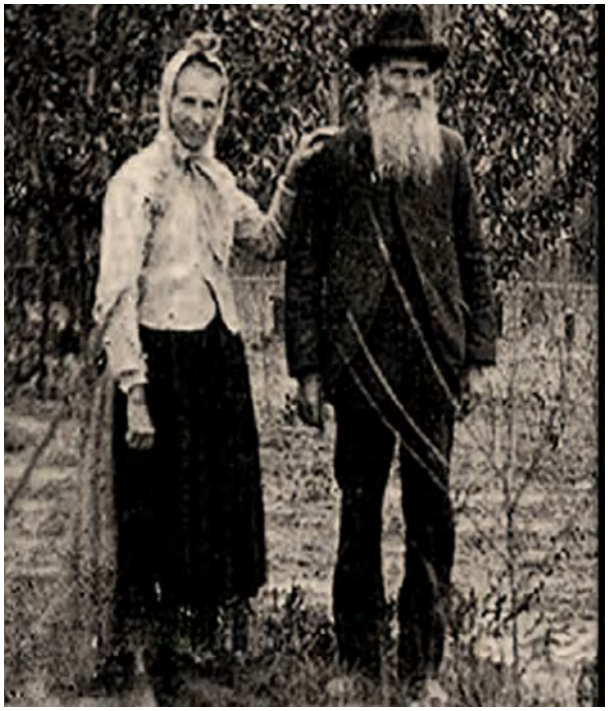


Figure 3-11.2. Robert T. Connor and wife Elizabeth who lived on Peason Ridge. Robert was a Confederate Sergeant in Company K of the 1st Texas Infantry. He was wounded four times during the war and ended the war as a POW. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

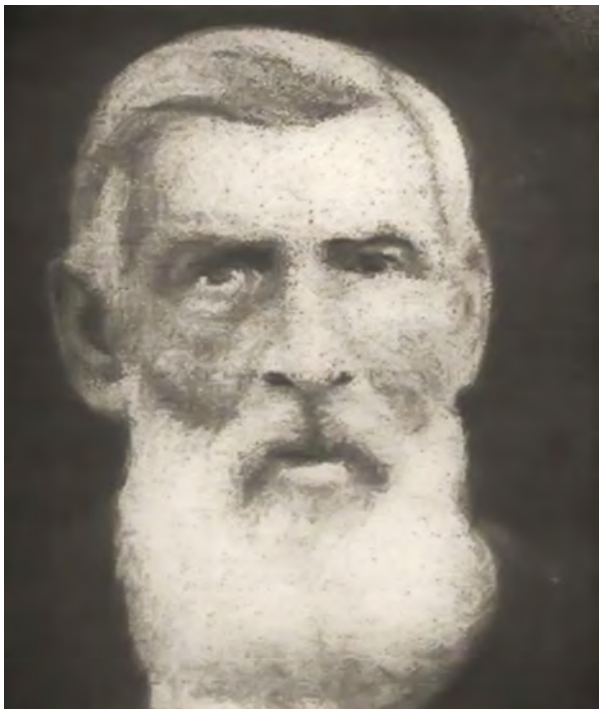


Figure 3-11.3. Picture of Alfred Michael Dowden from the Peason Ridge area. He served as a private during the Mexican War and served with Company K of the 19th Louisiana Infantry during the Civil War (the Anacoco Rangers). Source: www.polkhistory.org.

12. Conclusions

Rural life in 1940 Vernon, Sabine, and Natchitoches Parishes was dominated by the subsistence farming lifestyle, which was part of the Upland South cultural tradition. The lifestyle necessitated both self-reliance and community interdependence to ensure successful crops and survival. Neighborly support for harvesting crops and other essential tasks was often provided to families in need, especially those who were stricken by accident or illness, as everyone understood that bad luck could next befall one's own family.

The absence of modern technologies and luxuries in the rural areas of Vernon Parish and surrounding parishes in 1940—including for most, electricity and plumbing—created an environment much different than that we have come to appreciate. Work days were long and primarily consisted of all duties farmstead-related, though some Heritage Family members were able to obtain wage-paying jobs outside of farming. Creation of a home place to sustain a family, or even generations of families, involved a myriad of tasks and years of work: digging a well, clearing and cultivating fields, constructing and expanding a home, arranging and constructing barns, outbuildings and fences, planting orchards and shade trees, and tending treasured flower gardens.

In spite of an unrelenting and physically demanding workload, families found time to enjoy many simple pleasures such as listening to music, playing the fiddle and other instruments, socializing, playing games, hunting, fishing, and (for the children) mischief-making.

For those Heritage Communities with schools or churches, those institutions were focal points for community members and provided essential opportunities for children and parents alike to socialize, discuss the news of the day, and develop bonds. By 1940, though only a handful of rural schools and churches remained active in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas, these institutions remained vital, perhaps making them all the more important to community members.

The rural medical practitioners of the area were also vital to Heritage Family members. Individuals such as "Doc" Jeane epitomized the sense of community in multiple ways, including bartering with poor families in exchange for services, conducting day or night house calls, and providing beds to the sick.

The Camp Polk area then and now is filled with patriots and veterans (see Appendix B) who maintain pride in what the United States stands for, but who are also skeptical of government action and involvement in their lives. This "skepticism" was well founded in 1940 when the government decided to establish a permanent presence in west-central Louisiana through the use of eminent domain. The rural Heritage Communities of central Vernon Parish and southern Sabine and Natchitoches Parishes, and the subsistence farming lifestyle of the Heritage Families, slowly began fading into history after the construction of Camp Polk.

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Chapter 4 by Scott Faris[1] and Rickey Robertson[2]

THE LOUISIANA MANEUVERS, CAMP POLK AND PEASON RIDGE, AND DISPLACEMENT OF FAMILIES FROM THE LAND

1. Introduction

This chapter tells the story of the U.S. Army's Louisiana Maneuvers of 1940-1941 in the context of the impacts on the lives of the Heritage Families of the Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge areas, and how those families were removed from the land to create Camp Polk and Peason Ridge Artillery Range. The effects of the series of events that came to pass at this time and this place were felt round the world, yet perhaps nowhere more acutely than Vernon Parish, Louisiana.

For some Heritage Families and their descendants, these events are part of a distant, forgotten, or even unknown past. However, for others, the feelings engendered by the forced removal from their family homes and land left open wounds of sadness and resentment. The stories told below give voice to these feelings and also convey the depth of affection still held for life "on the range" and the Heritage Communities of Camp Polk and Peason Ridge.

Harbingers of Change: Part 1

The year 1940 is marked in history as being a harbinger of change, change in military theory and application and an end to a long standing lifestyle for many families that lived on the land which became Camp Polk and Peason Ridge Artillery Range. The 1940 Louisiana Maneuvers, lasting from spring to fall, were central to the U.S. and its allies in winning WWII. They were also responsible for the disruption and finally the dislocation of hundreds of families in Vernon Parish, LA (Camp Polk) and the tri-parish area of north Vernon, southeast Sabine, and southwest Natchitoches Parishes (Peason Ridge Artillery Range).

Memories of both the Army maneuvers and the trials of being forced from their personal property still elicit heartfelt comments from Heritage Family members, ranging from patriotic to deep resentment of family loss. As 1940 wound to a close, these families would soon be sending their sons and daughters off to war while yet in the midst of adversity from forced relocation.

All American families suffered hardships connected to the war effort. However, this dislocated group of subsistence farmers, without any public relocation assistance, amid inflated land prices and historic economic roadblocks, were challenged to survive until they could rebuild their lives. Within this group of dislocated families a few were faced with even more uncertainty, disappointment and conflicts with life.

From "Double Jeopardy – And More: The Family of Riley Matthew and Zella Calhoun Cryer," by Skip Cryer (2013a), Heritage Family member

Adapted with permission by Stacy Basham Wagner, Environmental Analyst, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. (see Part 2 for the original story)

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[2]Peason Heritage Family member, local historian, and founder, Peason Historical Foundation, Inc.

2. The 1940 Maneuvers

In early spring 1940, life went on in west-central Louisiana much as it had for the previous 100 years or more. Crops were planted, children went to school, families attended church, and the troubles of the outside world seemed far-removed. Although war had been raging in Europe between Germany, on the one side, and the combined forces of France and Great Britain, on the other side, since September 1, 1939, most Americans felt that becoming involved in another European war was a bad idea. To many people in the United States it seemed as if the war in Europe had died down after the initial German blitzkrieg swept over Poland in the fall of 1939. The American press called it a "phony war," but it was about to explode into a major conflagration that would eventually involve most of the countries across the globe.

Some leaders within the United States Government, especially President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had the foresight to understand that the coming global conflict would almost certainly involve the United States. As a result, in 1939 the federal government implemented a revision of the 1937 Protective Mobilization Plan that called for increases in military personnel strength and armament manufacture. Reflective of the national isolationist mood even after the German invasion of Poland, the president was forced to declare a state of national emergency on September 8, 1939 in order to implement the Protective Mobilization Plan, as it was doubtful there would be enough support in Congress to pass the required legislation.

The implementation of the Protective Mobilization Plan meant that thousands of young

From the 1940 Census Heritage Project, Community Summaries Narrative

In 1939, the Army and U.S. Forest Service reached an agreement for the Army to use 259,400 acres in the Kisatchie National Forest in Vernon Parish for military maneuvers (Kane and Keeton 2004:17). In February 1940, Army officers were sent to Vernon Parish to persuade landowners to allow their land to be used for the maneuvers without charge. Within just a couple of weeks of the April 1940 Census, significant numbers of U.S. Army soldiers arrived in Vernon Parish for the Louisiana Maneuvers, and, on May 15, 1940, tanks of the Army's Red and Blue Forces rolled into the city (Ibid.:7).

The night of April 8, 1940 was reserved for enumeration of individuals in hotels, guest houses, camps, and other types of temporary-stay lodging, recorded on page 81 of the Census schedule. Several U.S. Army visitors were reported in Leesville that night. Six Army officers were guests of Dr. Brown Word, a medical doctor, while another six Army personnel (chauffeurs, clerks, a soldier, and a machine gunner) were staying at Emma Ward's hotel.

The highest ranking officer reported in the schedule was Captain Sherman V. Hasbrouck. His exact role in the maneuvers is not identified in A Soldier's Place in History, Fort Polk, Louisiana (Kane and Keeton 2004). Hasbrouck was born in Kingston, New York; graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1920 as a second lieutenant of infantry; served as a Commanding General, 97th Division, Artillery in the European Theater in World War II; and retired in 1955 as a Brigadier General (www.hasbrouckfamily.org). He died in 2002 as the oldest surviving graduate of West Point, at 103 years of age (*Los Angeles Times* obituaries, March 16, 2002).

The Census entries do not reveal the exact nature of the Army officer's business in Leesville in April 1940, or how long they had been in the city, but most certainly their business was related to the impending maneuvers. (See also the News Item excerpt in this section from the *Leesville Leader* speculating about their presence.)

By Leslie Barras, Cultural Resource Consultant, Orange, TX

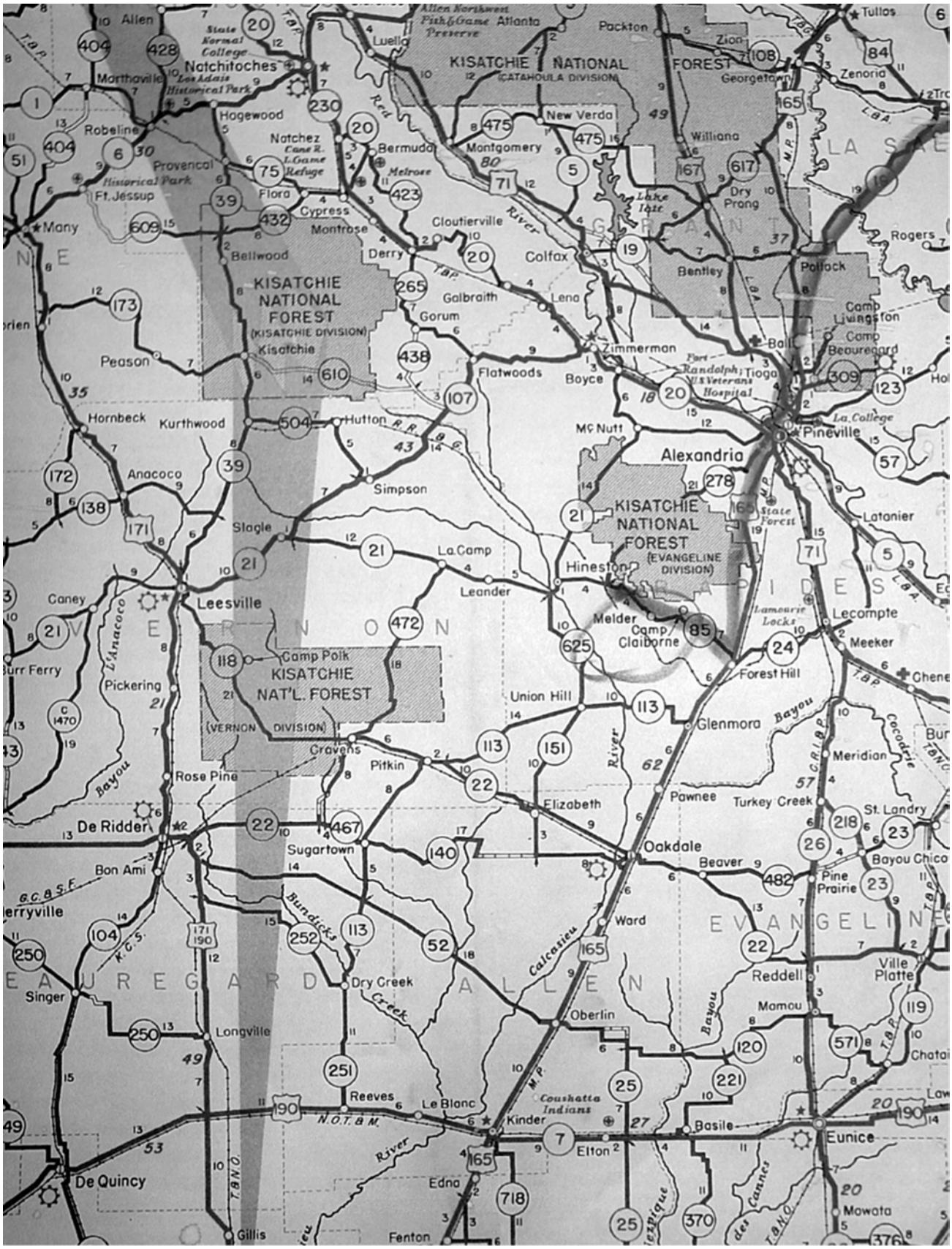
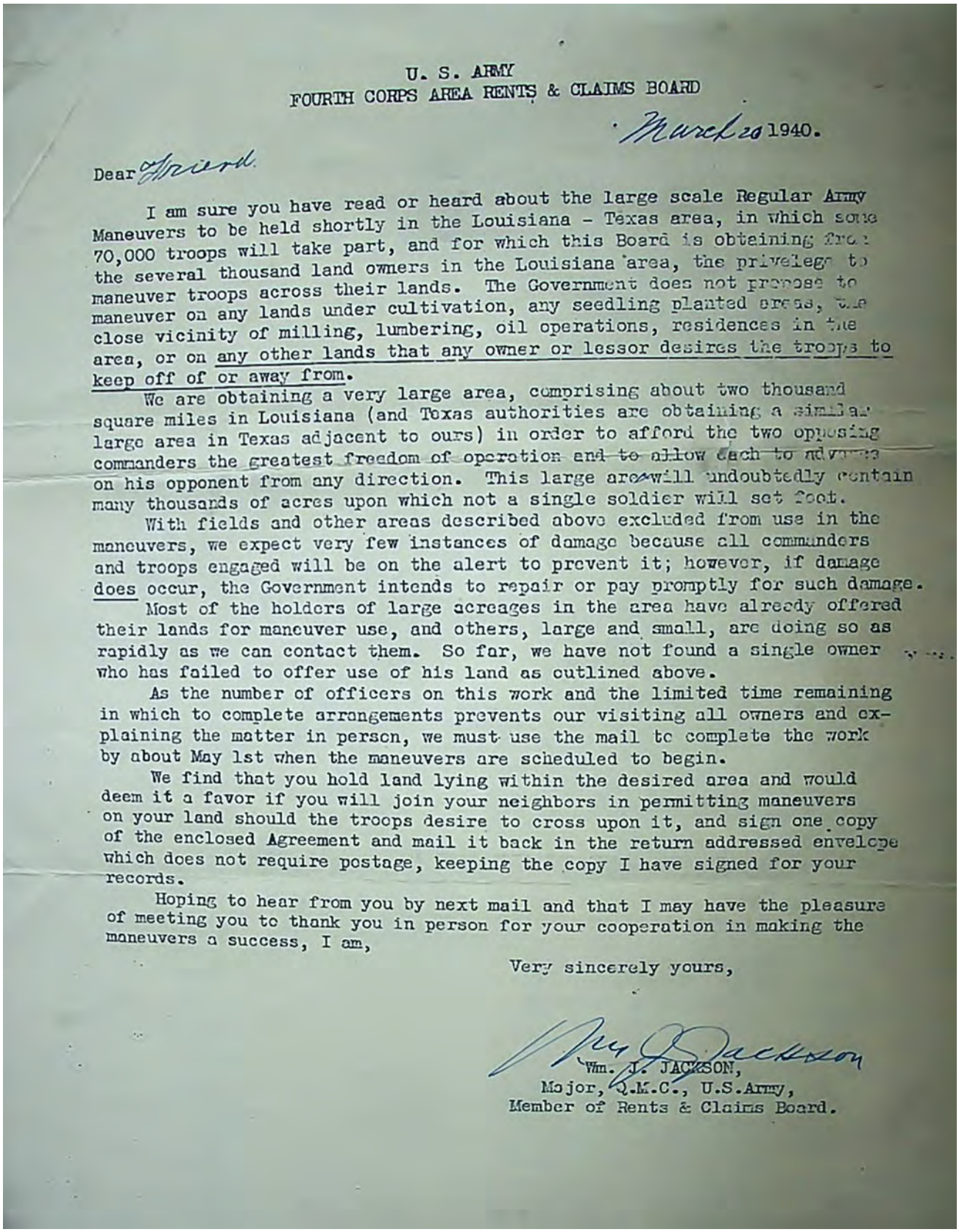


Figure 4-2.1. Texaco road map of Louisiana from the 1940s. A similar map was used by exercise planners prior to the 1940 Maneuvers. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.



U. S. ARMY
FOURTH CORPS AREA RENTS & CLAIMS BOARD

March 20 1940.

Dear Friend.

I am sure you have read or heard about the large scale Regular Army Maneuvers to be held shortly in the Louisiana - Texas area, in which some 70,000 troops will take part, and for which this Board is obtaining from the several thousand land owners in the Louisiana area, the privilege to maneuver troops across their lands. The Government does not propose to maneuver on any lands under cultivation, any seedling planted areas, the close vicinity of milling, lumbering, oil operations, residences in the area, or on any other lands that any owner or lessor desires the troops to keep off of or away from.

We are obtaining a very large area, comprising about two thousand square miles in Louisiana (and Texas authorities are obtaining a similar large area in Texas adjacent to ours) in order to afford the two opposing commanders the greatest freedom of operation and to allow each to advance on his opponent from any direction. This large area will undoubtedly contain many thousands of acres upon which not a single soldier will set foot.

With fields and other areas described above excluded from use in the maneuvers, we expect very few instances of damage because all commanders and troops engaged will be on the alert to prevent it; however, if damage does occur, the Government intends to repair or pay promptly for such damage.

Most of the holders of large acreages in the area have already offered their lands for maneuver use, and others, large and small, are doing so as rapidly as we can contact them. So far, we have not found a single owner who has failed to offer use of his land as outlined above.

As the number of officers on this work and the limited time remaining in which to complete arrangements prevents our visiting all owners and explaining the matter in person, we must use the mail to complete the work by about May 1st when the maneuvers are scheduled to begin.

We find that you hold land lying within the desired area and would deem it a favor if you will join your neighbors in permitting maneuvers on your land should the troops desire to cross upon it, and sign one copy of the enclosed Agreement and mail it back in the return addressed envelope which does not require postage, keeping the copy I have signed for your records.

Hoping to hear from you by next mail and that I may have the pleasure of meeting you to thank you in person for your cooperation in making the maneuvers a success, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

Wm. J. JACKSON,
Major, Q.M.C., U.S.Army,
Member of Rents & Claims Board.

Figure 4-2.2. Letter sent to landowners prior to the May 1940 Army maneuvers asking for use of land. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection. The Fourth Service Command Rents and Claims Board was the agency designated to receive and process claims for damages to private property; unit claim officers were to be appointed by the commanding officer of each separate battalion, regiment, or corresponding unit.

men would enter the military; also, it meant that orders went out to American factories to begin or increase production of arms and equipment. At the same time, military leaders came to the realization that existing training facilities were too small and too few to accommodate the huge numbers of troops flooding into the military. Additionally, the Army wanted to stage large-scale maneuvers in order to provide a realistic training environment for both troops on the ground and their commanders. Thus, Army officials began looking at different parts of the United States as staging grounds for exercises that could support force-on-force battles between Corps-level and perhaps even Army-level elements (around 100,000 and 300,000 soldiers, respectively). One of the places Army planners looked was west-central Louisiana and east Texas.

The land subdivided by the Sabine River was, at that time, sparsely populated. There was a total of approximately 2.2 million acres of land that could be used with little or no cost to the government, including more than 200,000 acres within the young Kisatchie National Forest (Burns 1994). The total acreage considered by the Army for the maneuvers included over 400,000 acres in east Texas and over 1.7 million acres in Louisiana. Military and government leaders decided that this was the place, and as a result, notices were sent to landowners asking for the use of land for the coming maneuvers.[3]

Once the Army had permission to use the land, planning began in earnest. Army personnel arrived in Louisiana and Texas to facilitate logistical and public-relations issues inherent with such an unprecedented movement of large numbers of troops.

Figure 4-2.3. Verification of maneuver area agreements, July 21, 1941 (see Section 4 below for discussion on 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers). Works Progress Administration workers in 11 western Louisiana parishes labored to speed the verification of maneuver area agreements. In Calcasieu Parish, a crew of 30 Historical Records Survey workers operated on a 24-hour basis to complete the verification before the deadline fixed by the Army. The photo shows part of the night shift working in the office of the Calcasieu Parish tax assessor, with Ermine Tant, district supervisor of the project, and Major Alvin Purcell of the U.S. Army, studying a master map of the parish. Source: The LOUISiana Digital Library.

News Item: Soldiers spotted in Leesville and surrounding area. Several Army officers and enlisted soldiers have come to Leesville in advance of the maneuvers scheduled next month. Rumor has it they are "scouting" the area in anticipation of the big invasion. The officers are staying in a hotel in town while the soldiers have been taken in by local residents. -*Leesville Leader*, April 1940 (1940a)

Camp Beauregard, an Army post near Pineville, Louisiana, which was originally established in 1917, was designated as the main headquarters for the 1940 Maneuvers. From

[3]Interviews and other accounts from Heritage Family members suggest that not all landowners in the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas may have been contacted for permission to use their lands. Landowner identification may have been incomplete, and mail delivery and other forms of communication may have been less reliable than today. In addition, not all landowners received the *Leesville Leader*, the local newspaper of record for informing land-owners of the impending maneuvers, nor were all landowners able to read and write, making it difficult for them to gain full knowledge of the Army's plans or grant permission for use of their lands.

Figure 4-2.4. Infantry on the march, May 1940 Louisiana Maneuvers. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

there, advance party personnel spread out across the maneuver area to mark campsites and arrange for local support for the exercises. As a result, residents of Leesville and the surrounding area began seeing soldiers as early as April 1940.

The first round of maneuvers were scheduled to begin May 5, 1940 and the projected conclusion was May 25, 1940. The first maneuver elements were made up of two Army Corps: IV Corps under the command of Major General Walter Short, and IX Corps led by Major General Walter Krueger. (It is interesting to note that Short's IV Corps was, at that time, the only fully-constituted and equipped Corps in the U.S. Army.) Each Corps was made up of various infantry, horse cavalry, artillery, aviation, medical, and the then-newly mechanized cavalry units, in addition to support units of all types. Many units were equipped with obsolete armaments or were not equipped at all: it was not unusual for local residents to see various farm implements with hand-lettered signs adorning them that read "anti-tank gun," pieces of pipe used as mortars, trees propped up on dirt revetments representing artillery pieces, or automobiles marked "tank." Troops were outfitted in a wide variety of uniforms and personal equipment, including World War I-style campaign hats and leggings and Springfield bolt-action rifles.

The two Corps were designated Blue Force and Red Force, and the maneuvers began as scheduled on May 5, 1940. The plan called for the exercises to be divided into four phases of two or three days each, with down time in between to allow for rest and reconsolidation of scattered units. Units changed sides as well; for example, an infantry brigade could start out with the Red Force and end the exercises with the Blue Force. Unfortunately for both sides, nine inches of rain fell in 24 hours on the 4th and 5th of May, resulting in huge traffic jams due to impassible roads. Even with road im-

Figure 4-2.5. Machine gun positions, May 1940 Louisiana Maneuvers. Note the stumps in the back-ground (top photo) and the old logging tram crossties being used as cover (bottom photo). In the middle distance can be seen the abandoned rail bed (bottom photo). Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

provements and bridge construction by Army engineer units, road travel remained a problem throughout the maneuvers. Participants took it all in stride, with combat operations being conducted throughout east Texas and west-central Louisiana.

As the U.S. Army and National Guard troops fanned out in 1940, they found a vast cutover land filled with sage brush and pine stumps. Units would travel and set up positions wherever possible. The machine gun position in the top photograph above (Figure 4-2.5) is set up behind a pine stump near the homesite of Asa Dowden, located near Lyles Creek on Peason Ridge. The battles see-sawed back and forth across the cutover landscape. As units moved to and fro, positions providing cover were utilized wherever found. The unit in Figure 4-2.5 has emplaced their machine guns behind the old tram bed of the former Christie and Eastern Railroad that ran from Peason to Kurthwood, Louisiana. In the bottom portion of the figure, the old crossties are clearly visible on the rail bed in the midst of a barren, stump-filled landscape. These troops were attacking towards the home-steads of Foster, William and the aforementioned Asa Dowden. (Rickey Robertson 2013).

The first three days of the exercise were taken up mostly with reconnaissance by both sides. Most of the sham battles centered on road crossings and bridgeheads. By May 10th, the countryside was overrun by Army units of

Figure 4-2.6. J. C. Bridges (on left, age 9) and Andrew Bridges (on right, age 12) with soldiers from the Louisiana Maneuvers. An Army unit had camped near the boy's home during the maneuvers. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

Figure 4-2.7. Willie L. and Viola Haymon and family at the old home place near Birds Creek, ca. 1939. Left to right, back row: Noah H. Haymon, Elbert E. Haymon with guitar, Willie L. Haymon, Viola Haymon, and Floyd L. Haymon with cigarette. Left to right, front row: Ivy I. Haymon, Doris (Dollie) Haymon, Willie Vee Haymon, and Olea Haymon. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

all types. For many of those who lived in Vernon Parish, this would be the first time they saw large numbers of troops, but it would not be the last.

> *The first I remember of any Army that came up there was the cavalry. The horses. They just came up there and was, just came through the country, you know. And they stayed around, I don't really remember how long, but mostly I remember the big old pretty horses they had* (Leon Swain 2008).

As increasing numbers of soldiers began to be seen in the area, local citizens' interactions with the troops increased as well. Both official and unofficial trading occurred between enterprising residents and the Army. Local entrepreneurs sold homemade food and soft drinks to maneuver participants. Some families did laundry for the soldiers; others provided something as simple as a spot on the front porch for a soldier to get out of the weather. Olea Haymon Fletcher was 12 years old when the Army descended upon her little corner of the world, (the Big Creek/Mill Creek Community). In an oral history interview, she remembered her mother cooking for soldiers during the maneuvers:

> *They camped all around our house and my mother cooked for them. She cooked meals for them and they'd give her a little money. She should have charged a whole lot! We could have used it back then. They loved her fried chicken! She had a lot of chickens*

Figure 4-2.8. Leon Swain and Lori Hall at the old home place. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

> *and she'd fix fried chicken and potatoes and peas. But they paid. Back then it was big money to them. It wouldn't be now* (Olea Haymon Fletcher 2008).

Olea's sister, Willie Viola ("Vee") Haymon Bolinger, remembers the soldiers as well:

> *...Mama cooked biscuits and biscuits and biscuits. And they would sit at the table and talk, and they were from New York and places and it was interesting to me…And when they would sleep they would just lay their things down on the porch. It was a long porch, but Mama was very careful with her little girls so she was not letting us go out there with them, but boy they were everywhere. There were soldiers everywhere that's mostly what I remember* (Willie Viola Haymon Bolinger 2010).

During the May maneuvers, the two Corps conducted intensive combat operations throughout the area. The maneuvers tried the logistical and human elements of the Army to their respective limits; not since the Civil War had so many men and so much materiel been transported from disparate parts of the country and assembled in one place. The May 1940 maneuvers tested new concepts: large-scale movement of troops and equipment by motorized convoys, close air support by the Army Air Corps, breakthrough exploitation by mechanized cavalry, and improved radio communication. On the other hand, it was the foot soldier who slogged through all sorts of weather, both fair and foul, and large columns of horse cavalry were seen marching down dusty roads. It was an Army in transition, with new concepts alongside old ones, and untested commanders who got their first taste of combat on a large scale during the maneuvers.

The battles raged across east Texas and

Figure 4-2.9. Army Commanders and staff officers involved in the 1941 Maneuvers. Original caption reads, "Commanders and staff officers, Louisiana army maneuvers, September 1941. Left to right Brig. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Maneuver Director; Brig. Gen. Harry J. Malony, Deputy Chief of Staff, GHQ; Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Chief of Staff, Third Army; Lieut. Gen. Ben Lear, Commander, Second Army; Lieut. Gen. Walter Krueger, Commander, Third Army; Lieut. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, Chief of Staff, GHQ." Source: www.alexandria-louisiana.com/camp-livingston-history.htm.

west-central Louisiana; mechanized columns made the roads nearly impassible in short order. From Lake Charles to Shreveport, from the Sabine River to the Red River, the simulated warfare see-sawed back and forth across the pine-barrens and bottomlands, testing the mettle of both common soldiers and corps commanders. Umpires made on-the-spot determinations of who defeated whom, while staff officers counted up the "casualties." Units rotated in and out of the battles in order to simulate battlefield attrition. Unit commanders were carefully observed in order to gauge their reactions to battlefield situations and their willingness to take the initiative when the opportunity arose.

Of all the maneuver unit commanders, none made such an impression on the War Department brass as did George Patton. Patton, a West Point graduate, grew up listening to the Civil War stories of John S. Mosby, the famous Confederate raider who was a friend of his father. By 1940, Patton had embraced the concept of highly mobile mechanized forces and was eager to demonstrate his ideas. The 1940 Maneuvers were his crucible. Toward the end of the exercise, Patton led his mechanized spearhead on an end-run up the Texas side of the Sabine River, crossed the river at Many, Louisiana, and eventually captured the opposition headquarters. Many stories have been passed down with regards to Patton and the maneuvers; one of the most humorous was recounted many years after the fact by a Catholic priest who had served with another priest assigned to the Catholic Church parish in Many in 1940:

> *It was a Sunday, and Mass had just started, when a commotion was heard outside the church. The priest continued the service, but the commotion continued and in fact got so loud that the parishioners could hear the colorful language being used very clearly. Finally, the priest couldn't take it anymore. He excused himself and stepped outside to see what all the fuss was about. Right out-*

side the church was an officer standing up in a small staff car; the 'blue language' was coming from him in a steady stream. The officer was trying to untangle a bad traffic jam and was waving his arms and yelling a blue streak. The priest approached the car, got the officer's attention, introduced himself, and asked him to please stop cursing as it was disrupting Holy Mass. The officer replied that he was General George Patton and then apologized for the disruption. The priest returned to the church and finished Mass. He remembered the incident for the rest of his life (Faris 2013).

The final phase of the May 1940 maneuvers involved the largest peacetime use of combat aircraft to date. Wave upon wave of Army aircraft made simulated bombing runs on both preplanned targets and targets of opportunity (i.e., troops in the open, convoys, etc.). Army bombers dropped sacks of flour to simulate bomb hits. If the soldiers were awed by this

The Military Influx

One morning at daybreak my father called my sister and I to get up to a strange sight. There on the dirt road in front of our house were two tanks. Military equipment was unknown to me and a space ship would not have been more amazing

Soon the piney woods near our house were teeming with troops and equipment. They were continually passing, sometimes encamping for a short time, then moving on.

Many times after dark we would see signal flares fired from different locations. They would be in a sequence of colors, and obviously conveyed a message. Many times after seeing this, a bustle of activity would occur at a troop encampment nearby and minutes later they would be gone, leaving only the call of an owl or a whip-poor-will to break the silence.

One day a unit was encamped near our house. I heard the sound of an engine and soon an aircraft appeared. I saw that it was trailing several ropes, and as it neared the encampment a number of men grabbed the ropes and pulled it down and secured it. A basket or gondola was detached from its underside and rolled away. It remained there for a short time, then the gondola was reattached, and a couple of men reentered it. It was released, the engine was restarted and it made its way slowly out of sight. This craft was long, like a fat cigar. I heard it referred to as a Dirigible or Blimp. It was probably used for aerial observation.

I also remember watching as an occasional small single engine plane would fly over. Grownups told me that it was a mail plane. I recall this sight beginning in the late 1930's, or perhaps I had gotten old enough to observe and remember. As Army training in the area intensified in 1940, aircraft sightings became more frequent. They bombed bridges, using sacks of flour. If they struck the bridge it was considered destroyed for military use.

Much later I saw aerial survey maps of the area and came to realize that I was probably seeing history-making activity without comprehending its impact. The fact that the aerial survey maps show dates from the late 1930's support the idea that the small airplanes I saw were mapping the future Camp Polk.

After the 1940 maneuvers ended, my family was served with an eviction order as were our neighbors. War stories were being heard continually and my life was drastically changed both physically and emotionally from that time forward.

By Harold K. Davis (2013), Heritage Family member

show of American airpower, the locals were completely astonished.

I was a young lady back then. My mama told me to go to the store. I had a big apron on—we all wore those back then. I had to get across the road, and that was hard. Anything that could be there—horses, carriages, people—was there. On my way to the store, a soldier asked me if I was going anywhere near the post office. I told him I was, and he asked me to post a letter for him. By the time I made it to town, my apron was nearly filled with letters. I suppose the soldiers were desperate to have their letters mailed to home. As I was about to enter the store, a small airplane flew overhead. It dropped flour all over me. When I got inside the store, my grandpa said to me, 'What on earth happened to you?' A soldier came up to me–my black hair was a mess—and said 'You're one dead soldier.' Sylvia Maud Brown, from the *Fort Polk Guardian*, August 24, 2012.

The results of the May 1940 maneuvers were inconclusive. Shortcomings were noted, especially in the use (or misuse) of the new mechanized cavalry units. Reconnaissance was inadequate and not enough attention was paid to concealing ground forces from combat aviation units. Still and all, it was a start, and so the largest peacetime Army maneuvers in history came to a close with commanders on the ground and in Washington better aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the Army as it stood in 1940.

In August 1940, the Army returned to Louisiana for a second round. This time, it was on a smaller scale and involved mostly National Guard troops rather than Regular Army units. Little had changed since May; the area filled with soldiers and local residents interacted with them. However, the National Guard units, many of them from the Northeast U.S., were not as well equipped as their Regular Army counterparts and, in fact, fared poorly in the Louisiana heat, much as their ancestors had during the Civil War. There were numerous occurrences of soldiers dropping out during road marches and the horse cavalry quickly exhausted their mounts. Regular Army cavalry units rode rings around their National Guard counterparts. During this iteration of the maneuvers, some of the National Guard cavalry units "rented" local horses from farmers in the area in order to make up for attrition, with mixed results.

Rickey Robertson, Heritage Family member and local historian, provides more insights into the animals used in the maneuvers, based on his extensive research:

The Louisiana Maneuvers of 1940 brought

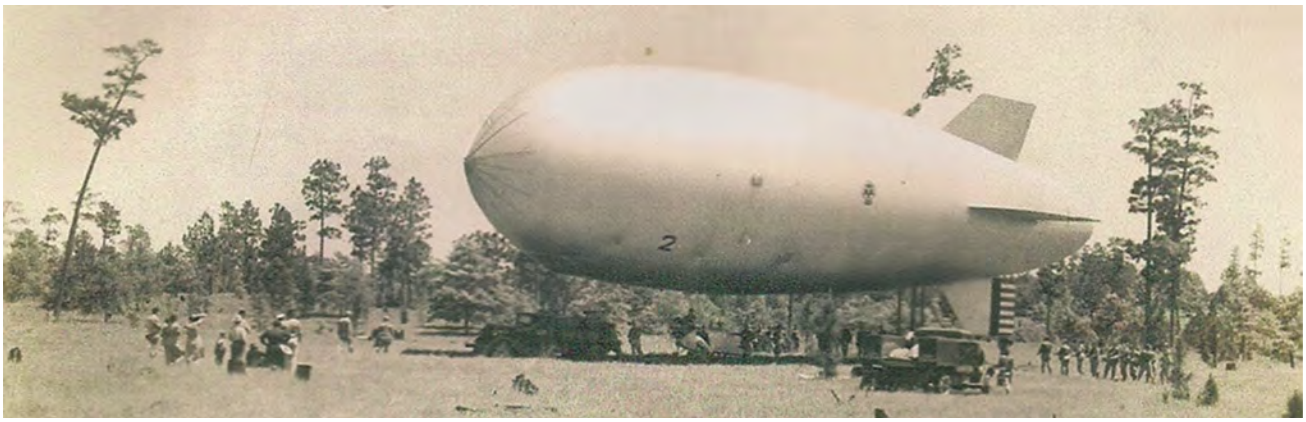


Figure 4-2.10. Military "blimp" tethered near Neame, Louisiana. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection and the Fort Polk Museum. Heritage Family informants report watching blimps flying over the maneuver areas and returning to the same spot to land each afternoon.

Figure 4.2.11. Motorcycle dispatch rider standing in a dusty Louisiana road with a Thompson submachine gun firing at an attacking aircraft. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

out many shortages in equipment, supplies and weapons. The mounted cavalry units were still one of the most important elements of the U.S. Army. These units could provide reconnaissance for infantry and armored units and attack the enemy with lightning speed when necessary. Unfortunately, many of the National Guard cavalry units were not equipped with enough trained cavalry mounts. Agents for the Army spread out across the maneuver area and 'rented' farm horses for use by these National Guard units. There is a great deal of difference between a plow horse and a cavalry mount. The plow horse may be trained to ride, but it is used mostly for pulling a plow. They neither rein well nor ride well. A well-trained cavalry mount could travel specified distances very fast, were well fed and were very well trained. These horses were even trained to respond to bugle commands, since the cavalry used this method to relay commands to the troopers. The poor underfed and undertrained rental horses could not stand up to the continued patrols and advances and were completely worn out in a few days. The cavalry horses in Figure 4-2.12 are being watered in Dowden Creek on Peason Ridge, and look emaciated and worn out from hard use. The saddles and gear have been removed from some of the tired horses. Many horses actually fell dead along the roadside. Detachments of cavalry troopers would quickly dig a hole and bury the dead animal. Needless to say, these cavalry units performed very poorly due to their use of rental horses.

As in the May maneuvers, the results of

A Horse for Vernon: The Last Cavalry Charge

This short story covers a portion of my youth, in the old Whiskachitta Community, inside the Kisatchie National Forest, where Fort Polk is now located.

When I was born (June 8, 1931) at the old Whiskachitta Community, my grandmother Adeline Jane Davis gave me a cream-colored short- horned calf named Vivian. When I was eight years old in 1939, I owned 10 brood cows and 4 steers ready for market. I was very proud of my little herd.

I had long wanted a horse, so it was decided within the family that we would sell my four steers at the auction barn in Alexandria, Louisiana, then purchase a horse with part of the proceeds, and 'No,' I could not go to the auction. I was too young.

The day of the auction, my dad left home with my steers at 5:00 am. This was the longest day of my life. I was on pins and needles, worried about what my horse would look like. Would he be a sorrel, a gray, or a paint? Golly, a paint would be real neat!

I was worried and fretting and thinking to myself, 'How much longer will it be until my dad gets home? What's the hold up?' when finally I heard the old truck and trailer rumbling up our road. I jumped up and yelled, 'Dad's home!' and started running outside with mother yelling at me not to go outside bare-footed, and to take the coal oil lantern with me.

OK!! At last, there in the trailer was the biggest and most handsome horse that I had ever seen. He was so sleek: a dark sorrel with a lighter mane and tail, beautifully curried and brushed, with his head held so high.

I was overjoyed, and looked at the white blaze on his face, and the four white fetlocks, and I was so happy even with my mother telling me it was my bedtime. It was the happiest event of my life; I now owned a beautiful horse.

My first project was naming the new horse, and I chose the name Starlight, taken from a Louis L'Amour short story published in a pulp Western magazine written in 1938.

The year 1940 was a very exciting one for me. We were having Army maneuvers in the woods, all around our small subsistence farm, with the R-A-T-T-Y-TAT-TAT of machine guns and mortar rounds going off at all times of the day and night. Blimps hovered in the air directing the simulated fighting, with two of the new gyro planes practicing landings and take-offs and flying around observing all the action. There were rumors of the cavalry moving into our area to participate with cavalry charges, horse- drawn cannon carriages and action involving the newly-formed motor cycle corps.

Most of my time was taken up with making friends with Starlight. He was only happy when he could be in the pasture with my dad's two horses. I could not get Starlight to eat corn from his trough in the stable. He would only eat corn if I placed it in a bucket and held it up under his nose. He would then eat out of the bucket.

One day two of the sharpest dressed soldiers I had ever seen, a Major and a Master Sergeant, stopped by our farm. They were dressed in olive-drab woolen shirts with olive-drab bloused boot pants; the shirts had three ironed pleats on their backs and the men wore leather Sam Browne belts with leather shoulder straps and knee length brown leather boots, highly polished.

They requested that we strive to keep our livestock (we had open stock laws at that time) on the west side of our field fences. They wanted the property in between the two roads along the meadow, because they were staging a two-troop cavalry charge and cannon battle for the coming Friday. My dad, Cleon Smith, readily agreed. As they were leaving, the Sergeant told me to be sure and watch the cavalry charge, saying, 'I think you will like it.'

Continued

A Horse for Vernon: The Last Cavalry Charge *(continued)*

The day of the cavalry charge was a beautiful summer day, no clouds with little wind. It started around 11:30 am with a battery of horse-drawn light cannon setting up on the acreage between the two roads entering our little farm.

Starlight and my dad's two horses were in a pasture alongside the road. Suddenly, at least two bugles were blowing spine-chilling bugle calls and two double columns of charging cavalrymen with drawn sabers were racing towards where my horse Starlight was going wild, running up and down the fence line, nickering, neighing and snorting, big clods of dirt flying from all four hooves and head held so high, as if he was trying to join his old stable mates as they thundered by. This cavalry charge was so thrilling it gave me the shivers.

After the charge was over and all the cavalry horses had been cooled by walking, the Major came to our front gate, saying, 'Young man, you know your sorrel horse was a cavalry mount.' I thanked him for telling me, though I had already figured it out due to the way Starlight reacted to the bugle calls.

I said, 'Major, can you tell me why my horse will not eat corn out of this trough in his stable?'

He said, 'Young man, cavalry horses are fed out of a nose-bag fitted over their nose and mouth.'

As he was leaving the said, 'Tell your dad to come over to our bivouac area around 10:00 a.m.' On Saturday morning, my dad and I were at the cavalry bivouac area and true to the Major's word, he gave us 12 sacks of oats and 8 bales of hay. He also gave me a nose feed bag with a broken head-strap, which I was able to repair. Old Starlight loved it. As we were leaving, the Master Sergeant came up and asked me what I thought of the cavalry charge. I told him it was awesome, and he said he thought awesome covered his feelings also.

He then said that the cavalry charge of the day before would probably be the last one ever held in Louisiana, as the cavalry was being dismantled.

The maneuvers continued, with a large group of motorcycles, foot soldiers, half-track armor etc. All very exciting for this eight-year-old.

Starlight adjusted to civilian life and became a family member with many privileges. My memories of him and the last cavalry charge are alive and well.

By Vernon D. Smith (2013a), Heritage Family member

Adapted with permission by Stacy Basham Wagner, Environmental Analyst, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. (see Part 2 for the original story)

the August maneuvers were mixed. One of the outcomes was that the federal government realized that the National Guard was badly equipped and poorly led. As a result, President Roosevelt federalized the National Guard shortly after the conclusion of the August maneuvers. National Guard divisions went on to serve valiantly during World War II and benefitted greatly from federalization. More importantly for local residents, the powers-that-be in Washington saw that west-central Louisiana was a good location for large-scale military training. Shortly after the close of the August maneuvers, planning began in earnest for the establishment of a permanent military installation in western Louisiana.

Figure 4-2.12. Cavalry horses watering at a creek, August 1940, Louisiana Maneuvers. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

3. Camp Polk and Displacement

After the August 1940 maneuvers, the War Department decided that, since the west-central Louisiana region was ideal for military exercises, a permanent military installation was required to support further military maneuvers. The Army was directed to scout out locations for such an installation. When word got out to Vernon Parish community leaders, they formed a committee that actively lobbied Army officials in order to persuade them to build the new Army camp in Vernon Parish. An editorial in the *Leesville Leader* on August 29, 1940 attempted to foster public support for the proposed camp by pointing out that the Army would funnel millions of dollars into the local economy.

In September 1940, the Army sent Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower, then Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall's right-hand man, to survey the areas being considered for the new camp. Eisenhower was conveyed to Leesville in style on the Kansas City Southern Railroad's most luxurious rail coach, and feted by the "big men" of the parish. Eisenhower and his staff were loaned horses and they began a tour of the barren ridges of the parish. About seven miles east of Leesville, "Ike" dismounted, looked over the area, jammed his walking stick into the sandy soil, and declared that this would be where the new camp would be built.

Citizens Of Vernon Parish

Vernon Parish has been assured an army camp and in addition to the grounds used as a camp site the entire area of the parish, with the exception of cultivated fields, orchards, or other planted enclosures, is needed for maneuver purposes. Maneuver lease agreements have been mailed out to every land owner in the parish, yet there are land owners who have neglected, forgot, or for some hinderance [sic] have failed to sign and return their lease agreement to the Rents and Claims Board.

The Vernon Parish Committee for Co-operation with Defence [sic] and Military Training are again appealing to those who have not signed their lease agreement to do so at once and send it in. We want Vernon parish to be 100% signed up by Saturday, October 12. You can be a great help to the parish if you will but do this now. On the back page of this paper you will find an advertisement listing those property owners who have neglected to sign and return their maneuver agreement. Each of these property owners cannot be contacted so this means is being used to call their attention, sign their agreement NOW and send to this Rents and Claim Board, or hand to the army officer, now located in Leesville.

Source: *Leesville Leader*, October 3, 1940

Shortly after Eisenhower's tour, representatives of the Army met with parish officials and presented them with a list of properties that the Army wanted to lease as soon as possible.

By October 3, 1940, the parish clerk had in his possession signed agreements from enough landowners that the newspaper proclaimed "All Land Obtained for Location of Army Camp Here."

Although it would be several months before construction of the new camp was underway, speculators ran advertisements in local newspapers attempting to persuade local landowners to sell their land, claiming that they (the speculators) would give them a fair price. It is unknown whether anyone took them up on their offer, but the speculators did in fact buy up some cut-over vacant land in order to sell it to the government. In fact, although the railroad built a spur to service the then-unbuilt camp and there were other small signs of movement, the months of November and December, 1940 were times of uncertainty for most of the residents of Vernon Parish.

What is certain is that, in the span of a few months, the government's attitude toward west-central Louisiana had gone from *laissez-faire* to intense scrutiny. To the people who lived in the area affected by the government's apparent determination to establish a military training base on top of them, it must have been as if their entire world had turned upside down. It started with requests for land leases that went out to property owners in the late summer and early fall of 1940. As fall passed into winter, the government's intentions became clearer as more landowners were served with offers to purchase from the U.S. Government. Some families sold out,[4] but many chose a "wait and see" attitude. The final blows came in the form of property condemnation declarations that forced those who had held out to accept the

[4]In October 1940, the Riley Matthew Cryer family sold its home site and 20 acres of land near the Whiskachitta Community and the present-day South Fort Polk Cantonment area (see the text box later in this chapter titled "Double Jeopardy: The Dislocation of a Whiskachitta Family"). The Riley Matthew Cryer family was among the first five families known to sell their land for creation of Camp Polk, and their land was sold to a private group of businessmen in Leesville rather than to the government. Four other families who sold their land to this business group in October 1940 were the Ida Jeane, Elijah Calhoun, John Thomas (Tom) Jeane, and Charles W. (Charlie) Jeane families. Source: Based on public records and information provided by Heritage Family members.

Harbingers of Change: Part 2

Most years, late summer and fall bring feelings of accomplishment, security, and good will for the subsistence farmer and family. Crops are harvested and stored away for the harsher weather of winter to come. Firewood is cut, split and stacked. Children scour the hills gathering lighter wood to quickly start fires in fire places on cold mornings. Ahead is cold weather, the year's butchering to be planned, and meat to be canned, smoked, or salt cured. Food is generally plentiful.

But the 1940 growing and harvest seasons for Heritage Families of Vernon, Sabine and Natchitoches Parishes is different than all the ones that had come before. That spring and summer are marked by the disturbance and commotion of an invasion: an Army invasion. U.S. Army soldiers, horses, vehicles and aircraft are everywhere, moving across and above the landscape, putting to the test military tactics and equipment in the largest maneuver exercises ever conducted. The noise level from the air and on the ground is extremely troublesome, routinely day in and day out. Farm animals are agitated and disperse in all directions. It is difficult for farmers to control their horses in the field with thousands of strange people, low flying aircraft, roaring tanks, high pitched motor cycles, and whinnying Cavalry horses constantly on the move. Milk cows are unable to find a placid environment to 'let their milk down.' One can only imagine the lady of the house trying to milk a cow under these conditions.

The U. S. Army's Louisiana maneuvers have dominated the lives of the locals since spring. Dark clouds of impending war hang heavy on the horizon and in the hearts of the public. Instability and anxiety are everywhere. Poland has fallen—Europe is in turmoil. The Great Depression has had a suffocating strangle hold on the economy since the financial crash of 1929. Money is scarce as hen's teeth. Clouds of dust puff upward from everything that moves, or rains bring seemingly endless quagmires. The roads, trails, and lanes have been essentially destroyed by the incessant passing of heavy equipment. The maneuvers slowly grind toward an end, but the face of the landscape has been changed by the seemingly endless soldiers, horses, and mechanized equipment that roamed across the denuded hills, stripped bare of their blanket of pines to feed the sawmills just a decade past.

People of the entire area are watching. Rumors are born and die on a daily basis. The government is mute. The public does not know what to think or who to believe, if anyone. Newspapers are pushing. Uncertainty rules. Self interest abounds. Economic conditions and the threat of war are unsettling to the point some forget that humans and their futures are involved.

No one, except possibly a few military officers, politicians, and land developers, could have known or had a vision of what is about to happen to the Heritage Families who made their homes in the heart of Vernon Parish, in communities such as Whiskachitta, Bayou Zourie, Nash Town, Jetertown and Smithville or to the north where Vernon, Sabine and Natchitoches Parishes meet, surrounded by the communities of Peason, Hornbeck, Cold Springs, Kurthwood, and Kisatchie. The lumber companies and the military maneuvers indelibly changed the landscape, but what is to come will change these people's lives forever.

From "Double Jeopardy – And More: The Family of Riley Matthew and Zella Calhoun Cryer," by Skip Cryer (2013a), Heritage Family member

Adapted with permission by Stacy Basham Wagner, Environmental Analyst, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. (see Part 2 for the original story)

Figure 4-3.1. Dixon Monk family at their Six-Mile home. Left to right, back row: Flaudie May Nixon Monk, Dorothy Lea Monk (mostly hidden behind her father). Left to right, front row: Minnie Mae McLeod, Vaughn Edgar Nixon (baby), Dixon L. Monk. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

government's payment for their land. In one fell blow, years, decades, even generations of hard work, planning, and determination, family connections, and community ties were reduced to a small sum of money from a government they barely knew existed until the Army came to Louisiana that summer of 1940.

Lost also would be crops in the field, grazing lands, school companions and church congregations, and even access to cemeteries where loved ones lay buried. For many, in place of these losses grew the seeds of sorrow and distrust.

Finally, a few days before Christmas 1940, the *Leesville Leader* reported that construction of the new camp would begin after the first of the year. January 1941 would prove to be a pivotal month in the lives of nearly every person in the parish, but especially so for the hundreds of families who lived in the areas immediately adjacent to the planned camp.

The landowners and sharecroppers were in for a shock. The Army needed land; a lot of land was required to support military maneuvers, small arms ranges, and artillery and bombing impact areas. Initially, the U.S. Forest Service signed an agreement allowing the Army use of approximately 28,000 acres of the Kisatchie National Forest, but the Army needed at least 55,000 additional acres in order to fulfill its plan for a large-scale training base capable of accommodating all weapons currently in the Army inventory. The government's offer to buy the land it needed for "fair market value" had some takers, but many families did not wish to leave.

Among the many who refused to leave their ancestral lands were Willie Lee Haymon, his wife Viola and their children. The Haymon families had lived in the Fullerton area since before the Civil War; leaving their land was nearly unthinkable. Doris Haymon Mayo Wilcox was 16 when the Army came to remove them from their home. "Mrs. Dollie," as she was known, recalled the following events in the book A Soldier's Place in History, Fort Polk, Louisiana (Kane and Keeton 2004):

> *When the federal government wanted her family's land for Camp Polk in 1941, a representative offered her parents $385, not enough to buy replacement property, but they had little choice…The family lingered for a time, hoping to be allowed to stay, but finally had to leave.* [Dollie] *helped load their belongings into a wagon. I saw the tanks run over that fence. A tank ran right over our kitchen. They crushed our house with tanks. My mother cried…*

The family left behind friends, the family cemetery, the children's schools, and 'the old home place' built with their own hands. They moved near Anacoco Lake into a house so small that two of the boys had to sleep in the barn and her mother had to cook outside because there was no kitchen.

Dollie's sister Olea remembered mostly her

Old Paul—Roots Unsevered

The intense drive to return to one's roots is not limited to humans. In our quest for information on human impacts, we tend to forget that thousands of animals were caught up in the exodus. Many were ultimately left. This was Paul's fate.

Briefly, Paul was a draft horse able to plow all day and did many times. He also was transportation and a companion to a young Marie Cryer. The family of George Richard Cryer was evicted and ended up on a farm near the Good Hope Community west of Anacoco where some of his siblings had settled after moving out. Old Paul was transported to Anacoco along with the family. He chaffed and fretted. Soon he broke out and ran off. Later, George Richard found him back at the old home place on Whiskachitta Creek some 15 to 20 miles away. Needing to plow the land for a coming crop, George Richard had him returned to the farm west of Anacoco.

Paul escaped again. The horse was unhappy, George was unhappy, and the family was unhappy. George then decided it was too expensive to locate and move Paul again. The following is a quote from Marie during one of our discussions on the trauma of the exodus.

By Skip Cryer (2013b), Heritage Family member

After sixty-five plus years, it's beyond me, how I can have the heart-feeling that I do about Old Paul and that situation. Dad got [Cousin] *Horace to ride him to Sandy Creek* [in the Good Hope Community] *when we moved. He skedaddled right away and headed back to Whiskachitta. Dad got someone to take him* [self] *and Horace back down there, probably Uncle Tom, for Horace to ride him back. Evidently Dad didn't have any trouble catching him; he knew where he'd be. Dad couldn't do a thing with him on the new place, he was so nervous. It was a very short time before he found his chance to get away and head back 'home.' Dad let him stay this time. Nothing he could do, Paul was so determined.*

I loved that horse so much. He was a workhorse but I rode him all over those woods. He was my friend. I have always wondered if he made it back and what happened to him. Such a sense of direction!

If anyone could see me with these tears at this moment, I know I'd be open for ridicule but all this reminiscing brings up a lot of things that have been stored away for six and a half decades.

I don't know why we always called him 'Old Paul.' There was never a 'Young Paul.'

Dear Old Paul, you're the only one of all of us that got to go home. Farewell.

By Marie Cryer White (2013), Heritage Family member

Note: Marie Cryer White and her family left the Whiskachitta Community in November 1941.

mother's anguish.

They did notify [us]. *As far as how, I don't know how, but I knew that we had to move. Well, my daddy couldn't move; he didn't have no money. He had no place to move to and he had twenty acres and this grist mill, this blacksmith's shop, this syrup mill, corn crib, fruit house, hen house. They gave him $385 for it. That's all he got. You'd think that was big money back then. No, it was not big money, because he left this big house, it's not air conditioned and it was not heated with central heat but it was comfortable. And he didn't have any money and that's what they give him. And my daddy had to move my mother into a two-room house. And…I'm*

going to tell you something from my heart. I was a thirteen year-old girl and I saw my mother cry and cry and cry. If I would have known who to hurt, I would have hurt them. I didn't know who to hurt. All her bedding and stuff was outside. Us three girls slept on the dining table…But she didn't complain… My daddy, he finally built another house and we moved in…But if I would have just known. But I was just a kid. But I thought, I saw her cry so much. That was her home. That was the only home they had. There wasn't going to be another one. If I knew I'd just go in there and get that gun and I'd shoot them. That was really in my heart! 'Cause I saw her cry so much. And she'd say, 'Sug, don't worry, we'll go back home.' No…the tanks pushed that house down (Olea Haymon Fletcher 2008).

The $385 offered to Willie Haymon for his land was typical of the government's "generous treatment" of the Camp Polk landowners. The amount paid to most was barely enough to reestablish a family in another location, often being sufficient to purchase only "raw" undeveloped land or a reduced number of acreage and smaller home. In most cases quality of life suffered, at least temporarily. Uncertainty and worry took its toll on some. Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon had married and moved away by the time her family was forced to leave their home on Six-Mile Creek, but she was still deeply affected by the displacement:

It was so bad, they had to move out because they were shooting all around them. We had a beautiful place down there. Rolling hills and plenty of things to raise and plenty to eat. But they came in of course and taken it all. And they'd move out and move back trying to live down there. So eventually they stayed and bought the place out at La Camp, Louisiana and that's where my daddy put up another sugar cane mill and made one more batch maybe two years and he had a cerebral brain hemorrhage and died. He had high blood pressure and we always said it was from the stress of leaving his home and going back and forth and leaving everything he'd raised down there…It [the Army coming] *changed everybody! You didn't hardly see anyone that you'd know. They went different ways. I told them it was like a bunch of birds scattering everywhere* (Flaudie Mae Monk Nixon 2008).

Adel Nash Swain was 11 years old when her family was told they had to move from the Six-Mile Community. The Nashes were another well-established family in the area, so leaving was no easier for them than for others. Like many of the displaced families, they took as much of their personal property as they could carry. In particular, the Nashes took apart their home and reconstructed it on new land north of Leesville.

A service man came out, if I don't make no mistake. A service man came out and talked to my daddy about it. And that's how I bet he knew [the family had to move]*, and he gave a length of time to get it all tore down and get it moved out of there…*

I pulled nails. We put them in a metal bucket, and when we got through with everything we brought them with us to use wherever we moved. Daddy bought twenty acres of land across Anacoco Creek over here. And we moved into an old house and then he repaired that old house with what materials we brought from up there and he built several sheds on the outside and built a big corn crib that we placed our corn in (Adel Nash Swain 2008).

For one family in particular, bad news was followed by more bad news.

Well, that was…a bad time. Everything go-

Double Jeopardy: The Dislocation of a Whiskachitta Family

In September 1940, in spite of the world condition and the local turmoil, Vernon Parish brought to town one of the few fun and entertaining things for people to do to momentarily escape the reality of life. The annual Vernon Parish Fair arrived! People from all around gathered to see the exhibits, jostle to see who won the purple ribbons, and walk down the midway listening to carney talk.

Riley Matthew Cryer, raised on Whiskachitta Creek, brought to the fair Zella (Calhoun) Cryer, his wife of almost 21 years and their five sons, four of whom were born on land that became Camp Polk. On the evening of the fair in Leesville, money was short for all the family to enter through the entrance gate, and the boys found a hole in the back fence. Regrouped and being short of money for foolishness, the boys walked along the midway looking at the sights. For rural people in that pre-WWII era, living without electricity or other services, the sights and sounds of the carnival world were splendid to behold.

While the family moved along, a gentleman approached, acknowledged Matthew, and motioned for him to step aside. An obvious discussion unfolded. On returning, Matthew held five dollars, which in 1940 was quite a sum. He handed the boys a share of the money. Surely, a small band of young boys from the country had a great time that night. The content of the adult discussion is unknown. However, it must have been powerfully convincing, as Matthew Cryer, a serious, hard working, family man agreed to give up his family's farm and home. Maybe previous negotiations had been involved, aided by the swirl of rumor and misinformation.

A great sense of urgency existed in Vernon Parish in 1940 concerning the purchase of property and start of construction on a future military camp, as yet unnamed. Although Congress had not yet appropriated monies for purchase of land or construction of an Army training facility in Louisiana, the threat of war was growing more dismal and training facilities were urgently needed. The five dollars handed to Matthew Cryer by E. D. Boone of Leesville was the down payment for the purchase of a home, outbuildings, and 20 acres of improved farm land located near the present day south water tower in the south cantonment area of Fort Polk. The exchange of this small sum can be considered the starting point of a forced exodus of over 200 families that owned property and an undetermined number of families (probably several hundred) that lived on and farmed property they did not own, mostly either government land or timber company land.

The total purchase price for the Matthew Cryer family farm was $500. Another Leesville resident, R. D. Schaeffer, was the actual recorded purchaser of the Matthew Cryer farm. The deed was filed October 3, 1940. The Cryer farm was one of five farms, Section 29, T1N—R8W, that were purchased at this time by a combine of local business men. The land from these five farms became the early center of construction for the new Army training facility.

On October 10, 1940, Riley Matthew Cryer purchased 40 acres of unimproved land from A. J. Weeks and Columbus Pitre for $500 located in Section 7, T1N, R8W, near Bayou Zourie. The Cryers and four other families near the epicenter of future construction were given 30 days to vacate and were allowed to take from their farms any removables they wished. The Cryer family dismantled their home, constructed of lumber recycled from their previous home (an abandoned Whiskachitta school house), deconstructed their fences, gathered their belongings and prepared to move four miles north near Bayou Zourie. The military initially showed no interest in this property, which was not far removed from Matthew's familiar community, friends, family, cemeteries, and heritage. However, this would change.

Continued

Double Jeopardy: The Dislocation of a Whiskachitta Family *(continued)*

The Cryers moved to their new home near Bayou Zourie too late in the year to plant any crops. The free range timbered land had to be fenced and sufficient area cleared before any farming could be accomplished. Winter was on the way. Matthew and his boys built a temporary, essentially three-sided lean-to for protection against the weather and set to the tasks of building fence and clearing land. But as luck would have it, approximately four months after they had moved to their new location, the military expanded its training plans to include the Bayou Zourie site. Through eminent domain proceedings the Matthew Cryer family was evicted a second time, again given 30 days to vacate by the government. According to Fred Cryer, son of Matthew and Zella, they were not allowed to cut the virgin pine timber on the property and were paid less than half the amount his father paid to Mr. Weeks and Mr. Pitre.

Matthew Cryer entered into a lawsuit with a group of other displaced people who felt they were compensated unfairly for their land. The court ruled against the government, August 09, 1941. However, due to the pressure on available lands created by speculation and the displacement of hundreds of families who needed a new place to live, stability eluded this Cryer family and many others. Matthew and family ended up for a time on a worn out farm in Evans, LA, called the old Presley place, so infested with nut grass that it could not effectively be plowed. He even had his father, William Riley Cryer, visit and try to prepare the ground for planting. Matthew finally found property on Sandy Creek in the Good Hope Community west of Anacoco, LA, near other Cryer family members from the Whiskachitta Community. He was able to live there and farm into the late years of his life, despite the many "dangers, toils and snares" through which he and his family came. And in spite of twice being relocated by the government, Riley Matthew Cryer and his wife Zella Calhoun sent several of their five sons off to defend our country in WWII. They even signed approval for one son, 17, to volunteer. Fortunately all sons returned.

Survivors of Heritage Families who gave birth to their farms from scratch, built their homes and barns, gathered together to build their churches and schools, and who buried their dead on this land, look back. At the end some say the changes brought by the military were for the good, while others say they were devastated—never to get over the impact.

From "Double Jeopardy – And More: The Family of Riley Matthew and Zella Calhoun Cryer," by Skip Cryer (2013a), Heritage Family member

Adapted with permission by Stacy Basham Wagner, Environmental Analyst, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. (see Part 2 for the original story)

Figure 4-3.2. Riley M. Cryer. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

The Cleon Smith Family Exodus from the Camp Polk Rifle Range, 1941 (adapted)

Sometime in the early spring of 1940 we had our first contact with the 'un-masked daytime raiders,' whose mission was to remove all persons, land owners, and squatters alike from the Whiskachitta School Community and the Kisatchie National Forest, to make way for Camp Polk. They came in a 1938 olive drab Chevrolet four-door auto, a party of three: one cigar-smoking Army Major and two real quiet U.S. Marshals. Being it was Saturday, my father was home plowing our family garden.

During the week my dad worked as a carpenter foreman at Claiborne, Louisiana, where a military installation was being built. This was the best job he had secured since the Crash of 1929 when he had worked at the Texaco Refinery in Port Arthur, Texas.

I greeted the visitors at our front gate and escorted them around the house to the back porch, arriving there as my dad came up and started unhooking Sam, our old plow horse, from the Georgia stock plow he had been using. My dad walked over extending his hand to the Major and said, 'I'm Cleon Smith, and this is my wife Jane.' Mom places her arm across my shoulder saying, 'And Major, this is our son, Vernon.' The Major introduced himself and the two U.S. Marshals (Dad already knew one of the Marshals). As was the custom in our family, my mother offered our visitors coffee and tea cakes (lemon flavored, my favorite). They accepted, but I noticed that the Major had started acting a little strange, ill at ease, and nervous.

We were enjoying our coffee when the Major fired up the fattest cigar I had ever seen; he puffed and puffed until he got a long ash, blew the smoke toward my mother and father and says, 'Mr. and Mrs. Smith, we are here today to evict you all from this property as soon as possible. My superiors would like it to be today or at most within the month.'

My dad jumped up and asked, 'Mr. Major, why so fast? Won't it be over a year before there will be troops at Camp Polk? I have a crop in the field, cows and hogs in the woods and no place to move to. Please give me eight months and I'll be gone.'

At this time, the Major jumped up, dropping his coffee cup and breaking the saucer, knocking cigar ashes all over my mom's dress collar and neck and yelled, 'I have the marshals here to move you if I so decide.' My dad replied, 'Mr. Major, I don't think you brought enough evictors to do the job and if you don't calm down I'm going to start doing some evicting myself and I won't need any help.'

Then my dad turns to the U.S. Marshal with whom he was acquainted and says, 'Please tell this Mr. Major whether or not you think he brought enough help.' The U.S. Marshal says, 'Major, we don't want to go there.' Then the Major and my dad had a private conversation, wherein the Major agreed to work with my dad and give him as much time as he needed, up to eight months, if my dad agreed to move sooner if he could.

We stayed on until we had our crop of figs, peaches, pears, tomatoes, speckled butter beans, etc. preserved or canned. Our next project was to herd all of our cows into our field so they were behind a fence and easily caught and waiting to be transported to a new location. We had cross-fenced our field so the cows could not get into the corn field. By this time, a little more than four months had lapsed.

My dad arranged with some of his friends to swarm at our house that was to be vacated with three big trucks and three pickups and load up all our household goods and personal items, plus all of our farm equipment, then move approximately two and a half miles to the Shelton Jeane home site, which was located on the Dr. Jeane place (that still had three months left till it had to be evacuated).

Continued

The Cleon Smith Family Exodus from the Camp Polk Rifle Range, 1941 *(continued)*

The Shelton Jeane place gave me new areas to explore, with a lot of new trees to climb and big trees with rope swings hanging from high limbs. My best friends (also my cousins) Marie and Dudley Cryer came to visit us and stayed a whole week. Marie was about five years older than me, but Dud (Dudley's nickname) was my age and we really had a good time. Mom even let us go barefooted. We explored all the surrounding area, made china berry pop-guns, built a fort, played soldiers, etc. We really loved each other. I was so sad when they had to go home.

My dad was also working at Camp Claiborne, but he found time to gather his corn crop and store it in a barn in Pickering, Louisiana, where we planned to finally settle. Mr. Carney Sellers, one of dad's best friends, gave my dad the OK to move all of our cows and hogs onto property adjacent to the barn where he stored our corn. We only took six hogs, and the rest we left on the range.

After about four months, my dad again called in a bigger group of friends and again they swarmed at the Dr. Jeane's place and loaded all of our belongings and traveled approximately five miles to my grandfather's, (J.L. (Fate) Smith) place and moved in. This place was a lot nicer than our old home place or the Dr. Jeane place. Boy, this was a fun place! I went fishing almost every day; the creek behind this place was full of pan size frying perch. Thirty minutes of fishing would yield thirty fish. There were new kinds of fruit trees—orange, tangerine, nectarine—and they were not ripe and we would probably move before they did ripen.

Mom went fishing with me and read to me a lot during this summer. We were staying by ourselves for days at a time. It was real lonesome for we now had no neighbors. My dad was working 3 to 4 days in Claiborne, then coming home for one night and going back to Claiborne the next morning.

Then, in the middle of August, my dad came in saying we will be moving to Pickering, so I could start to school the first of September, 1941. We would be living about 300 yards behind the school. He also informed my mom that he was transferring from the Claiborne job to Camp Polk at the end of the next week and that his friends would again swoop down on us to get us loaded and moved within hours. It was getting easier to move because we had unpacked only essential items.

The final day on the range went real easy, as we were headed out as a convoy: three stake-bodied trucks, one 1940 Chevy car and two pickups. As we passed by the burned sight of the old Whiskachitta School, we were stopped by Mr. Major and eight armed soldiers. He said to my dad, 'Mr. Cleon, I am certainly pleased to see you moving today, as you were the last evacuee remaining to be removed from the range, and as you can see I came with a big enough crew to get the job accomplished.' My dad grinned and extended his hand for a parting hand shake, and he said, 'Major, I for one am glad we are not going to find out for sure today, because we would have been handicapped by the fact that only two of my people were upset enough to really want to resist you and the whole Army. Those two are my wife and our 10 year old son (ha, ha, ha). Major, stay safe, and thank you for giving us more than the eight months we agreed on at our first meeting.'

We continued on to Pickering, and our arrival there would be the beginning of the next four years of my young life.

By Vernon D. Smith (2013b), Heritage Family member

Adapted, with permission, by Stacy Basham Wagner, Environmental Analyst, Quantitative Ecological Services, Inc. (see Part 2 for the original story)

Note: Vernon is the only child of Cleon and Jane Smith. The Smith family is believed to be the last family to move from the range in 1941.

Figure 4-3.3. Garsie James in North Africa. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

ing on and happening you know and they come around and…give you a price for your place and…it didn't matter whether you took it or left it, you left. Then it was the process of finding where you was going to. 'Course everybody tried to salvage everything they could, you know. I know we took down all the fence around our place, and my brother had a log truck then, and me and my mother, she went with me and I had to load them posts, and we come to Rosepine and unloaded them posts, and when I started to turn around to leave, I run over a little old stump and busted the radiator. Then had to get somebody to take us home and get that fixed, and then before my daddy built down there, fire got out and burned all them posts up, so we didn't gain anything but moving the posts (Garsie James 2010).

Shortly after Garsie's family was forced to move away from their old home place in the Whiskachitta Community, Garsie received his draft notice.[5] On his birthday in January 1942, he was sworn into the U.S. Army.

Maurice James' family was in a better situation than most. Maurice's father, in addition to being a farmer and a substitute mail carrier, was also a Vernon Parish Police Juror. Perhaps because the elder Mr. James had a role in bringing Camp Polk to west-central Louisiana, he was able to arrange for better treatment than many other families.

I remember this incident when the government bought out all the community out there. There was a host of people sold out their homes but I remember my dad…I guess he got some help in…completely tore down the home we were living [in]. They took it apart and took it down board by board, even the brick chimney was taken down. The Army furnished trucks to carry the material over to the home place that my daddy had bought. He took that lumber and built another house near the one he had bought. But it was quite a deal to see all those people moving out (Maurice James 2010).

Using his position as Police Juror, Mr. James purchased some road-building equipment; young Maurice, 12 years old at the time, drove dump trucks and road graders to help build roads for the Army when he was not in school.

Ralph Deason tells another story of how the Army helped to relocate a church (see below).

Perhaps the families dealt the hardest blow were the so called "squatters," families who did not own the land that they occupied and farmed, but who in many cases had built homes and

[5]Garsie James' family left their land and home in the Whiskachitta Community in January 1942.

Sand Hill Church Became Oak Grove Church

The Sand Hill Church was a small country church serving the people of what is now the northeast area of Fort Polk. It was located on the Fullerton Road (now designated State Hwy 489) that ran north-south from LaCamp to the sawmill town of Fullerton.

During the exodus this church was mandated to be removed since it was standing on land purchased by the government. A positive relationship developed around this church between the members and the Army. The local population decided to move the church to the north and relocate it outside the Camp Polk boundary rather than letting it be destroyed. There was no cemetery associated with this church.

The church was jacked up. Logs were cut and placed on the ground under the church to protect the building and endure the move. The military provided a bull dozer to pull the church building to its new location. After the church was moved into position it was jacked up again, logs removed, and lowered on blocks salvaged from the Fullerton Sawmill.

The church building was moved intact about 1¼ miles north of the Camp Polk boundary on the road now designated LA 489 and located on the east side of the road facing west. This church is still in use today as a wing on a modern church complex named Oak Grove Baptist Church.

By Skip Cryer (2013c), from information provided by Ralph Deason (2013), both Heritage Family members

farms equal to those established by landowners. These families typically occupied land owned by lumber companies—often absent landowners—and may have developed and farmed the land for decades.[6] When these families were removed from the land where they lived and worked, they received no compensation from the government, could bring with them only what they could carry in a rattletrap truck, and had little or no ability to recover. Many were related to neighboring landowners who could help ease the transition, but some undoubtedly struggled to reestablish homes, farms and lives.

Sharecroppers, tenant farmers who owned no land but rented plots in order to support their families, were also left without compensation when they were removed from the land. These folks, the poorest among poor yeoman farmers, literally had no resources. Little is known of what became of these people; it can only be hoped that the community saw to their welfare.

Some of the displaced found work helping build Camp Polk. The huge construction job required enormous numbers of workers; Leesville's population boomed from around 2,300 people to over 15,000 between January 16 and February 15, 1941. Crews worked around the clock in three shifts in order to complete the camp as quickly as possible. Once the main construction was completed, many of the displaced found work in support jobs on the camp. Steady work for cash money helped ameliorate the feeling of loss, and most quickly adapted to their new circumstances. Yet the ill will was always there, just pushed down deep inside.

4. Peason Ridge and Displacement

The people to the north of Camp Polk at Peason Ridge had witnessed the 1940 Louisiana

[6]Lumber companies may have allowed "squatters" to occupy their land rent free or for token rent payments as an incentive to minimize the risk of intentionally set wildfires or other property losses. After the longleaf pine was cutout in the late 1920s, lumber companies often abandoned the land to avoid payment of taxes and may have been unconcerned with squatters.

Maneuvers and subsequent boom in Leesville with growing dread. When construction began at Camp Polk in January 1941, the Peason families were not immediately affected, but rumors swirled that the Army wanted to build a bombing range there. In August 1941, another round of Army maneuvers was held in west-central Louisiana, even larger than those that had gone before. After the 1941 maneuvers, a decision was finally made to acquire land on and around Peason Ridge for Army use. Although some Peason Ridge landowners agreed to sell out and leave, on July 16, 1942, an order was issued by a federal judge in the U.S. District Court in Lake Charles ordering the eviction of 32 "defendants" who had not removed themselves from the land.

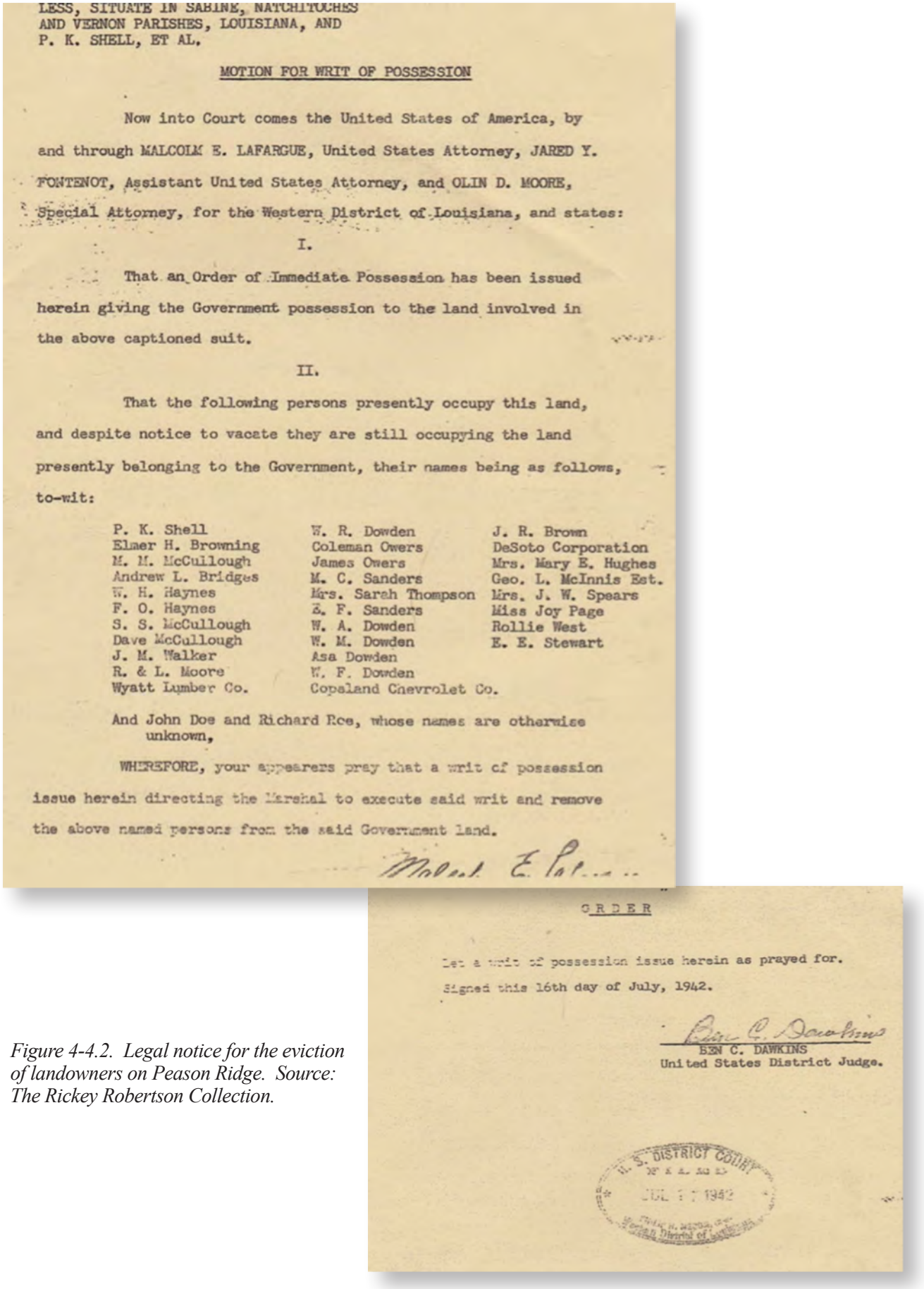
Coleman Owers reluctantly agreed to sell after receiving the above eviction notice; he sold his land for $795 and received an additional $115 for his crops. The agreement allowed him to remove his personal property (including his house), but he was prevented from ever returning after July 31, 1942.

According to Rickey Robertson,

William Haynes and his wife Kate lived on the northern edge of the proposed artillery range near the old Peavey-Wilson Mill, from whence Peason Ridge gets its name.[7] *William Haynes and his family were forced*

Figure 4-4.1. McInnis Family, mid-1940s. Seated: Dona Bell Craft McInnis. Standing, left to right: Thomas Franklin McInnis, Andy Ester McInnis, Myrtle L. McInnis, Samuel Luther McInnis, Daniel McDuffy "Duffy" McInnis, Lois McInnis, Mettie McInnis, and Mellie Iona McInnis. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

[7]'Peason' is a combination of the first three letters of 'Peavey' and the last three of 'Wilson.'



LESS, SITUATE IN SABINE, NATCHITOCHES
AND VERNON PARISHES, LOUISIANA, AND
P. K. SHELL, ET AL.

MOTION FOR WRIT OF POSSESSION

Now into Court comes the United States of America, by and through MALCOLM E. LAFARGUE, United States Attorney, JARED Y. FONTENOT, Assistant United States Attorney, and OLIN D. MOORE, Special Attorney, for the Western District of Louisiana, and states:

I.

That an Order of Immediate Possession has been issued herein giving the Government possession to the land involved in the above captioned suit.

II.

That the following persons presently occupy this land, and despite notice to vacate they are still occupying the land presently belonging to the Government, their names being as follows, to-wit:

P. K. Shell	W. R. Dowden	J. R. Brown
Elmer H. Browning	Coleman Owers	DeSoto Corporation
M. M. McCullough	James Owers	Mrs. Mary E. Hughes
Andrew L. Bridges	M. C. Sanders	Geo. L. McInnis Est.
W. H. Haynes	Mrs. Sarah Thompson	Mrs. J. W. Spears
F. O. Haynes	Z. F. Sanders	Miss Joy Page
S. S. McCullough	W. A. Dowden	Rollie West
Dave McCullough	W. M. Dowden	E. E. Stewart
J. M. Walker	Asa Dowden	
R. & L. Moore	W. F. Dowden	
Wyatt Lumber Co.	Copeland Chevrolet Co.	

And John Doe and Richard Roe, whose names are otherwise unknown,

WHEREFORE, your appearers pray that a writ of possession issue herein directing the Marshal to execute said writ and remove the above named persons from the said Government land.

Malcolm E. Lafargue

ORDER

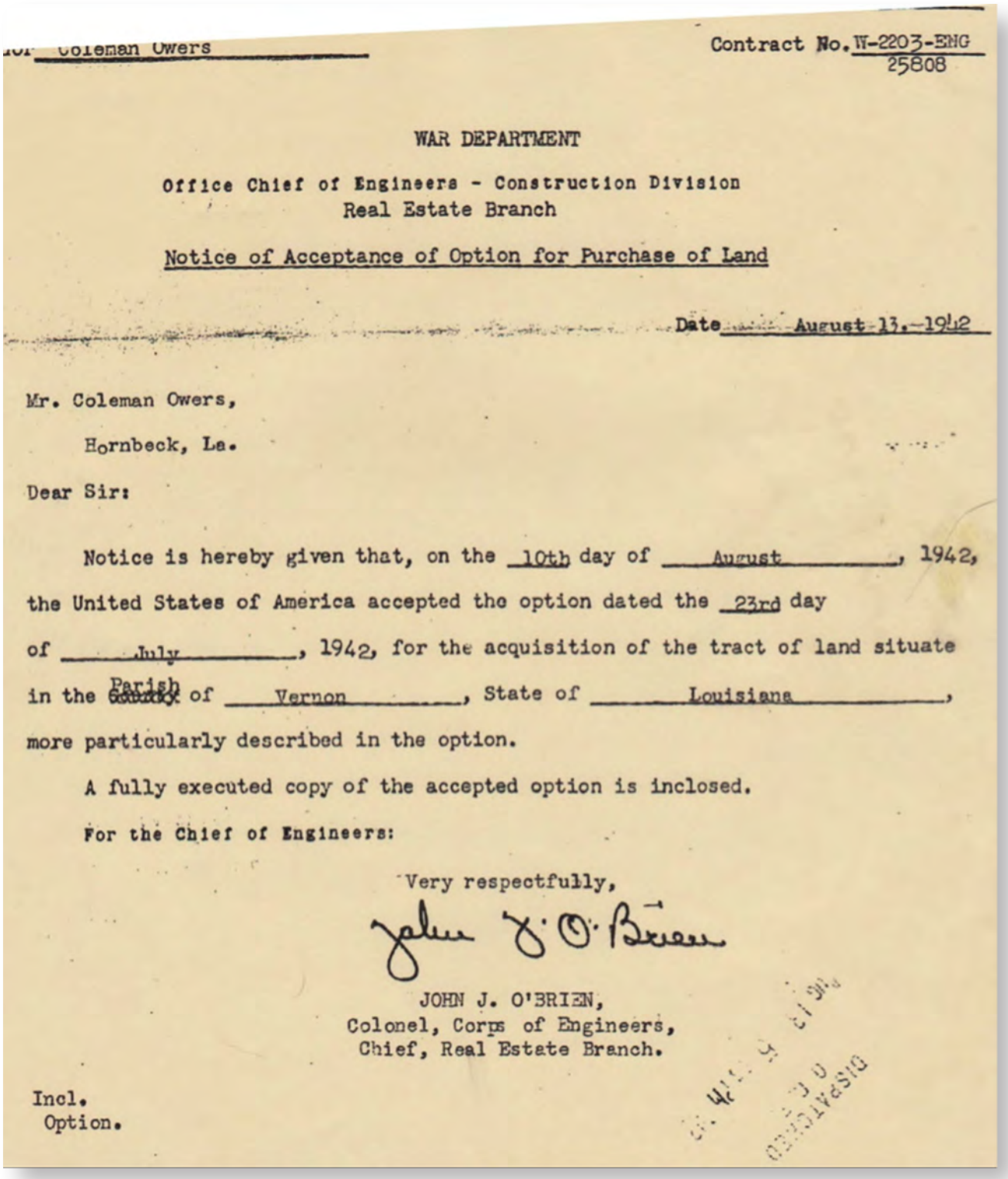
Let a writ of possession issue herein as prayed for.

Signed this 16th day of July, 1942.

Ben C. Dawkins
BEN C. DAWKINS
United States District Judge.

U.S. DISTRICT COURT
JUL 17 1942

Figure 4-4.2. Legal notice for the eviction of landowners on Peason Ridge. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.



for Coleman Owers

Contract No. W-2203-ENG 25808

WAR DEPARTMENT

Office Chief of Engineers - Construction Division
Real Estate Branch

Notice of Acceptance of Option for Purchase of Land

Date August 13, 1942

Mr. Coleman Owers,

Hornbeck, La.

Dear Sir:

Notice is hereby given that, on the 10th day of August, 1942, the United States of America accepted the option dated the 23rd day of July, 1942, for the acquisition of the tract of land situate in the ~~County~~ Parish of Vernon, State of Louisiana, more particularly described in the option.

A fully executed copy of the accepted option is inclosed.

For the Chief of Engineers:

Very respectfully,

John J. O'Brien

JOHN J. O'BRIEN,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Chief, Real Estate Branch.

Incl.
Option.

Figure 4-4.3. Purchase offer acceptance letter to Coleman Owers from the War Department. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

Postmaster Displacement on Peason Ridge

J.D. Grant was one of the landowners named in the July 16 [1942] eviction notice. Based on 1940 Census records, the family included wife Emma, daughter Velma, and sons Leslie and Earl.

J.D. Grant was the postmaster of the little settlement of Nona located on Peason Ridge. Mr. Grant also ran a store/trading post at this location and sold staples to the families living through-out the area. He was like many of these landowners who lived all their lives on the same farm. Mr. Grant had a well-built house with barns and other outbuildings for various use on his farm. But on July 16, 1942, J.D. Grant and 31 other landowners on Peason Ridge were served eviction notices signed by U.S. District Judge Ben Dawkins. All the landowners were advised that they could not go on or occupy the properties listed as 33,000 acres of land, more or less, situated in Sabine, Natchitoches, and Vernon Parishes of Louisiana. The document stated that these new lands were to be known as Peason Ridge Artillery Range. The document further read that if they trespassed in any manner or continued in the nuisance of their occupancy of their former homes and lands, they would be arrested by U.S. Marshalls. A way of life was ending. J.D. Grant moved less than one mile from his former home and farm and due to circumstances, was forced to live with his family in a tent for months until they could purchase another home located away from Peason Ridge.

By Rickey Robertson (2013), Heritage Family member

Figure 4-4.4. J.D. Grant family homeplace on Peason Ridge. Source: The Rickey Robertson Collection.

Figure 4-4.5. Barn originally standing on the Thomas Franklin McInnis and Dona Belle Craft McInnis homestead located on Peason Ridge. The structure was salvaged and moved to the homestead of son Daniel McDuffy McInnis and Norma Talmadge Laurence McInnis in the 1940s and represents one of the few remaining intact Heritage Family structures predating removal of the families from the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge areas. Source: Thomas Willard McInnis (photo taken in 2010), provided by Rickey Robertson.

to leave their homestead on Peason Ridge along with the other families. Mr. Haynes and his family moved near the Mt. Carmel Community. When forced to leave their farm, all the crops were ready to be harvested. These crops provided winter food for both the family and for their livestock, but they were forced to leave the crops in the field. After settling on a small farm site, Mr. Haynes decided to go and carry the family back to the old homestead in order to harvest the crops. The vegetables could be canned for the family and the corn could be used to make much needed corn meal and also to feed their animals. While gathering the crop, Army officers found the family doing so. The officers left and returned with a unit of tanks and advised the family to get in their wagon and leave. To prevent the family from ever coming back, the tanks were ordered to destroy the crops, and after churning them to a pulp, they ran into the house and completely destroyed it as well. Sadly Mr. Haynes and his family left that horrible sight, never to return. With no food for the winter, neighbors helped them out with what little excess and animal feed they could spare until a crop could be planted the next spring at their new farm.

Thomas "Uncle Tom" McInnis had known heartbreak: he had lost his first large farm on Peason Ridge because he was unable to pay the taxes assessed against his property. He moved onto land owned by his family until he was

forced to move again during the evictions of July 1942. Tom was elderly by this time; his wife Dona ("Doanie") could hardly walk due to arthritis. According to family history, both Uncle Tom and Doanie died from broken hearts a couple of years after leaving their last home on Peason Ridge.

5. Conclusions

There can be no doubt that the removal of landowners and others to pave the way for the establishment of Camp Polk was a traumatic experience for most of the participants. In fact, many people harbored harsh feelings toward the U.S. Government until recent times. It is to the credit of these individuals that, despite their animosity toward a government that they felt had betrayed them, many family members served in various capacities with the armed forces during World War II (Appendix B for a list of Heritage Veterans). Some made the ultimate sacrifice: they gave their lives for the defeat of tyranny and a return to peace.

Like the families on and around Camp Polk, the Peason families never forgot how they were forced to leave their homes. And like their Camp Polk counterparts, the Peason families gave their share of young men to serve in World War II (Appendix B). Those who served have been called the Greatest Generation; however, their parents should never be forgotten for their contributions to the victory effort. All of these people should be remembered and thanked for their individual and collective sacrifices during a time of national emergency. Times of trouble often create heroes; these families should be counted among them.

The events of 1940-1942 in west-central Louisiana helped to propel the United States and its allies to victory in World War II. And the Army installation that eventually became the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk has helped to train and prepare millions of soldiers to fight in conflicts around the globe. Yet, the forced exodus of hundreds of families and the dismantling of historic communities on the land that became Fort Polk and Peason Ridge wrought a legacy of sadness and heartbreak that has spanned more than 60 years. A recognition and a reconciliation has been long overdue.

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Chapter 5 by Ted Hammerschmidt,[1] Gene Haymon,[2] and Dr. Charles Stagg,[3] as noted

THE HERITAGE FAMILY PROGRAM AND THE HERITAGE FAMILY ASSOCIATION

1. Introduction

By Ted Hammerschmidt

The first day of spring in 1940 began with a temperature of 48 degrees. A cloudy, calm day was to follow, with a high of 74 (see Figure 5-1.1). It did not rain that day. As Chapter 4 of this book has shown in particular, despite the pleasant weather that heralded spring and planting season, turbulent times lay ahead for rural families living on the land that would soon become Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range. The War Department secured federal court approval to seize private land for public use under the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and thus the Heritage Families were removed from their homes and farms through the exercise of eminent domain.

Sixty-seven years later, on a spring day in 2007, the season began again with pleasant temperatures and sunshine. But this spring season was to bring another kind of renewal, one that was long overdue. For the Heritage Families, what was to follow shortly was almost as momentous as the start of the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1940: the U.S. Army began a process to seek to repair, to make amends to the Heritage Families for their removal from the land and their ways of life.

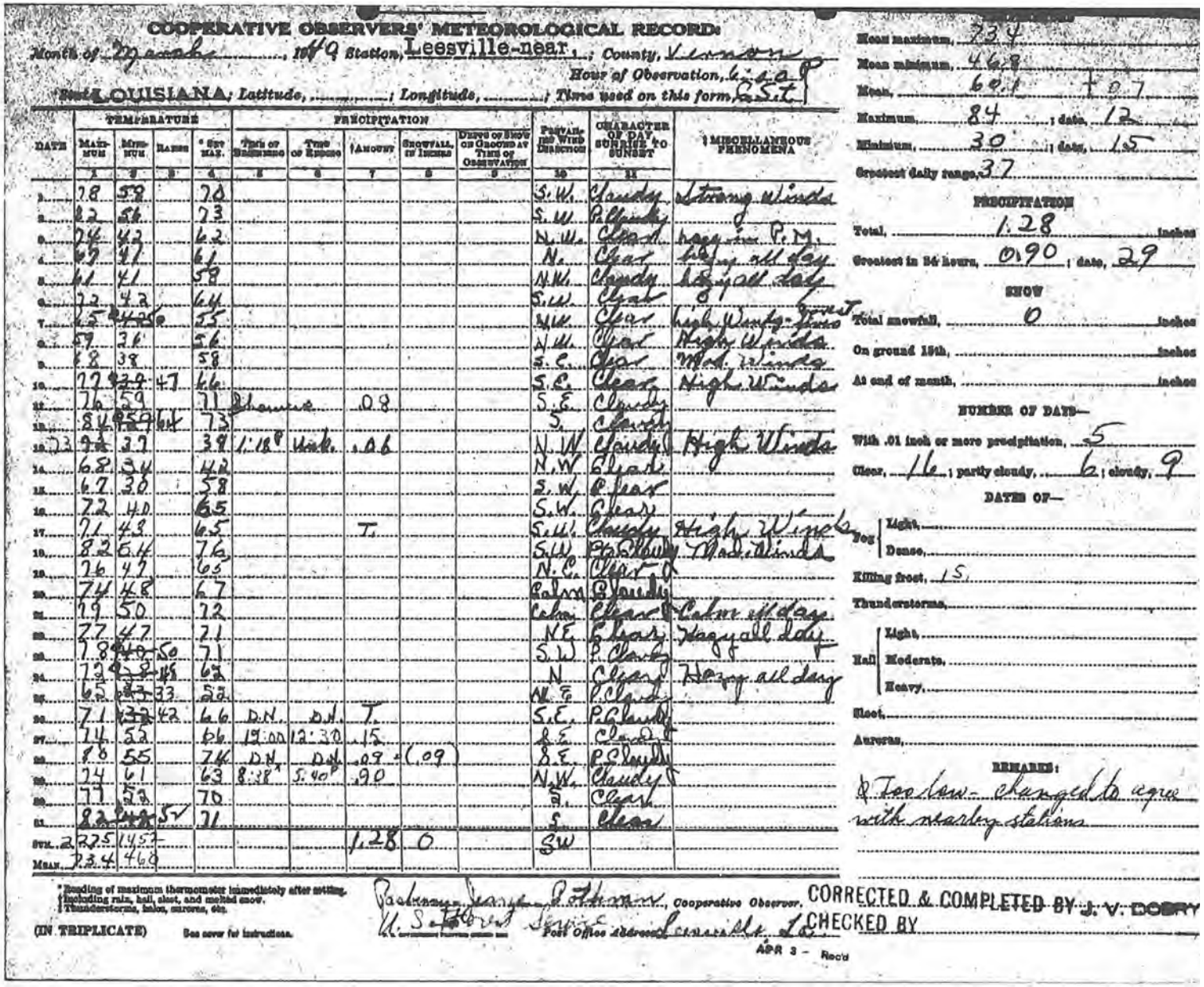
This chapter describes the development of Fort Polk's Heritage Family Program and how it is being carried out, including activities (such as archaeological site investigations and artifact management) which have been underway since the 1970s as part of Fort Polk's broader cultural resources program. This chapter also explains the early beginnings of the Heritage Family Association and its role in telling the story of the Heritage Families. The chapter then concludes with thoughts by Dr. Charles Stagg, under whose supervision and guidance the Heritage Family Program has been implemented by Fort Polk.

2. Fort Polk's Heritage Program

By Ted Hammerschmidt

Reparation to the Heritage Families began simply, with the vision of then Garrison Commander, Colonel David G. Sage, U.S. Army (now retired). A few months after arriving at Fort Polk in 2006, Colonel Sage reflected upon the magnitude of sacrifices endured by these ordinary American families. His recognition of familial ties to the landscape, to their heritage, and their way of life that was severed, stirred his conviction to act. A commitment was made to help restore "the connection between families and their land, history, and identity," and to strengthen relationships with the local community (Strickert and Hudson 2007:5). The Heritage Family Program was thus born to fulfill this vision, and to foster the hope for an en-

[1]Farmer and facilitator. DeRidder, LA.
[2]Heritage Family member and current President, Heritage Family Association, Vernon Parish, LA.
[3]Chief, Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division, Fort Polk, LA.



COOPERATIVE OBSERVERS' METEOROLOGICAL RECORD

Month of March, 1940 Station, Leesville-near; County, Vernon

Hour of Observation, 6:00 P; State LOUISIANA; Latitude, ; Longitude, ; Time used on this form, C.S.T.

DATE	TEMPERATURE: Maximum	Minimum	Range	* Sfc Max.	PRECIPITATION: Time of Beginning	Time of Ending	†Amount	Snowfall, in Inches	Depth of Snow on Ground at Time of Observation	Prevailing Wind Direction	Character of Day, Sunrise to Sunset	‡Miscellaneous Phenomena
1	78	58		70						S.W.	Cloudy	Strong Winds
2	82	56		73						S.W.	P.Cloudy	
3	74	42		62						N.W.	Cloud	Rain from P.M.
4	69	41		61						N.	Clear	Rain all day
5	61	41		58						N.W.	Cloudy	Rain all day
6	72	43		64						S.W.	Clear	
7	75	42	50	55						W.	Clear	High Winds-Frost
8	59	36		56						N.W.	Clear	High Winds
9	68	38		58						S.E.	Clear	Mod. Winds
10	72	39	47	66						S.E.	Clear	High Winds
11	76	59		71	Thunder		.08			S.E.	Cloudy	
12	84	59	64	73						S.	Cloudy	
13	72	37		39	1:18*	Unk.	.06			N.W.	Cloudy	High Winds
14	68	34		42						N.W.	Clear	
15	67	30		58						S.W.	Clear	
16	72	40		65						S.W.	Clear	
17	71	43		65			T.			S.W.	Cloudy	High Winds
18	82	64		76						S.W.	P.Cloudy	Mod. Winds
19	76	47		65						N.E.	Clear	
20	74	48		67						Calm	Cloudy	
21	79	50		72						Calm	Clear	Calm all day
22	77	47		71						N.E.	Clear	Rain all day
23	78	40	50	71						S.W.	P.Cloudy	
24	73	38	45	67						N.	Clear	Rain all day
25	65	33	33	52						N.E.	P.Cloudy	
26	71	29	42	66	D.N.	D.N.	T.			S.E.	P.Cloudy	
27	74	53		66	19:00	12:30	.15			S.E.	Cloudy	
28	86	55		74	D.N.	D.N.	.09	(.09)		S.E.	P.Cloudy	
29	74	61		63	8:38*	5:40*	.90			N.W.	Cloudy	
30	77	53		70						S.	Clear	
31	82	48	54	71						S.	Clear	
SUM.	2325	1457					1.28	0		SW		
MEAN	73.4	46.8										

Mean maximum, 73.4

Mean minimum, 46.8

Mean, 60.1 +0.7

Maximum, 84 ; date, 12

Minimum, 30 ; date, 15

Greatest daily range, 37

PRECIPITATION

Total, 1.28 inches

Greatest in 24 hours, 0.90 ; date, 29

SNOW

Total snowfall, 0 inches

On ground 15th, inches

At end of month, inches

NUMBER OF DAYS—

With .01 inch or more precipitation, 5

Clear, 16 ; partly cloudy, 6 ; cloudy, 9

DATES OF—

Fog: Light, Dense,

Killing frost, 15

Thunderstorms,

Hail: Light, Moderate, Heavy,

Sleet,

Aurora,

REMARKS:

0° Too low - changed to agree with nearby stations

* Reading of maximum thermometer immediately after setting.
† Including rain, hail, sleet, and melted snow.
‡ Thunderstorms, halos, aurorae, etc.

(IN TRIPLICATE) See cover for instructions.

Cooperative Observer.

U. S. Forest Service

Post Office address

CORRECTED & COMPLETED BY J. V. DOBRY

CHECKED BY

APR 3 - Rec'd

Figure 5-1.1. Meteorological report for March 1940, Leesville, LA. The first day of spring in that year fell on the 20th of March.

Figure 5-2.1. At the Heritage Workshop held in 2007, Fort Polk cultural resource specialist Ellen Ibert hears from Doris (Dollie) Haymon Mayo Wilcox and Olea Haymon Fletcher (left and right foreground, respectively), two of three daughters of Viola and Willie Lee Haymon, displaced from land now a part of the Multipurpose Range Complex on Fort Polk. Rear: Carolyn Areno and Ella Arnold, daughters of Columbus James. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

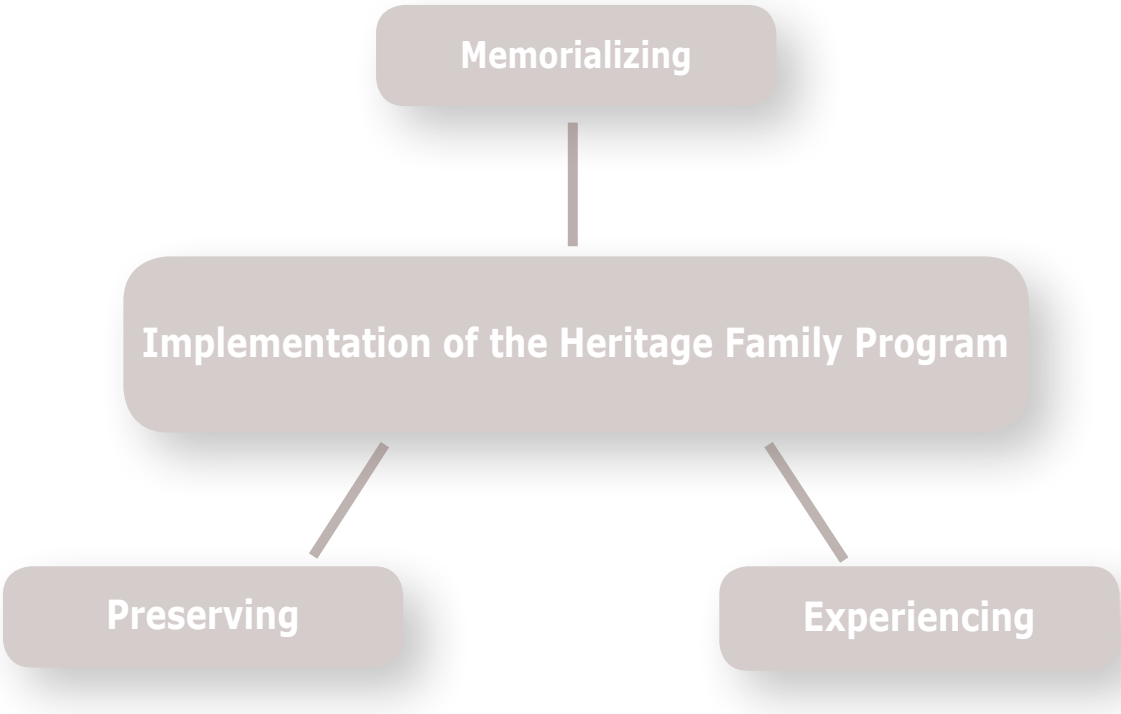


Figure 5-2.2. Conceptual diagram of Heritage Program areas.

during partnership between the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk and its Heritage Families.

How to begin to repair the relations between the Heritage Families and the military? How to ease tensions, build trust, and "recognize, honor, and memorialize" their sacrifices? As a group of Fort Polk's cultural and natural resources staff met and pondered the task of carrying out Colonel Sage's guidance, it became obvious that none of the participants had the knowledge, experience, or skills to develop, organize, and execute this effort alone. An inclusive planning effort was needed.

As a result, a collaborative, multi-day workshop was held in April 2007 to chart a way forward. Workshop participants included representatives of the Heritage Families, area museum curators, chambers of commerce, historical societies, academia, and Fort Polk and U.S. Forest Service personnel. The workshop opened lines of communication that had been suppressed for decades—mostly by providing a long-needed opportunity for family representatives to talk and for the government representatives to listen.

The workshop group decided on a number of activities that everyone agreed was necessary to do honor to the Heritage Families, which are represented by three program areas:

2.1 Memorializing

As the initial Heritage Family Program workshop group met in spring 2007, the specific questions surrounding memorialization began to emerge. *Who* is to be memorialized, and in what manner? Which family surname spelling is considered appropriate to record on a monument? What type, style, material, and setting are best-suited for this recognition? Should there be two monuments, one for Camp Polk families and one for Peason Ridge families? Ultimately, it was decided to dedicate separate monuments to the families from whom lands were taken for Camp Polk and to those from whom lands were taken for Peason Ridge. The monuments were dedicated to the Camp Polk and Peason Ridge families during the first Heritage Day celebration in November 2007. They are located at Warrior Memorial Park on Mississippi Avenue in South Fort Polk,

Figure 5-2.3. Left: Aerial maps and obelisk memorials to Camp Polk and Peason Ridge Heritage Families. Right: Closer view of obelisk memorial to Peason Ridge Heritage Families. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 5-2.4. Memorialization can also be expressed through art. The figures and fence are part of a silhouette created to capture life on the H.E. Self homestead, based upon a historic photograph. The silhouette is located at Warrior Memorial Park on Mississippi Avenue in South Fort Polk. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

which is open to the public after obtaining a visitor's pass at the Main Gate.

A second question emerged, just as important—*what* is to be memorialized? The home sites represent special places for memorialization. When the families left or were evicted in 1940, many dismantled their houses to reassemble them elsewhere, and they took with them virtually all of their few possessions. It was still the time of the Great Depression when money was scarce and nothing was thrown away. Most of today's surviving family members were infants, children, or very young adults at the time of displacement. When a tangible piece of a home site is identified, it holds special meaning:

As Marie Cryer White was re-discovering her family's home site during a Heritage Reunion visit, she literally stumbled upon a door from an old wood-burning stove. Marie exclaimed, "Why that's from my Grandmama's stove! The last time I saw this door, I was tending Grandmama's fire while she cooked!" The experience she recalled occurred more than sixty years ago.

Scant evidence of home sites remains in the landscape, except for an occasional dug well, brick scatter, or metal artifact, now an archaeological site. Fort Polk has conducted initial archaeological surveys on over 168,000 acres of Installation lands and National Forest train-

ing areas as part of its historic preservation program since the 1970s, well before the Heritage Program was conceived. While over 3,300 archaeological sites have been identified, most are associated with a prehistoric occupation or use by native people. Of the sites in this total that have had a second, more intensive archaeological survey conducted, approximately thirty-eight have an association with the historic period of settlement of interest in the Heritage Family Program and have been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or potentially eligible for listing; twelve are solely homestead sites, while twenty-six yielded artifacts showing past use by both settlers and earlier Native Americans (JRTC and Fort Polk 2014).

In order to protect these sites, the precise locations are not identified on public maps and they are marked with posts and signage as "environmentally sensitive" areas so that Soldiers and Installation personnel know to stay out of the area. The marked sites are inspected at least yearly to make sure the markers are in place and intact and that there is no sign of ground disturbance.

Ornamental plantings at historic homestead sites and cemeteries are sometimes the most visible surviving evidence in the landscape of human settlement, and can themselves serve as memorializations. The existence and locations of such plantings and the home sites have been charted through a combination of research using global positioning system coordinates, computer mapping, current and historic aerial photography, archaeological surveys, and oral histories. These types of tools were used to develop a Heritage Tree Registry to identify, record, and preserve "sentinel" trees, clear identifiers of places where homesteads once stood.

Although trees are prominent markers of human settlement, historic roses and other perennials have also been located on home sites found through archaeological surveys and in family cemeteries. Cuttings from 'Seven Sisters' and 'Old Blush' roses found on post, espe-

Figure 5-2.5. Left: A remnant sycamore standing tall at the Napoleon Nash home place in Nashtown. Right: Charlie Nash, Napoleon's brother, who settled north of their father's (George Washington Nash) homeplace. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 5-2.6. An 'Old Blush' rose is presented to the most senior Heritage Family member in attendance at the 2008 annual reunion. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 5-2.7. An early morning view looking northeast along the ridge of Brack Cemetery, which is located east of Whiskey Chitto ("Whiskachitta") Creek. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

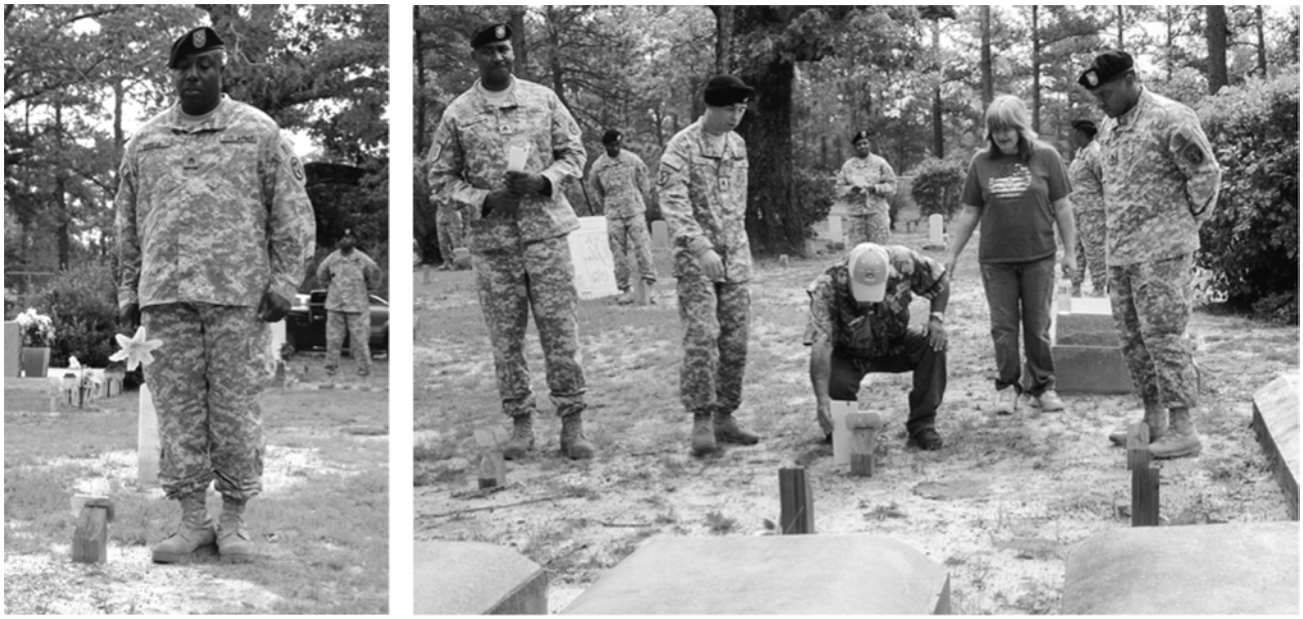


Figure 5-2.8. Left: A Wounded Warrior honors the grave of a Heritage Family member at the Holly Springs Cemetery, recently re-identified and verified as a result of collecting and sharing oral histories. Right: A family member reconnects with a lost ancestor at Holly Springs. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

cially in the cemeteries, have been propagated by Fort Polk's natural and cultural resources staff and offered to family representatives at heritage celebrations.

In addition to home sites, the family cemeteries are the most visible and affecting elements of the Heritage Families' connection to the land, which was severed in the 1940s. Twenty, possibly 22,[4] Heritage Family cemeteries are within Army lands or training areas at Fort Polk and Peason Ridge, making them inaccessible when training is active. Prior to initiation of the Heritage Program, identification of unmarked burials and cemetery boundaries, and maintenance of headstones and the sites themselves, were not systematically carried out. Since the 2006 to 2007 timeframe, the Army has improved its caretaking of each of these cemeteries. Ten of the sites have been newly fenced and new arched entries installed, and cemeteries are routinely maintained and inspected.

Fort Polk and the Heritage Families recognized that many gravesites within the historic cemeteries were marked with temporary wooden markers that have not survived. Non-invasive, ground-penetrating radar has been used to help locate these gravesites, and more permanent marking has been placed. In many cases, documented oral histories have helped to identify the name of the person interred, thus memorializing and restoring the gravesite of that individual with his or her family.

2.2 Experiencing

History is often best learned through *experiencing*, the second program area of the Heritage Family initiative.

Heritage Day, also called the Heritage Reunion, provides an annual reminder regarding the purpose of the Heritage Family Program, which is to recognize and honor the "connection between the families, their land, their history, and their identity" (Strickert and Hudson 2007:5). Heritage Day provides an opportunity for multiple generations of Heritage Family members to reconnect with one another, to share memories, share a meal, and share their

[4]See Table 3-7.2 of Chapter 3.

Figure 5-2.9. Heritage Family booth displays, 2012 Heritage Reunion. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 5-2.10. A coloring book was created from historic photographs under the supervision of Michelle McKenzie, Heritage Resource Specialist. The page at right reproduces a photo of Maydella and Versie Bass on clothes washing day. Dolls, jacks, and marbles (left) are common games that children can play during reunion time. Source: On file at the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office, Fort Polk, LA.

Figure 5-2.11. Soldiers in period uniform serve as color guard during a Reunion Day opening session in 2009. Each gave a dramatic reading of a letter written to their mother or girlfriend back home on the range. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 5-2.12. Re-enactor Chaplain Joe Hamilton unsaddles his horse at the Mill Creek Pentecostal Church to deliver the Sunday morning service. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

Figure 5-2.13. Dr. ("Doc") James W. Jeane lived in the Whiskachitta Community, serving the medical needs of a large part of Vernon Parish. Here, Chaplain Hamilton delivers one of Doc Jeane's 1940-era messages as part of the "brush arbor"gathering event. The podium was constructed from a remnant cedar tree rescued from Doc Jeane's home site after being uprooted by a hurricane. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

knowledge of life as it was on the "range" in 1940. Another purpose of the reunion, perhaps less apparent but no less important, is to connect Soldiers and families—to blur the lines that separate people, to bring us into one fold, under one wing.

Families create booths to display their photos and stories, reunite with friends, share tales, and reflect at these reunions. Other educational booths demonstrate children's play and craft activities in 1940, display genealogical and historical information, take oral histories, allow photographs to be scanned digitally, and show the proper way to clean headstones in order to preserve them.

Food, an integral part of Southern culture, has also become integral to Heritage Day. Old-fashioned syrup tea cake recipes and ice cream have been made during the Heritage Reunions. These and other recipes are taste-tested by attendees to find the ones that best "conjure up" memories of homemade foods of the past.

Guided tours of the family cemeteries are also a highlight and a tradition now during the Heritage Reunions. Since many Heritage Families have been unable to visit the cemeteries where their ancestors are buried since the 1940s, part of the day is devoted to guided tours of cemeteries and home sites. Training at the JRTC and Fort Polk ceases fire for a full day in remembrance of our Heritage Families' sacrifices, so that families may tour the range where they or their forebears once lived, and where some of their forebears are buried. The historic cemeteries are a setting where families often choose to explain their ancestry to their children and grandchildren, and the cemetery tours represent increasingly rare opportunities for folk history to be handed down from generation to generation. The inscriptions visible on the headstones there are tangible examples of Heritage Family genealogy and somber reminders of the hardships of the rural South subsistence farming lifestyle in 1940.

Figures 5-2.11 through 5-2.13 depict several of the re-enactments that are featured at many of the annual celebrations, bringing to life people, places, and events. These types of "living history" events often involve Army military and civilian personnel, Heritage Family members, and other individuals who are interested in regional history.

Each year, the theme and focus of the Heritage Reunion are developed through collaboration between the Heritage Family Association and Fort Polk, and these emphases vary to meet the needs and interests of the Association and its members.

2.3 Preserving

Volumes have been written about the rural life of the antebellum plantation era along the Mississippi River delta. Yet one must search long and hard to scrape together a complete image of the subsistence farming lifestyle in west-central Louisiana in the 19th and early 20th century. Fort Polk has had a cultural resource program, staff, and collection of artifacts since at least the early 1970s, as required by several federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. However, for many of those years, the primary emphasis of the program was on finding and researching prehistoric sites, which is consistent with the emphasis of the field of historic preservation and archaeology at that time. It was not until the late 1990s that a professional assessment was undertaken, at Fort Polk's behest, of three cultural sequences of interest to the Heritage Program: exploration and early settlement by Europeans (1528-1830); pioneer settlement (1830-1860); and subsistence farming (1860-1890) (Anderson et al. 1999).

Since the 2006 to 2007 timeframe, the overall management of cultural resources at Fort Polk has expanded and been enriched by the Heritage Program. The *preserving* aspect of the Heritage Family Program consists of: 1) collecting, assembling, and piecing together tangible and intangible reminders of the regional Heritage Family history; and 2) scholarly research to develop a more comprehensive understanding and depiction of the "Upland South" subsistence farming families in west-central Louisiana.

Individual family researchers volunteer a tremendous amount of knowledge and energy to compiling research about their families and subsistence farming. However, life intervenes at times, interests are diverted, and home collections are susceptible to fire and other loss. In order to develop and provide a systematic and secure way to develop oral histories and preserve Heritage Family memorabilia and artifacts, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed in 2008 between the U.S. Army, U.S. Forest Service (Kisatchie National Forest), and Northwestern State University (NSU) in Natchitoches, Louisiana.

The agreement established a framework for the three parties to share information and expertise relating to cultural resources in the stewardship of Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest, particularly those relating to "the period of time between 1820 and 1945 which saw the initiation and termination of settlement within the current military installation boundary by members of immigrant families from post-colonial, territorial, and eastern American states" (JRTC and Fort Polk et al. 2008:B.). Through the MOU, faculty and staff at the Folk History Center at NSU substantially contributed to the Heritage Family Program for collection of oral histories. The NSU Folk History Center has special expertise in this domain and provided technical guidance and assistance on how to secure authorizations for interviews, develop questions, and conduct and record interviews. Oral histories have been collected from more than sixty of the elder representatives of the families, some of which have been interviewed a number of times. Many oral histories begin

The oral history work has been especially important in documenting the lives of women and children, since much of history, to the extent it exists, has been focused on the men as head of households and primary providers. In response to questions (Q) by interviewer Ellen Ibert about her childhood near Six-Mile Creek, Elly Mayo Swain (ES) recalls bath-time:

Q: *What about when you took a bath?*

ES: *Number 3 wash tub.*

Q: *Number 3 wash tub? How many times a week you took a bath?*

ES: *Every night, at this time of the year. Every night you bathed, and you'd better do it right, too. Every night. Number 3 tub. It was momma's wash tub.*

Q: *Did you have a water well at the house?*

ES: *It was at the schoolhouse.*

Q: *So you all didn't have a water well at the house?*

ES: *Not at the house, no ma'am.*

Q: *So you all would use the water well that was at the school house for your water? And did Jack and Jill* [the mules] *haul it back to the house? How did you carry it?*

ES: [Papa]*'d take one of those mules and fill that tub full of water. He'd talk to him, talk to the mule, keep him from walking so fast so it wouldn't all slosh out. Make a trip or two. But you know, that was easy to do. Because to us that was just like you putting on your shoes in the morning. It was nothing to it.*

Elly Mayo Swain (2008)

Figure 5-2.14. Signing ceremony, Heritage MOU. Left to right: Dr. Larry Monk, NSU; Colonel David G. Sage, Fort Polk; and Greta Boley, U.S. Forest Service Supervisor, Kisatchie National Forest. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

with a reticent comment, such as "I don't have much to offer," and then expand into a two-hour voyage into the past. Both the interviewer and interviewee often find the experience an emotional one, in which the opportunity to capture memories yields the potential for another nugget of information—painful or pleasing—to buoy our knowledge of the past.

Another key outcome of the MOU was the establishment of a permanent repository for the Heritage Family Collection. At present, the collection consists of approximately 2,000 historic photographs, 2,000 research photographs, and 420 historic documents; in total, the collection represents over 250 individual families (Wagener 2014). Heritage Family members are continually donating new photographs and documents; therefore, files will always be in formal processing for inclusion in the curation facility at Fort Polk. Since the growth of the Heritage Family Collection depends on the families themselves, this collection continues to grow as more families become aware of and interested in JRTC and Fort Polk's effort to preserve this part of history.

All of the items that comprise the Heritage Family Collection (hard copy and scanned records, such as photographs, oral histories, books, maps, and videos) are housed in a climate-controlled, secure curation facility at Fort Polk. The curation facility is overseen by a cultural resource specialist in the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division of the Installation.

Family, public, and academic access to the Heritage Family Collection is provided in two main ways. First, a room has been set aside in the curation facility with a desktop computer for viewing digital resources (e.g., transcribed oral histories, photo images, 1940 Census information) and hard copy materials. Interested individuals are asked to submit an access re-

Figure 5-2.15. Webpage screenshot of Fort Polk and Peason Ridge cemetery map at the "Cemeteries" link. A click on a cemetery takes the user to that particular cemetery, highlighting each grave. Another click on a particular grave will produce the name of the deceased and her/his birth and death dates (if known), inscriptions, associated photographs, if any, and a photo of the headstone and footstone. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

quest form to a staff representative of the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division ahead of their desired time for viewing so that the materials can be made available when they arrive.

The second means of public access to Heritage Family Program information is through the Fort Polk-sponsored website, www.polkhistory.org. Whether a person is across Vernon Parish or across the U.S. or world, access to the Heritage Families' past is only a click away. Currently, the "Heritage Project" link takes a user to links for Cemeteries (see Figure 5-2.15), Publications, the Image Gallery (featuring family albums of historic photos, general historic photos, and Heritage Family Program events), Links (other resources), and Forums. The website is a work in progress, with updates being made on an ongoing basis to include new information about cemeteries and burials, add Heritage Family photographs and records, and to improve the accuracy of names and other information based on new knowledge and consensus.

2.4 Closing Thoughts

The stories of the Heritage Families of Camp Polk and Peason Ridge, untold and forgotten by all but a few, have now been given a place in history. Their heritage, too, has now

become our heritage. An oft-quoted phrase tells us, "We cannot change the past, only the future." To change the future, we must pass on that which we hold dear: our Family Heritage and what we have learned from it.

The 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides for the power of eminent domain, which enabled the removal of Heritage Families from the land for a public good: the creation of Camp Polk and Peason Ridge Artillery Range. But the last two words of the 5th Amendment also serve as the final means of protection for the individual and require that power to be coupled with "just compensation" for those whose property is taken.

It is our hope that these words will ring true, and that the Heritage Family Program may be a part of that well-deserved compensation.

Coming face to face with the people who made Fort Polk possible is truly the greatest day I've had during my tenure at Fort Polk. Today is a day long overdue. The Federal Government exercised their authority under the Constitution in taking the land during a time of war. The Constitution states, however, that just compensation must be given when land is taken… Today, just compensation has finally been given to you through the Heritage [Program]. *Sixty years ago, your land was cleared, but your history was not uprooted. Your roots will always be here. Your land will never be made into a parking lot or a shopping mall. Your heritage will always be here. We honor your families. You gave up your homes, way of life, and happiness. Heritage Day reminds us of this. Your roots are now the roots of our great Army. Wherever our Army goes, we bring the red mud of west-central Louisiana with us on our boots. America's freedom is indeed just compensation for your sacrifices. On behalf of all of America's Soldiers, I thank you.*

Major General Daniel P. Bolger, the Commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk at the inaugural Heritage Day celebration in November 2007

3. The Heritage Family Association

By Gene Haymon

Figure 5-3.1. Logo of the Heritage Family Association.

The start of this chapter briefly describes the genesis of the idea of a former Fort Polk commander to recognize the families who lived on the lands now occupied by Fort Polk and Peason Ridge. In Section 4 below, Dr. Charles Stagg, who leads the Installation's department responsible for cultural and natural resources, also gives his views on the Army's vision and reasons for the program. From my perspective and experience, over the past six years, the officials at Fort Polk, beginning with the Commanding General, recognized that in order for the heritage celebrations to grow and prosper, a family-driven, non-profit organization was needed. The non-profit could serve as a vehicle through which more people could become involved in helping to build a complete footprint of each and every family's sacrifice and to preserve the heritage and cultural resources that are so bountiful on the tens of thousands of acres now owned and used by the Army.

Thus, the Heritage Family Association was formed in the fall of 2012 as a non-profit membership corporation registered in the state of Louisiana. The purpose of the organization is to encourage interest in family history, genealogy, traditions, culture, customs, and the ways

our ancestors decorated, adorned, and spiced their lives. The Association, and the families and their descendants, are enriched each time someone captures, archives, and shares a story, a favorite family recipe, a tune, or a simple reflective moment of a way of life that *ist nicht mehr* (that is "no longer"). Membership is open to anyone interested in family, in our history, and the heritage of this area of Louisiana.

3.1 What Is Heritage

Before I talk about what the Heritage Family Association is doing and plans to do, it occurred to me that I should try to explain what "heritage" means to me and the Association's leaders. I bet if the readers wrote down the number of times the word "heritage" is used in this book, the exercise would fill a page itself—or maybe two or three pages.

Academically, culturally, and even according to Webster's Dictionary, "heritage" is both a combination and culmination of all the things that make up one's *identity*. Temporally, the Heritage Family Association's interest dates back to the earliest settlement in the area by men and women of European ancestry—circa 1790. The heritage we seek most to understand includes the landscape, traditions, spirit of the community, and the legacy handed down from this past. What we learn from this understanding is interpreted and celebrated today, and passed on to future generations in the many forms of music and dance, favorite stories and recipes, healing practices, spiritual traditions, "courting" customs, and even childhood games.

Figure 5-3.2. Friday night bluegrass jam. From left: Fred Cryer, Lucille Cryer, Lyndon Smith, and Shelby Smith. Source: Heritage Family Association.

"Heritage," as former residents and their lineal descendants of the land prior to Camp Polk and Peason Ridge, also includes an implied promise and a broken trust on the part of our government. The manners in which "we"—the families, and even our animals—reacted to displacement and continue to respond are also our heritage. Further, heritage is not just valuable in helping an individual understand her or his identity; the understanding and knowledge also defines who we are as a region, a state, and a nation. The word includes all of the tangible and intangible things that we want to keep and share with others in the future. Amid all the turmoil of the middle of the 20th century, one must not forget that this great nation was entering "the greatest war" in the early 1940s. Proud, patriotic, and selfless, our sons and daughters volunteered for military service, served with dignity, and many returned to a new home and a new way of life. While some Heritage Family members never fully recovered, others prospered and flourished. Those experiences too are our heritage and deserve to be collected.

The phenomenon of "heritage" is also happening as we speak and write today. The Heritage Family Association's directors and officers are mindful that our organization's current events in 2014 are the heritage of future descendants, Soldiers, and citizens. No one, hardly even the military, could have foreseen in the 1940s that there would be a time when we could record, share, and communicate words and images in bits and bytes through millions of wired and wireless means and devices. Our organization has a social media page on the World Wide Web and a link on www.polkhistory.org to disseminate information on who we are and how to join, and to keep in up-to-date contact with members and interested parties. Digital technology capability makes me feel better that the preservation of Heritage Family information will be assured. At the same time, the Association's goal is to make sure that our work is not simply enjoyed by future members and the public as a passive experience afforded by digital technology, but is a living, feeling, and participatory experience.

3.2 What We Do

This book shares a glimpse of rural life in the 1940s for families living in west-central Louisiana. When the Heritage Family Program began, it was thought that about 250 families owned land in the area that would become Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range. Based on updated research, we know that the area included between 600 and 700 families, counting not only "owners," but renters, other family members needing a place to stay during the Great Depression, and others seeking quick and free shelter. Many families who were displaced from the land they occupied simply moved a short distance "off post" and settled in a sense of adjacency. The Heritage Family Association seeks to track these settlement patterns and includes those families geographically, whether close by or distant from west-central Louisiana.

We also serve as an agent to help collect oral histories and as a town-crier to announce the calendar of events. Family reunion dates are scheduled and advertised, as are graveyard cleanings, tours, speaking engagements, gatherings, booths, workshops, and crafts. Avoca-

If there was a house with a roof, it seldom remained vacant. As one family departed, another would take up residency within days. Most did not own their own house or the land upon which it was built.

Heritage Family member

Figure 5-3.3. Multi-generational families at cemetery tours. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

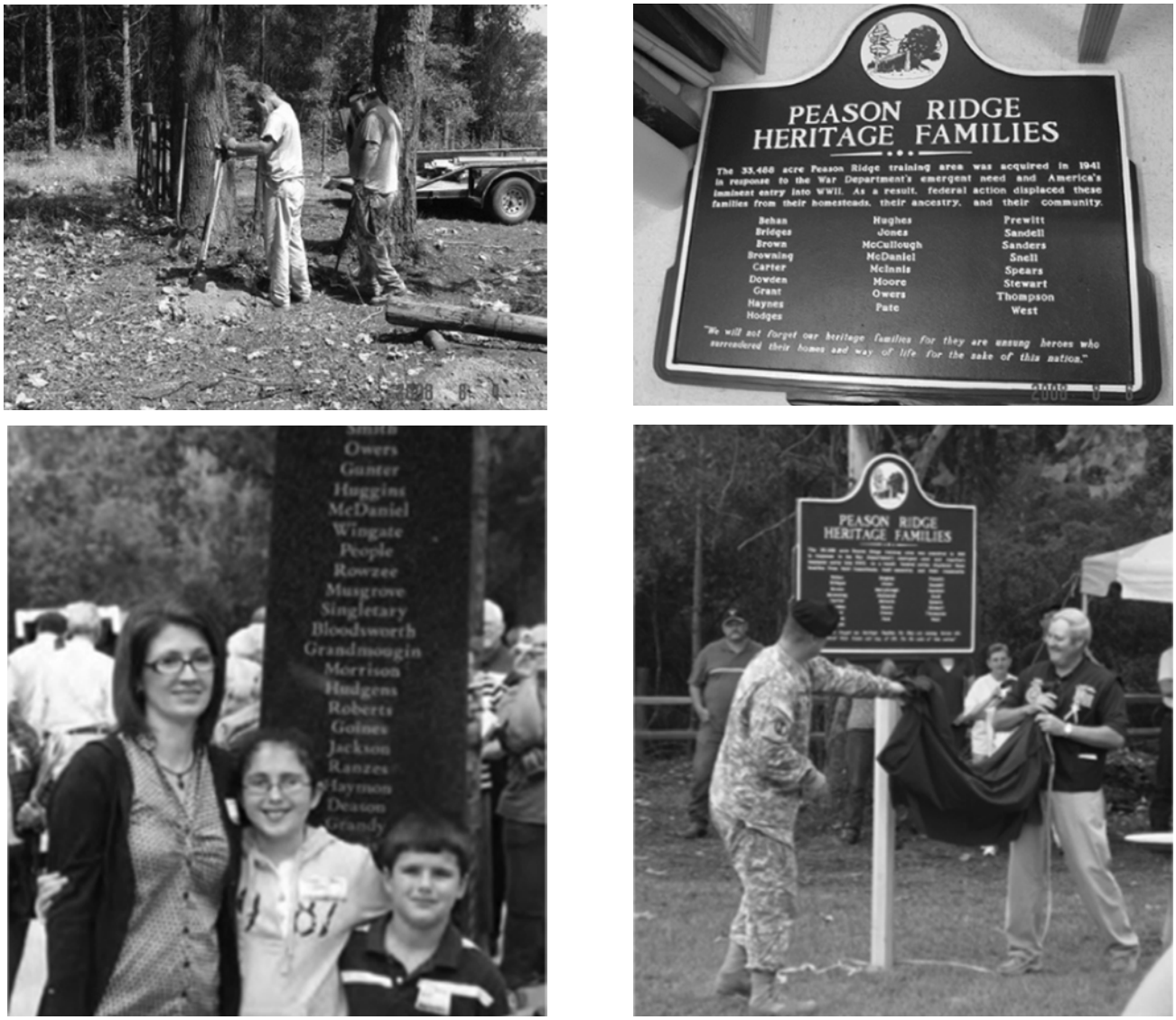


Figure 5-3.4. Montage of Peason Ridge Heritage markers and events. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

tional genealogists are embraced, indeed encouraged!

The Association pledges support to the Soldiers and civilians at Fort Polk. We welcome America's sons and daughters into its fold, just as our children have been embraced by others across this nation, and appreciate the sacrifices each makes in securing freedom and way of life for us all. The men and women stationed at Fort Polk, in a sense, have also been displaced from their families and communities. Many are a world away from home—some may be in search of a familiar family surname, a home-cooked meal, or a folk life story to help fill that temporary void. Our Association is ready to step into the shoes as a surrogate family.

The leadership of the U.S. Army is now responsible for stewardship of the land our ancestors once occupied. Many roads, training areas, and facilities bear a Heritage Family surname as a respectful nod to the sacrifices once endured. Our membership is committed to being an active voice in assuring that the reverent preservation of the land, homestead sites, cemeteries, and our interred remain imperatives to the Army. We also seek continued access to and assistance in collecting, archiving, and sharing the past through the Heritage Family collection of documents and images.

The Heritage Family Association celebrates the opportunity to move forward in partnership with the U.S. Army to meet mutual needs and to serve the inheritors of our great land, now and in the future. As the training needs of the Department of Defense expand and Fort Polk acquires new land to meet its mission requirements, we will be an attentive ear to listen to the needs of the Installation and offer to help identify lessons learned from the past, promote open communications, and help capture the rich history of families and communities that may be affected in the future.

In closing, the subsistence farmer is no more. Gone are the days in which a family and a community lived with such singular purpose and way of life that was so abruptly foreshortened. Specialization, technology, and social and economic transformations have made a return to this past improbable. The Heritage Family children and young adults that were displaced in 1940 are now gray with wisdom, their parents long since deceased. While all may reflect upon those times, none now choose that way of life, preferring today's more comfortable lifestyle. We can honor these settlers by celebrating, reflecting, learning from and building upon, and sharing their cultural heritage with our children and our children's children.

4. Wrapping Up *1940 – Last Year-Home:* Reflections on the Land, The Families, and the Future of Preserving Heritage Identity

By Dr. Charles Stagg

Because of my age I suppose, or more than likely because of my tendency to be tactfully stubborn, I was given a special dispensation by the editors and allowed to begin this portion of the chapter by speaking personally. So, let me commence by stating that I consider it a privilege to have had a small part in honoring the Heritage Families of Fort Polk and Peason Ridge. That said, it is also important for me to clearly state that Colonel David G. Sage, U.S. Army (now retired), was the originator of the Heritage Family Program—the Army program to recognize, honor, and memorialize the families who were displaced to establish Camp Polk and the Peason Ridge Artillery Range.

A somewhat similar, but less comprehensive, program had been carried out at Fort Hood while Colonel Sage served there as the Deputy Chief of Staff. When Colonel Sage arrived

Figure 5-4.1. Colonel David G. Sage, U.S. Army (now retired), originated the Heritage Family Program. Source: www.polkhistory.org.

in Louisiana in 2006 to serve as our Garrison Commander, he immediately appreciated the need for Fort Polk to reach out to this special group of heroes. Colonel Sage could see farther than all of us. In fact, he could clearly see that the sacrifices of land, home, and community by the Heritage Families had never been fully appreciated and our debt of gratitude had never been properly expressed—and that this situation needed to be corrected in short order. Most importantly, he could see that our Heritage Families have a singularly important role to play in sustaining the present and the future of Fort Polk.

According to Colonel Sage, "By strengthening our relationship with the local community, we are able to improve the quality of life, and life experiences, that our Soldiers and their families have while stationed at Fort Polk." In effect, in his vision, the Heritage Family Program should not only facilitate the reconnection of the Heritage Families to their own cultural landscape—their traditional homes, communities, and cemeteries—but the program could represent a living community connection for Soldiers and Soldiers' families while they are stationed at Fort Polk. Each Soldier realizes the terrible sacrifice of being separated from home and community in the service of this country, and each Heritage Family member carries that same heartfelt memory of sacrifice for this nation. The Heritage Family members and the Soldiers in training at Fort Polk thus share a common need for connection and reconnection to the same landscape. So, our hope is that the formation of a stronger and healthier Fort Polk

community will be based on the shared values of family, community, and landscape: values that will represent positive and enduring legacies of the Heritage Family Program.

4.1 Displacement and Healing the Hurts It Caused

Olea said something to me which I do not intend to ever forget: 'I have spent a lifetime hating the Army for what they did to my family, but, now, the Heritage Family Program has helped me to begin to forgive.'

Although the trauma of displacement has been detailed in the other chapters of this book, it is necessary to reemphasize for the reader that displacement destroyed more than the lives of individuals and single families. In fact, a primary purpose of this book is to recognize and correct our error of not adequately chronicling the impacts at the community level of human social organization. Heritage Family member Skip Cryer alluded to this loss at the community level when he stated that, "They lost everything—home, ancestors, land, even their grocery store." Schools and churches and cemeteries and grocery stores are operative at the community level of life. These kinds of institutions are not always noticeable to us at the conscious level of awareness, but they are powerful forces in our psyches. How powerful is shown by an interaction I had during lunch at the 2007 Heritage Family workshop, as I happened to be standing next to Olea Haymon Fletcher. We visited as we moved up toward the serving line, and at one point during our visit we began to talk about the meaning of the Heritage Family Program. Olea said something to me which I do not intend to ever forget: "I have spent a lifetime hating the Army for what they did to my family, but, now, the Heritage Family Program has helped me to begin to forgive."

4.2 The Future of the Heritage Family Program and the Heritage Family Association

The formation of the Heritage Family Association in the fall of 2012 was of special importance for the future of Fort Polk as an Army training installation and of the greatest importance for the sustainment of the Heritage Family Program, both inside and outside the post. The first point that I would like to make concerning the Heritage Family Association is that its formation has raised the effort to recognize, honor, and memorialize the Heritage Families to another dimension—the dimension of future time. The second point is that the group is distinct and separate from the Heritage Family Program. Bear in mind that the program was, and is, an Army-funded and Army-structured program, which primarily involves Army civilian employees and specialty Army contractors. It was these Army personnel who first interacted with an unorganized group, or groups, of Heritage Family members to develop a way to recognize and honor those displaced by the War Department in the period from 1940 to 1943.

With the initial goal of recognition completed, the next goals of the Heritage Family Program will focus upon compliance with state, federal, and Army standards for curation of artifacts (such as ceramics and other materials collected from archaeological surveys of home sites) and continued collection of cultural information related to the Heritage Families for preservation in perpetuity. The importance and strength of the Heritage Family Association is now, and will be, based upon its independence from the Army bureaucracy and its right

to speak directly to the U.S. Army leadership about matters of interest to the Heritage Family descendants. In this role, the organization's leaders have already begun to interact with the Army's leadership and to inform the Heritage Family Program of issues relevant and important to them. This is healthy.

For example, in 2009, Fort Polk announced an initiative for acquisition of up to 100,000 acres of private and commercial lands adjacent to existing Army lands in order to expand training lands for current and future resident units. The Heritage Family Association has participated in a formal consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to give its views on management of cultural resources on land near Peason Ridge acquired under the Land Purchase Program. Interestingly enough, we learned through that dialogue that there were several close ties between Heritage Family members and abandoned, but traditional, family farms located on the new lands. Those farms had been purchased following World War II by the current or subsequent industrial timber landowners. Members of the Association volunteered to guide Army archeologists to the sites of several home sites and two cemeteries located on those lands. The group has also provided historical information about several burials, and shared the Association's desire for protection and long-term management of the cemeteries.

On March 5, 2013, the Heritage Family Association was officially invited by the Garrison Commander to become a member of the Fort Polk Environmental Quality Control Committee. The Environmental Committee serves as a forum for discussion of important environmental, natural resources, and cultural resources issues facing the post. As a member of this committee, the Association will be kept up-to-date on cultural resources issues and have a voice in development and improvement of cultural resources management at Fort Polk.

One of the over-used mantras of our modern, technologically steeped world of bureaucracy is "performance;" the word "effectiveness" is another one of that ilk. Can you imagine how one of our management efficiency experts might have counseled Doc Jeane against spending too much time in delivering a particular child in the Whiskachitta Community? After all, the return on investment of Doc's extra time spent dealing with a complicated delivery would not have been justified, since he would probably have received the same payment of a dozen eggs regardless of the time involved in the labor.

My hope and firm conviction, which is fairly well founded on personal experiences with the people involved in the Heritage Family Association and Heritage Family Program, is that the best is yet to come. The sacrifices laid down on the altar of the nation by the Heritage Families and by the Heritage Communities were not in vain. I see a better Fort Polk, and a better surrounding regional community, because we are going to continue to take the time each year, and throughout each year, to recognize our debt to the past—a past that is absolutely relevant to the present and the future.

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