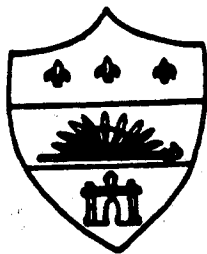


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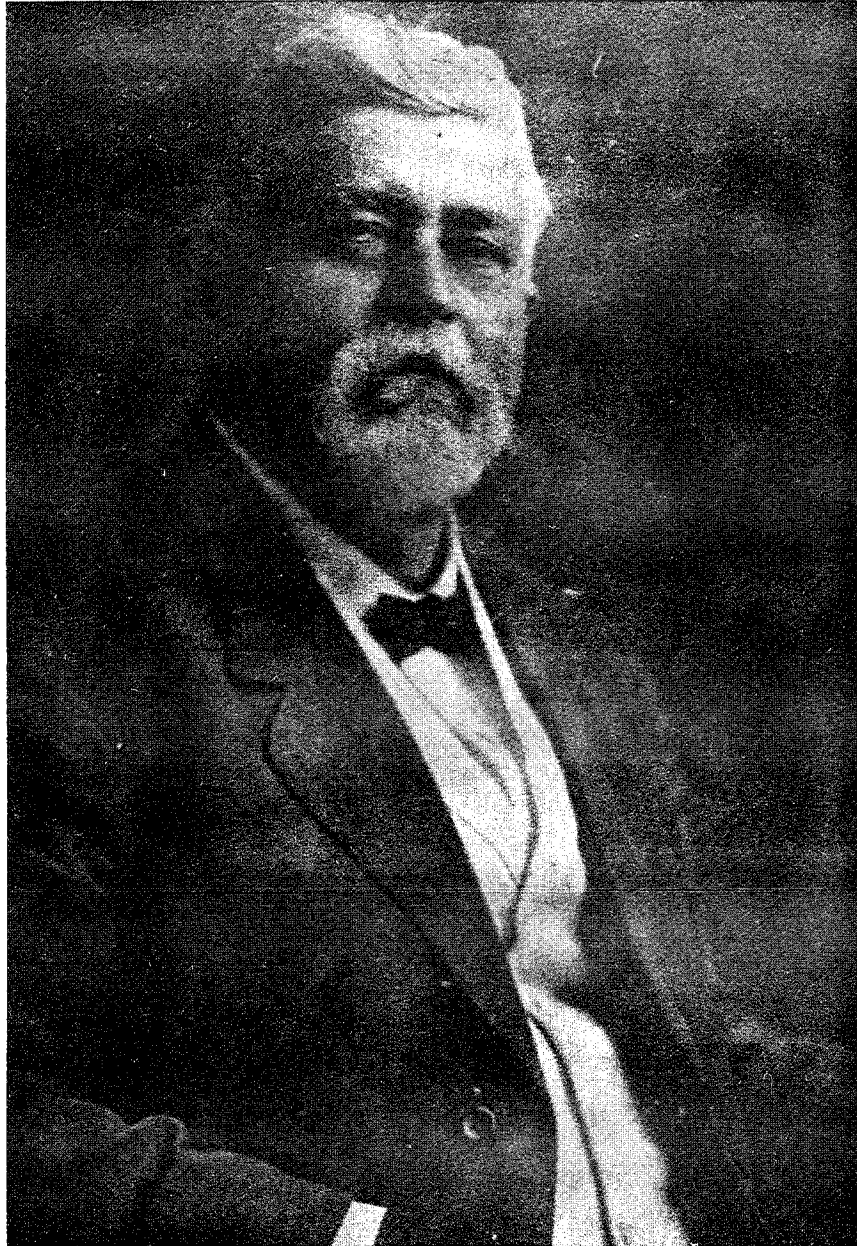
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FIGURE A



Homer Barousse  
(From La Pointe de L'Eglise)

HOMER BAROUSSE: PORTRAIT OF AN ACADIA  
PARISH POLITICIAN

By Gary Lavergne

*Gary Lavergne*

A curious aspect of small town politics in South Louisiana is the power and influence wielded by men who hold minor political offices or, in some cases, none at all. These men, who usually shy away from the limelight, are noted for their ability to work behind the scenes and are usually content to use their power to influence the office holders. These backstage politicians are, in most instances, financially independent, and hence worry little about public accountability. They often make it known that they are partially or wholly responsible for the great accomplishments of the current regime, but always seem to blame "responsible" politicians for their failures. In the past, Church Point has had such men; however, such was not the case with Senator Homer Barousse.

Homer Barousse was born on September 25, 1849 in a small frame house, just north of the Charles Franques residence in present-day Church Point. (1) At birth, Homer was christened Pierre Omer in honor of his paternal grandfather, Pierre Barousse. (2) He subsequently dropped his first name and anglicized the second to Homer. (3)

Homer was the son of Jean Barousse and Caroline Fontenot of Church Point. Jean, a native of Labarthe Iuard, France, immigrated to America in 1837, when he was only sixteen years old. Shortly thereafter, he settled in Church Point and met his future wife, Caroline, the daughter of Leufroy Fontenot and Gertrude Daigle. On the day of Homer's birth, Jean was celebrating his twenty-eighth birthday. (4)

The elder Barousse was a man of ingenuity and determination. He built a store on what is now the northwest corner of Plaquemines and Main Streets in Church Point. For its time, the store was quite impressive. Oral tradition maintains that "Mr. Jean" could sell anything to anyone--"everything from buttons to buggies." (5) Jean operated the store efficiently, and, with the growing volume of profits, he provided his family with things that other local families considered luxuries. For example, he sent his son to public and private schools in nearby Washington, Louisiana, a privilege then reserved for children of wealthy families. Moreover, the young merchant was apparently a member of the Church Point aristocracy, for, in April 1887, his property holdings, an accurate, antebellum barometer of

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1. There is much conflicting evidence concerning the exact date of Homer Barousse's birth. Since 1916, secondary sources have cited September 25, 1850 as his birthdate. More recent sources, such as *La Pointe de l'Eglise* and various newspaper articles, concur. The headstone on his tomb, however, states:

Homer Barousse, Sr.  
Born September 25, 1849  
Died May 28, 1936.

"Centennial Souvenir Edition," *Church Point News*, September 25, 1973. "Homer Barousse," *Who's Who in Louisiana Politics in 1916* (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Louisiana Chronicle-Democrat*, 1916), p. 64. "Homer Barousse," *Who's Who in Louisiana and Mississippi*, 1918 (New Orleans: *The Times-Picayune*, 1918), p. 17. "Golden Anniversary Edition," *Crowley Daily Signal*, 1949, p. 59. Hereafter cited as "Golden Anniversary Edition."

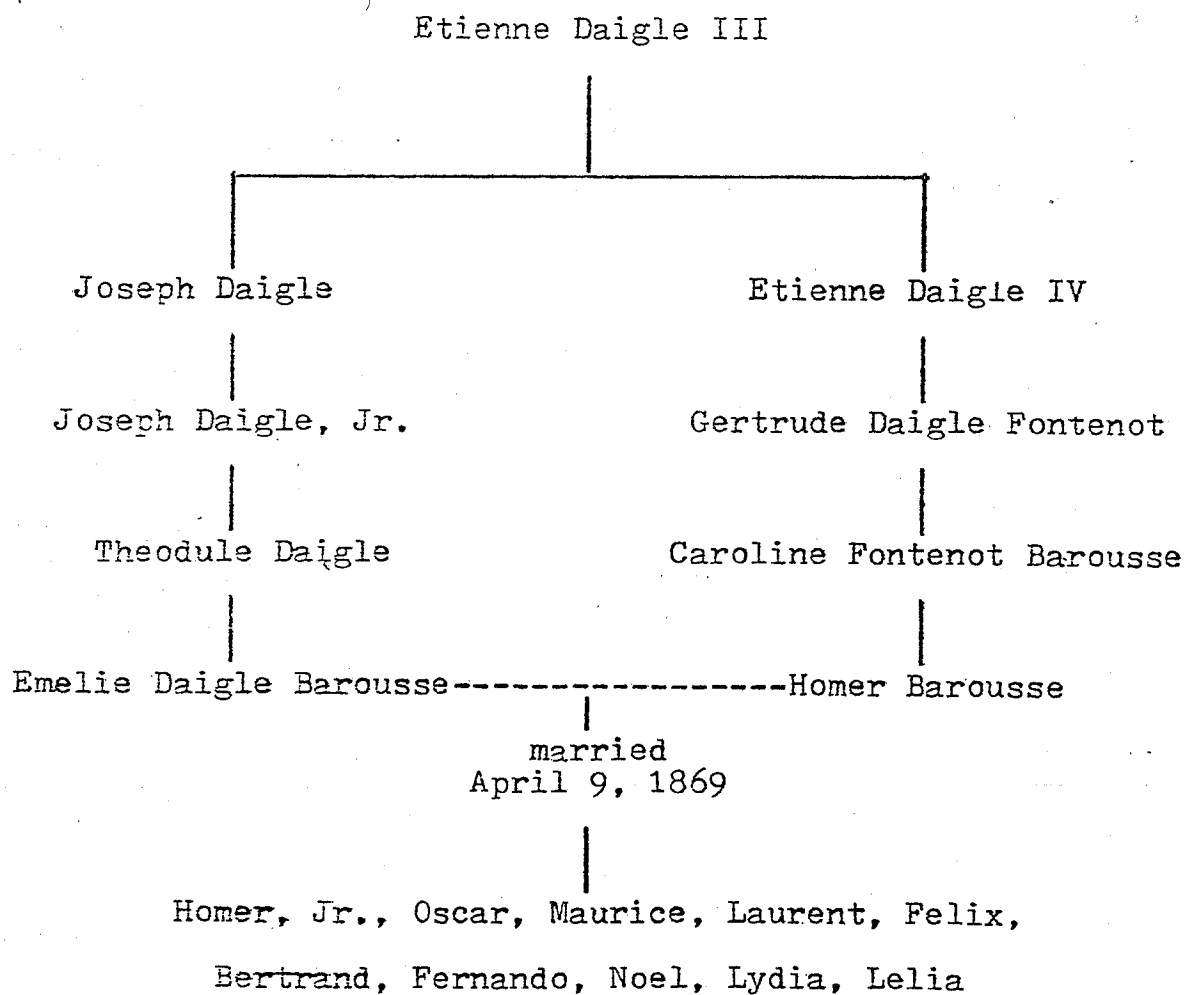
2. Homer's baptismal record states, "On the ninth of February in the year of Our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty, I baptized Pierre Omer Barocles (sic), son of Jean Barocles (sic) and Caroline Fontenot, born on the twenty-fifth of September in the year of Our Lord eighteen hundred and forty-nine. Register of Baptisms, 1819-1850, Church of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, Louisiana, Volume I, p. 315. Hereafter cited as "Record of Baptism." I wish to acknowledge Reverend Robert Romero's assistance in translating this document.

3. See Figure B. Jean Barousse, interviewed by the author on October 12, 1975. Lee Wimberly, interviewed by the author on September 14, 1975.

4. Interview, Jean Barousse.

5. Anita G. Guidry, et. al., *La Pointe de l'Eglise* (Lafayette, La.: Tribune Printing Company, 1973), p. 22. Roy Horecky, interviewed by the author on October 17, 1975.

FIGURE B



Daigle family genealogy provided by Bruce Arceneaux,  
Barousse family supplemented by author.

affluence, were assessed at \$6,264, indicating that he was one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest man in Church Point. (6)

Like most of their contemporaries, the Jean Barousse family was very religious; however, as there was no resident priest in Church Point at the time of Homer's birth, these townspeople were forced to wait for a Jesuit circuit rider from St. Charles Parish in Grand Coteau to minister to their spiritual needs. (7) Consequently, Homer's baptism was delayed until February 9, 1850, (8) when Fr. Roccofort visited Church Point.

Little is known of Homer's childhood, but it is certain that his youth was profoundly affected by the Civil War, which erupted when he was twelve years old. The war had little effect on the Church Point area, because it was not dependent on a plantation economy. The area was inhabited primarily by poor white farmers and merchants who could not afford slaves. Furthermore, the large landholders, like Jean Barousse, usually employed white sharecroppers to work their lands. Nevertheless, these farmers did not remain untouched by the war.

By 1863, the Union army had occupied St. Landry Parish. (9) Despite the presence of the invaders at Opelousas, only ten miles away, the Church Point residents were faced with a more serious threat to their well being. Bands of Jayhawkers followed in the wake of General Nathaniel Banks Union army, terrorizing Opelousas and its environs. The jayhawker nuisance quickly developed into a serious problem. By 1864, they conducted daring daylight raids, usually stealing "all the fine horses and good arms they could find." (10) Consequently, one can surmise that Jean Barousse and his young son, Homer, spent many nights next to a loaded shotgun.

In 1869, Homer joined his father in business. Some time before this, however, he met his future bride, Emelie Daigle, the daughter of Theodore Daigle and Evelina Fux. (11)

The Barousses and the Daigles were good friends. (Eugene Daigle had been Homer's godfather.) (12) Consequently, Homer and Emelie's engagement announcement was well received. Getting married, however, proved to be more difficult than expected. The affianced couple soon discovered that they were both descendents of Etienne Daigle III, the first member of the Daigle family to move to present-day Louisiana. (13) According to the Canon Laws of the Catholic Church, it was necessary for them to get a dispensation of consanguinity of the fourth degree from the Diocese of New Orleans. (14) The dispensation was granted, and, on April 13, 1869, Reverend Jean B. Serra married Homer Barousse and Emelie Daigle in the presence of Eugene Daigle, Ernest Daigle, and Wilber McBride. (15) Their marriage would last fifty-eight years and would produce ten children, Oscar, Homer, Jr.; Maurice; Laurent; Felix; Bertrand; Fernando; Noel; Lydia; and Lelia. (16)

6. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 126. Assessments quoted from the records of J. David, deputy assessor, April 1887 entry.

7. C.A. Bienvenue, comp., *Dedication of the New Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* [St. Martinville, La.: Bienvenu Printing Company, 1954], pp. 43-46. Hereafter cited as *Dedication booklet* "Golden Anniversary Edition," *Crowley Daily Signal*, p. 21.

9. A. Otis Hebert, Jr. and T. Harry Williams, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, Louisiana Civil War Centennial Commission pamphlet. During the Civil War, Church Point was part of St. Landry Parish.

10. John D. Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p. 322.

11. Theodule Daigle and his brother "Jose" are considered the first settlers in present-day Church Point. They donated the present Catholic church site. *Dedication booklet*, p. 43.

12. *Dedication booklet*, p. 43.

13. Homer Barousse was related to the Daigle family through his mother, Caroline Fontenot. See Figure B.

14. Reverend Robert Romero, interviewed by the author on October 27, 1975.

15. Certificate of Marriage, Marriage Records, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, April 13, 1869.

16. "Golden Anniversary Edition," *Crowley Daily Signal*, p. 59.

Before launching his political career, Homer devoted his energies to community improvement, especially in the field of education. Before the Civil War, the Church Point area was served by only a small, one-room schoolhouse adjoining the chapel. This school, which had been built in 1856, was a semi-private institution, which depended almost entirely on student tuition. This school, the first in present-day Acadia Parish, (17) closed its doors following the conclusion of the Civil War. Church Point remained without a school until 1875, when Barousse and his close friend, Ernest Daigle, decided to construct a new educational facility. Church Point's second schoolhouse, a one room building built of "rough edges" from a small, local sawmill, served as that community's first public school. (18) Homer always recognized the value of an education, and throughout his political career he worked to provide the children of Louisiana with educational opportunities. (19)

Following Jean Barousse's demise on February 2, 1893, Homer began to manage his father's holdings. Like his father, Homer proved to be a talented, level-headed businessman. He expanded the large volume of business conducted by his late father's store, making it "probably the finest store in Acadia Parish at that time." (20)

Homer made the store a family enterprise. While he was away attending political meetings, caucuses, and legislative session, he left the store in the dependable hands of his sons. (21) But, around 1910, a fire started in one of the back storerooms and quickly spread throughout the store. The blaze, which has been described as "the most spectacular fire Church Point ever had," completely destroyed the entire store. (22) Because of this tremendous financial setback, Homer Barousse was forced to move into a smaller building on Main Street. Barousse's store remained at this location until it was sold to Newton Harmon in 1923. (23)

Homer was an ardent supporter of the Catholic Church. His devout faith was manifested in 1894, when church wardens resolved that the Church Point chapel needed a new bell; however, because of the steeple's role as a prominent local landmark, these functionaries were convinced that no ordinary bell could adequately serve the needs of the ecclesiastical parish. Through the efforts of three of the region's most prominent families, Meneely and Company of West Troy, New York, was commissioned to make an enormous, fine toned bell. (24) The bell bears a Latin inscription, which clearly indicates that Homer Barousse was instrumental in purchasing the parish's prized acquisition.

Called Marie Louise in honor of the Virgin Mother of God and St. Louis, King of France, I came into being through the efforts of the citizens of the parish of Church Point, among [whom] Homer Barousse, Elodie Daigle, Thelesmar Guidry, and Ernest Daigle, deserve special mention. (25)

Another outstanding example of Barousse's pious nature was his active participation in the Knights of Columbus. Homer was a member of the Opelousas chapter as early as 1916.

17. *Ibid.* Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 15.

18. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 15. "Golden Anniversary Edition," *Crowley Daily Signal*, p. 91.

19. *Who's Who in Louisiana Politics*, 1916, p. 64.

20. Interview, Roy Horecky.

21. Interview, Jean Barousse.

22. Interview, Roy Horecky. Interview, Jean Barousse. Interview, Lee Wimberly.

23. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 57.

24. The bell weighed 2,200 pounds. Dedication booklet, p. 36.

25. Guidry, *La Pointe de L'Eglise*, p. 22.

(26) He seemed to take pride in his membership, and he never hesitated to be identified as a loyal Knight. In 1923, the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus sponsored a "million member" drive. As a result of this campaign, Homer and six other Church Point men affiliated with the Opelousas council decided to establish the Church Point chapter. After recruiting forty members, the new Acadia Parish council received a charter on December 2, 1923. (27)

Homer was deeply concerned with Church Point's financial situation during the early 1900s. In 1902, the growing volume of business conducted by Church Point merchants prompted Homer Barousse and Edward Daigle, Ernest Daigle's son, to establish the Commercial Bank and Trust Company. (28) Two hours after the bank officially opened its doors, the \$15,000 minimum stock subscription was reached.

The bank served as the community's financial center until it became insolvent nearly twenty-five years later; however, Homer, the bank's first president, had resigned sometime prior to its financial collapse, apparently as a result of the demands of his political and additional mercantile activity. Nevertheless, Barousse, who had a genuine love and concern for the poor farmers who were financially ruined by the closure, gave up much of his land to the state in order to meet the obligations of the bank. (29) There was no regulation or law that could have forced Homer to extinguish the bank's heavy debts--only a high sense of honor. (30)

Homer's landholdings were quite extensive. In 1918, his property extended from the southern bank of Bayou Plaquemine to a point six hundred acres to the southeast. At that time, he cultivated cotton, corn, and rice, an undertaking which undoubtedly proved to be very profitable. (31) His estate would have been much more valuable if he would not have experienced two giant financial setbacks: the destruction of his original store by fire, and the failure of the Commercial Bank and Trust Company. Nevertheless, he remained financially independent. (32)

On May 19, 1886, J.L. Lyons of St. Landry Parish introduced a bill entitled "An Act to Create the Parish of Nicholls, and to provide for the Organization Thereof" into the state House of Representatives. The bill was referred to the Parochial Affairs Committee, where the name of the prospective parish was changed to Acadia. Prior to this, in March 1886, seven Washington residents, members of an informal, fact-finding commission, visited the communities of the southwestern section of St. Landry Parish to study the feasibility of forming a new parish. (33)

The people of the southwestern section of St. Landry Parish wanted a new parish for a variety of reasons; however, most historians agree that the overriding cause was the inconvenience of traveling great distances over very poor roads to the parish seat. (34) A related, but more serious problem stemmed from the large size of St. Landry Parish, which undoubtedly created many problems for the parochial administration. The residents of the

26. There was no Knights of Columbus chapter in Church Point at this time.

27. Boudier and Everett, *Knights of Columbus in Louisiana, 1902-1962* (New Orleans: A.F. Laborde and Sons, 1965), p. 249. Interview, Jean Barousse. Charter, Knights of Columbus, Church Point Council 2504, December 2, 1923.

Dr. E.J. Petitjean served as the chapter's first grand knight. Meetings were held on the second story of the store formerly owned by Barousse. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 57.

28. Edward Daigle served as the bank's first vice president.

29. Lloyd Franques was serving as the president of the Commercial Bank at the time of its failure.

30. Interview, Jean Barousse.

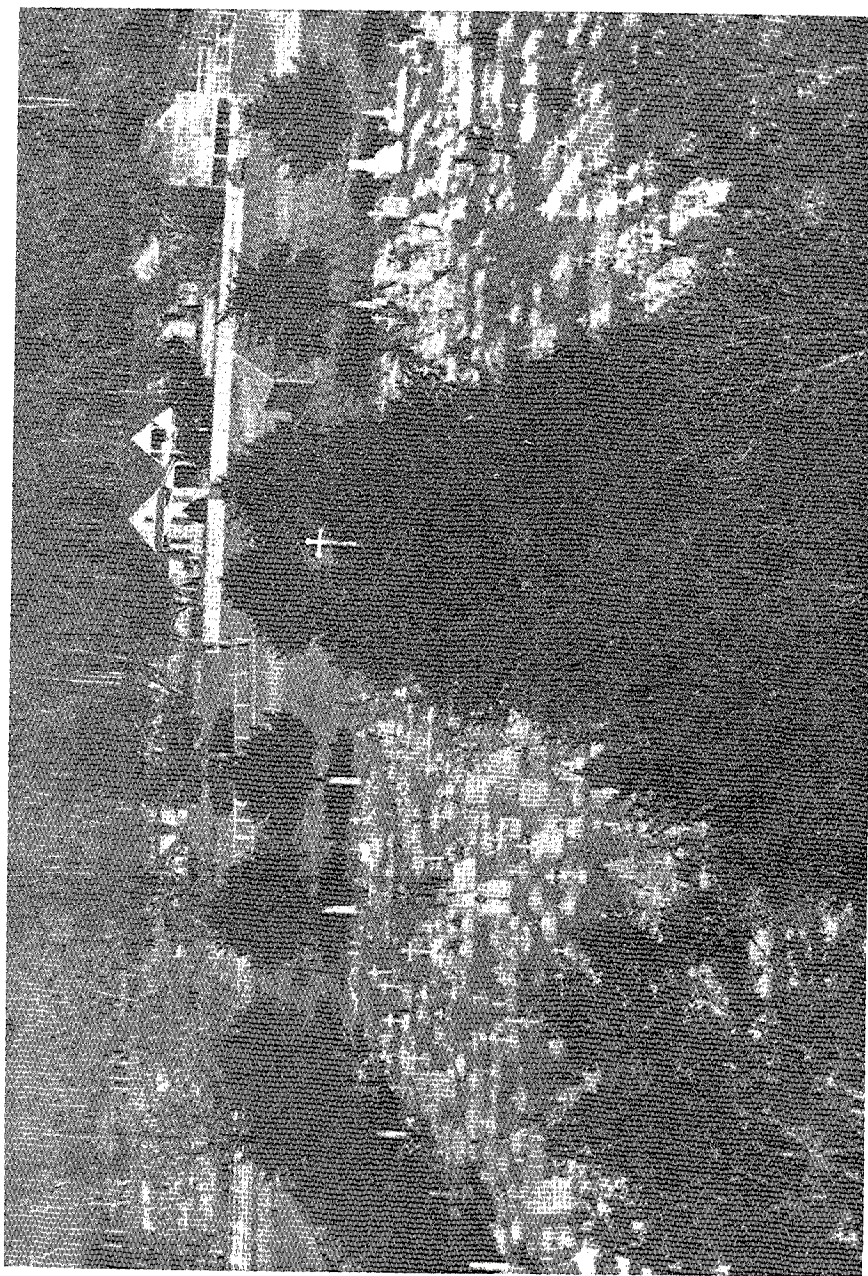
31. *Who's Who in Louisiana and Mississippi*, p. 17.

32. Interview, Jean Barousse.

33. Verna Lee Hair, "A History of Crowley, Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (winter, 1944), pp. 1119-1225.

34. *Ibid.*

FIGURE C



Barousse Home in Background  
(From La Pointe de L'Eglise)



southwestern portion of the parish, on the other hand, demanded a greater voice in local, governmental affairs, which had heretofore been controlled by the Opelousas courthouse ring. (35)

The Washington investigatory committee visited the dissident communities and held mass meetings at Crowley, Rayne, and Church Point. Fully aware of the harvest of political benefits which his home town would reap as part of the new political subdivision, Barousse was instrumental in persuading the Church Point residents to cast their lot with Acadia Parish. Homer's efforts on behalf of the new parish were recognized on November 3, 1886, when Governor Samuel D. McEnery appointed him to the region's first police jury. (36)

A dearth of information relating to the formative years of the Acadia Parish police jury makes documentation of Barousse's career as a police juror a Herculean task. Nevertheless, extant records reveal that Barousse played a central role in the organization of the infant parish.

In December 1886, two months after the creation of Acadia Parish, Homer introduced a resolution dividing the region into five wards. After considerable debate, the jurors adopted Homer's motion. (37) He continued to serve as a member of the police jury for the next twelve years. In addition, he served as the chairman of the Acadia Parish Democratic Executive Committee between 1886 and 1894. (38)

By 1893, Church Point's rapid growth dictated the need for some type of local government. As a consequence, the townspeople appointed Homer Barousse as its first mayor on March 11, 1893, even though the community was not incorporated. (39)

Anita Guidry, author of *La Pointe de L'Eglise*, suggests that the town took action without waiting for the community to be incorporated because the local civic leaders were simply not aware that a gubernatorial proclamation was necessary to effect incorporation. (40) This explanation is not acceptable for many reasons. First, the community was politically active while part of St. Landry Parish, and even more so after the formation of Acadia Parish in 1886. This political activity reflects a high degree of political knowledgability among the populace. Second, Homer Barousse, Ernest Daigle, and H.D. McBride were among the the region's most prominent politicians.

They were undoubtedly aware of state affairs and procedures. Furthermore, at this juncture, Homer had been serving on the Acadia Parish police jury for almost seven years, and, as many towns in the infant parish had been recently incorporated, it is very unlikely that he, or any other active public servant was ignorant of the proper procedures of village incorporation. Finally, Louisiana's secretary of state had record of Homer's term as mayor. It would be ludicrous to assume that this office would not have informed the officials of the proper procedures of incorporation. Therefore, Homer's election as mayor of Church Point was probably an act of transition, a milestone along the road to legal incorporation.

On June 1, 1899, Governor Murphy J. Foster signed a proclamation establishing Church Point as a "corporation in law with metes and bounds." The legal boundary for the newly incorporated village of Church Point, as stated in the governor's proclamation provides insight into Barousse's role as a town father.

The corporate limits shall begin at a line between H. Barousse's and J.E. Daigle's land running north fifty feet east of Joseph Comeaux's residence, to the line between Albert Olivier and H.J.

35. Ibid.

36. Homer Barousse filed an oath of office on November 11, 1886. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 122.

37. The Rayne Signal, December 11, 1886. The Crowley Signal, August 25, 1888.

38. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 122.

39. Mayor Barousse's term of office expired on February 1, 1895. Ibid., p.24. "Centennial Souvenir Edition," Church Point News, September 25, 1973.

40. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 24.

Guidry, about three arpents east of Albert Olivier's residence then to run west one mile and south to Bayou Plaquemine at a small coulee northwest of H. Barousse's residence, then to run south back to the line dividing the H. Barousse's and the J.E. Daigle's land and east to the starting point above mentioned. (41)

The town council was organized on August 28, 1899. Mayor H.J. David, Councilmen Homer Barousse, Albert Olivier, and H.D. McBride, and Marshall Abner Higginbotham attended the session. In the first order of business, Barousse sponsored a resolution establishing guidelines for organization of the the council; the motion was unanimously adopted. In addition, he advocated that Edward Daigle be named clerk and that he receive a salary of five dollars per month. This motion was also approved. Governor Foster's proclamation was then read and the boundary was officially approved. (42)

The minutes of Church Point's early town council meetings accurately depict Barousse's extensive political influence and his efficiency. For example, entries in the council's journal were longer when Homer was present than during his absence. Moreover, the mayor and his colleagues on the council were remarkably reluctant to make decisions without consulting Barousse. The city administration's tractability was merely a manifestation of their faith in the wealthy merchant-politician, a sentiment shared by most of the area's small farmers.

Their confidence in his abilities surfaced during a boll weevil scare, when many of the region's small farmers assembled near the front entrance of Homer's store, in hopes that the prominent politician would provide a solution to the impending crisis; however, upon hearing of Homer's absence, many in the crowd were driven to despair, and one of them was quoted as saying, "Well, what we gonna do? Mr. Omer's not here!" (43)

On April 17, 1900, the voters of the Sixteenth Senatorial District, which was then composed of St. Landry, Acadia, and later Evangeline Parishes elected Homer Barousse to succeed Senator James Webb, a sixty-seven-year-old Rayne farmer. (44) He attended the regular session of the state legislature in May 1900. The freshman senator, however, did little to benefit his district, for he failed to introduce legislation during this initial session. His reluctance to introduce bills soon became his hallmark as a state senator. Nevertheless, he was a dedicated legislator, who preferred to work quietly, behind the scenes in support of bills he favored, or against those he opposed. The most striking example of his role as a back stage politician was his participation in the logrolling which preceded passage of Act 100 of 1902 and Act 184 of 1906, which were pension bills for Confederate veterans and their widows. (45)

41. Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. iv. Ordinance Book I, non paginated.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Interview, Lee Wimberly.

44. Oral tradition has mistakenly maintained that Homer Barousse was first elected state senator in 1894. Throughout the twentieth century, secondary sources have unfortunately accepted this legend as fact. "Centennial Souvenir Edition," *Church Point News*, September 25, 1973. "Golden Anniversary Edition," *Crowley Daily Signal*, 1949. Guidry, *Who's Who in Louisiana and Mississippi*, 1918. *Who's Who in Louisiana Politics* in 1916.

*Official Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana at the First Regular Session of the First General Assembly under the Adoption of the Constitution of 1898, Begun and Held in the City of Baton Rouge, May 14, 1900* (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Advocate*, 1900), p. 519.

45. *Ibid.* Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana at the Regular Session Begun and Held in the City of Baton Rouge on the Twelfth Day of May, 1902 [Baton Rouge, La.: *the Advocate*, 1902], p. 154. Hereafter cited as Acts, with facts of publication, and page numbers. Acts, (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Advocate*, 1906), p. 336. *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the State of Louisiana at the Second Regular Session, Begun and Held in the City of Baton Rouge, May 12, 1902* (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Advocate*, 1902), p. 232. Hereafter cited as *Journal of the Senate*, with facts of publication and page number. *Journal of the Senate* (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Times*, 1906), appendix, p. 118.

Barousse, who enjoyed a fine reputation and always conducted himself with a high sense of honor, had little patience with people who took their responsibilities lightly. Consequently, he supported a bill that made it unlawful for a man to desert his wife and children. During that particular session he also supported a bill establishing penalties for illegal use of railroad cars by vagabonds. He obviously had little respect for people who refused to help themselves. (46)

Homer was also concerned about graft in the state bureaucracy. He was instrumental in securing legislative approval of bills whose objective was the eradication of this growing administrative menace. One of these statutes required sheriffs and tax collectors throughout the state to make monthly settlements with the state auditor of public accounts. (47) Another bill, one that Senator Barousse introduced on June 2, 1926, authorized the state's police juries to elect a supervisor for the purpose of protecting the interests of the parish from unscrupulous police jurors by making individual jurors accountable to the supervisor. Although Homer was sincere in his intentions, the bill fell short of its intended purpose, for it allowed police jurors to supervise their own activity, determine their own salary, and be employed at their own pleasure. (48)

Because of his financial expertise, Homer Barousse was appointed to numerous legislative committees, including the Committee on Internal Improvements, Parks and Public Buildings, Capital and Labor, and Banks and Banking. In 1902, the year in which he founded the Commercial Bank of Church Point, Senator Barousse supported a bill regulating bank practices. (49) He also supported bills requiring steamboat and railroad companies to improve their public accommodations. Homer was painfully aware of the wretched condition of the public quarters aboard steamers, having frequently traveled from Washington to Baton Rouge aboard steamboats during the twilight years of the nineteenth century. (50)

As a state legislator, Homer continued to promote education in his home town. During a Church Point city council meeting held on March 5, 1901, he motioned that the clerk be authorized to consult Edward Daigle to secure that wealthy merchant's support for a special school tax. (51)

As a senator, his interest in education was not restricted to Church Point. In 1902, he guided a bill authorizing the Acadia Parish police jury to purchase a new school site in Crowley through the upper house of the state assembly. As usual, he quietly sought support for the measure in both houses of the state legislature; consequently, there was little opposition to this pork barrel legislation. (52)

A veteran politician, Homer Barousse was not alien to political meetings. Indeed, after forty years of uninterrupted "politickin", he must have felt at home during conferences and caucuses. Like most politicians in the Pelican State, he took particular interest in gubernatorial elections. Although he rarely spoke on the floor of the state legislature, Barousse's colleagues in the senate knew that he was one of the most influential political leaders in south Louisiana.

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46. *Ibid.*

47. *Acts* (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Advocate*, 1904), p. 305.

48. *Journal of the Senate* (Baton Rouge, La.: Ramires-Jones Printing, 1926), p. 88.

49. *Journal of the Senate*, various issues.

50. Interview, Lee Wimberly. Interview, Jean Barousse.

51. Ordinance Book I.

52. *Journal of the Senate* (Baton Rouge, La.: *The Times*, 1902), p. 40.

The extent of Barousse's political power is exemplified by his inclusion among the closed circle of political power brokers who determined the course of the 1924 gubernatorial campaign. At the conclusion of one particular meeting held at the New Orleans' Monteleone Hotel on June 23, 1923, Senator Barousse was confronted by reporters. In a rare display of garrulity, he entertained a few questions from the assembled newsmen. When he was asked about public opinion in his district concerning the outcome of the conference, he stroked his white beard and quietly replied:

I came down here to see if I could learn anything.

Did you? asked the reporter.

Nothing.

Who is your candidate for governor?

Out in our section, we are for Guilbeau; he is one of our boys. (53)

One half hour later he boarded a train and returned to Baton Rouge.

Contrary to Homer's terse remarks, he learned quite a bit at the Monteleone meeting. George Guion had decided to pull out of the governor's race and to back Hewitt Bouanchaud. (54)

Homer Barousse initially supported Dudley Guilbeau's candidacy for governor. Guilbeau's support, however, was limited to his native St. Landry Parish. As a consequence, he was subsequently forced to withdraw from the race and to become Bouanchaud's campaign manager. (55) Homer supported Bouanchaud because of his affiliation with Guilbeau and his denunciation of the Ku Klux Klan.

To the casual observer Homer was not a particularly exciting politician. His colleagues in the Louisiana legislature must have wondered what he was really like under his facade of silence and determination. By 1928, Homer had been a politician for forty-two years, but the most turbulent years of his political career lay ahead.

By far the most interesting and controversial aspect of Homer Barousse's political career was his relationship with Huey Long. Surviving political observers of the late 1920s and the early 1930s all relate the same story. "Yes, he and Huey were good friends." "Oh yea, he would have done anything for Huey." "Huey and Earl loved Church Point." (56) these are the comments of people who remember Barousse's political alliance with Huey Long. Actually the two men were almost completely different in style and manner. Thus, their close relationship served as a source of confusion to many observers.

Huey Long was a brash, uninhibited politician who flourished in the limelight. He depended upon his oratorical abilities to capture the support of the masses. On the other hand, Homer, who was unobtrusive, was usually behind great accomplishments. Unlike Huey, he did not depend on publicizing his accomplishments to satisfy his constituency. The voters in his district could always point with pride to some tangible benefit which the venerable senator had secured for them. Whereas Huey's customary mode of campaigning was stump speaking, Homer rarely spoke to large or even small groups. His own grandson once remarked, "I never heard him give a speech." (57) As a senator, Homer very rarely gave speeches and almost never engaged in debate. He did not seem to care for newspaper

53. The New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 23, 1923.

54. *Ibid.*

55. T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), p. 195.

56. Interview, Lee Wimberly. Interview, Roy Horecky. Myrta Fair Craig, interviewed by author on October 18, 1975.

57. Interview, Jean Barousse.

reporters and often avoided them. Needless to say, he was a paradox to his colleagues in the state legislature. By 1923, Homer Barousse had earned a reputation as the "silent man of the Louisiana Senate." (58)

The Long-Barousse political alliance was built upon the foundation of their common political views. In south Louisiana, both men were viewed as champions of the common man. Contemporaries remember Huey and Homer primarily for their work on homestead exemptions, free bridges, and free textbooks. (59)

The textbook issue was an especially popular one in south Louisiana, where a substantial number of the Catholic children attended parochial schools. Huey circumvented a constitutional ban on state aid to parochial schools by distributing free textbooks directly to all children rather than their schools. (60)

At the time of Long's impeachment in 1929, Homer had spent forty-three years of his life in public office. (61) As a veteran senator, Homer was undoubtedly aware of the legislature's drift towards impeachment. Consequently, when Governor Long called the general assembly into its fifth extraordinary session in 1929, Homer was probably preparing himself to work against impeachment. Barousse's customary silence during the ensuing political battle gave rise to Long's unfounded fear that he was losing the Acadia Parish's support. The governor's fears were dispelled, however, in a special conference with Homer, and Long later remarked, "You could always put a finger on Barousse because he stayed with the ins." (62) Homer knew that Huey was too smart to be impeached.

During the weekend of April 15, Huey directed J.C. Wimberly, a Church Point resident, to transport Homer to Baton Rouge. Huey later stated in his autobiography:

I arranged for an automobile at the premises of each of the fifteen senators whom I telephoned and asked to come immediately to Baton Rouge. All of them came. I asked them to sign the 'Round Robin.' (63)

In Barousse's case, compliance with the governor's request was not as simple as Huey made it seem. When Wimberly arrived at Homer's residence, he found Homer ill and in bed. Nevertheless, the senator agreed to meet Huey, and the two men travelled to the Heidelberg Hotel in Baton Rouge. The trip was a long and agonizing one for Homer, who was wrapped in a blanket throughout the trip. (64)

When Homer reached the governor's suite in the Heidelberg Hotel, Long immediately presented the round robin, a document declaring the senators' conviction of refusing to support impeachment regardless of the evidence, and asked for his signature. Huey Long had experienced difficulty in persuading some of the senators to cooperate, but not Barousse. Oral tradition maintains that "Homer would have signed it even if Huey wouldn't have asked him." He was probably the sixth senator to sign the document. (65)

During the following week, the anti-Long faction mounted an intensive propaganda campaign in hope of persuading the "robineers" to reverse their position. Huey claimed that the Longites received "offers [which] were immense." (66) Homer was approached by a

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58. The New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 13, 1923.

59. Interview, Lee Wimberly. Interview, Jean Barousse.

60. Hugh Davis Graham, ed., *Huey Long* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 41.

61. Barousse was a multiple office holder during much of his career.

62. Williams, *Huey Long*, p. 390.

63. Huey Long, *Every Man a King* (Chicago: Triangle Books, 1964), p. 160.

64. Interview, Lee Wimberly.

65. *Ibid.* Williams, *Huey Long*, p. 398.

66. Long, *Every Man a King*, p. 167.

prominent anti-Long politician and offered \$50,000 and the directorship of the state highway department in return for his support of impeachment. The Church Point senator brushed off the proposal and replied, "the people elected him and he's gonna stay in there." (67) An octogenarian and a wealthy man, Barousse was not easily impressed with money or position.

Of course, Homer Barousse was not the only senator to receive offers of bribes. For example, J.L. Anderson of Winnsboro declared on May 3, 1929 that he could have sold his vote for \$50,000. T.A. McConnell, a New Orleanian, subsequently admitted that he had been offered \$10,000 for his vote. (68)

It is hard to believe that Barousse's fidelity to the governor's cause was not rewarded. Yet, that is the opinion of virtually all of the senator's surviving friends and associates. The typical response was, "Oh no, he didn't give Homer anything, but he gave the Church Point area better roads." (69) In all probability Barousse signed the document, knowing that it would benefit his district. Nevertheless, it is unlikely--though not impossible--that Homer benefitted personally.

When the round robin was presented, the anti-Long faction was taken completely by surprise. Out of desperation, Senator Delos Johnson rose and offered a motion "to propound to the fifteen senators the question if the document contain[ed] their personal and general signatures, and if the declaration in that document are their fixed position and decision in this matter." When asked this question, some of the Longites saw fit to explain their motives. Homer, however, gave the shortest speech among the signers of the round robin; he saw no reason to defend his position. When asked if the signature was his he replied, "That is my genuine signature and I will vote accordingly regardless of the evidence." (70)

The successful conclusion of the impeachment trial was an obvious source of relief to the Long faction. The impeachment had been an exhausting experience. On May 29, Huey took the "robineers," twenty-four representatives, and other friends and allies on a weekend outing at a Grand Isle resort owned by Alfred Danziger. During the riotous celebration which ensued, Long was asked to address his supporters. When the governor asked, "What shall I say?" Danziger replied, "Promise 'em a road." (71)

By May 31, the party was over and the majority of the celebrants had gone home, except Huey Long. He had accompanied Homer, Henry Larcade, Dudley Guilbeau, and other pro-Long politicians to Church Point, where it had been announced that Long would address the townspeople. Despite a torrential downpour, a large crowd gathered to hear the governor. In typical fashion, Huey Long blasted Standard Oil as the prime enemy of Louisiana and he defied his enemies to impeach him. In addition, he praised Homer and Larcade for standing up to the large corporations and remaining loyal to the champion of the poor people. Afterwards, Barousse and Larcade, both of whom represented the Sixteenth Senatorial District, spoke briefly and were presented silver loving cups for their fine work during the last legislature. (72)

When Homer's contemporaries are asked about the aftermath of the impeachment, the majority of them indicate that the pro-Long districts received the bulk of the funds appropriated for road construction. For example, the portion of state highway 35 lying between Rayne and Church Point was resurfaced. (73)

67. Interview, Lee Wimberly.

68. Carleton Beals, *The Story of Huey P. Long* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1935), p. 158.

69. Interview, Roy Horecky. Interview, Lee Wimberly. Interview, Jean Barousse.

70. *Official Journal of the Senate*, (Baton Rouge, La.: Ramires-Jones, 1929), pp. 267-268.

71. Beals, Huey Long, p. 167.

72. *The Rayne Tribune*, May 31, 1929.

73. Williams, Huey Long, p. 406. Interview, Roy Horecky. Interview, Jean Barousse. Interview, Myrta Fair-Craig.

Despite the tangible benefits which the Sixteenth Senatorial District received as a result of Barousse and Larcade's support of the round robin, (74) the senators' association with the Long regime became increasingly unpopular among their constituency during the years which followed the impeachment proceedings. Discontent was especially intense in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana's fourth most populous parish and a bastion of Anti-Longism. Consequently, faced by young and talented anti-Long opponents, A.C. Gardiner (75), and C. A. Gardiner, the incumbents were soundly defeated in the Democratic primary held on January 22, 1932. (76)

The election marked the end of Homer Barousse's long and distinguished career; his tenure of office spanned the administrations of thirteen governors.

Homer's last days were spent quietly at his Church Point home, where he remained politically inactive. But, in early May 1936, he received an invitation to a "robineer" reunion to be held at the Heidelberg Hotel on May 28, 1936. The grisled political veteran, however, was unable to join his former colleagues; stricken by pneumonia, he died two hours before the festivities began. (77) He was laid to rest on May 30 by his family and hundreds of friends, including most of the celebrants at the Hiedleberg Hotel.

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74. Both Larcade and Barousse represented the Sixteenth Senatorial District.

75. A mule dealer, A.C. Gardiner operated a livery stable in partnership with Offie Olivier. Despite the nescient nature of his job. Gardiner was well educated. Unlike his twenty-one elder siblings, he had the advantage of receiving a rudimentary education from his mother. He subsequently attended St. Charles College at Grand Coteau.

According to Anita Guidry, Dr. Walter Jenkins of Church Point frequently accompanied Gardiner and Olivier on mule-buying excursions. On one particular trip Dr. Jenkins signed "M.D." at the end of his name. Gardiner and Olivier did the same. When asked if they were medical doctors, they replied, "No, one medical doctor and two mule dealers." Guidry, *La Pointe de l'Eglise*, p. 48.

76. The following are the electoral returns for the four major candidates in the Acadia Parish primary: Homer Barousse, 3196 votes; Aurthur C. Gardiner, 4504 votes; C. A. Gardiner, 4307 votes; and Henry Larcade, 2095 votes.

In Church Point, Barousse received 494 votes, A.C. Gardiner, 453; C.A. Gardiner, 673; and Larcade, 143. The *Rayne Tribune*, January 29, 1932.

77. The *Lafayette, Daily Advertiser*, May 29, 1936. The *New Orleans, Times-Picayune*, May 29, 1936.