

Broussards Came To Texas In Search Of New Pastures

For over a century three old homes near Taylor's Bayou in south Jefferson County have been landmarks of the area. Their history, and that of their occupants, has been so intermingled that the story of one can hardly be told without that of the others. They are known as the Arceneaux House, the Hamshire House and the Boudreaux House.

The land on which the houses stand was patented to the heirs of William H. Smith, who was slain at the Alamo. All three houses have been approved for Texas historical markers, and markers have been placed on two, the Arceneaux House and the Boudreaux House. The Arceneaux House is probably the oldest of the three.

The house was built by Moise Broussard and whatever friends and neighbors he could recruit to help. Moise, along with his two brothers, Sevan and Eloï, all sons of Edward Theophile Broussard, and his three cousins, Emil, Theophile

and Deuneville, sons of Pierre Onezeme Broussard, came to Texas in the 1840's. They were descendants of the Acadians who had settled in Vermilion Parish and Imperial St. Landry Parish, La.

Looking for new pastures for their cattle they found the green prairies of the Texas Gulf Coast. They built large cumbersome ox-carts, loaded their household possessions on them, and with their herds, made the long trek to Texas. To cross the rivers and bayous on the way they tied floating logs to the carts and towed them across with a skiff in which the women and children rode.

The small house which Moise and the other men built consisted of one large and two small rooms on the ground floor and a large attic room reached by an outside stairway. An underground cistern to furnish water was built into a porch which ran down one side of the house and across the front. The kitchen was built away from the

house, a typical arrangement at that time.

Lumber for the house, which was all hand-dressed, was hauled from the village of Beaumont by ox wagon. The cypress shingles were also handmade. The inside walls of the lower story were "daubed" with a mixture of mud and moss into which was sealed strips of sassafras wood to repel insects.

In 1856 Moise Broussard brought his bride, Mary Gadrac Arceneaux of Imperial St. Landry Parish, La. to the simple home. She was the great-great-granddaughter of Louis Arceneaux, the Gabriel Lajunesse of Longfellow's poem "Evangeline."

Gadrac brought with her some acorns from the huge oak that shades the grave of Emmeline Labuche, Longfellow's heroine. She planted the acorns near her new home.

Of the 10 children born to Moise and Gadrac, five lived. Besides their five, they reared seven orphans. Moise, who had been educated at schools in France, was anxious that the children receive a good

education. In 1869 he hired John W. Leonard, who in 1880 would found the Beaumont Enterprise, to teach school. His students were 30 children from

miles around and five of Moise's cowboys.

As the Broussard herds increased, Moise and others began to make cattle drives to

New Orleans, crossing Sabine Lake to Cameron Parish, swimming the cows across the Mermentau and Calcasieu rivers to Morgan's Point, where

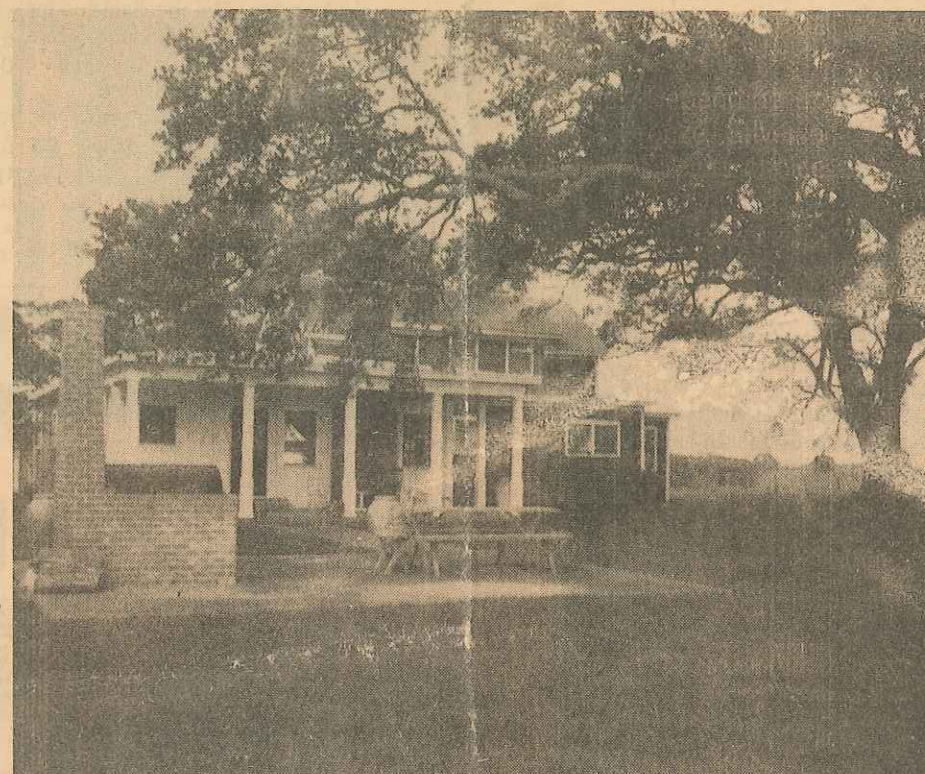
they were put on a barge and shipped to New Orleans and markets in the East.

The trail drives opened a profitable market to Moise and the other cattlemen, but then the Civil War began. Moise fought for the Confederacy and received a broken leg in Battle at Sabine Pass. After the war he came back to his home near Taylor's Bayou with all his household belongings in a two-masted schooner, "Tenas" Arceneaux bought the little house, and he and his wife Mary raised their four children there. Arceneaux often said that he, Frank Burrell, Dan Wingate and Edgar Carruthers planted the first rice on a commercial scale in Jefferson County in 1881. In his prime Arceneaux owned several thousand acres of land in south Jefferson County, over a thousand acres. He rode the

prairies till he was in his 90s. He saw barbed wire come to the prairies, and it was never the same after that.

After Arceneaux' death in 1939, the old house had several owners who did extensive remodeling, changing its appearance, but the basic part of the old Arceneaux home is still there, its pegged cypress timbers still intact. Though covered now, the daubed walls are rock hard with age. Present owners of the house are Mr. and Mrs. Junker Spencer of Beaumont.

The sturdy old house and its giant oaks grown from the Evangeline acorns, have withstood well the ravages of time and weather. With its owners it has witnessed and played a large part in the history of Texas and Jefferson County.



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fought for the Confederacy and received a broken leg in Battle at Sabine Pass. After the war he came back to his home near the bayou. His cattle had increased with no market for them during the war. The North was beef hungry, and the needy South, enduring the Reconstruction, wanted to sell beeves. Moise looked for larger pastures for his herds.

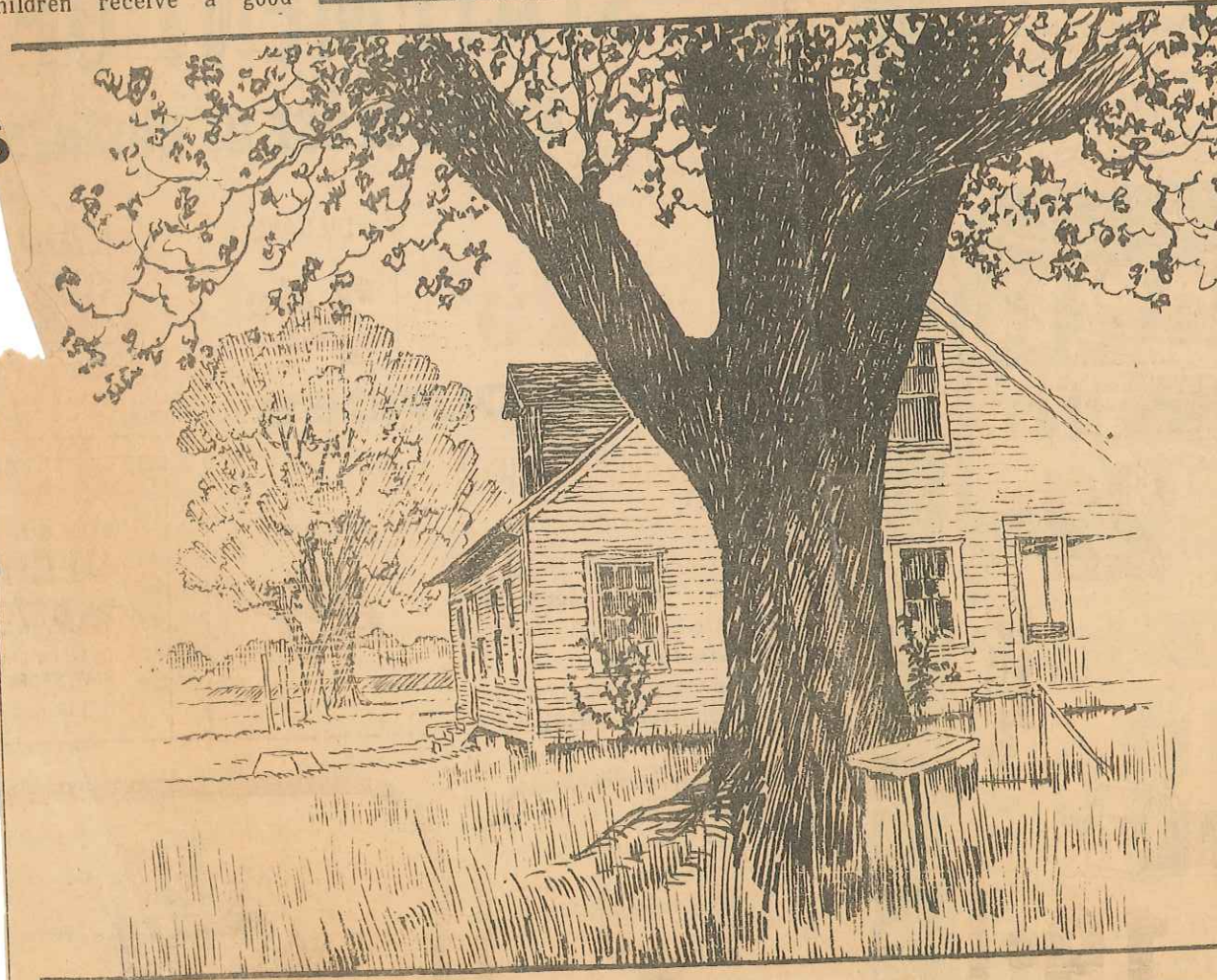
In 1866, after the war's end, Gadrac Broussard's brother, Athenas, or "Tenas" as he was known, late of the 25th Louisiana Infantry, "saw a

"saddlebag" priests who came that way every few months to celebrate mass. When Moise and his family moved to a larger house he had built at Sabine Pass, sailing down Taylor's Bayou with all his household belongings in a two-masted schooner, "Tenas" Arceneaux bought the little house, and he and his wife Mary raised their four children there.

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REMINDER OF THE PAST — Extensive remodeling has restored the historic old house which Moise Broussard built in the 1840s near Taylor's Bayou in south Jefferson

County. The house, as it looked before remodeling, was sketched by the late historian-journalist Dean Tevis.