



Berwick Beacon

Town of Berwick

March 2014

Town Council Members
Duval Arthur-Mayor Pro tem
Troy Lombardo
Edgar Thomas
Damon Robison
Greg Roussel

Special points of interest:

- www.sitesbylea.com/Recollections/
- Facebook search: "You Know You Are From Berwick If..."
- [History of South-west Reef Light-house](#)

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS WILL BE ELECTRONIC ONLY AND WILL BE POSTED ON THE TOWN WEBSITE. SCAN THIS CODE WITH YOUR MOBILE/SMART DEVICE TO GO DIRECTLY TO OUR WEBSITE AND REGISTER YOUR EMAIL TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF THE PUBLICATION OF A NEW EDITION OF THE BERWICK BEACON



We are on the web.
www.townofberwick.org

Berwick Library News:
National Library Appreciation Week will be observed at our branch location on April 17th.
An adult book club meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 6 PM.
A teen book club meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday at 4 PM.

"*Fizz, Boom, Read!*", the Summer Reading Program for all ages, will begin the first week of June.

For more information, please visit the website, www.stmary.lib.la.us.

From The Mayor's Desk.....



As I was preparing to write this for the Beacon, I came across a quote that surprised me because it said exactly what I was trying to put into words. The quote by Andrew Guzaldo reads *Salute the past and give thanks for the lessons and ex-*

perience it gave. Welcome the future and be ready for new challenges." When I read that, I thought, wow that is us, that is Berwick! We have had a past filled with much success and from those we have learned so much. And as I thought about our future, I knew without a doubt that we are ready.

So, let's first look back and name a few of the success stories from 2013:

- Renwick Phase V was completed late last year with 33 new lots becoming available. As of this writing, all properties have been sold. Out of 190+ lots constructed, Renwick has 129 homes completed; with another 4 under construction. We anticipate another 5-10 homes that will be started during 2014.
- Regarding industry, Cameron completed the 38.46 acre addition south of Highway 182 which will primarily be used for surface storage first; but, they have plans to further develop the property with additional buildings. And a local food distributors has purchased 15 acres next to Cameron for future development.
- The re-building of the dock at the Oregon Street Boat Launch began with funds through a St. Mary Parish/State grant. The Parish awarded the job to a local company, Berry Brothers General Contractors. In addition, the public dock just South of Crappell's Fish Market is being rehabbed with a grant from the Port of Morgan City. This work is being done with the Town's crews and equipment. Both projects should be completed in the first quarter 2014.
- In recreation, we have received another grant from the State to extend our walking trail on Gilmore and Fairview (Old Spanish Trail). The playground set at the Civic Center is being upgraded and should be ready for use during the first quarter.
- All of our three schools have been recognized and rated as "A" schools by the State Department of Education.

After reading this, I hope you will join me in saying "We welcome the future"! And I can assure you that we are indeed ready for new challenges!

In closing, 2014 should be an exciting year for all of us!

Mayor Louis Ratcliff

A LOOK BACK



Berwick Lions Club, circa 1930's, front row Sidney Bella, Charles Bowman, Shiek Nini, Dewey Brown; back row Laurie Toups, Adam Robicheaux, Caeser Thorguson, Ste. Landry, Bernie Driskill, Herman Hebert, Jakie Hebert, Prone Saunders, A.L. Boudreaux and J. C. Thomas.



Recognizing those Berwick residents serving in WWII.



Former Town Clerk/Mayor Gloria Nini receiving the Beacon Shines on Award for December 2013.



Principals of Berwick's Schools: Dr. Buffy Faganbush, Berwick High; Dr. Teresa Bagwell, Berwick Jr. High; Debbie Tompkins, Berwick Elementary were honored at the December meeting for their schools receiving an "A" grade from the Louisiana Department of Education for 2013 school year.



Councilman Troy Lombardo

The new play equipment at the Civic Center is the culmination of an approximately one year process by the Recreation Committee. The board was created by Mayor Ratcliff to inform the

Mayor and Council of the recreational needs of the town. The first step in the process was to inform the Mayor & Council that the 30 year old equipment needed to be replaced. The Mayor then authorized the committee to solicit bids for replacement of the old play equipment. The committee contacted several playground equipment companies to survey the area and suggest equipment that would fit properly into the "pit" area and blend with the adjacent park areas. Once the committee received these bids and chose which one best suited the needs of Berwick, that bid was submitted to the full Mayor and Council. At which time the project was approved, but not funded due to the impending hurricane season. The project was then sent through the budget committee process later in the year, where it received funding. It is important to note that this project was funded entirely by the town of Berwick. No State or Federal funds were used to accomplish this project. At a cost of \$40,000 and life expectancy of 30+ years, this new equipment will be enjoyed by the children of Berwick for years to come.



St. Mary Central Dixie Youth Baseball

Opening day ceremonies for the 2014 season of the St. Mary Central Dixie Youth Baseball will be held in early April, date and location to be announced. Coaches are preparing their teams for the upcoming season and all are looking forward developing successful youth in every aspect of the game including respect, hardwork, knowledge, teamwork, and sportsmanship. The organization services the youth of Berwick and Bayou Vista. Games will be played at the fields at Pharr Park in Berwick and Bayou Vista Community Center.

Did You Know?

Until 1912 the Berwick Light Plant was owned by the George Vinson Co. In 1914, town officials called an election to vote on a \$12,000 bond issue to purchase the light plant, which furnished night service only to the residents and a few street lights. Service charge was 50¢ per each 16 candle power bulb. The election was held on May 26, 1914, and there were a total of 142 qualified voters with a total assessment of \$88,033.55. The net returns from the bond issue showed that 79 voted a total of \$62,856.55 and 22 voted against with a total of \$43,674.35. With the \$12,000.00 bond issue, the physical equipment of the Berwick Light Plant was purchased for \$3,500.00. Also purchased was a Snow 65 HP crude oil engine and other needed supplies—Berwick still only had night service.

During the year 1925, J. G. Hix was buying light plants throughout the country, having bought the Jeanerette, Patterson, and New Iberia plants. He made a bid to purchase the Berwick system. After much discussion, it was shown that the operation cost of the plant here was taking up the better part of the town's income. The plant was operating at a great loss, as shown by the records. Berwick officials were induced to sell the system for the sum of \$25,000.00, having been offered a nice franchise. Some time later the Gulf Public Service Co., Inc. purchased the system from Mr. Hix and steps were taken to build a real service plant, with 24 hour service and with enough power to have electrical appliances. The Central Louisiana Electric Co., Inc. would eventually take over all Gulf Public Service properties and still provides state of the art electrical service to Berwick and surrounding communities.

Renwick Subdivision Park Pavilion

Berwick public works crews have been busy constructing a new pavilion in the Riverside Drive park in Renwick Subdivision. The improvements are funding in part by the Renwick Homeowner Association, with the town providing labor and expertise.



Safe and Sober Prom Campaign



The annual Safe and Sober Prom Campaign event was held at Berwick High on March 19th. Eight BHS students participated in the mock head-on car crash scene portraying 2 vehicles. One with students coming from the prom and the other coming from an after-prom party where they had been drinking. Berwick Police and Fire Departments, Bayou Vista Fire Department, Sheriff's Office, Acadian Ambulance and Hargrave Funeral Home, The District Attorney's Office and KQKI radio station volunteered their time and talents to make the scene as realistic as possible. The event is sponsored by the School Board and the Red Ribbon Committee.



The purpose of the event campaign is to remind the students of the seriousness of drinking and driving. Observers of the event all agreed that this mock scene will surely leave a lasting image on the heart and mind of everyone.

Berwick Project Graduation

Parent volunteers for this amazing event are working diligently to raise funds for this year's event. You can help by donating at this year's annual "Can Shake". On Saturday, **April 12th** from 9 - noon parents will be stationed at intersections in Berwick and Bayou Vista asking for donations. So, please help fill the cans for our BHS seniors!



BHS Class of 2013 at Project Graduation

Berwick Town Market -- Saturday, April 12th from 9 - 1

That's right, a Town Market right here along our beautiful riverfront. And it will be open not just in April, but **every month** on the second Saturday! If you haven't been to this event yet, you really need to make the time to go. Not only will you see a lot of people that perhaps you haven't seen in a while, but you can also shop!

The desire to host this market came from a group of ladies who saw the need to showcase local crafters; as well as farmers, fishermen and those who offer baked and preserved goods.

The event offers arts and crafts, jewelry, baked goods, fresh vegetables, yard art and



a list too long to name of other creative, unique items! Direct sales and retail items are not allowed.

Crafters can obtain an application for a space of 10ft X 10 ft for \$10 each month by calling 498-0264 or by sending an email to: berwicklamarket@gmail.com. For info go to www.facebook.com/berwicklamarket.

A portion of the proceeds from each market event is donated to Autism Awareness.

ANNETTE THOMAS BOWMAN



Ann and Annette

Annette Thomas Bowman and her identical twin sister Ann (older by ten minutes), were born to David S. and Sarah Luke Thomas on September 22, 1911 in Bayou Sale, LA.

Aunt Net as she is affectionately known had three siblings Dave, Jr., Ywell, and Kenneth. The family moved to Berwick in 1913 and lived on River Road until Uncle Dave moved them in 1922, to the house they occupied for many years on Oregon Street. Aunt Net may be 102 years young, but she still vividly remembers the early years with a still very keen mind. Some of the events occurring during her life are the two bridges, the railroad bridge, the great depression and stock market crash, the great "Flood" in 1927, and two world wars. She and Ann attended Berwick schools up through the ninth grade then went on to Morgan City to complete their high school requirements as Berwick did not have a high school at that time. They graduated with the class of 1930.

Aunt Net married Charles Bowman in 1934 and their only child, daughter Charlotte, was born in 1936. She and Charles bought their business, Bowman Oil Company from his Uncle Wheaton Bowman which was a fuel dock just north of the railroad bridge in Berwick in about 1942. He had worked for his Uncle for many years and he and Aunt Net operated it until the late 1960's. They also owned several real estate properties which became a source of revenue for their livelihood.

Aunt Net has been a lifelong member of the Berwick Methodist Church. After her husband's death she and Ann spent copious amounts of time together and were never far apart either physically or mentally. Since Aunt Ann's passing in 2002, she has managed to keep busy with church, jumble word puzzles, visiting with her family and friends all the while still living in the same house on second street in Berwick.

As probably Berwick's oldest living citizen at 102 years, we all look forward to celebrating her 103rd birthday this coming September.

"Recollections of Berwick, LA"

By Nina Guzzetta

Republished Courtesy of Daily Review

February 13, 1998



Did you know that the Teche Bus Station used to be at Charles Bella's Store on Pacific Street? The four Bella boys were bus drivers - Joe, Vincent, Allen and Peter. However, they didn't cross the river as Berwick was their last stop on this side of the river. Later on, the Greyhound Bus Company bought the Teche line out.

I was told by Joe Watkins that Bonnie and Clyde had just robbed a bank in Campti, and had six large bags of money. While they were going through here on their way to New Orleans, Clyde told Bonnie, "Let's pass by the bank in Berwick and check it out." When they got to the bank and saw how deplorable it was, Clyde shook his head and told Bonnie to throw a couple of bags of money in front of the bank. Clyde said, "Looking at the condition of the bank, they need the money more than we do."

Remember during the war, in the '40s, how Front Street in Berwick flourished every night? The Sport Center, the Doodle Bug, the Buck Horn, and the Brown Derby were packed with service boys - Sailors, Marines, the Army boys, and English soldiers were all well represented. We also had air raid warnings. I remember when I was still running the theatre, Betty Drew, who was just a young girl at that time, told me to put out the lights in front of the theatre. As I said, Betty Drew was just a very young girl, but she was an Air Raid Warden so I put out the lights. People didn't realize it then, but the German submarines were only 18 miles from our area. I remember one night, Betty Drew walked up to "Soo Pep" (George Gaspar) and told him to put out his cigarette, because the Germans could see the bright light. "Soo Pep" told Betty, "There aren't any Germans around here except old Dad Roder and he's my friend - he wouldn't hurt me!" Betty, because of her youth, had a hard time being an Air Raid Warden around here!

The German subs blew up a great number of our boats right at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River. We could hear and see the reflections of the explosions right here in Berwick.

There were a lot of happenings in sports around Berwick in my days. I remember O'Neal Boudreaux, whose nick name was Gavin after the "strike out king" who went through the whole season striking out and walking. One day, the pitcher threw a wild ball that hit O'Neal's bat for a foul that went up against the stands. Willie Roder, in the stands, stood up and hollered for O'Neal to go and get the baseball that he had fouled and frame it because this is the only time you'll ever hit a ball with your bat!

I can remember in my times there were only two really outstanding athletes in our area. They were Jimmy Conrad of Patterson and Paul Geisler of Berwick. Paul Geisler was one of the most outstanding athletes to come from Southern Louisiana. He played every position in every kind of different sport. He made All-State at Morgan City High School. He was tall, fast and tough! When the Morgan City Greenies would use Paul as a full-back, and then most of the time as an end. He could catch a football with one hand, leaping at a height of nine feet. At Centenary College, a small college in Shreveport, Paul made All-American as a member of those 11 players selected nationally who played both offense and defense. Today, if one of those professional players would run 30 ft., the coach would take him out to rest. Not Paul Geisler - he played the whole game - 60 minutes.

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