

Lot 13, Block 1 Plan of Rayne

"That fellow that owns his own home is always
just coming out of the hardware store." — Barbed Wire

By Sidney Stutes
Special to the Tribune

Much has been written by modern sociologists about the present generation's preoccupation with itself, the so-called "me generation," given birth by the social upheavals of the 1960's and 1970's.

The modern family unit, divided and scattered, more now than at any other period in our nation's history, hardly ever takes time to communicate with each other, much less to ever gather as a group to enjoy and renew their commonality.

Instead, "parts of families" converge periodically only as in a football huddle — for a quick face-to-face, hurried meeting, with little time to exchange but the vaguest of current plans, whereabouts, and doings.

And nowhere more is that feature of modern life observed than at funeral wakes, where everyone expresses the same sentiment, "It's so good to see you, too bad it's under these circumstances," before huddling with the next group to say the same thing again, with little thought of changing the circumstances.

So, in our world of change, family "connectivity" has largely been lost, leaving to the older generation to wonder what happened to all the joyous gatherings of family — the countless Sunday afternoons at Grandma's with all the uncles, aunts, and "goofy" cousins "sharing" their experiences and anecdotes that, like glue, would bind them to family through their lives. The children of that era knew of their past, which "connected" them as a path to the future.

To our point, Walter J. McBride, Rayne pharmacist (1914-1960), with his business house on the very Lot 3 of Block 13 purchased by his blacksmith father, Walter Scott McBride in 1880, "drew" upon his connections from his background to provide him with a certain track upon which he sought to serve more than himself alone. He would serve family, church, and community, in a manner a "father" had taught.

And that had been the theme of Monseigneur Hubert Lerschen's eulogy when Walter died in 1964. The St. Joseph pastor stressed how Walter had replicated his father's service to the community by being elected to the city council some 50 years apart, the family, now, to treasure the "Commissions" each had received from a Governor of Louisiana. The "Rayne" of 1964 was a far better place to live, said Monseigneur, because of this father-son combination. The father, Walter Scott McBride, had taught well.

Walter Scott McBride, who would be Pouppreville's blacksmith in 1880 was, himself, a certain product of that concept of family that valued "connection between generations and over great distances."

Walter Scott McBride's lineage reached back "in large family" to a Virginia blacksmith, Thomas McBride and his wife Mary Scott McBride. That union produced a second-generation blacksmith, a son named Walter who migrated to the St. Martin Parish area of Louisiana in the early 1800's. That Walter and Julienne Bogard McBride would have nine children: Mary, Mathilda, Anna, Robert, David, Charles, William, Thomas, and Walter McBride, Jr., who would, in time, marry Miss Judy Higginbotham.

This Walter McBride, Jr. and wife Judy would have twelve children of their own: six girls, Marguerite, Judy, Julienne, Mary Ann, Florence, and Cinderella and six boys, Edwin, Roland, Stephen, William, Henry and Walter Scott McBride, who would continue in the family trade of blacksmithing.

But, from a brood of that size, there was bound to emerge a politician or two. And even before Acadia Parish was carved from St. Landry officially in 1887, the McBride name began to surface as one to be reckoned with.

From upper Plaquemines Blue (Church Point) came word that Walter Scott McBride's brother, Henry Dallas McBride, a blacksmith as well, had entered public service as a Justice of the Peace for St. Landry and he would follow, years later, by being elected to the first town council of Church Point in 1891, subsequently to be chosen the fourth mayor of that community (1900-1902).

But it was to be in 1891 that a unique circumstance arose in the politics of the new parish of Acadia. Two brothers, Walter Scott McBride

of Rayne and Henry Dallas McBride of Church Point, were elected to public office as aldermen in their respective communities, the second and third largest towns in Acadia.

In Rayne, Walter Scott McBride would make his entry into politics by being elected to the council to serve through both administrations of James Webb, who was the town's sixth mayor and the first in Rayne history to be re-elected to office (1891-1895).

Rayne was only eight years old officially in 1891 and, still in its infancy, the community had much to do. And for that period, the minutes of the Town of Rayne are filled with motions, ordinances, debates, and amendments, covering the full range of topics from the frivolous to the serious.

At one point in reading the Minutes, it becomes clear that it had fallen to Alderman Walter Scott McBride to "mentor" Rayne's appointed Town Marshal, J. E. Wimberly, whose salary had been set at \$1.00 a day, with incentives to earn more.

But problems apparently arose with getting Marshal Wimberly to perform his regular duties. And motion upon motion by Mr. McBride called on the Marshal to "wear his badge in a conspicuous place; to find the person or persons responsible for discharging firearms at night and put a stop to it; to prevent children from jumping on and off trains."

And, of course, there was the perennial matter of the railroad company's disregard of Rayne's lawful speed limit. Their trains were constantly traveling through Rayne at more than the legal six miles per hour!

But, when it came to "incentive" pay, Marshal Wimberly was quick to present his invoice statement to the council — "\$5.00 for making 5 arrests at \$1.00 each; \$5.00 for recovering the wheels that had been stolen from the horse-drawn, town street-grader; and \$2.16 for hauling 12 canines out of the corporation at \$0.18 each."

Other matters caught the attention of the Council as well. Frenchman Donat Pucheu, who nightly toasted "le bon vin de Bordeaux" ("water was to wash in") upstairs at his dinner table at his Rayne Drop Inn and who had begun to ship frogs from the rear of his establishment had apparently not maintained his over-hanging porch over the entrance at the front sidewalk on Texas Avenue (Bercier Dental Clinic).

That prompted a resolution from the "Town Fathers."

That the porch in front of Donat Pucheu's saloon, having been found to be an obstruction to the sidewalk and in a dangerous condition, is hereby declared a nuisance, and after five days notice, the owner failing to remove the same, the Marshal shall remove said obstruction at owner's expense.

But, largely, the Council (1891-1895) handled more "pressing" matters — like the complaint from homeowners about the "planting of rice within the corporate limits" and the enforcement of "Sunday laws" which had aggravated some ten merchants.

And there was always correspondence to answer from Father Blaise Branche (Branche Street), for example, St. Joseph's second pastor, who sought to close the business houses of Rayne for a few hours during the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus. And the "good father" would request a wooden sidewalk be built for the Sisters of Mt. Carmel who had just arrived in Rayne on a "fleecy, cold December day in 1891."

His letters always ended with this statement, "Be assured we pray God to Bless all your families and the generous town of Rayne." Who could deny a petition with a "complimentary close" like that?

An interesting bill appears in the financial recordings of June 2, 1893 — "For nails — \$0.80 from McBride's Hardware" (and blacksmith shop).

But the most time-consuming matter of the day was Rayne's successful attempt to "amend" its original Charter of 1883 to have "...the depot declared the center of town with the corporation extending three-quarters of a mile in all four directions." The amendments, moreover, addressed such matters as the qualifications for mayor and aldermen, drainage, public amusements, fines and jail-time, the construction of banquettes (wooden sidewalks), and all fees and taxes.



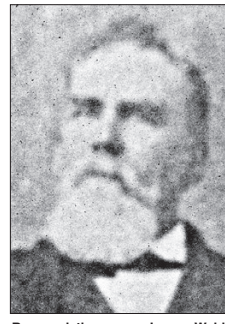
Aurelia Perres McBride, wife of Walter Scott McBride, posed with three of her children. Standing at left is a son Walter J. McBride. Standing at right is Ella McBride, while sitting on his mother's lap is Edward McBride.



Mary Alice Fontenot published a photo card prepared for the hanging of murderer Sylvestre Abshire. Though a scaffold was erected, no hanging took place; his sentence was commuted.



Father Blasie Branche, St. Joseph's second pastor (1882-1889) frequently communicated by mail with the town council during the administration of Mayor James Webb.



Rayne sixth mayor, James Webb, was the first in the town's history to be re-elected to office (1881-1885). Blacksmith and hardware operator Walter Scott McBride served as an alderman through both tenures.

Some of this was handled by the "Committee on Improvement" consisting of aldermen Dr. George C. Mouton, Dr. Rufus Clyde Webb, and blacksmith and hardware operator Walter Scott McBride. The same council members oversaw the "extension" of Parkerson, Cunningham, and Arenas Streets northward to Jeff Davis.

Then, the election of 1893 produced two unprecedented results. Initially, Mayor James Webb and four of his council members were re-elected to a second, two-year term — a "first" in Rayne politics. Returning to office were aldermen Walter Scott McBride, Dr. Rufus C. Webb, Dr. George C. Mouton, and W. F. Perkins. Council member Henry Anding opted to take a parish job, and was replaced by Auguste Perres, which meant that the Rayne Council of 1893-1895 would find Walter Scott McBride serving with his father-in-law Auguste Perres in the only known "family combination" of the sort to ever serve the community. (Walter Scott McBride was married to Aurelia Perres McBride).

And, too, there was the matter, raised by the Board of Health head-

ed by Dr. Mouton, as to the depth of graves in Rayne: "adults at five feet at least, children at a minimum of three."

And just as Mayor Webb's administration was coming to an end, Acadia Deputy Americus V. Lyons was murdered on New Year's Eve, just out of Rayne. On January 7, 1895, the Town Council of Rayne voted to "drape the town hall in black for 30 days." The murderer, Sylvestre Abshire, was sentenced to "hang," but the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. (See Mary Alice Fontenot's Acadia Parish, Louisiana, Vol. 1, page 317).

The minutes of the early years of Rayne rarely provided details of election results, only to name new administrative officials when chosen. In September 1895, the Minutes open with Emile Daboval as Mayor and alderman Olivier Broussard, Frank Bernard, J. B. Richard, W. B. St. John, and A. S. Chappuis in charge.

Thus ended Walter Scott McBride's tenure as an alderman of Rayne. By then, as noted, he had expanded his blacksmith shop to include "hardware sales."

NEXT: A Special Convention!