

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Pavilion is an octagonal, raised structure, unique to this area. "It is a bandstand type pavilion, highly Victorian. (Arthur Middleton, A.I.A. Covington, La.) It is an open wooden structure. At one time there was a long wooden foot bridge that went to the upper level. Railings that went around the upper level are now missing and should be replaced.

There is an earthen level now only three quarters around the Pavilion.

The Pavilion was built by Poitivent and Farve in 1888. It was repaired when it was a state park.

The Springs themselves were cemented over by the State and should be opened.

(The Pavilion is built over the Springs.)  
The diameter of the Pavilion is 52.6 feet.  
The height is 46 feet.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

There are springs which supposedly have medicinal value that are located in a 5.6 acre park in the western part of the town of Abita Springs. Over the springs is a unique, to this region, highly Victorian Pavilion. The Abita Springs is the reason for the existence of the town of Abita Springs. It is, of course, the reason for the name of the town of Abita Springs. Sources agree that Abita is an Indian word; there is no agreement on the meaning of the word.

Legend has it that the Choctaw Indians considered the waters to have healing powers. <sup>1-2</sup>

In a mortgage filed in 1859 (Joseph S. Bossiere to Theo O. Stark) <sup>3</sup> it is noted that "all said described lands adjoining and situated in Abita Creek. In the Parish of St. Tammany and being the same on which the Abita Springs are situated, ---. All said lands were acquired from the United States on the 18th of April, 1855."

On the 21st day of April 1853, the owner, Mrs. Francis Anne Bossier, was advanced money by a Mr. Christy, "with a distinct understanding with her that the said amount was to be laid out in the location lands in her name, in the neighborhood of the Spring aforesaid with the view to add value to said Spring-----." <sup>4</sup>

From 1859 to 1867 the land was in litigation. <sup>5</sup>

In 1867 in sworn statement, Dr. T. M. D. Davieson, who moved to Covington in 1857 and had been a "practicing physician continuously since," stated that "these springs are mineral water-highly medicinal these Springs are valuable on account of the medicinal qualities -- I consider them very valuable for being a resort for boarders and invalids ----." <sup>6</sup>

An Ad placed in The St. Tammany Farmer, a parish newspaper, in May of 1880 appears as follows:

"THE FAMOUS ABITA SPRINGS ---- MRS. F. A. BOSSIER Has opened her house at the famous Abita Springs, three miles from Covington for the reception of

boarders, ---- a pretty cottage, with good well, outhouses etc. near the spring to rent for the season."<sup>7</sup>

On June 26, 1887, the first railroad train arrived at Abita Springs.<sup>8</sup>

On December 20, 1887 a post office was established and Mr. Thomas H. McAvoy appointed postmaster.<sup>9</sup>

An article in 1888 stated "Curative Properties of the waters of the Abita Springs became better known, and the general healthfulness of the locality attracted considerable attention."<sup>10</sup>

Among the ads in 1888 was one for :  
SIMON'S HOTEL AND RESTAURANT  
FRENCH KITCHEN  
PARISIAN STYLE  
ABITA SPRINGS, LA.

It was noted in the ad that it was the Closest place to Spring and Depot."<sup>11</sup>

A passenger on the East Louisiana Railroad related his impressions, "Florenville then Abita Springs. Can anyone tell anybody about Abita Springs? I have heard so much about them that I suppose everybody else has heard, that it leaves one at a loss to say anything that has not been already told. The medicinal qualities of the Springs have not been over-rated, so I am told."<sup>12</sup>

In 1888 the Pavilion was built over the Springs. "Messrs. Poitevent and Favre have just built a commodious pavilion over the Springs, so constructed as to be beyond the reach of high water ----" <sup>13</sup>

Another delightful article in 1888 describes "Life at Abita Springs" with the "pleasure seekers from among the wageworkers and counter hoppers of the Great Southern Emporium.----- All who can move around light out for a ramble to the springs and through the pinewoods ----- or can recline upon the seats of the ample pavilion. ----- There are four well kept and commodious hotels in a few hundred yards of the main Artesian Saline Caledonian Springs -----." <sup>14</sup>

On March 4, 1903 the first ordinance for the Village of Abita Springs was written.<sup>15</sup>

The Town of Abita Springs was chartered in 1912.<sup>16</sup>

In 1948 the springs and the grounds surrounding them were purchased by the state of Louisiana and placed into the State Park System.<sup>17</sup>

In 1965 the Park was sold to the St. Tammany Parish School Board and neglect set in.<sup>18</sup>

In 1971 the town of Abita Springs reused 5.6 acres around the Pavilion and Springs and have made it into a Park once again.<sup>19</sup>

An article in 1972 in the States-Item, New Orleans, La. reads in part; "A group of concerned Abita residents who remember the charm and magnetism of the old St. Tammany spa of a decade or two ago, with its Abita Park, pavilion, picnic grounds, bubbling springs and winding spring-fed river ----are attempting to restore the park to some of its original magnificence. ----There are scores of New Orleanians who nostalgically remember their childhoods when their parents took them to Abita Springs for the summer.----" <sup>20</sup>

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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- 4- Suits # 693 and 6948-8th Judicial Court-W. E. Kennedy Vrs. Capt. St. Auge Bossier-8-10-1865-St. Tammany Courthouse # 3 and 4 (records not numbered nor in any particular order)
- 5-See Above 3 and 4
- 6-Suit # 1132
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- 8-St. Tammany Farmer-June 26, 1888
- 9-Office of Postmaster General -- Washington, DC — copy personal property of Mrs. Amos Neff: Covington, La.
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- 18-St. Tammany Parish School Board Covington, La.
- 19-Town Hall-Abita Springs, La.
- 20-States-Item New Orleans, La. June 29, 1972 page 39