

**Presenting  
the  
Louisiana  
Outdoor  
Drama  
Association**



**Natchitoches, Louisiana**

**LODA**  
**Louisiana**  
**Outdoor Drama**  
**Association**

## Preface

The LOUISIANA OUTDOOR DRAMA ASSOCIATION, Inc. (LODA) was formed on August 11, 1970, to establish an outdoor historical drama based on the first settlement of the territory that later became the LOUISIANA PURCHASE. LODA has been chartered by the State of Louisiana as a NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION to make this idea a reality.

The Louisiana Council for Music and Performing Arts, Inc., Mrs. Edwin H. Blum, president, has helped LODA with valuable advice as well as financial aid. Mrs. Blum secured the services of the Institute of Outdoor Drama of the University of North Carolina to advise the local group and helped enlist the services of Paul Green, "dean of outdoor drama writers" and the writer of *The LOST COLONY* at Manteo, N. C., *The COMMON GLORY* at Williamsburg, Va., *The STEPHEN FOSTER STORY* at Bardstown, Kentucky, and *TEXAS* at Canyon, Texas, to write a symphonic drama for LODA.

The Institute of Outdoor Drama conducted a Feasibility Study for LODA in February. The team was headed by Mark Sumner, Director of the Institute, and included Arthur Cogswell, well-known North Carolina architect, and Bert Ballard, manager of *The STEPHEN FOSTER STORY*. Their report shows that LODA has a solid base and has told LODA that "the word is GO!" They predict gate receipts of \$150,000.00 the first season to cover operating costs. The Institute will continue as consulting agency for LODA.

Natchitoches has the HISTORY in the establishment of Fort St. John Baptiste in 1714, Los Adais as the first capital of Texas only 14 miles to the west, and the early plantations of the Cane River Country. The DRAMA is here in the story of St. Denis building the fort, making friends with the Indians, visiting the Spanish to establish trade, being imprisoned by the Spanish, marrying the young Spanish girl



**Dr. Paul E. Torgrimson**  
LODA President



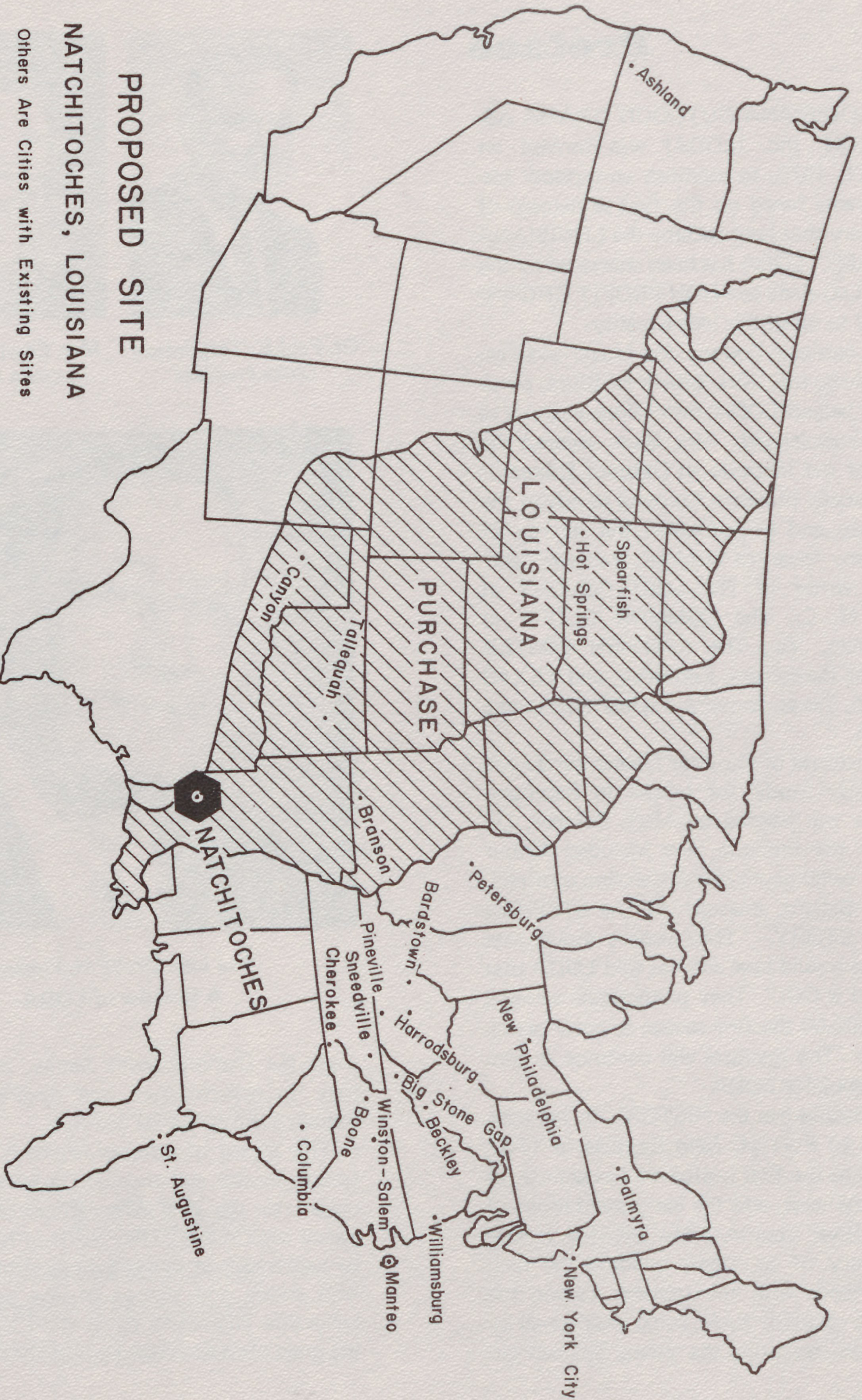
**Mrs. Edwin H. Blum**  
LCMPA President



**The Late Dr. W. H. Pierson**  
A founder of LODA

from the Commandant's family, bringing her back to Natchitoches, and dealing with the Indians as both friends and foes.

The appeal of outdoor drama is largely the feeling in the audience of "a sense of pilgrimage" to the spot where important historic events took place. The "spirit of history" can be captured best in a beautiful, outdoor setting with music and dances of the period, with believable characters taken from the pages of the great history of this section.



**PROPOSED SITE**

**NATCHITOCHEES, LOUISIANA**

Others Are Cities with Existing Sites

## **Coming Out of the Past**

In 1714, 93 years after the Pilgrims roasted turkeys for the first American Thanksgiving in 1621, the French sent a party of explorers to establish an outpost on Red River in the Southwest to head off the Spaniards who were gradually moving in from toward Mexico. The Frenchmen, led by Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, decided on a site on the high west bank of the Red, behind which rolling hills were covered with virgin timber. Thus began the settlement called Natchitoches, and the area later named Louisiana.

Eighty-nine years later, in 1803, Napoleon sold a vast territory stretching to the Rocky Mountains and the present Canadian border to the United States. In 1812, Louisiana became a state of the Union after adoption of the Constitution.

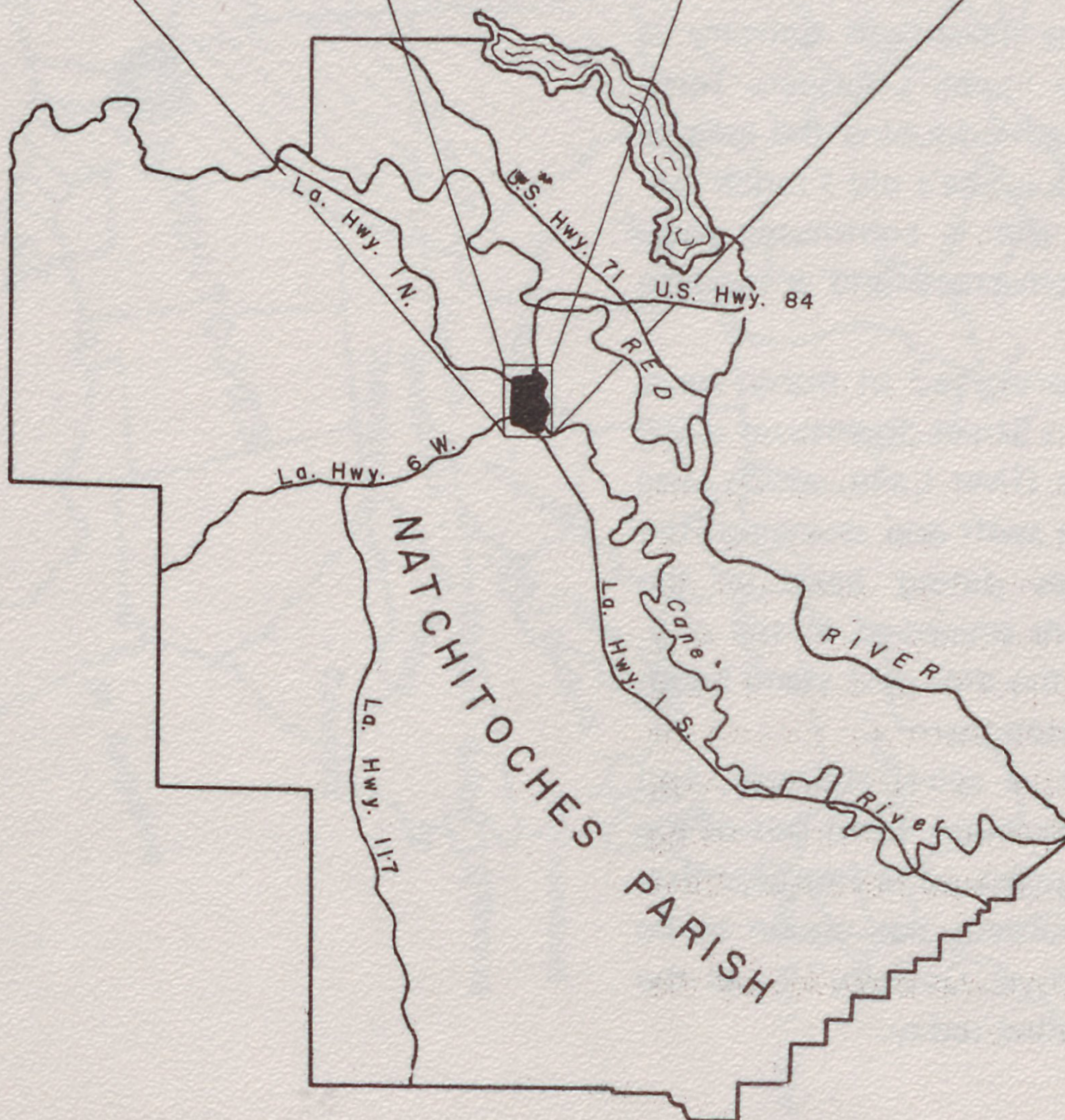
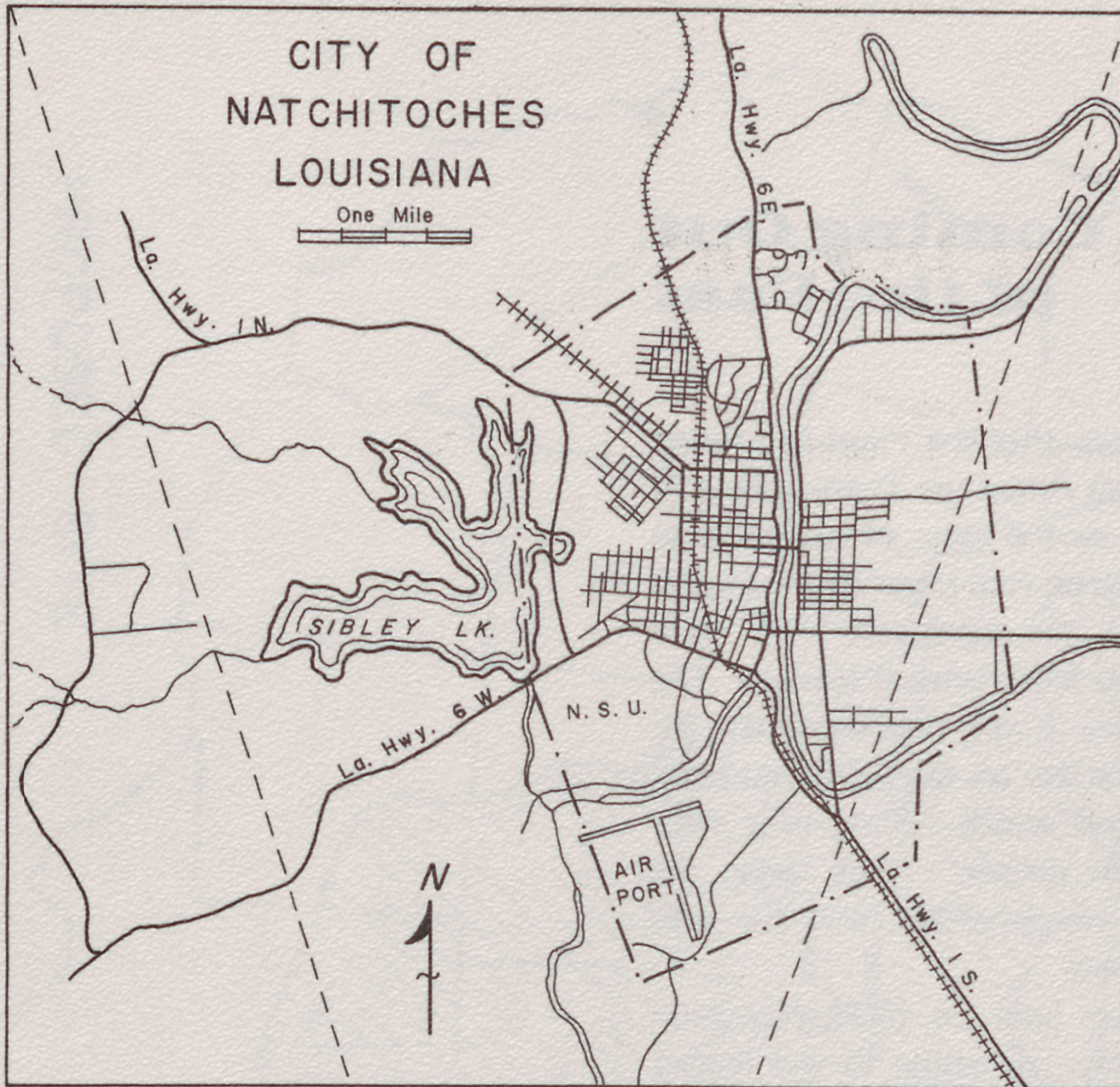
Natchitoches in the Twentieth Century is the oldest community in the Louisiana Territory, which when bought doubled the area of the United States. Louisiana's old French culture lingers, mingled with a continuing antebellum plantation aristocracy and a modern university society.

Its rich history is preserved in many ways. There's a bricked Front Street downtown along the west bank of Cane River Lake, which until 150 years ago was the swift and changing Red River. Town houses dating back to the Eighteenth Century are preserved in the city. Planters' homes from the dim past stand handsomely on nearby plantations.

Beautiful ironwork, a spiral stairway, and other French architecture too come out of the past as exciting reminders of a heritage that denies an equal. Louisiana has reason to be proud of its "Cane River Country" — as the Natchitoches area is called today.

CITY OF  
NATCHITOCHEES  
LOUISIANA

One Mile



## Outdoor Drama?

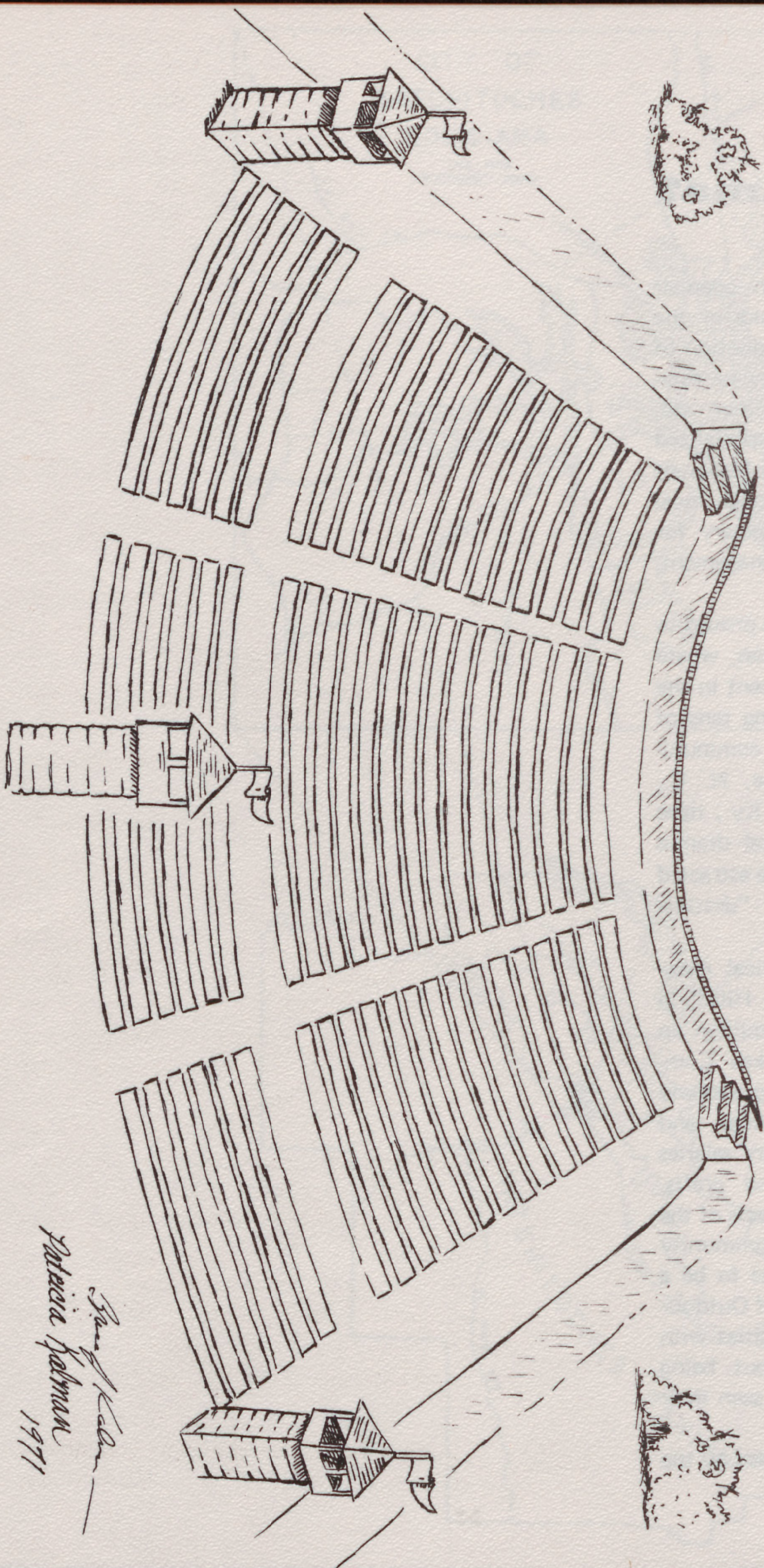
Outdoor drama is performed in open-air amphitheatres for perhaps 10 weeks in the summer. The drama may be a production of an original historical play or it may be established as a festival of classics. In either case, the production requires intense specialized effort and high concentration. Professionals are used as much as possible, although local area talent is widely used and necessary for many positions, such as writing, management, direction, and scene design.

Economically, outdoor drama has proved to be big business in many communities, where nearly 90 percent of its budget is spent in the area at the same time it is attracting tens of thousands of tourist dollars. Several communities, including Manteo and Boone, N. C., Spearsfish, S. D., and Bardstown, Ky., have proved with their outdoor historical dramas that tourist business in volume can be attracted to areas at first considered neither "destination" or "pass-through" points.

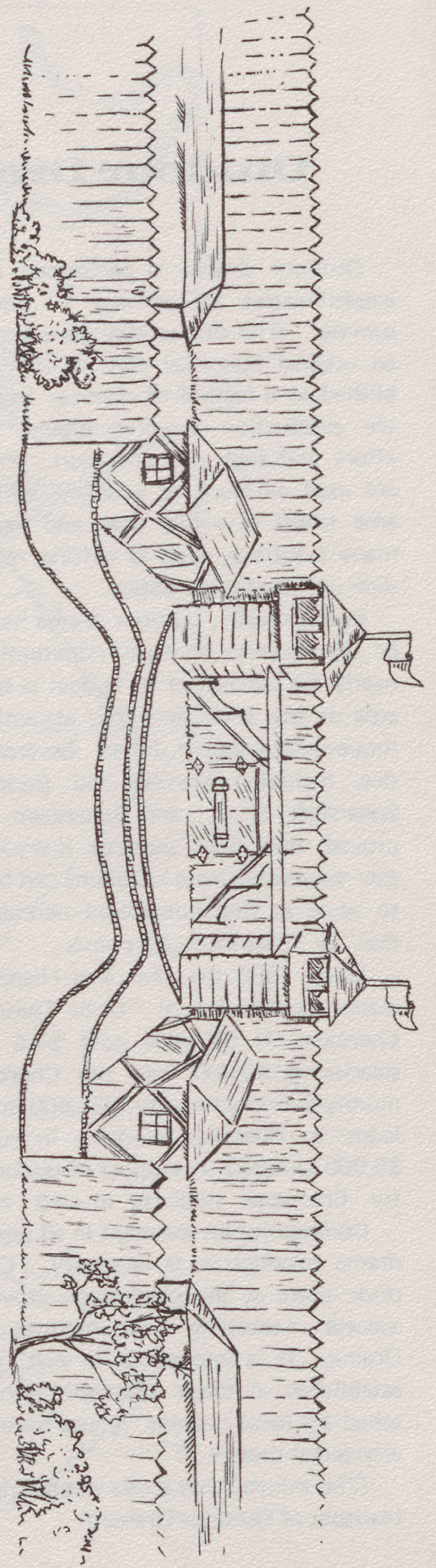
Since 1950 the Cherokee Historical Association, producers of "Unto These Hills" in Cherokee, N. C., has paid \$1.6 million in salaries, \$150,000 into the Cherokee Community Services treasury, \$36,800 in grants and loans to Cherokee students in college, and \$5,000 annually in support of teachers' salaries for Cherokee students in arts and crafts.

Community involvement in all aspects of the drama production is necessary. Community pride soars as the production proves to be a success. According to the Institute of Outdoor Drama, "It is impossible to visit" cities with established outdoor dramas "without being asked by local citizens 'if you have seen their wonderful theatre.'"

(The information above was provided by the Institute of Outdoor Drama.)



*Patricia Palmer  
1971*



## Comments on LODA

The following are excerpts from letters to Dr. Paul Torgrimson, president of the Louisiana Outdoor Drama Association:

"As president of the Louisiana Council for Music and Performing Arts, Inc., (LCMPA), and as a private citizen, I heartily endorse the idea of an Outdoor Symphonic Drama for Louisiana and I enthusiastically endorse Natchitoches as the site. . . .

"Mark Sumner, director, Institute of Outdoor Drama, University of North Carolina, has been commissioned by LCMPA to conduct a feasibility study of the area. The citizens of Natchitoches have accepted the challenge that Mr. Sumner proferred to them and have done a remarkable job in furthering LODA for the purpose of having their city chosen as the site. . . .

"It is my firm belief that the whole state, as well as the area surrounding Natchitoches, will benefit from the large number of visitors who will come to see this Louisiana Outdoor Drama."

**Mrs. Edwin H. Blum, President  
Louisiana Council for Music and  
Performing Arts  
New Orleans**

"We at NSU believe that the Louisiana Outdoor Drama Association will be a real asset to our university, our students, and our faculty. An organization of this kind will give opportunities to students for work and experience in this type drama that they might not have otherwise. The training in an undertaking of this nature could very well be priceless as far as the value to them is concerned.

"It is our feeling that Northwestern State University students and faculty, the City of



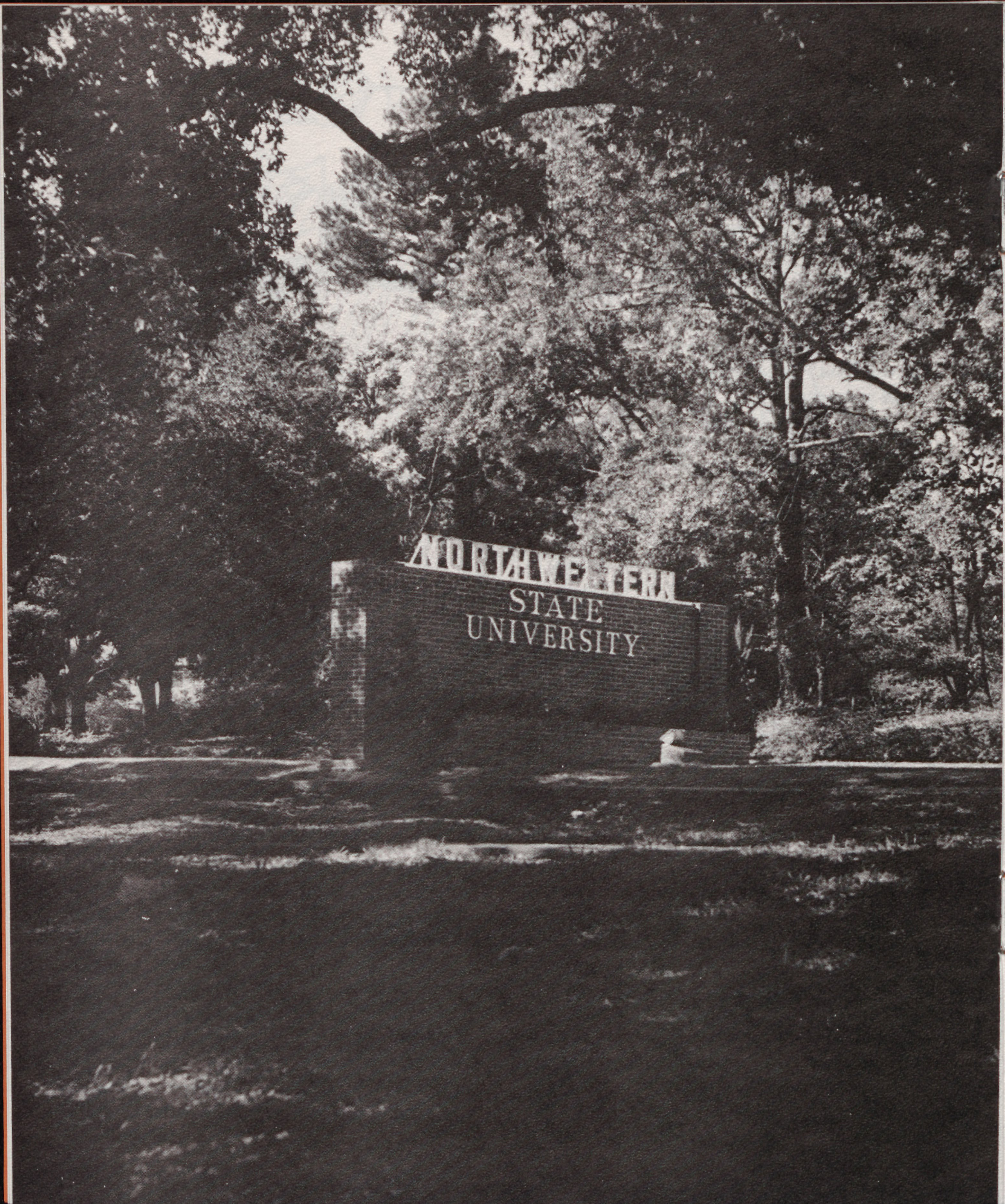
Natchitoches, and the State of Louisiana would benefit greatly by the outdoor drama."

**Arnold R. Kilpatrick, President  
Northwestern State University  
Natchitoches**

"We, in the Louisiana Tourist Commission, recognize this project as one of the most important tourist developments in Louisiana that can take place in the next few years. Certainly the City of Natchitoches, as the first town in the Louisiana Purchase, is a natural setting for such a theater presentation. . . . Having some knowledge of the success of other outdoor pageants which have been presented throughout the country, I am well aware of the tremendous contribution they have made to any area or region in which they have been produced. Not only the City of Natchitoches but a much larger area around that city would definitely benefit.

"Of course, you are aware that at such time as the theater becomes a reality, the Louisiana Tourist Commission will do everything in its power to publicize it throughout the nation."

**Morris Ford, Director  
Louisiana Tourist Development Commission  
Baton Rouge**



NORTHWESTERN  
STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## **Drama, University Benefit Mutually**

Outdoor drama in a community setting which includes a modern university would have a difficult time NOT succeeding.

This may be stretching a point, but undoubtedly one of them would complement the other. University students, teachers, and administrative staffs would of course benefit from viewing the drama just as anyone else. But they would also participate in production and performance of the drama.

LODA's articles of incorporation provide that it can engage in historical research. This is likely to be done in conjunction with Northwestern State University, its researchers and libraries, thereby benefiting both the drama and the university.

University courses can be structured around the drama productions, offering credit to those who enroll.

Students at the university can find summer employment during performances of the outdoor drama. They can work as ushers, parking attendants, bit actors, technicians (stage lighting control, and so forth), ticket salespersons, bookkeepers, and general maintenance personnel.

The varied talents of university faculty will help both them and the outdoor drama, in such activities as writing, management, administration, direction, and scene design.

Yes, the Louisiana outdoor drama setting in Natchitoches will be enhanced by the presence of Northwestern State University.

## Tourist's Mecca

Louisiana, including the general setting for LODA's planned outdoor drama, has many tourist attractions. Near the historical drama setting are the Civil War museum and battlefield at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill; beautiful, expansive Hodges Gardens south of Many; nationally famous Toledo Lake north and west of Many; Fort Jesup (and its museum) of pre-Mexican War days, between Natchitoches and Leesville; El Camino Real, a Spanish trail stretching from Natchitoches to Mexico City; Los Adais, along the El Camino Real near Natchitoches, once the capital of the Spanish province of Texas; the famous and imposing bluffs rising 100 feet above Red River at Grand Ecore; Bayou Folk Museum in Cloutierville; and the Kisatchie National Forest, providing thousands of acres for camping, picnicing, and fishing.

The northwest area of Louisiana is known for the plantation on which Harriet Beecher Stowe based her novel **Uncle Tom's Cabin**; for the neutral "no-man's land" east of the Sabine River where after the Louisiana Purchase Amer-



ican soldiers fought to protect American settlers from outlaws who sought refuge in the strip; and for its famed antebellum plantations, including Melrose, Magnolia, Oakland, Beaufort, Cherokee, Starlight, Lakeview, and the Isle Brevelle community.

Within the city of Natchitoches are many homes of the early Nineteenth Century, and one built as early as 1776. The Roque House Museum preserves historical architecture and relics.

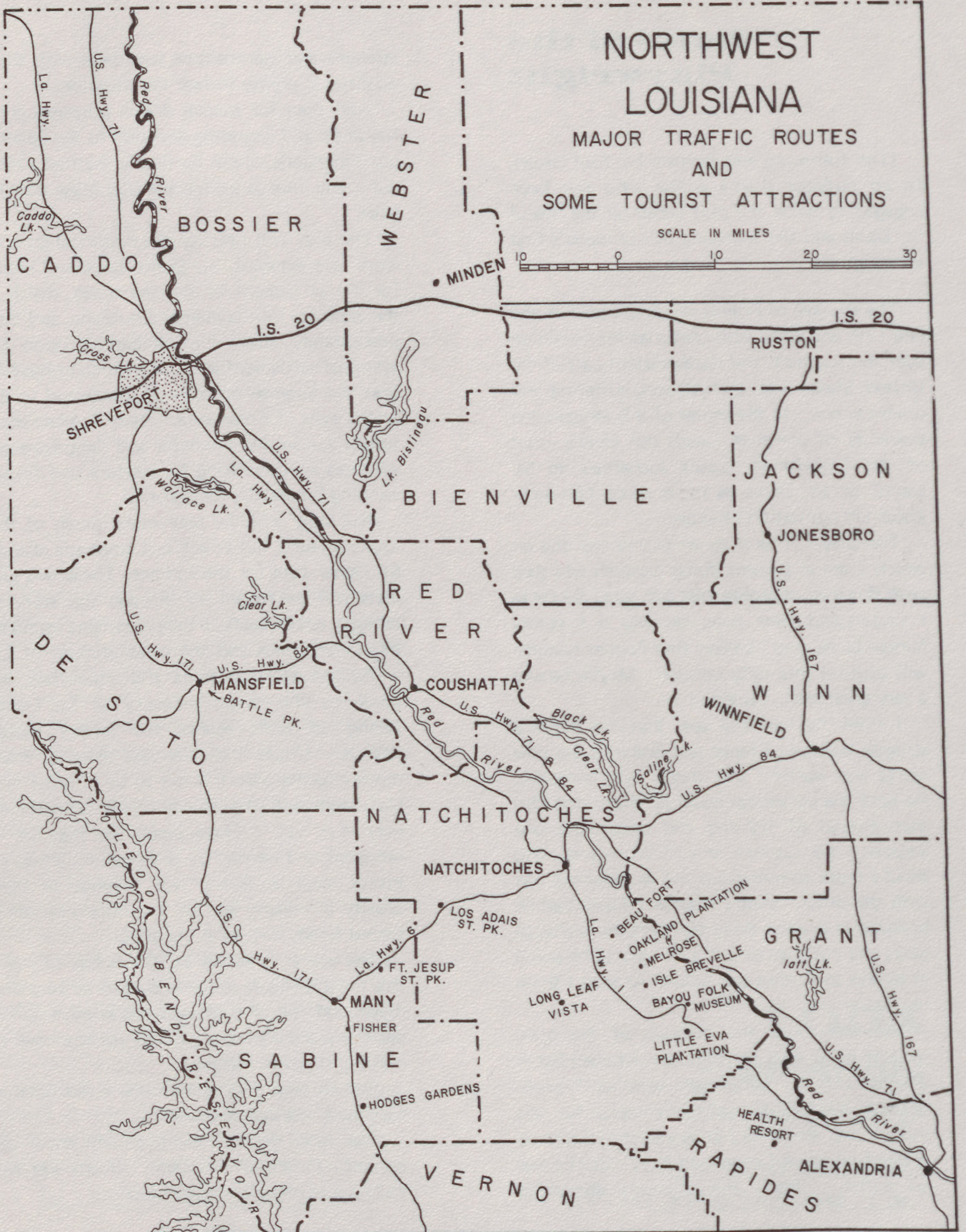
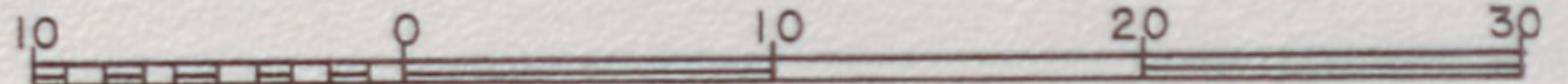
Opportunities for recreation abound. The deer, duck, quail, dove, fox, and squirrels bring out the hunters; fishermen constantly pull many species from Cane River Lake, Sibley Lake, Toledo Lake, Saline Lake, Black Lake, and Clear Lake; and boaters, campers, and skiers never lack enjoyable sites.

Christmas festivals of renown are held in December at Hodges Gardens and Natchitoches, where crowds have been estimated as high as 75,000. Art, drama, and music festivals are conducted regularly at Northwestern State University, Natchitoches.

# NORTHWEST LOUISIANA

MAJOR TRAFFIC ROUTES  
AND  
SOME TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

SCALE IN MILES



## Notes of the Playwright

(The following was written by Paul Green, famed outdoor drama writer who has been engaged to write the play based on the life of St. Denis and the founding of Louisiana's first settlement.)

The struggle of France and Spain back in the late 17th and early 18th centuries for dominion over the southern and southwestern part of the United States was a cruel, long-suffering and dramatic one. In the center of this struggle the character of one man stands out vividly—that of the Frenchman, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, or St. Denis as he is more familiarly known in our nation's history.

The play I intend to write and the one on which I am at present doing research will deal with this man as protagonist and hero. So far as I understand him now, he was a first-rate human being, and I believe that further research will confirm this early opinion. Maybe he was a very great man. I hope so.

I think he basically saw that the military struggle between France and Spain in the new world was wasteful and tragic, even senseless. He held the somewhat novel (at that time) idea that instead of fighting and destroying one another, the nations should be friends and should trade commodities and do business one with the other. (And I wouldn't doubt that he believed it a good thing for them to exchange ideas and cultures as well.) He did all he could in reason to further this belief. At least I think he did.

His was more the attitude of the open trusting hand than the inimical clenched fist in dealing with his fellowman, whether French, Spanish or Indian. His friendship for the Indians and theirs for him is a bright chapter in a dark and woeful American story. But he was no softie. When the situation demanded

strength and sternness he was there with these qualities in plenty to face the situation.

And then for special drama purposes is his romantic and unending devotion to the Spanish girl Emanuella whom he finally married. Here are many fine as well as popular stage possibilities.

The play will first lay the historical groundwork and establish St. Denis' hope and intent for the settlement in the new world, which at the time for him is mainly Louisiana, and then immediately show him embarked upon his intent of settlement and trade which brings him into the Spanish territory of Texas and to the bright eyes of Emanuella. Then in a few short scenes follow his dramatic and dangerous adventures in outwitting his captors and finally winning Emanuella for his bride.

Not only will the play make much of this love romance, but it will put emphasis also on St. Denis' care for the Indians. These two subjects will be woven all through the story of struggle which leads to the permanent founding of Natchitoches and the establishment of La.

As the story unfolds and intensifies, we come to the tragic necessity of St. Denis' taking up arms against his former Indian friends. Under the relentless drive of man-made circumstance this has to be in order that his dream and the dream of his countrymen may not fail. Throughout the play he is hindered and harried by the cruel blindness of his political superiors, and because of their cruelty in making war on the Indians he too is forced finally to join in the attack.

The scene in which St. Denis has to make this most difficult decision should be very dramatic and full of overtones too relative to the decisions some of our present leaders have to make in the world scene.

And through it all Emanuella walks hand in hand with the man she loves.

The final part of the play will show the accomplishment of St. Denis' dream and will end on a strong affirmative up-beat.

There will be much music and dancing and pageantry and color in the drama. (Crowd scenes of course.) I expect to use the French music of the times—ballads, dance tunes, religious hymns, etc. And I will want to call on all the local archives and personnel I can for help. As to the Indians—I still have to do much more research on them before I am sure as to the leading character or characters among their chiefs I wish to use.

It seems to me at this present writing that the Natchitoches drama ought to have a very good chance of success and of joining the enlarging list of summer historical plays which are continuing year after year—for instance, "The Lost Colony" in its 30th year, "The Common Glory" in its 25th, "Unto These Hills" in its 21st, "Horn in the West" in its 19th, and so on.

Naturally our success will in the main depend on two things—the dramatic power of the script and a sufficiency of funds to insure a first-rate production of that script.

We will all pray and work together.

**LODA**

• **Statewide**

• **Non-Profit**

**Domociled at  
Natchitoches, La.**

