

**HISTORICAL AND  
GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION  
OF MOREHOUSE PARISH, ITS  
NATURAL RESOURCES, ETC.**

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Historical and Geographical Description of Morehouse Parish, Its Natural Resources, Etc. by C. T. Dunn

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BY  
CAPT. C. T. DUNN,  
*OF BASTROP, LA.*

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## PREFACE.

The object of the following pamphlet is to give to men of energy, in search of a home, information in regard to a section of Louisiana whose productive qualities are unsurpassed by any in the Union; its broad fields and heavily timbered forests offer to agriculturists and lumbermen an opportunity for wealth that needs but *capital* to be made a certainty.

The stranger will find in the following pages a candid and full discussion, by a native Louisianian, of the history and development of Morehouse Parish; of its climate and natural resources; the extent and nature of the labor now employed, and the impressions of a representative citizen of the South, who has ever been loyal to the Union in regard to *Secession*, and the politico-social problem of the negro, that has been for years agitating the country. This citizen is Capt. C. T. Dunn, born in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, but since 1858 a resident of Morehouse Parish. He has won great and merited distinction as a journalist in his younger days, and since as a jurist of unusual experience and ability. His reputation, and the fact that he has fearlessly and energetically fought to maintain, in the days of prejudice, the correctness of his views of the Union, should be a guarantee on the one hand, while his selection by the people of the parish should afford an equal assurance on the other that his views represent, as they do, a fair and impartial description of Morehouse Parish, its people and its resources.

J. M. SHARP,

Com. for Morehouse Parish at the Cotton Exposition.

P. O., OAK RIDGE.



## CHAPTER I

North Louisiana designates that section of the State of Louisiana some two tiers of parishes in width from north to south, bordering on Southern Arkansas and extending from the Mississippi river westward to the Texas State line.

The country is almost wholly free from rocks and boulders and abounds in natural resources of much variety and of great value. It is chiefly noted for its temperate climate, its many navigable water-ways, its immense forests of valuable timber, and its fertile soil, which, in the eastern portion and along Red river, is not surpassed in productive capacity by the far-famed lands of the Nile.

From the Mississippi river westward across the bottoms of the Tensas river, Bayou Macon, Bayou Bartholomew, and the Ouachita river, a distance of some eighty miles, the lands are generally level, the soil is in great part alluvial, and much of the country is liable in the late winter and early spring months to inundations from the overflowing of the Mississippi river.

That section lying between the Ouachita river and the Texas line, about 100 miles in width, is an elevated, undulating country, traversed by the Red river and several smaller streams. The soil in many localities is productive for upland. Extensive pine forests abound, valuable for their timber. The bottoms of the Red river are noted for their fertility.

The climate of North Louisiana, being about the 32nd degree of latitude, is mild and genial. The thermometer rarely rises above 90 degrees in summer, or falls below



the freezing point in winter. Killing frost about the middle of November. Spring opens in February; then the planting season commences for the principal products, which continues till July. Two crops of corn have frequently been raised in one season on the same land. Snow falls seldom, and then lightly. Long, balmy spells of Indian summer weather are frequent during the fall and winter months, lasting sometimes for weeks. Stock of all kinds run in the woods during the entire winter season, finding their own food in the natural pasturages, and requiring no shelter except what is afforded by the timber and canebrakes. Rains are generally regular, falling mostly in the winter and early spring, on land properly prepared for cultivation, crops are not liable to be injured by drought or wet weather. The fall season is nearly always dry, and favorable for gathering the cotton crop. The earliest variety of fruits commence to ripen in April and May, and from that time may be had in continued succession till frost.

The Ouachita valley is rather an indefinite extent of country, lying along the Ouachita river, embracing several counties in Arkansas and several parishes in North Louisiana. It is exceedingly rich in natural resources and is perhaps the garden spot of the whole state.

The country was settled by French colonists about the beginning of the 18th century. Baron de Bastrop, a Holland nobleman, obtained a grant of an extensive tract of land from the then Spanish governor of the territory of Louisiana, with the privileges of locating it wherever he chose in the immense country west of the Mississippi river.

The great natural advantages of this section, its mild and genial climate, its broad savannas and prairies, affording a wide extent of pasturage for herds of all kinds, the great quantity of wild game, buffalo, bears,

deer, wild turkeys, ducks, etc.; the number of running streams and fresh-water lakes filled with many varieties and great numbers of choice fish; and, above all, the broad expanse of rich, alluvial bottoms extending in unbroken bodies for miles, induced this enterprising pioneer here to locate his land grant and his colony, when the choice portions of what now constitute the great states of Arkansas, Missouri and Texas, besides Louisiana, lay open to his choice.

The site of this French colony was fixed on the Bayou Bartholemew within the bounds of the territory now embraced in

#### MOREHOUSE PARISH.

Here it was that these hardy, enterprising adventurers, fleeing from European oppression and in search of freedom, civil and religious, rested from their wanderings and made homes for themselves in the flowery wild woods along the beautiful stream, which they named Bartholemew, perhaps in honor of their chief patron saint.

For many years the settlement grew slowly. The country was known and chiefly used as a famous hunting-ground by the red man, together with the not much more civilized white hunter, who together pursued the chase, little dreaming or caring for the immense agricultural treasures which lay in the soil beneath their feet.

The additions received at first by the colony were not choice immigrants, many of whom had fled the states, perhaps for the good of the countries they left.

When at length the English-speaking settlements from the east approached nearer, and a better class of immigrants began to flow in, the growth of the colony was long retarded by another cause. The titles to many of the most valuable lands became involved in doubt and litigation growing out of the legality of the Bastrop grant.

After a long contest in the courts between the claimants under Baron de Bastrop and the "Squatter Sovereigns," this question was finally adjudicated on and settled by a decree of the Supreme Court of the United States in 1831, from which time the settlement entered a renewed and vigorous growth.

The report of the goodly land had been circulated far and wide, and immigrants, particularly from the Southern states, moved in rapidly, bringing with them numbers of negro slaves. Hundreds of new plantations were opened in the great forests, and the volume of produce and population was much increased in a few years. From 1852 to 1861 the number of inhabitants in Morehouse Parish had more than quadrupled. The cotton crop of the parish in 1852 was 4,764 bales; that of 1861 was 24,682 bales. There was much competition to own the rich alluvial lands, and they rose rapidly in price. Plantations bought and sold in 1853 at from \$3 to \$5 per acre, were worth in 1860 from \$40 to \$75 per acre. Many refused to sell at any price; an offer of \$82 per acre in 1859 was made for one fine plantation and refused. Wild lands rose in market price in the same ratio in nine years more than 1,000 per cent.

Cotton, the principal crop, was cultivated almost entirely by negro slaves. It was rare that provisions, grain, forage, etc., were produced in sufficient quantity to supply home and plantation demands.

This description of Morehouse Parish would be incomplete without something of a discussion of the character and present state of society in the country. As the reader knows, that society is made up of two distinct and different races of people, the whites and the blacks, intermingled and closely allied to each other in the same community.

Prefatory and germane to this discussion it is necessary