

L. A. Carville from Carville, La.

Bright and early on the morning of the first day of December 1894, a ten-year old boy rode his pony down to the river bank near what is presently the site of this hospital. For weeks, the whole neighborhood, for miles around had been alive with rumors about the ostrich farm to be started at the old Indian Camp Plantation, and so, with the healthy curiosity of the young, the boy had come for a look-see at the unloading of a boat-load of what was supposedly ostriches. When no richly plumaged birds appeared, but instead five or six drab looking people aboard the coal barge walked down the gang plank and several others were hauled off on stretchers, an old darkie who had come along with the boy exclaimed, "Lordy, Lordy, little Boss, them's no ostriches—them's sick folks!" Whereupon the boy wheeled his pony and lit out for home. He told his parents and the nearest neighbors what he had seen. The community rose in indignation.

Now, 60 years later, Louis Arthur "Fritz" Carville, one of South Louisiana's most prominent and influential citizens, smiles when he reflects that the thing which scared him so much as a youth, should have proved so beneficial to him. For, Mr. Carville attributes most of the success and growth of his business in the village of Carville, about a mile and a half "down the road," to the establishment of this hospital. He started small, but grew with the hospital and he considers the hospital a definite asset to the entire area, and not just for selfish reasons, either.

The Carville family, even in the 90's, had long been associated with this community. Mr. Carville's father was postmaster-way back in 1880, and there's been a Carville as postmaster ever since. At various times, his mother and sister served in the capacity of postmistress, and following tradition, L. A. Carville fell heir to the job in 1908, a post which he held for 37 years. The present postmaster is Mr. Carville's son, Chester.

Louis Carville remembers that the first mail went waterway, then by train, and today it goes by truck to and from New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Until May 1948, when the Post Office Department authorized the Point Clair branch at this hospital, the patients had to get their money orders and transact other postal business at Carville through a government employee here. But all the mail for the hospital for both patients and personnel still goes first to the main post office at the Carville store. At first, the mail was carried back and forth from the Carville store to the



A Recent Photograph of—
Louis Arthur Carville

hospital by a colored man on the back of a mule; then on a wagon; later by a model T-Ford; then a V-8 truck and today, it arrives in an ultra-modern sedan.

Formerly called Island, because of its periodic isolation whenever the waters of the Mississippi rose before the river levees were built, letters addressed to Island, Louisiana, sometimes found their way to Island Station at New Roads, quite a few miles away. So when the United States Postal Department asked Mr. Carville if he would like to have the name of his office changed to avoid scrambled mail, he thought it might be a good idea. When he had related his family's record of postmastership, there was no fiddling with a fitting name. It fitted perfectly and it became Carville after the postmaster.

Getting back to the old days, Mr. Carville said that the whole idea of "the leper home," as it was then officially designated by the State, was not very well accepted at first by the people of the community. There was much indignation and a petition was written to halt proceedings. When the petition failed, some people wanted to resort to violence, but that never came off, either. For years, people would not even ride past the "home" choosing rather to take a long detour to avoid the place. After a while, the community seemed to resign itself to the situation, although it still wanted no part of anything connected with the "home."

In a way, it was the Carvilles who were somewhat responsible for the creation of better understanding in community public relations. Not long after the "home" opened, the Carville combination general store-post office began supplying it with groceries "on credit," and although Mr. Carville recalls his mother always had a difficult time in collecting from the State, they continued to do so. Through the Carvilles' dealings with the "home" and by their

reassurances to the members of the community, the resentment and phobia gradually began to break down. Young Carville himself used to deliver groceries to the Sisters and in that way became friendly with Sister Benedicta. After many visits, his fears diminished and he was, in fact, very much impressed to see the Sisters washing the clothes of the patients. He thought them very heroic to do that.

Whenever Mr. Carville travels and makes new contacts, he is invariably asked if he is connected with the hospital. One such instance occurred on a trip to New York when he signed the hotel register, "L. A. Carville, Carville, La." To the blaze desk clerk, whom Mr. Carville thought eyed him rather quizzically, he explained that he was postmaster at Carville and that Carville was his real name, etc., etc. Incidentally, it is L. A. Carville to his business associates, but to his wife, he is "Arthur" (she always calls him by that name), and to his close friends, he is known as "Fritz"—a nickname he acquired as a youngster because he was as chubby as the German "Fritz," who worked on a dredge boat nearby.

Louis Carville's family background is closely identified with this section of the State. His mother, Octavia Dehon, was born near Carville. His maternal grandparents, the Dehons, came to Louisiana from their native Belgium and started a grocery business on a flatboat going from plantation to plantation. When they died, they left the business to their daughter, Octavia, who had married Irish-born John Madison Carville, a carpetbagger. Octavia and John Madison Carville, Louis Carville's parents, opened their general store and grocery "down the road" in 1882 and the business has been handed down from one generation to the other ever since.

Mr. Carville's importance in this area is emphasized by the fact that he is a member of the Police Jury of Iberville Parish, a member of the Board of Directors of the Fidelity National Bank, Baton Rouge; a member of the Greater Ports Association, Baton Rouge; and director of Louis A. Carville, Inc., with stores in the villages of Carville and nearby Dutchtown. Mr. and Mrs. Carville (Mrs. C. was a New Orleanian) have five children, four sons, Louis Jr., Chester, David and Lloyd, and a daughter, Mary Pearl, Mrs. Thomas Blackney (wife of an Army colonel). The Carvilles have 19 grandchildren (8 girls and 11 boys), the eldest of whom is Louis III. There will always be a Carville.