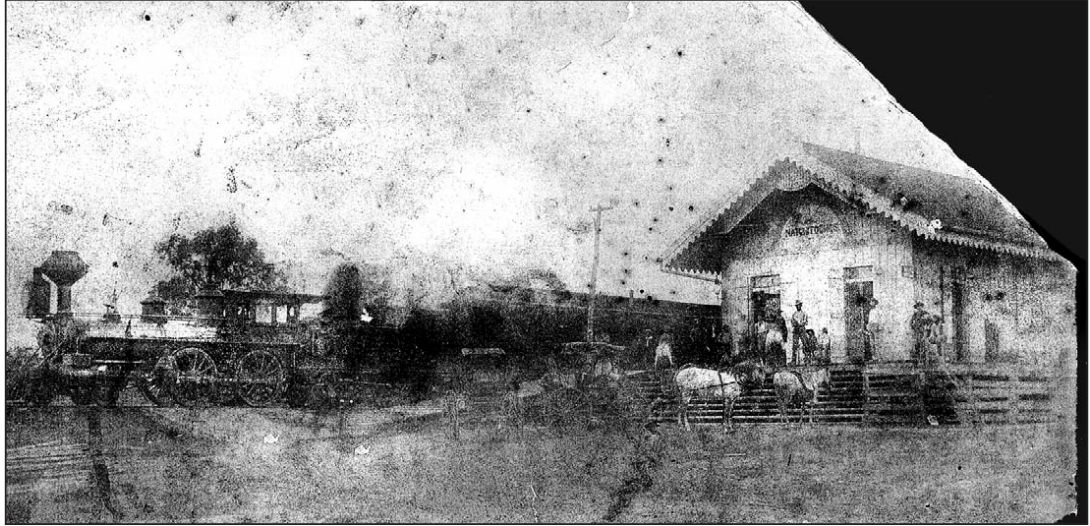




Leopold Caspari is remembered as the man instrumental to the founding of the State Normal School and the Natchitoches railroad branch.



The first depot in Natchitoches was located near the Jefferson Street entrance to Northwestern State University. This photo was taken in approximately 1887. According to Kerlin Sutton, the bell of the historic engine in the left side of the photograph is in the possession of a private collector. Photo courtesy of Kerlin Sutton.

History of university, railroad share track thanks to civic leader

By Henry 'Buddy' Maggio

Given its rich history, the story of Natchitoches is full of twists and turns that changed the course of its development. Two monumental events occurred in Natchitoches in the 1880s. The first was the Louisiana State Legislature authorizing the establishment of a State Normal School. This led to the second great occasion, the building of the first railroad in Natchitoches.

Both were accomplished under the leadership of one man, Leopold Caspari. In 1884, Caspari and other citizens of Natchitoches bought the Bullard Mansion, a large school building erected by the Society of the Sacred Heart and 107 acres. In an act of generosity, the civic-minded leaders transferred the property to the state of Louisiana.

The "TAP" was built to provide rail service for the students attending the new Normal School. The nearest railroad to Natchitoches was the Texas & Pacific located in Cypress. Though only 11 miles away, this amounted to a considerable distance in a time of poor roads and vehicles that were literally horse-powered. A new short rail line would allow it to be tapped into the T & P railroad, making it accessible to all points.

It was extremely difficult for Normal College students to get in and out of Natchitoches. In order to encourage the youth of the state to attend this school, it was necessary that some mode of transportation be provided for them.

Caspari undertook the formation of the Natchitoches Land and Railway Company, which was incorporated on

Nov. 23, 1885. In June 1887, an ordinance was introduced that levied a five-mill tax for 10 years as a grant to the Natchitoches Railroad Company. After the ordinance was adopted in August of 1887, work on "TAP" Railroad began.

Rights-of-way were secured, a roadbed was erected and great timbers out of the virgin forest supplied the ties upon which the iron rails were fastened. In December the first excursion train passed over the road. Truly, it would be impossible to try to describe that banner day. The



Prior to the "TAP" line, the closest rail service to Natchitoches was a depot in Cypress, 11 miles away.

citizens of Natchitoches must have celebrated to get the long-needed rail service, as the town would then be 173 years old. In addition to improvements on travel, the railroad ensured that freight operations became much more convenient.

Caspari served as president and general manager from its organization until the "TAP" was sold to the T&P Railway Company in 1900.

Because of his lifelong efforts to promote the inter-

Form 304, 7-22-21.

Claims for overcharges, loss or damage must INvariably be accompanied by ORIGINAL BILLS OF LADING AND RECEIPTS. Attach to them Bill against Company, giving particulars.

Ex. Bill No. 273

NATCHITOCHEs STATION. 189

M. J. Caspari
To NATCHITOCHEs RAILROAD CO., Dr.
 L. CASPARI, President.

For Transportation from CYPRESS.

W. B. No.	Date	Car No.	Initial				TOTAL
ARTICLES				WEIGHT	RATE	FREIGHT	CHARGES
1	7c	meat	3000	25	75	75	175
							175

Received Payment *River* 189 Agent.

Consignor *River*

This express bill from Natchitoches Railroad Company lists L. Caspari as president.

Form 311

READ THIS CONTRACT.

The NATCHITOCHEs RAILWAY.

NOTES GUARANTEED.

To: *New Orleans*

Received from: *W. J. Caspari*

Charge Freight \$ *1.00*

1st Class \$4 per 100 lbs.

2d Class \$2 per 100 lbs.

3d Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

4th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

5th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

6th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

7th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

8th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

9th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

10th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

11th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

12th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

13th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

14th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

15th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

16th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

17th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

18th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

19th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

20th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

21st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

22nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

23rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

24th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

25th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

26th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

27th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

28th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

29th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

30th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

31st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

32nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

33rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

34th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

35th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

36th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

37th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

38th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

39th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

40th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

41st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

42nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

43rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

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51st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

52nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

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60th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

61st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

62nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

63rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

64th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

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68th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

69th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

70th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

71st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

72nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

73rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

74th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

75th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

76th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

77th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

78th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

79th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

80th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

81st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

82nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

83rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

84th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

85th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

86th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

87th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

88th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

89th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

90th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

91st Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

92nd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

93rd Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

94th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

95th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

96th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

97th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

98th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

99th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

100th Class \$1 per 100 lbs.

MARKED: *J. J. D.*

LIST OF ARTICLES: *177 Meaton*

WEIGHT: *500*

COMMITTED TO: *A. M. Mahoney*

Signature: *Wm. J. Caspari*

A freight bill dated Oct. 24, 1888 shows cotton to be shipped from Natchitoches to New Orleans. The Natchitoches Railway opened up opportunities for commerce, tourism and a growing student body at the State Normal School (now Northwestern State University).

time the selection committee meets for the St. Denis Walk of Honor, the illustrious body

will consider Leopold Caspari as a permanent addition to the elite of Natchitoches.

I sincerely hope the next