

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

Volume 1, Number 10

By Damon Veach

VERMILION HISTORY: It is always a treat to log onto the Vermilion Historical Society's web site. Due to the tireless efforts of webmaster Gary E. Theall, you will find just about anything and everything you ever wanted to know about this part of Louisiana. I don't know of any other organization in Louisiana that can get anywhere close to the excellence presented here – www.vermilionhistorical.com.

Not only is the web site filled with outstanding information on the history of this parish, but the society can boast of three of the best historical books in print. This non-profit society was formed in 1975 and is dedicated to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of the history of Vermilion Parish. They even maintain a museum at the Alliance Center in the heart of Abbeville. You will find historical artifacts, documents, and photographs on display here.

In 1983, the society published the first of the three wonderful books on the early history of the parish. "History of Vermilion Parish, La." is a 485-page book containing historical topics, family stories, and pictures. The second book hit the market in 2003 and contained 620 pages. Then a third one was published recently and titled "Journeys Into the Past – Abbeville, Louisiana." It is the result of the work of Abbeville's premiere historian, Kenneth A. Dupuy.

Theall has designed an easy-to-use site containing images of the people, places, buildings, and things from the past – documents, maps, biographies, articles on interesting historical topics, obituaries, newspaper articles, and a wealth of other data which should prove to be very valuable to researchers and family historians.

Researchers with family ties to Vermilion Parish really have a treat when Theall's slide presentations are discovered. He has made slide presentations over the years at each of their quarterly meetings based largely on the research and writings of Ken Dupuy as well as some of his own along with hundreds of old pictures. Many of these presentations are now posted on the website.

Some of those you will find here are:

- 1 - The life of Père Mégret, founder of Abbeville, a two-part presentation, the first being "Mégret in France" and the second being "Mégret in Louisiana."
- 2 - The history of the Vermilion Parish Courthouses.
- 3 - The history of the Abbeville Meridional.
- 4 - The Veranda Hotel, a two-part presentation about the beautiful hotel that graced the corner of State and Concord Streets for 70 years until it was demolished in 1928 to make way for the Audrey Hotel (the present City Hall).

- 5 - The history of how The Railroad came to Abbeville.**
- 6 - The history of the Bank of Abbeville.**
- 7 - The Eli Wise Home, that gray two-story home on the Vermilion River at the foot of Lafayette Street, that was modeled after a home on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans and was a wedding gift from Solomon Wise to his son Eli.**
- 8 - The Great Concord Street Fire of 1903 that destroyed all of the buildings on the south side of Concord Street and more, making way for the construction of the brick buildings that are there now, almost all of which are more than a century old.**
- 9 - The story of the man whom Ken Dupuy has dubbed "Abbeville's Stellar Architect," Christian George Honold, who designed St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church, the Bank of Abbeville, the Masonic Temple, the Fenwick Sanitarium (Palms Hospital), the first High School (now the School Board Office), and many other Abbeville landmark buildings.**
- 10 - The History of Abbeville as told in script and postcards by Lt. John W. O'Bryan II, a genuine Abbeville hero whose plane was shot down over the North Sea near the end of World War II.**
- 11 - The history of the magnificent Fenwick Sanitarium, that was begun by Dr. F. F. Young with his four doctor brothers and his doctor brother-in-law Clarence J. Edwards, which later became the Palms Hospital, where thousands of Vermilion Parish residents were either born or treated.**
- 12 - The history (3 parts) of St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church, originally established by Père Mégret in the home of Joseph LeBlanc, who sold him the land to make the town of Abbeville, and the story of the pastors and the other five buildings that have served as churches on that land.**
- 13 - The Stained Glass Windows (2 parts) of St. Mary Magdalen, including everything you would want to know about the scenes in the windows, the religious significance and symbolism, and the families who donated the windows. Even if you have never seen these windows yourself, you should view these presentations for the stunningly beautiful pictures.**
- 14 - Abbeville in 1922, based on the scrapbook of Paula Broussard, daughter of Ovide A. Broussard, including many pictures taken in 1922 by Paula at the railroad depot, on the streets of Abbeville, on Magdalen Square, and on the school ground of Abbeville's first high school, from which Paula graduated in 1922.**

In addition to all this, the society also sells miniature models of Abbeville buildings. It is a treat just to see all these models which contain wiring for electricity which gives the effect of light coming from within. It is like looking at a city with individuals who loved the surroundings so much that they reproduced it in miniature. They are amazing replicas of these early buildings.

Membership in the Vermilion Historical Society is only \$5.00 for each individual, or \$10.00 for couples, with \$100.00 gaining you a lifetime membership. Contributions to the society are tax-deductible, and because of the generosity of this group, you can even attend their meetings or browse their web site free of charge. Be sure to check them out soon. It is just so nice to see so much data preserved for future generations, and everyone involved in the work of this group deserves high praise.

Correspondence to them should be sent to Vermilion Historical Society, P.O. Box 877, Abbeville, LA 70511-0877. All copyrights for works appearing on this website are retained by the original authors. All other material is copyrighted by the society. The website is constantly being updated.

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ABOUT TRAHANS: In the last column format, I told you about the Broussard family CD. Now it is with pleasure that I can introduce you to the new CD about Trahan descendants. This is all due to the excellent work of Mitch Conover. In fact, this CD contains 5,811 pages of text and covers 15 generations as well as 72,398 individual entries. The work covers over 121,000 persons. This is definitely something all descendants will want to add to their collections, and major genealogical libraries should take note of the importance of this CD too. The price is \$75.00 and is available directly from M.E. Conover, 300 Strasbourg Drive, Lafayette, LA 70506.

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QUERY: Eron Borne, 214 Rock Pine Ridge Rd., Harrisonburg, LA 71340, e-mail - acbornel-orchid@yahoo.com, would like to contact descendants of the following couples: Valcour Songy and Zoe Bossier, Florestan Millet and Zoe Songy, Jules Fourroux and Celestine Chene, Gorome Hymel and Athenais Hymel, Numa Haydel and Velida Berthelot, and Benjamin Berthelot and Josephine Elmiere Folse.

Borne would like to share information on common ancestors, their families, and particularly old photographs.

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SEMINARS: The Lafourche Heritage Seminar will be held on August 8, 2009 at Envie in Thibodaux, Louisiana from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. They have a new book coming out called "Lafourche Country III," and more information will be announced soon. Information on the book, membership, and address changes can be sent to Jess Bergeron, Correspondence Secretary, P.O. Box 20295, Houma, LA 70360-0295 or e-mail to jessndot@bellsouth.net.

A Branching Out in Genealogy seminar will be held on Saturday, October 17, 2009 at the Lake Charles Civic Center, Contraband Room, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The speaker is Carolyn Earle Billingsley, and the subjects for discussion will be communities of kinship, the reality of researching your Indian ancestors, Melungeons and other mixed race groups, and history lost – history found. John A. Sellers will serve as master of ceremonies.

Interested vendors and genealogical and historical societies should contact the Southwest Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Library for complete details about selling genealogical and historical books or genealogical supplies. The e-mail address is gen@calcasieu.lib.la.us for guidelines and pricing. This event is sponsored by the Calcasieu Parish Public Library, Libraries Southwest, Friends of the Library (Calcasieu), and the Southwest Louisiana Genealogical Society, Inc.

Another seminar will take place in Lufkin, Texas. This is the 13th Annual Angelina College Genealogy Conference to be held Thursday through Saturday, July 16 – July 18, 2009. For more info, contact them at www.angelina.edu/genealogy.htm.

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BOOK ARRIVAL: The long-awaited “Livingston Parish History” reprint will be available for pickup at the Livingston Parish Library on Saturday, May 23rd from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. If it is impossible for you to pick up your book at this time, arrangements are being made for night pickups on Tuesday and Thursday since the library is open until 8 p.m.

The next meeting of the Edward Livingston Historical Association will be on Thursday, May 21st at 6 p.m. at the Livingston Library. The guest speaker is Clifford Normand, and his topic for discussion is Spanish Contribution to the American Revolution.

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NEXT WEEK: DeSoto Parish will be covered extensively through the history of its towns and communities. For researchers, it will serve as a guide to how your ancestors lived and will serve as a guide to researchers branching out into other areas of the state as well as the bordering states of Texas and Arkansas.

Send all queries and books or other publications for review to Damon Veach, Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. The e-mail address is ancestorslaveach@cox.net.