

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

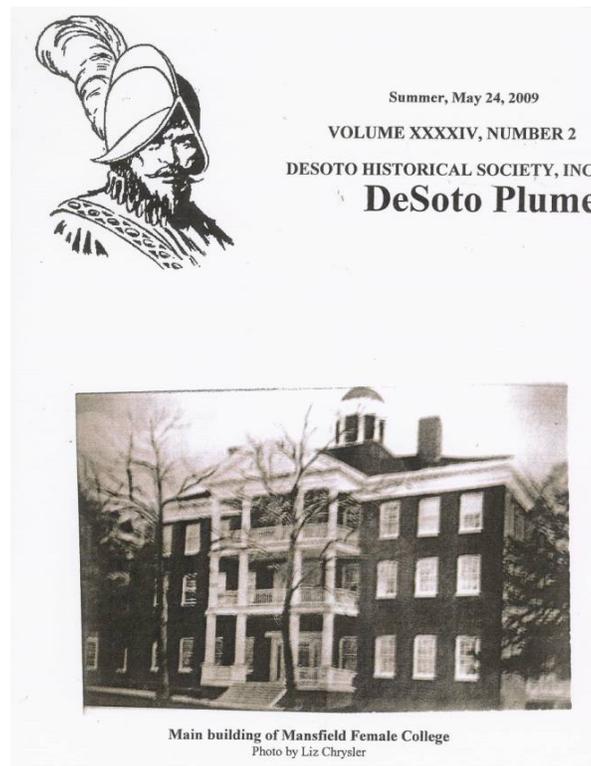
Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

HISTORIC DESOTO: Northwest Louisiana is sometimes overlooked in the overall picture for historical importance. Natchitoches is usually the most discussed because of its early settlement and being on the edge of “no man’s land.” However, there is more to learn about this area, and a new importance is being placed on this section of the state. DeSoto Parish is located between Caddo and Natchitoches parishes, and it has long been overshadowed by these two areas. That is changing.

The resurgence of importance can be attributed to the work of the DeSoto Historical Society and to the recent dedication of the Mansfield Female College, which houses the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection. The official dedication as a museum places it in the forefront of importance now, and with the availability of the research library, DeSoto Parish now stands to be recognized for more than just this museum. It is now a major research center for this part of the state. The Mansfield Female College was the first one established for women west of the Mississippi River, and in addition to the library collection, there are other collections here of importance relating to early life on the campus. The DeSoto society publishes a quarterly *DeSoto Plume* and has several other publications to their credit. Much can be learned by checking out all their books and newsletters.



In addition to its historic homes and building in the downtown section, Mansfield was also the home of several important people. Major league baseball player Vida Blue and Broadway producer Josh Logan were born here as was Mary Miles Minter, a silent screen actress. Tommy Allen was a photojournalist and worked for the Washington Post. There were others such as politicians and war heroes, and each has made his or her mark on the history of this town and parish. Up the highway a few miles is the small community of Grand Cane, and football great Terry Bradshaw lived here.

The Battle of Mansfield was one of importance for the Confederacy during the Civil War. It is also known as the Battle of Sabine Crossroads or Pleasant Grove and occurred on April 8, 1864. It was the first major clash of the Union Army's Red River Campaign. Major General Richard Taylor was in command of the Confederate forces along with subordinates Brigadier General Thomas Green and Major General Camille de Polignac. They made a stand against the Union forces near Mansfield against the direct orders of Major General E. Kirby Smith, the commander of all the Confederate forces west of the Mississippi River. It was successful. The Union suffered the loss of many supplies which included 20 cannons, 150 wagons, and around 1,000 horses killed or captured. The Federal force was demoralized, and captured Union soldiers were sent to Camp Ford, a prison camp in Texas.

In addition to the Mansfield connections to the Civil War, little is ever noted of Keachi/Keatchie. This is a small community that is perhaps one of the most unique places in the entire state. You can step back in time here as well as other smaller towns such as Logansport and Grand Cane.

The town of Keatchie was established around 1833 after the Red River was opened up. It was settled by wealthy Baptist landowners and by the 1850s was an attractive town. With a land grant from T.M. Gatlin and the tireless efforts of A.M. Backus, a young preacher, the Keatchie Female College was opened in 1856. It was incorporated a year later under the new name Baptist Union Male and Female College. Because it was primarily a female school, it suffered little during the Civil War although it was used as a Confederate hospital after the Battle of Mansfield.

During the period following the Civil War, it was necessary to combine the college with a nearby all-male academy. This brought on strict rules, and no communication was allowed between the boys and girls. The school maintained its importance until the early 1890s when state colleges were opened in Natchitoches, Ruston and Pineville. Enrollment declined, and in 1908, the school was closed for lack of funds. It did re-open a year later after a successful financial drive, but in 1912, it was closed permanently. Today, it stands neglected and in a decaying state.

Logansport was once a bustling port town, and in earlier years (before the waters of the Toledo Bend Reservoir covered it), the ruins of a boat could be seen during the

low stage of the Sabine River. Now the town is a shell of its former glory days. The hotel is closed, the old Castle Theater is gone, Reese's (where you could get two hamburgers for 25 cents) is an empty shell, and the Piggly Wiggly moved across the river into Texas causing residents to start shopping there. The Ford and Chevrolet businesses are gone. The little grocery store run by the Baker family is no more. Headrick's Drug Store and the O'Donnell Drug Store are memories of the past along with Turner's Variety Store. The old post office building is still there on the block where the N.J. Caraway store is located, but so many of the other businesses are gone. The hospital building is still there but is no longer in operation for medical services, and some of the old homes that backed up to the river have been torn down. The old Logansport High School burned down, and now there is a void in the landscape. Logansport was once a very vibrant town and now clings to life, but the memories linger on for those who are still alive and can recall these days. There were so many great teachers here – Gamble, Jackson, Dry, Odom, Perigo, Abbingtion, Webster, Kilpatrick, Henry, Cromwell, Smart, and others – and the families in the downtown area included Foshee, Barry, Nicholson, Golden, Creech, Jackson, O'Neal, David, Averett, Pepper, Brown, Perigo, Bowden, Clark, Swindell, Malone, Cox, Riley, O'Donnell, McGlathery, Garrett, Jones, Horn, Smith, Gamble, Greer, Pace, Garland, Henderson, Murray, Lawrence, and others – many no longer here. They are just memories now.

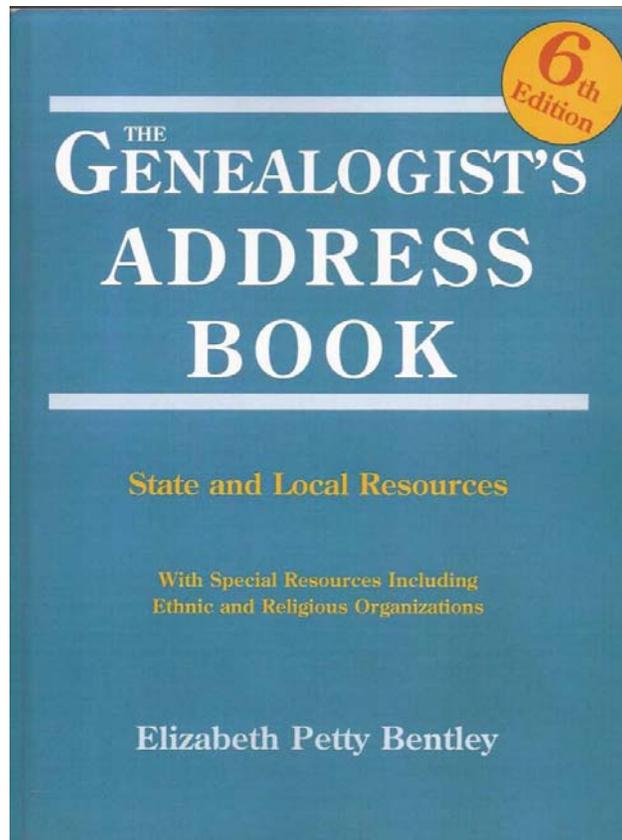
Stanley is a small community located between Logansport and Mansfield. Its original name was Oak Grove, but when they added a post office, they had to adopt a new name because of the one located in the southern part of Louisiana. Grand Cane, Kickapoo, Gloster, Longstreet, Stonewall, Belle Bower, Pelican, Naborton, Hunter, and other communities are still around, but time has not been on their side either. Throughout the parish, there are historic churches, cemeteries, and homes, but little remains of the glory days prior to people moving away to the larger cities for work and higher education. Some are just shells of their former glory from the 1900s.

With the work of the DeSoto Parish Historical Society, much is being done to salvage the past. It is a massive undertaking, but the group is active, and with this interest, there seems to be a new regeneration of activity in all things historical. From the courthouse in Mansfield to the farms and old deserted homesteads around the parish, this group is forging a path into some great preservation projects. It is always nice to learn of their accomplishments and see the results of all their hard work.

You can join this society for only \$10 per year, and they meet quarterly on the Sunday nearest the 22nd during the months of February, May, August, and November. The address to send the membership fee or to request further information is DeSoto Historical Society, P.O. Box 300, Stonewall, LA 71078. This membership fee includes *DeSoto Plume*. The history and importance of this part of Louisiana is in good hands with the DeSoto Historical Society. They continue to be one of the most active societies in the state.

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LATEST REVISION: “The Genealogist’s Address Book” (6th Edition) has just been released by the Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore, Maryland. This is one book that needs to be in all major genealogical library collections. It is an excellent source of reference for those researchers needing the proper addresses for the world of genealogy.



This book gives you access to all the key sources of genealogical information, providing names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, websites, names of contact persons, and other pertinent information for more than 27,000 organizations, including libraries, archives, societies, government agencies, vital records offices, professional bodies, publications, research centers, and special interest groups.

Based on a written survey of thousands of organizations and institutions across the country, and supplemented by information from printed and Internet sources, the new edition has been extensively revised and updated, eliminating undeliverable addresses and defunct organizations, while adding thousands of additional sources. Besides new websites and e-mail addresses, the new edition features greatly expanded coverage of archival agencies and vital records offices, especially in the

New England states and New York. In addition, it is now easier to use than ever, with all 27,000 entries divided into two easy-to-use sections.

This is the only comprehensive list of genealogical and historical resources available and the only book that places an exhaustive list of genealogy organizations at your fingertips. Because of this collection of data, researchers have all the sources in one book. Since its first appearance in 1991, it has established itself as the most frequently consulted book on the genealogist's reference shelf – the one research tool that almost everyone uses. Through six editions, it has proven to be indispensable for beginners and professionals alike, and if you own any of the previous editions, you will certainly want to own this one. If the expense is too much, check with your local genealogical librarian and see if it can be added to the collection for researchers to use.

The price is \$74.95, postpaid, and all orders should be sent to Genealogical Publishing Company, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 260, Baltimore, MD 21211-1953.

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CANARY ISLAND HERITAGE: Something you may want to check out can be found on page 19 of *The Catholic Commentator*. An article by Laura Deavors will be of interest to everyone descended from the Canary Islanders. If you don't have a copy of the newsletter, you can check it out online at the following site: <http://www.diobr.org/tcc/2009/090520tcc.pdf>.

You may also want to check out the Canary Islands locales and their associated Louisiana families compiled by Paul Newfield III, 3016 45th Street, Metairie, La. USA 70001. His e-mail address is pcn01@webdsi.com. This compilation can be found at: <http://thebrasscannon.com/locales9.html>.

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QUERIES: All queries are welcomed for publication in this format. They can be any length but should have a Louisiana connection by heritage or residence of the researcher who may be interested in other areas of the country. Submittals should be sent to ancestorslaveach@cox.net or directly to Damon Veach, Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. This is a free service.