

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

ANCESTOR SEARCHING: Genealogical information on ancestors is sometimes found in unlikely places. Acts of the State Legislature would seem to be one of those places. Early state legislatures often handled family matters, granting divorces, name changes, adoptions, and emancipations. Details of these matters are found in published acts of state and territorial legislatures. But genealogists rarely think to search these publications. And if they did, the lack of indexes makes it difficult to find information on any particular individual.

In 2005, Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane made that job a little easier when it published *Genealogical Selections From the Acts of the Louisiana Legislature, 1804-1879*. This 196-page book contained all acts found to have family relationships and genealogical data beginning with the earliest territorial acts in 1804 up to 1879 when the legislature was relieved of handling most of these time consuming matters.

After the book was published, one of the compilers, Ann DeVillier Riffel, reviewed the published acts a second time and uncovered several more that could be helpful to genealogists. These included some that were considered borderline on the first review, and a few that were inadvertently omitted from the book. These acts, dating from 1810 to 1867, were transcribed and appear in the June issue of *le Raconteur*.

This issue also contains several other articles of note including an 1806 Bellevue District tax listing for St. Landry Parish, an index to West Baton Rouge Parish civil suits for 1807-1846, Henry Duffel's reflections on the Civil War, 1851 correspondence between sisters Esther Phillips and Matilda Crum, a listing of East Louisiana State Hospital patients for 1848-1849, an index to Iberville Parish successions for 1893-1900, and a continuation of the St. Martin Parish Voter Registration Book for 1880-1896.

The issue is available with a 2009 membership in Le Comité for \$20. The above-mentioned Acts book sells postpaid for \$35.50 to non-members and \$25.50 to members of Le Comité. The mailing address is Le Comité des Archives, P.O. Box 1547, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. For more information, visit their website, www.lecomite.org.

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VERNON PARISH: The Vernon Historical & Genealogical Society has scheduled a special program on 12:30 p.m. Saturday, June 20, 2009 in the Meeting Room of the Vernon Parish Library in Leesville, Louisiana. Judy Riffel, long-time member of Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane will speak on genealogical research at the

Louisiana State Archives located in Baton Rouge. Her excellent book *A Guide to Genealogical Research at the Louisiana State Archives* is now in its second printing. She is a specialist in translating French and Spanish documents to make them easier for researchers to use. Her presentation will cover the different types of genealogical sources available at the State Archives including vital records, parish records, colonial records, and military and pension records as well as many underutilized documents that contain genealogical information.

Riffel is a well-known genealogical researcher and is not only treasurer of Le Comite but also is editor of the organization's publications. She has quite a few books in print and is an outstanding speaker.

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DEADLINE EXTENDED: The FGS/AGS 2009 registration deadline has been extended to July 1, 2009. Registering before this deadline will result in a \$50 savings. The seminar is scheduled for September 2 – 5, 2009 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Federation of Genealogical Societies sponsors a national conference each year for genealogists of all levels of experience. These conferences spotlight management workshops for organizational leadership training, genealogical lectures by nationally recognized speakers and regional experts, and exhibitors providing access to genealogical materials and supplies. Co-host for the 2009 conference is the Arkansas Genealogical Society.

The conference for 2010 has already be schedule for August 18-21 in Knoxville, Tennessee. You can reach the Federation of Genealogical Societies at P.O. Box 200940, Austin, TX 78720-0940.

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BOARD MEETING: Le Comite des Archives de la Louisiane, one of the top preservation groups in the nation, held their latest board meeting at the Riffel home on Bartlett Street in Baton Rouge. Several things were discussed and accepted by those present. The meeting was followed by a lunch and conversations on things genealogical.

Plans for their annual meeting to be held in September at the Louisiana State Archives was one of the important topics discussed, and Cherryl Montgomery also summarized the upcoming August meeting of the Special Interest Group, a branch of Le Comite.

The fall board meeting was also scheduled for October 17, 2009 at the home of Doris Falkenheiner.



Photo by Damon Veach, President Le Comite

Le Comite Board Members: Ann Riffel, Judy Riffel, Doris Falkenheiner, Cherryl Montgomery

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FROM THE PAST: One of the finest genealogical researchers, who I had the pleasure of working with for several years, is no longer with us, but the past often returns to all of us in memories or when we rediscover something of importance. While going through books to donate to the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection at the Mansfield Female College in DeSoto Parish, I discovered a book that was a treasure at the time it was received and remains so today. It was “Prospector, Cowhand, and Sodbuster,” a gift from long-time friend Merle Ganier. When I opened it up, I saw her signature and the date of 1967. The inside cover showed a map of historic sites of national significance, and her signature was in the state of Kansas.

In the state of Texas, she wrote “Your Texas Ancestors (we hope).” I had forgotten, but this was when I was negotiating with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram to write for them. It came to pass that I did get the assignment. What was even more important to me was “Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters,” written in the state of Louisiana, and “Saints or Horse Thieves?” written in the margin. I wrote this one many years ago for a newspaper in West Virginia.

The book itself is important and covers so much historical data for the Kansas area and other points west of the Mississippi River. I didn’t recall the scope of coverage in this book until I checked it out again after all these years of having it on my bookshelf. The book was actually Volume XI of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, with Robert G. Ferris, Series Editor, and published by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The book covers all the historic places along with the people who were associated with the mining, ranching, and farming frontiers in the Trans-Mississippi West.

Sometimes we forget over the years why we save books and other items we consider valuable. In fact, this reason is lost when passed on to others. A collection is only as important as the reasoning used to save it. In the case of “Prospector, Cowhand, and Sodbuster,” I’m sure it was given to me because of my Veach and Wilson heritage in Kansas. It is important that we not only save our personal family histories, but it is equally important to know something about where they lived and even why they settled in the area.

The Veach family came by way of France, to Scotland, then Maryland, West Virginia, and on to Kansas with a few stops along the way. When I first started my family research, I knew my dad was born in Ottumwa, Kansas, near Burlington, so I wrote the mayor of Burlington hoping to have him forward the letter to a relative. Instead, I received a shock, something completely unexpected. I knew the family home was in an area that is now under the waters of the John Redmond Reservoir. I even have a picture of the home with all my relatives standing in front of it. Above the front entrance was a large stone with the date when the home was built. When the old home was torn down, someone felt it important enough to save the old stone from above the door. When the mayor told me the stone was at his home, I immediately got the family together and away we went to Burlington, Kansas with a little tour of Topeka included. Someone thought it was important enough to save it in case anyone should search for the family history. By luck, it was me. I brought the stone back, and it now rests in my tropical garden, and I also value a little book I found published about early residents in Coffey County. Most of my relatives are written up here, a treasure that I had no idea existed.



This early discovery gave me the incentive I needed to carry on. It really gave me a boost of energy when it came to sitting long hours in libraries looking at microfilm. Things have changed now, but those memories of the hours of work linger. Many younger researchers just sit at computers, and a lot of their family history unfolds in

front of them. Whatever the case might be, it is really the joy of the hunt that brings the most rewards. When the work looks complete, there will be other things that are actually there, so in reality, genealogical research never ends. It is a true labor of love that we all enjoy.

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QUERIES WELCOME: If you are having problems locating family information, send in the information you have for publication in this column format. Queries can be any length as long as they have a Louisiana connection by heritage or by residence of the researcher working on lines in other states or countries. Books and publications are also reviewed if samples are submitted with each request. Every item submitted is then donated to the special research library located in Mansfield, Louisiana.

Address all correspondence to Damon Veach, Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337, or by e-mail to the following: ancestorslaveach@cox.net. Submittals are filed by date of postmark or receipt and used as space permits.