

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

ONLINE INDEX: FamilySearch and Svensk Arkivinformtion (SVAR), a division of the National Archives of Sweden, has announced the launch of the largest online indexing initiative undertaken to-date. The two groups unveiled plans to engage Swedish volunteers throughout the world to help create a highly searchable, free online index to the historic parish registers of Sweden—200 years of recorded Swedish history as documented in the Sweden church records—comprising over 400 million names.

In 1608, the Archbishop of Sweden asked the clergy to begin making records of births, christenings, marriages, and burials of all the residents of Sweden. By 1686, they were conducting regular examinations of the population of each parish. The church records (often called “parish registers” or “church books”) span over two centuries and chronicle the vital life events of an estimated 418 million people who moved in and out of parishes in Sweden.

According to David Rencher, FamilySearch chief genealogical officer, the church records are a key source for genealogists seeking Swedish ancestors because nearly everyone who lived in Sweden was recorded in a church record, and the challenge now is to make those records, which are written in Swedish, available to researchers worldwide.

Anders Nordström, director of SVAR, states that they are very pleased with the excellent cooperation they have enjoyed for many years between FamilySearch and the National Archives to microfilm and scan the Swedish church records. Now together, they are going to create an index that will revolutionize the genealogy research in Sweden. The simplicity of finding and reading about one’s ancestors on the internet in the millions of scanned records will attract many beginners of all ages. To the academic researcher, this is an entirely new means. It makes it possible to do research within disciplines on a micro level, an extent that was never possible before now.

The way Swedes passed on a family name throughout the centuries is another reason why the indexing initiative is so important to family historians. Imagine being in a Swedish community 200 years ago and 10 out of 100 people have the same first and last name as you. That’s how small the naming pool was in Scandinavia, according to Jeff Svare, FamilySearch Scandinavian collection management specialist.

If you were Anders Andersson, your father could have been Anders. Your brother could have also been named Anders, as well as your uncle. To help distinguish

which Anders Andersson you were referring to at the time, locals added the name of the farm (residence) of an individual to keep them straight. Otherwise, when you're trying to search for Anders Andersson today, your ancestor falls into the proverbial fog of same-named people, and you don't know who they are without the additional context. The FamilySearch index will include the residence or farm name from the individual's vital record. This information has been extracted to assist patrons in identifying their Swedish ancestor.

The goal is to engage the Swedish community in creating a highly searchable, free online index to the Sweden church records. When complete, the index will be the single largest point of access to information contained in the historic parish registers of Sweden. The free index will link to images of the original records hosted by the National Archives of Sweden (SVAR). In addition to the free public index that will be made available, SVAR might charge a nominal fee for public patrons who want to view or print the images.

FamilySearch is the global leader of online indexing. It launched its online indexing program in 2008, and tens of thousands of volunteers recently helped reach another major milestone by indexing their 250 millionth name. FamilySearch currently has 65 online indexing projects underway.

For this project, FamilySearch will create digital images of the Sweden church records provided by SVAR. Volunteers worldwide will then use FamilySearch's internet indexing tool to view the digital images and extract only the desired information from the image. That data will then be processed and published online in searchable indexes linked to the digital images.

Volunteers need only internet access and the ability to read Swedish to contribute to this historic effort. A unique quality control process ensures a highly accurate, finished index. Each document is transcribed by two different indexers, wherever they are in the world. Any discrepancies in their two extractions are then forwarded to a third volunteer—an arbitrator—who makes any needed corrections between the two interpretations.

The project will start with records from Örebro, Uppsala, and Södermanland counties. Indexing will begin with the earliest year available for each parish and continue through 1860. A typical downloaded "batch" (group of records) will take a volunteer about 30 to 40 minutes to complete. The indexing utility has built-in tutorials and helps.

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MEETING SCHEDULED: The September 12, 2009 meeting of the Canary Islanders Heritage Society will be held at The Louisiana State Archives, 3851 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The meeting is open to the public and will begin at

11:00 am. The guest speaker is Ms. Dessiree Aguado of the Island of Tenerife. Her talk will focus on her village and island.

Some of the surnames of Canary Islanders that came to Louisiana from Tenerife between 1778 and 1803 include: Acosta, Aguilar, Carbo, Diaz, Dominguez, Escando, Gonzales, Hernandez, Jorge, Lopez, Marrero, Melian, Pereira, Perez, Pino, Rodriguez, Ruiz, Sanchez, Suarez, Torres, and Viera.

For more information about the Canary Islanders Heritage Society, you can visit their web site at www.canarvislanders.org, or contact the society president, Rose Marie at 225-755-0422 (rosemarie@canarvislanders.org).

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CREOLE CELEBRATION: An historic and nostalgic look at Creole culture in the 20th century will take place on Saturday, October 3, 2009 at Xavier University in New Orleans. The program includes a panel discussion on neighborhood businesses, featuring merchants Vance Vaucresson, Calvin Moret, and Dr. Clifford Belfield, with an overview by author Keith Weldon Medley. Another discussion will cover the cultural celebrations and entertainment in the Creole community, featuring an overview by musician Dr. Michael White of Xavier University.

There will also be a session on the role of families, churches and schools in sustaining New Orleans Creole culture, featuring an overview by cultural and intellectual historian Dr. Ronald Dorris, also of Xavier University. Performances will include vocalist John Boutte, guitarist Charles Moore, and vocalist Tatum Robertson with pianist Carol Dolliole.

There will be an open discussion on the ongoing viability of New Orleans Creole culture and a family research sharing session.

Saturday night will include a time for good food, music, and general good times at the Autocrat Club on St. Bernard Avenue from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. On Sunday, there will be a jazz brunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., reservations only, featuring the Pinstripe Jazz Trio.

For registration or more information on this fifth major conference, go to www.lacreole.org or call 504-241-1439. This is a function of the Louisiana Creole Research Association in conjunction with the History Department of Xavier University. LA Creole is a New Orleans-based non-profit organization dedicated to the study of the Creole people of Louisiana through ancestral research, education, and celebration.

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BURIALS DISCOVERED: The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition is was commemorated in Key West, Florida on the site that is thought to be the only African refugee cemetery in the United States. Presented by Key West's Bahama Conch Community Land Trust, the observance was held August 23rd at the 1860 Burial Ground on Higgs Beach, Atlantic Boulevard and White Street. The celebration focused on the progress of memorial honoring the African refugees buried in the cemetery and goals for making it a World Heritage Site.

Experts believe the burial ground contains the graves of Africans who died in 1860 after being freed by the U.S. Navy from three American-owned slave ships captured near the Cuban coast. More than 1,400 African men, women, and children were transported to Key West for sanctuary and care after being rescued from the slave vessels. Most were returned to Africa but 295 died in Key West. They were buried in unmarked graves along the island's southern shore. Shortly afterward, construction began on a Martello tower that encompassed part of the cemetery site, and the African story was virtually forgotten until historical research and a 2002 ground-penetrating radar analysis revealed the presence of graves.

The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition commemorates the start of a 1791 uprising of enslaved Africans in Santo Domingo that played a critical role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. For more information on this, contact Norma Jean Sawyer at njsawyer@bahamaconchclt.org or call her at 305-294-0884.

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COLUMN INFORMATION: Submittals for consideration and inclusion in this column format should be sent to Damon Veach, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337 or by e-mail to ancestorslaveach@cox.net. Books review copies, queries, and society notices are used in this format as space permits.