

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

Volume 1, Number 3

By Damon Veach

DESOTO PARISH RICH IN HISTORY: North Louisiana is sometimes overlooked when it comes to its rich history. When people think of Louisiana, it is primarily New Orleans that pops up first, followed by the capital city of Baton Rouge. However, Natchitoches Parish and points north are equally historic. DeSoto Parish alone has some of the most astonishing structures of any parish in the state. It is a tourist paradise and is now becoming a place where genealogical researchers can enjoy one of the top research collections in the country.

The Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection is my effort at paying tribute to my parents and to all the Veach and Foshee families that lived in the parish. The Veach family only arrived around 1925 when Joshua H. Veach accepted the position as pastor of the Cool Springs Primitive Baptist Church, located six miles north of Logansport on the Marshall Road. There has been some debate in recent years that the name is actually Cool Spring instead of Cool Springs, but while growing up, I only knew it as a plural name. Joshua and Harriett Adaline Wilson Veach settled in a home a short distance up the Marshall Road from the church, and they lived here until he was called to preach at the Primitive Baptist Church in Gonzales, Texas, sometimes shortly after 1940, exact date unknown.

The Foshee family came earlier. Morris Smith Foshee obtained a land grant for Civil War service in the Confederate Army in Alabama. Along with his wife Delphia Norfleet Horn and several brothers, they settled in DeSoto Parish right on the Louisiana and Texas state line. In fact, they attended church and attended functions in both DeSoto Parish and Panola County, Texas, namely in a small (almost forgotten community now) called Logan, Texas. Some of the Foshees also settled in DeBerry, Galloway, and other small communities between Logan and Carthage, Texas. Another branch of the Foshee family settled in the parishes along the Sabine River and south of Logansport. The Sinclair, Adams, McNeese, Horn, Reeves, Boyd, and Smith families as well as many others are related through marriage. For the most part, the biggest majority of the family members are identified with Logansport which was the closest town of any size and located forty miles south of Shreveport, Caddo Parish. Even though DeSoto Parish had such a colorful and important history, it still seems to have been lost mainly because of its location south of Caddo and north of Natchitoches. Only in recent years has it been re-discovered, and a lot of this is due to the work of outstanding historians and preservationists in the DeSoto Parish Historical Society.

Mansfield is the parish seat of government, and it is here that the first female college west of the Mississippi River was established – the Mansfield Female College. After it closed, Centenary College in Shreveport was formed. There are a few notable

residents from DeSoto Parish who have made their mark on the history of the parish. Football great Terry Bradshaw was from Grand Cane, just north of Mansfield, and Josh Logan of South Pacific fame and Vida Blue of baseball fame were Mansfield residents. There are lots of others, but perhaps these are the three most famous personalities because of their music and sports connections. Of course, many politicians of importance were from this area, and one of the biggest battles of the Civil War took place just south of Mansfield. Perhaps it is the Mansfield Female College that stands out the most in the area, but as you delve into old records of the area, you soon see Keachi, Logansport, Grand Cane, Longstreet, Stonewall, and other small towns come onto the scene. It just seems that Natchitoches is the best known, and it is in the neighboring parish below DeSoto to the south with Shreveport in Caddo Parish located to the north.

On Saturday, March 14, 2009, the Mansfield Female College became recognized officially as a historic museum. It is a part of the museum complex under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State. In fact, Jay Dardenne was on hand to dedicate the museum and thus dedicating the Veach-Foshee Genealogical Library, which is housed in the main building. It was an elaborate and catered affair with plenty of music and most notably lots of visitors coming to see the complex. The Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection had its share of viewers as quite a few visitors saw for the first time the size and the importance of the collection. This is an ongoing project with many more books to be added, but it will soon be ready for researchers and also a place to hold genealogical meetings and seminars. It is online at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ladesoto/veach.htm>, and you can also just check out DeSoto Parish in general. It's a fascinating part of Louisiana with some of the most beautiful scenery in the entire state. Steeped in history, it is almost like stepping back in time.



Photo by Sam Favaro

George Gilmer Jr., Damon Veach, and Judson Rives in the Veach-Foshee Library



Photo by Damon Veach

One of several views in the main library



Photo by Damon Veach

Jay Dardenne, right, talking with a guest in the entrance foyer



Photo by Damon Veach

Some items from the Josh Logan Collection

The late Riemer Calhoun Sr. purchased the college property and buildings in the 1940s. He removed the top two floors of the main college building, turning it into a single story residence for him and his first wife, Clista Calhoun, and their family. The museum's front parlor will contain original and replica furniture in memory of the couple. According to Marcia Calhoun, wife of Riemer Calhoun Jr., it will be the only area that will be almost authentic.

Hope Calhoun, Riemer Calhoun Sr.'s second wife, lived in the home during their 47-year marriage. Hope Calhoun made the decision in 2002, along with other surviving family members, to donate it to the Secretary of State to eventually serve as a museum. Hope Calhoun's mother graduated from the college in 1919, and Riemer Calhoun Sr.'s mother was also a student there.

According to Lance Harris, state curator and member of the Secretary of State's staff, the exhibits, now revealed to the public after the official dedication, will center on the life, education, and history of the college.

The DeSoto Parish Historical Society is one of the oldest non-profit organizations in the state. The society meets on the Sunday nearest the 22nd during the months of February, May, August, and November. Meetings begin at 3:00 p.m. at locations throughout the parish. Membership in this society is still only \$10.00 per year (\$18.00 for foreign memberships) and the *DeSoto Plume* is included in this fee. They have numerous publications for sale too. Applications for membership should be mailed to the Treasurer, P.O. Box 300, Stonewall, LA 71078. Raymond Powell is the noted historian for the parish, and Evelyn Powell, Gay Griffith Means, Judson Rives, George Meriwether Gilmer Jr., and so many others are among the parish's active preservationists. There are still others who are major players in these efforts in the parish and also contribute data to the *DeSoto Plume* and to *North Louisiana History*, a publication of the North Louisiana Historical Association. What the

DeSoto Parish Historical Society has done to help in the restoration, updating, and collecting of historic materials is phenomenal. Mansfield Female College Museum is really one of the best museums you will find anywhere in Louisiana, and it is the jewel of DeSoto Parish.

XXX

IMPORTANCE OF GENEALOGICAL QUERIES: Queries are important and helpful aids for genealogical researchers. They are published free in *Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates, and Planters* with no limit to the number of words used in each. They should, however, contain a Louisiana connection by heritage or residence of researchers working on lines in other areas. It is important to include both the e-mail and snail-mail addresses in case researchers do not have their own personal Internet service. Many researchers take advantage of Internet service at local libraries but have no computers at their homes. Books, society publications, and other materials are reviewed only if sample copies are submitted with each request. All review items are then donated to the DeSoto Parish Historical Society for inclusion in the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection.

XXX

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSES: All correspondence for *Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates, and Planters* should be directed to ancestorslaveach@cox.net. Personal correspondence to the compiler can be sent to 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. This is an exclusive weekly online format written specifically for Claitor's Publishing Division.