

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

SOME LAGNIAPPE: Here are some invitations to keep you occupied in October:

October 7, Noon - Lunchtime Lagniappe: "The West Florida Republic of 1810" - On the eve of the 200th Anniversary of the West Florida Republic, re-live the history and drama of 1810, the year in which local citizens threw off the last shackles of Spanish colonial rule. This unique - and little remembered - history of East Baton Rouge and the other Florida Parishes will be the focus of a year-long commemoration, beginning in 2010. Dr. Sam Hyde, Director, Center for Southeast La. Studies at Southeastern Louisiana University, will tell the fascinating story of the West Florida Republic.

October 21, Noon - Lunchtime Lagniappe: "History Underfoot" – Join others for a look at the history of the State Capitol Park through the eyes of an archaeologist. From Native Americans to the present day, see how the history of our city lies just below the surface. Dr. Douglas C. Wells of Coastal Environments Incorporated shares the results of his work in Baton Rouge's most historic spot.

October 28, Noon - Lunchtime Lagniappe "Sweet Olive" – Autumn is the time of the year that family members visit the graves of deceased loved ones. It awakens Southern family burial customs and cemetery traditions. Come learn about historic Sweet Olive, Baton Rouge's oldest surviving African-American Cemetery.

All State Museum events are free and open to the public. Additional information is available to those interested.

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COLLOQUIUM SCHEDULED: During the 19th century, tens of thousands of French-speaking Jews from Alsace-Lorraine immigrated to Louisiana and the Gulf South. They settled in locales both rural and urban and forged new communities and melded cultural and religious traditions from the Old World.

On November 13th, scholars from across the United States and Europe will trace the legacy of this historic migration. This discussion will take place at the Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres Street, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Advance registration through October 16, 2009 is \$35. Registration after October 16th is \$50. You can call 504-523-4662 for more information or to register. A reception for speakers and attendees will be held on Thursday, November 12, 2009, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 533 Royal Street.

Colloquium speakers include Anny Bloch-Raymond, Professor of Sociology at the Université Toulouse Le Mirail; Patricia Behre, Associate Professor of History at Fairfield University; Barry Stiefel, Visiting Professor of Historic Preservation at the College of Charleston; Daniel Hammer, Reference Assistant at The Historic New Orleans Collection; Pamela Dorn Sezgin, Associate Professor of Anthropology and History at Gainesville State College; and Lee Shai Weissbach, Professor of History at the University of Louisville. Commentary will be provided by Catherine C. Kahn, Archivist at the Touro Infirmary Archives.

Support for this program has been generously provided by Consulat Général de France a la Nouvelle-Orleans and the Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana.

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HISTORIC EXHIBIT: Another exhibit of interest to genealogists opened on Wednesday, September 30, 2009 at The Historic New Orleans Collection in the Williams Gallery, 533 Royal Street, New Orleans (in the historic old French Quarter). Their hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and Sunday, 10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

On December 20, 1803, the largest real estate transaction in U.S. history was fulfilled with the official transfer of the Louisiana Purchase territory from France to the United States taking place at the Cabildo. For nearly ten years, Louisiana was filled with political disputes and culture clashes. This exhibition (*Between Colony & State: Louisiana in the Territorial Period, 1803-1812*) examines the people, places, and events that shaped this fascinating period – which culminated in Louisiana's admission to the Union as the 18th state. Highlights include manuscript maps, newspapers, and artists' depictions of contemporary life.

The programming is presented in conjunction with the exhibition and includes an opening reception on October 7th and 15th of the annual Williams Research Center Symposium on January 30, 2010. Details on this can be found at www.hnoc.org.

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OCTOBER EVENTS: The Louisiana State Archives has just released a list of all the things they have planned for the month of October, and several items may be of interest to genealogical researchers. Here are those you may want to add to your calendar: October 14, how to research state land records in Louisiana; October 17, genealogy conference; October 21, how to research military records at the Louisiana State Archives; and October 28, how to begin researching your family tree at the Louisiana State Archives. The location is on Essen Lane at I-12.

The October 17th session or conference will feature several speakers who will discuss research, resources and recent genealogical developments as well as genealogical holdings of the Louisiana State Archives.

USING CENSUS RECORDS: In the United States, the census is taken every decade, in the year ending in zero, beginning in 1790. U.S. census records from 1790-1930 are currently available to researchers. 1940 will become available in 2012. Almost none of the 1890 census survives and scattered earlier census schedules are also missing. Some census records can be found online while others are available on CDs. All, however, are available on microfilm, so there are a number of ways you can try to locate your ancestors.

For many years, researchers worked without indexes to most of the censuses. Slowly, over the years, indexing was completed for the earlier census records. Of course, many of these indexes were published in books or in column formats, not on any worldwide internet. The government provided a Soundex index for some of the censuses 1880 and later, which is available on film. Now there are online and CD indexes to the censuses. However, be sure to check out any of the censuses that appear in book form. Make comparisons with those that appear on the internet. There may be differences in translating or copying from film to paper to internet. Major genealogical collections in libraries will probably have these in printed form.

The Soundex system was developed in the 1930s by the WPA for the Social Security Administration. The SSA needed a way to identify people who would be eligible to receive old-age benefits, specifically those people who were born in the 1870s and later. While the SSA began its identification process using the 1880 census documents, there were so many spelling errors that another means of locating records for potential beneficiaries had to be developed.

The Soundex system allowed for the use of sounds in a surname to be used to classify and index heads of household in the census records. All spellings of Smith, Smithe, Smyth, Smythe, and other variations that sound alike will be indexed together.

Households from the 1880 census with children aged 10 and under were Soundexed. (There are exceptions, additions and omissions, but that was the intent.) The 1890 census was destroyed by fire. Soundex was also used in 1900, 1910 and 1920 for some states. Another, similar code called Miracode was added for use in the 1910 census. In the 1910 census, there are only 21 states' census records which are Soundexed or Miracoded.

Today, the Soundex records are available on microfilm and may be just the tool you need to locate the census record for your ancestors during the census years mentioned above. An example of how this system has helped was documented by a researcher who was working in a Family History Center. This researcher located the Soundex record of his great-grandparents and their children. He had been searching the 1880 census records of Edgefield County, SC, for a long time without

success. The Soundex identified the place of residence as being in Aiken County, SC.

Once you have recorded your known family data and checked library file indexes for surnames, it is time to start census research. It is like piecing together a giant crossword puzzle – backwards. That is the enjoyment one receives when trying to uncover the secrets of their past. In earlier years, when only microfilm was available, the search was long and difficult, with lots of reading involved. With all the modern techniques, it is much easier and quicker.

Whether you will be using the U.S. Federal Census records or those of another country, state, or locality, census schedules provide a means to track members of a family group over time. This allows you to build a detailed timetable and, in some cases, discover clues about the lives of your ancestors that may not appear in any other source.

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COLUMN INFORMATION: Correspondence to this column should be directed to Damon Veach, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. Books and society publications are reviewed if sample copies are submitted with each request, and queries are published free of charge. These queries can be any length but should have a Louisiana connection by heritage or residence of researchers working on lines in other states or countries. Dated notices should be submitted several weeks prior to the scheduled event. The e-mail address is ancestorslaveach@cox.net.