

# **CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS**

*Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format*

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By Damon Veach

**PRECIOUS DOCUMENTS:** In a continuing discussion of how to find ancestral materials, let's take a look at documents that can be found in courthouses around the country. First of all, you just have to determine where your ancestors lived. Perhaps this has been done through census records or from notes made by interviewing older members of the family. Even old documents that have been filed away with important family papers can reveal clues that will make research a lot easier for you. Whatever the case may be, this is just the beginning. What lies ahead is a lot of time and effort to expand this base to form a complete family record.

Knowing how you have ended up in a particular part of the country is not always as simple as it may sound, especially in modern times when travel and job re-locations can carry you into other parts of the country rather easily. That is why it is best to start with parents or grandparents. Moving around wasn't as easy the further you go back in time, and this simplifies research into family backgrounds. That is where you find courthouses to be of great importance. These locations contain an enormous amount of data, and it is up to you to decide how you need to go about this phase of your research. It is definitely advantageous if you can visit these courthouses, but there are also lots of books where data has been published.

Many researchers have gone into these courthouses, copied the records or at least made a list of names involved, and then published the data in book form. Just as you find books of cemetery listings, you can also find conveyance records, indexes to wills and deeds, abstracts of court sessions, land grants, and other legal records. Sometimes this is made even simpler by going to web sites of historical organizations in the areas where you need to do your research. In my case, I know that the DeSoto Historical Society has published many records for my home parish, and I even know of a man in East Texas who has published some, but I also know what hasn't been done and needs to be published or at least researched. This is just the beginning. Once this has been done, you reach that period of time when your ancestors first came to the area, and you have to go back in time to where they came from to continue your research.

Getting away to research other areas of the country is sometimes difficult to do because of job duties. I suppose this is why so many older people work on their family histories. They have more time to do this. I know when I first got started that I spent lots of time in the main library in Fort Worth, Texas looking at census records and other microfilm covering records in my places of interest. The internet has made a lot of this so much easier now. Travel is still necessary if you want to really experience the places where your ancestors lived, but just knowing that a lot

of material has been preserved by way of microfilming or publications takes away some of the urgency to check it out. Of course, time is not always on your side either, and natural disasters come into play here too. That is why I encourage you to check out research facilities as quickly as possible. It is why I am so appreciative of what the Mormon Church has done to preserve, microfilm, store, and make research materials available to the public as well as those individuals who spend so much time making research easier and publishing or sharing their work.

Sometimes researchers discover documents that just seem to come out of nowhere. Such is the case in my early research into the Veach, Beavers, Mellett, Reed, and other allied lines in Henry County, Indiana. I am a descendant of Thomas Veach, whose son Arthur moved to Coffey County, Kansas. I obtained more personal information by going to the Reed family, not in my direct lineage, but I learned a lot by doing this.

I found that Thomas Reed (1824-1877) married Sarah Harlan in 1845 in a double wedding ceremony at the same time his first cousin Arthur Veach married Sarah's sister Mary Ann Harlan. The Harlan girls were daughters of Stephen and Polly (Sparks) Harlan. These two families went to Coffey County, Kansas in 1857 and then to Labette County where Tom Reed bought a farm about 1870/72. Thomas and Sarah Reed were founding members of the Primitive Baptist Church in Coffey County in 1866 along with members of the Harlan, Beavers, Veach, and other families. With this one look at an allied line, I found the year the Veach family made it to Kansas, got a lead on the Harlan and Sparks surnames, and even saw a new connection with another Kansas County, that of Labette, which I hadn't known before this time. As I've stated previously, it is like a giant crossword puzzle just waiting for the pieces to fall together.

While making connections to the family ties between Kansas and Indiana, I heard from a distant cousin, C.B. Veach in Miami, Florida, who just happened to have been the one to save all of Thomas Veach's paperwork. Thomas was our great, great grandfather. He wrote me and with this letter showed me how genuine and beautiful some people can be. He made copies of all the records and shared them with me, and I made copies of my records to pass on to him. Some are items that can never be replaced. One item in particular was a paper written by Ankah Veach about the history and personnel of Lebanon Church in Henry County, Indiana. Here is a portion of that paper. Note how the dates and places lead to more research possibilities and a note connecting to my Glasscock lineage.

“Prairie Township is one of the four townships erected by the County Commissioners in 1822. It derives its name from the low and level meadows which constitute a considerable portion of it. Lebanon church is situated near the center of the township. Among its earliest settlers and members were Jesse Mellett and his wife, Judith (Glasscock) Mellett, who came here with their family from Virginia, in the fall of 1827 and settled in Prairie Township near where the Lebanon cemetery now is. Other early settlers were John Miller, Sarah Miller, Ruth Wayman, Sarah

**Whittaker, Ankah Veach, John and William Powers. These nine people, as you have heard, organized the Lebanon Baptist Church, May 10, 1828.**

**John Reed, Thomas Veach, and Johnathan Veach, who married daughters of Jesse Mellett, were old time farmers, clearing the land, having log rollings, barn raisings and things that go with pioneer life. They did all they could to make a home in the new country. The men would tan the hides and make shoes, and the women would spin and weave, and make clothing for the family, also blankets and bedding of all kinds.**

**Joshua H. Mellett came to Henry County from Virginia in 1835. He always followed agricultural pursuits, and was very successful. He and his sister Aletha Mellett never married but lived together. They were members of the Baptist church, and always attended unless prevented by sickness. One day after church Uncle Josh went out to start home and found his horse had broken the bridle. He did not rave, and talk like some men would, but said to the horse – Dear, dear, you just ought to have to each dog fennel all the days of your life.”**

**There are several pages to this letter, but what I have tried to show you are the names and places and how important they are to anyone doing research on these families, even showing personality traits. The letter was written on Thursday, April 26, 1928 at the Forty-second Annual Meeting of the Henry County Historical Society in commemoration of the early members of the Lebanon Baptist Church, Mount Summit, Indiana, which was organized in Prairie Township in May, 1828.**

**In addition to this, I have lots of personal letters written by Thomas Veach, my great, great, grandfather, but that wasn't all. There are financial records, wills, deeds, photographs, and legal documents included in this package of material from this distant cousin in Florida. What a family treasure this is and all coming to me because of one man's concern to share the family history.**

**By the way, on a side note to history, Henry County, Indiana is said to be the place for the inspiration for Raintree County in the book (and later movie) of that name by Ross Lockridge Jr.**

**I keep mentioning how the internet has helped so much to simplify research, and this is found just by searching out information on individual family members. What this does is put you in touch with others who are working on the same surnames. I have done considerable research on the Veach family, have the three books compiled on the family, but I still am able to add notes of interest that I find in the research materials of other people. Even though I have a lot of material on one of my ancestors, Benjamin Veach, I still am amazed at what I can learn by continuing my searches. I always felt so sorry for this ancestor because I knew the hardships of his early years, so I always appreciate it when I learn something else.**

Benjamin Veach was born in 1765, and if my records are correct, this would be in Ayr Township in Pennsylvania, but I am still searching for the proof. His father, Jeremiah Veatch, died when Benjamin was about one year old. Benjamin lived with his mother who had difficulty supporting him. He was bound out as an apprentice. On his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, in 1786, the family he was apprenticed to presented him with a horse, saddle and bridle “in affection and appreciation”.

Benjamin courted Elizabeth Ford, but she fell in love with his friend Nathaniel Cochran. Benjamin later married Elizabeth’s sister Mary Ford in 1789 in Washington County, Maryland. Benjamin and Mary (Ford) Veach moved to Virginia with Nathaniel and Elizabeth (Ford) Cochran. Nathaniel Cochran had been based at a fort near that area during the Revolutionary War.

Benjamin Veach and Mary Ford Veach settled in the wilds of Virginia on the west fork of the Monongahela River, about one and one-half miles from the mouth of the river, in 1790. Here, they established a homestead, on which they lived and died. They were both regular Baptists and had their membership in West Fork Church. The area later became West Virginia, and this residence is in what is now Fairmont, West Virginia.

Not being able to go to the courthouse in Fairmont, I depended on a lot of correspondence from distant cousins in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. In the process, I located their burial sites. I have been unable to find out exactly what the current situation is, but I do know that the cemetery, with only a few burials is connected in some way to the country club there in Fairmont. Here is what I learned that is a part of history that I haven’t been able to figure out. The cemetery apparently was on the property owned by the Veach family, and this plot of ground was donated to the president of the United States – President James Buchanan. Without any descendants and not knowing what happened to this donation paperwork, I have been unable to learn if the cemetery was affected by attempts to move it from its present location, or who actually owns it now, or even of its present status. History has a way of hiding things, but that offers researchers the challenge of uncovering the truth.

I’m not ever going to give up on my research of Benjamin Veach. That may require a trip to West Virginia, but this could well to be the best thing in order to clear up this ancestral concern and bring it to a conclusion.

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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 for this column is:  
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