

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

FUNERAL NOTICES: Writing funeral notices is not only painful for family members, but it is also the final opportunity to pay tribute to a life of a beloved member of the family. It is important to think of this in advance because it can be a difficult thing to do. It may sound strange to prepare something like this in advance, but it does give you time to prepare a properly worded final writeup.

It is almost universal today to have an obituary printed in the local and/or hometown newspapers, and this is a way of paying respect to the deceased and to allow friends and other family members to share in the joys of a life. Whether this is done in advance or after the loved one has passed, it is a task that needs to be done, and it does bring one to terms with a death. What most of the time is an overwhelming task can be stress-free if done with a little prior planning.

Saying goodbye is always difficult, but death can be looked at in another way – as a celebration of a life, of achievements and remembrances of good times. Newspapers usually have a formula for accepting obituaries, and this can be a comfort and at times a little disturbing especially if you are not allowed to point out certain things you would like to have remembered. If you more or less are allowed to publish what you see as important to the deceased, it is equally important to pick the right person to write the obituary. This is sometimes a comfort to those closest to the deceased. If guidance from a standard format is available, then this is sometimes a welcomed aid for the writer.

For genealogists, obituaries are a way of learning more about ancestors, so it is important to add as much data as possible, especially relatives who have preceded the deceased individual. Like census records and courthouse documents, obituaries may contain data not found elsewhere. It can very well be something of a personal nature that other documents would not reveal.

As an example, a family member in my Foshee lineage rests in a burial site that has yet to be located. It is not a direct link by descent but a family member that appears to be forgotten in time. No relative should ever be forgotten. Because the grave cannot be located or an obituary found, a cousin in coordination with me, purchased a small headstone, and it was placed by the headstone of the child's mother. Many graves are sometimes lost because time has a way of covering up the past. Wooden head pieces decay with time, and even in the most up-to-date cemeteries, there are still lost grave sites. I've noticed this so many times in my research. It is a case of knowing the individual is buried there, but there is no trace of the actual gravesite. At least for our lost little girl, she is remembered, perhaps alone somewhere but

honored with a headstone to let all know that she was loved and will never be forgotten. Her name was Jewel.

One of the most unusual obituaries from the past can be found in Acadian records. Notices were published and distributed around the communities or handed out at the funerals. This method was common elsewhere in the world too, but the ones I've seen in my research are usually in French and serve as the official announcement of one's death. I don't have one to show you, but they were quite popular in Acadiana and sometimes the only records of a given death.

There are many books published in numerous areas of the country which contain information from death notices. These are usually indexed, but as a researcher, you can always go to the area where the original notices appeared and find the copies. Still other publications take the entire document and reproduce it, or the compiler of the material has typed all the data in a standard format. The importance of this material to researchers can mean the difference between solving a descent problem to causing one to search elsewhere for the information needed.

A joint effort of the New Orleans Public Library and The Historic New Orleans Collection resulted in the Louisiana Biography and Obituary Index which references obituaries and death notices published in New Orleans newspapers from 1804-1972. Included also is a lot of biographical information published in older Louisiana collective biographies. The original index is in the Louisiana Division of the New Orleans Public Library, and it is an alphabetical card file of more than 650,000 names. You can go online to check this out.

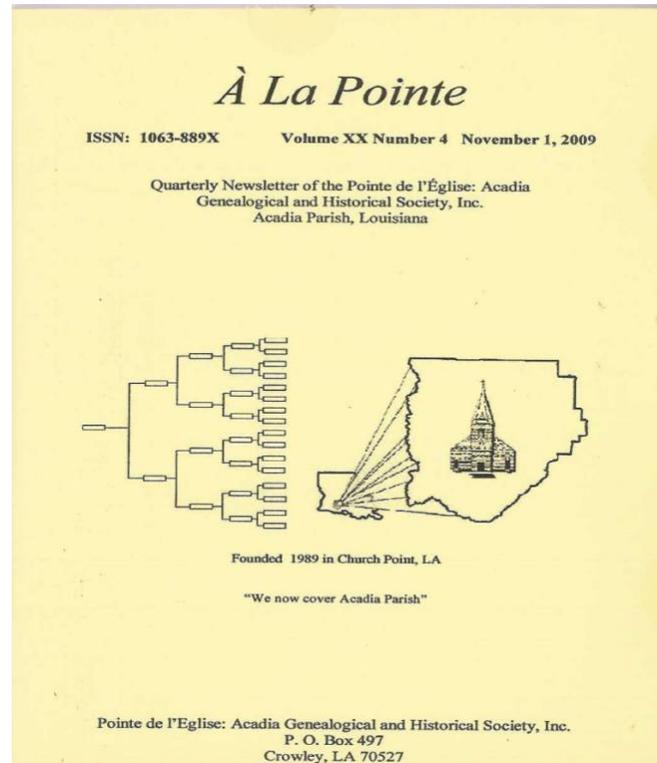
You can also go to www.newspaperarchive.com and log in to locate a death notice. This covers points around the world. Many societies around the country have published funeral records, and these are ideal for researchers to refer to in doing their family research. Just as with tombstone inscriptions, there are so many times that clues can be gathered from a funeral notice. Data entries today are all fairly similar, but old records found in newspaper files or stored in archives can be your best bet to connect with your past.

When doing research, it is always necessary to learn a lot about the area where your ancestors lived. Fire, flood, wars, and other disasters may destroy what seems to be your last hope for learning about your ancestors, but diligence in researching surrounding areas may become necessary and filled with surprises of great importance. Check out everything in a given area, and never give up until you feel that you have exhausted all avenues of discovery.

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OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION: Quarterly publications are always helpful in compiling information on family ancestries. One of Louisiana's best is from Pointe de l'Eglise: Acadia Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc. (P.O. Box 497,

Crowley, LA 70527). If you don't have access to their publication, you can always check them out at <http://rootsweb.com/~lapehgs/> or contact their editor, Gene Thibodeaux.



This is one society that has really taken advantage of funeral records as a means of raising money for their group, and also helping to make the data readily available for researchers. They have published ten volumes of funeral abstracts covering four funeral homes.

There are several excellent compilations in the latest issue of "A La Pointe." Thibodeaux compiled municipal officials of Mermentau (1899-2007) and state senators from 1887-2008), and Red Quebodeaux did Acadia Parish marriage license index for 1914. Also included in this issue is a 2009 index of names appearing in the publication and, of course, many other reprints from old publications.

Membership in this society is only \$15 per year, or \$20 for a family membership.

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QUERY: Robert Rousselle, 404 Jackson Ave., West Hempstead, N.Y. 11552 (e-mail rrousselle@optonline.net) would like to correspond with descendants of Valerie Rousselle Jr. and Marie Evela Deslatte, especially the descendants of the son Ozieme Rousselle, who married Aimee Haydel. He is interested in sharing family information and photographs taken by his grandparents on visits to Louisiana in the 1930s and 1940s.

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ACADIAN DATA: Janet Jehn continues to issue one of the best publications of its kind called *Acadian Genealogy Exchange*, and she is now completing her 38th year of doing this. The excellence was there in the beginning, and it has continued over the years to produce a wealth of information for researchers interested in Acadian ancestries. It is published in May and October of each year. Editor and publisher Jehn lives in Kentucky and has a world-wide following of readers.

Subscription is only \$17 per year in the U.S. and \$20 for those outside the U.S. Queries are free to members and non-members. However, they must have an Acadian or French-Canadian/Acadian connection. They have to be submitted at least a month prior to the official publication month.

Ancestor charts are also encouraged for publication and for sharing with other Acadian descendants since it is the purpose of this outlet to enable those interested in Acadian genealogy to further their knowledge and to learn more about their ancestors.

There were lots of interesting articles in this latest issue, but the Cormier data was well worth the read and should be checked out by all who are descendants of this family. According to this writeup from the Mi'k Maq News of Bay St. George, they are from the Magdalen Islands. This island group is located in eastern Quebec, Canada in the Gulf of St. Lawrence between Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. The group comprises several islands and islets. The largest include Havre-Aubert (Amherst) and Cap aux Meules (Grindstone). They were discovered by Jacques Cartier in 1534.

For more information about *Acadian Genealogy Exchange*, contact Jehn at 3265 Genealogy Exchange, 3265 Wayman Branch Rd., Covington, KY 41015-4601. You can also contact her at her e-mail address is janjehn@hotmail.com, and the web site is www.acadiangenexch.com.

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MISCELLANEA: Queries are printed in this format free of charge. Books and society publications are also reviewed if a sample copy is sent with each request. Be sure to check out the new formats of this column when they are posted every Monday morning. And tell your genealogical friends about this free service. All back issues are archived for your convenience, and they are presented in three formats – PDF, HTML, and Word. Send news releases and other items directly to Damon Veach, Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. The e-mail address is ancestorslaveach@cox.net.