

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

BIBLE INSCRIPTIONS: Bibles are often overlooked when tracing family histories. There are a number of reasons for this but primarily it is because there is no knowledge of who has them or actually what happened when there was a death in the family. Some family member is usually the keeper of old historic materials and books, but this is not always the case. However, it does help to start here when trying to locate a Bible.

Tracing a lineage can mean a lot of disappointments along the way, but it doesn't have to always be this way. Family members can often hold keys to successful research, and one of the first things to aid in this is the location of that family Bible. It isn't as common now to record births and deaths inside Bibles as it was in earlier times. This is why old Bibles are such treasures.

These old books often contained data not available in courthouses and church books or storage areas. When the United States was first settled, the family Bible was where important dates and names were recorded, and these followed family members as they moved westward. In the two family Bibles I managed to keep for our families, I have gleaned much of value from original spellings of names to notes of importance. Genealogists should never pass up a chance to check out old Bibles.

One of the best sources other than family members is antique stores. Bibles can easily fall into the antique category. I don't go to antique stores searching for genealogical materials, but it is interesting to check out what is included in the display items. I still have a local source that I need to get back to and finish my recordings from the old Bibles I found there. Readers who have followed this format over the years have seen a number of original sources appear in printed form for the first time.

My discovery of old listings in some Bibles at this local antique store was a surprise not only to me but to the manager. Many of these books were picked up at some New England flea markets and brought back to Louisiana for display and sale. Of course, the ones I refer to are fragile dating back two hundred years and more.

After publishing data from two of these Bibles, I was amazed to find a reader who actually had an indirect family connection here. Since the books came from New England, I never dreamed a local reader would discover such a wonderful connection in my column format, but this just goes to show you how even the smallest clue can lead to bigger discoveries. Even though a name from an old Bible may not be a direct lineage connection, it might provide a clue that was previously hidden from view.

Whether you are from Louisiana or some other part of the country, you never know where important research material can be found. That is why antique stores are so important to the overall research picture. Not all antique stores bother with books, and I'm not sure why my local source started this kind of collection. I rather think it was for looks more than anything else since they are behind the front counter and would be classified as display only. It would take a serious collector of Bibles to actually ask about this display. I'm not a serious collector of Bibles, but I know from past experiences that you should never overlook one without a quick perusal of what might be logged inside.

In one of my Texas columns from several years ago, I did a series of articles on the importance of Bibles and even encouraged readers to submit their information for publication. I also led a drive to have genealogical societies in the state to encourage their members to search out and find records from Bibles and to record them for publication. I even collected quite a few for publication in book form. Without someone coming forth to seek preservation of these materials, they often are discarded. The lucky ones stay with an interested family member or the owner of an antique store who just might be interested in rare and unique books.

Here again, it is important to remember that clues can be found anywhere, sometimes in the most uncommon of places. Never overlook a source. If at all possible, copy any data found in out-of-the-way places. Donate this to local genealogical societies or library collections. Make sure that it is made available so that others can see if it is a clue to what they are researching. You may be helping to solve a family's missing link or just helping in a small way to preserve a part of this country's amazing heritage.

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INTERNET SOURCE: Doug Barry (doug@barryandassociates.com) has suggested a better way to Google for genealogy and has a web site that makes it easier and more effective. The web site is free, and you can learn a lot by checking it out at the following link - <http://www.genealogy-search-help.com>. Finding information on ancestries can be frustrating, but perhaps this site will help you in some way. Often, the design or the way some sources go about requesting info can be confusing, so any simplified formula is bound to help minimize problems. See if this source can help you with your research.

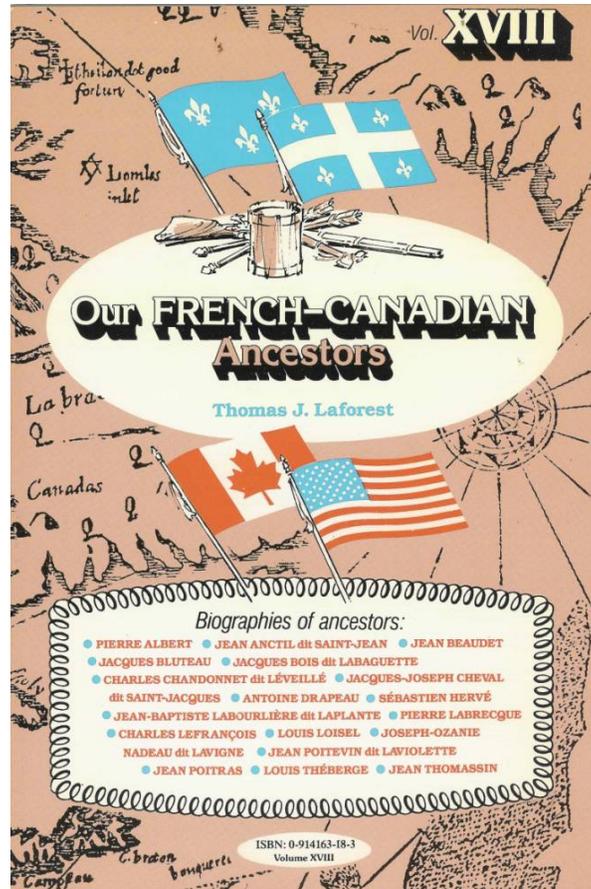
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FRENCH-CANADIAN RECORDS: Many researchers consider work in foreign archives to be more difficult than it really is. For instance, even if you can't read French, tracing French-Canadian ancestors can be easier than many people expect due to the excellent record keeping of the Roman Catholic Church in Canada. Baptisms, marriages and burials were all dutifully recorded in the parish registers,

with copies also sent to civil authorities. This, along with the incredibly high rate of French-Canadian records preservation, offers a much greater, more complete record of people living in Quebec and other parts of New France than in most other areas of North America and the world. As in France, most French-Canadian church and civil records are recorded under a woman's maiden name, making it much easier to trace both sides of your family tree. Sometimes, but not always, a woman's married surname is included as well.

In many areas of French-speaking Canada, families sometimes adopted an alias, or second surname in order to distinguish between different branches of the same family, especially when the families remained in the same town for generations. These alias surnames, also known as dit names, can often be found preceded by the word "dit," as in Jean-Baptiste Labourliere dit Laplante. Sometimes an individual even adopted the dit name as the family name and dropped the original surname. This practice was most common in France among soldiers and sailors. Dit names are important for anyone researching French-Canadian ancestors, as they necessitate searching the records under several various surname combinations.

In all the books reviewed in this column format, this use of dit names really shows in the works of Thomas J. Laforest in his series of books called *Our French-Canadian Ancestors*. This is the English version of *Nos Ancetres*, a series of biographies of the oldest of the French Canadian families.



Laforest took these books and translated them. He added an index of names, a bibliography, maps, illustrations, and appendices along with two introductory chapters about colonial life in New France. The English version is intended for those descendants who would enjoy an appreciation of their North American heritage. This series, both French and English editions, is an especially valued research tool for librarians, genealogical societies, and historians.

Father Gerard Lebel was the author of *Nos Ancêtres*. He was a Redemptorist priest at Saint-Anne-de-Beaupre in Quebec. He was a historian, teacher, and genealogist. He was an expert on original research and in presenting a look at ancestors, and he demonstrated historical truths unattenuated by legend and folklore. Monsieur Jean-Jacques Saintonge was the co-author of these biographies. He collaborated with Father Lebel in presenting these excellent research aids. In addition to his journalistic skills, his name is among the many great genealogical researchers in Canada.

A complete set of these books has been donated to the DeSoto Parish Historical Society for inclusion in the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection that is housed in the Mansfield Female College Museum in Mansfield, Louisiana.

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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.