

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

*Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format*

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By Damon Veach

**RESEARCH LINKS:** Family history for Louisiana and Mississippi researchers is closely related as are those in Texas and Arkansas. When families live on the borders, it is sometimes wise to check both states for important documents, especially if you can't seem to locate anything in Louisiana. Mississippi seems to house more Louisiana family links, and in order to fill in gaps in early lineages from the colonial period, it is necessary to study what is available there. (As an example of this, I need to point out that since my family settled right on the Louisiana line adjacent to Texas, I've had to do considerable research there. And I have lots of records going back into Arkansas and even Oklahoma.)

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History was established in 1902, and it is the second oldest department of its kind in the United States. It is located in the Archives and History Building, Capitol Green, Jackson, next to Mississippi's historic old Capitol. The scholar/researcher will find invaluable source materials on the history of Mississippi in the archives facility. Among the important early records are manuscript copies of original French, English, and Spanish provincial archives, 1687-1820, made in Paris, London, and Seville. Also on file is the original official correspondence of Mississippi's territorial governors, 1798-1817. State records no longer kept in the office of origin are in the archives, as well as a large number of county records and private manuscript collections.

There are numerous publications, old and new, that will guide you in your research. One that I found invaluable in the past was one called *A Guide to Official Records in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History* by Tom Henderson and Ron Tomlin. It has probably been updated, but even the copy in my file is still very good and a big help when I need to research anything in Mississippi. In fact, it lists archival material by record groups. Other important collections of this facility are listed in subsequent annual and biennial reports and in unpublished checklists of private manuscript collections contained in loose-leaf notebooks.

A description of the extremely valuable J.F.H. Claiborne Manuscript Collections is contained in *Publications, V, 203-227* from the Mississippi Historical Society. Because of the wide variety of holdings in the archives collection, the scholar/researcher is advised to write in advance for suggestions as to possible sources in his/her special field of research. There are several major classifications of historical and genealogical source materials. The list is incomplete, but it will serve as an example of the materials in the various categories.

Under the section called foreign archives, there are official documents covering the period of French dominion in Mississippi and dating from 1678 to 1763, official

documents covering the period of English dominion in Mississippi and dating from 1763 to 1781, and official documents covering the period of Spanish dominion in Mississippi, dating from 1759 to 1820.

The archives of Mississippi's territorial period, 1798-1817, include papers of the governors, legislative papers, and papers of the office of treasurer and auditor. Under the classification of state archives, papers can be found of the governors, records of the offices of auditor, treasurer, and secretary of state as well as assessment rolls and legislative papers for the period 1817-1900.

Military records are numerous. There are no official Revolutionary War records because it was not organized as a state or territory at that time. However, there are great numbers of records of Mississippians who served in the War of 1812, and the Civil War period is well represented with over 100,000 cards containing the name, rank, and organization of Mississippi soldiers who served in the Confederate States Army. The records for the Spanish American War, World War I, and World War II are also extensive.

The federal archives section houses the census records of Mississippi. They are thorough and important for researchers. The slave schedules cover 1850 to 1860, the mortality schedules from 1850-1880, agriculture schedules from 1850 to 1880, schedule of manufacturers from 1850 to 1880, and social statistics from 1850 to 1870. A collection of printed government documents includes House and Senate reports of the Congress of the United States relating to Mississippi history.

The private manuscript collection includes letters, business papers, diaries, plantation journals, and family correspondence of Mississippians which cannot be classified as official records.

The map collection includes more than 5,000 city, county, state and area maps of the state from 1687 to present. The photograph collection contains more than 15,000 items. The newspaper collection dates to 1805 and can be found in bound volumes and on microfilm. The library subscribes to over 300 periodicals, especially all those that are published in Mississippi or about Mississippi. The audio-visual collection is one of the best in the country.

There are some printed proceedings of conventions of various denominations in the state, and some manuscript church records can be found here too. No birth records were kept until 1912. Most of the land records for the southern and southwestern parts of the state may be found in the Office of the Land Commissioner.

The Historical and Genealogical Reference Library contains more than 30,000 cataloged books and pamphlets relating to the history of Mississippi and the South, and it continues to grow in size. The card catalog of the library is arranged by author, title and subject and should be consulted by all serious researchers.

Collecting, preserving, and making historical materials available to the public are the primary functions of the Department of Archives and History. Records and books are made available only in the Search Room, and they may not be loaned or taken out of the area. No research is done by the staff, but several suggestions are made to genealogists in need of assistance. (This would also apply to research in any state or archival facility.)

Several things can be done when researching or preparing to research in this facility. Gather as much family data as possible from local sources, such as family Bibles, marriage records, and person-to-person interviews before attempting major research in the archives. It is also helpful to learn as much as possible about a given Mississippi county that is of interest to you. It may have been a different county at the time your ancestors were here, so you will need to expand your research. Federal census schedules are arranged by counties. You may be able to locate your ancestors in this way. County records can be searched as well as clerk of court offices for wills, land deeds, inventories of estates, and marriage records.

Microfilm copies of 19<sup>th</sup> century county records are on file in the library section, and biographical indexes and subject files are important sources too. One source that many researchers overlook is that of the Works Progress Administration.

The political structure of the state of Mississippi has been wise enough in the past to realize the importance of proper facilities to house the state's documents. There are some states that still fail to realize the importance of our heritage through the recorded word found in old documents or they are used unwisely as political tools. The public, through letters to Congressmen and other public officials, is the key to better archival storage and can result in more proper use and/or control of important research materials.

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**COLUMN INFORMATION:** "Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters" is a service column designed to promote genealogical/historical subjects and offer readers free query listings on family lineage problems. There is no limit to the number of words in each inquiry, but there should be a Louisiana connection by heritage or residence of researcher working on lines in other areas. Books and society publications are reviewed only if a sample copy is submitted with each review request. Dated notices should be sent in for consideration several weeks prior to the scheduled event. Otherwise, mail is filed by date of postmark and used as space permits.

All materials submitted by genealogical societies and many privately printed books and magazines are donated to the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection in Mansfield, Louisiana. All genealogical/historical materials – Bible records, old wills, letters, ledger records, etc. – are accepted and considered for publication with full credit being given to the researcher submitting the material. If the data is too extensive for use in this format, it will be passed on to a preservation group for

**publication in their quarterlies or periodicals. The important thing to remember is to do everything possible to get these records into print or preserved in some fashion. Some of this material may be the only copy in existence and is valuable for both current research efforts and especially for use by future generations of researchers. Please help to preserve our heritage. It is priceless and cannot be replaced.**

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