

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

Volume 1, Number 45

By Damon Veach

BATTLE OF MANSFIELD: On a recent visit to New Iberia, I visited with one of Louisiana's most avid historians, Morris Raphael. He had mentioned a document he had which was of interest, so I especially wanted to see this. It was apparently given to him by someone whose family had originally owned the property where the battle took place. It was published in 1925 with the compliments of the C.E. Jenkins Company, Mr. C.K. Sheppard, and the Bank of Commerce & Trust Company. The full title reads: *1864, Battle of Mansfield, Mansfield, Louisiana, Fought April Eighth, 1864 – General Richard Taylor, Commander Confederate Forces – General N.P. Banks, Commander Federal Forces.*

It was published on the 61st anniversary of the battle on the occasion of the unveiling of the monuments to General Richard Taylor and General Polignac. This note is on the cover of the manuscript, but in the section on Polignac, it is evident that his official title was Prince Carmile de Polignac, a Prince of the Royal House of France, known as the Lafayette of the South. The manuscript contains pictures of both Taylor and Polignac. Other pictures are of General Alfred Mouton, a Brigadier General of the Confederate Army, hero and patriot who died in the battle, Colonel John B. Reid of the Federal Army, wounded in the battle and commander of the 130th Illinois Infantry, and Colonel J.H. Beard, killed while leading the Crescent regiment that broke the Federal line of battle. The two monuments of Polignac and Taylor are included as well as a map of the battlefield.

I'm not sure if this brochure is still in print or not, but this copy that I have will be included in the next donation of materials going to the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection, housed in the Mansfield Female College Museum in Mansfield. It is a thorough account of the battle and a very interesting read. The dedication of this manuscript by J.E. Hewitt of Mansfield was made to the Marquise de Courtivron, the only daughter of Prince Camile de Polignac whose enthusiasm for the Southern cause stimulated the erection of the Polignac monument on the battlefield where her father won the commission as Major General in the Confederate Army.

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OBITUARY FILE: I've mentioned this topic before, but I wanted to again stress the importance of this research gem. The Obituary File was started by the Works Progress Administration staff working in the City Archives Department in New Orleans in the 1930s. At the time, it was located in City Hall, which is now Gallier Hall) and the adjacent annex building on St. Charles Avenue. This collection contained manuscript journals and ledgers of city government dating from 1769, the

largest collection of bound New Orleans newspapers in existence. It was from this collection that the Obituary Index was created, one of several W.P.A. indexing projects.

For genealogists and historians, the importance of this index is found in the access to newspaper information and the focus that it provides when initiating a specific inquiry. It definitely helps researchers rapidly narrow a genealogy search to a specific time frame, a specific religious affiliation or specific sets of government and religious records, thus making more efficient use of time and effort.

In addition to access and search strategy attributes, the index tells personal information not found elsewhere in early records. Besides historical demographic data, the computerized indexed information enables the detection of trends, verify those periods of epidemics, and show economic prosperity. It expands and broadens accessibility of information.

As a writer, I find all this information fascinating especially when it can be applied to early New Orleans authors. The obit cards in this collection tell how voodoo doctors were actually a part of the local landscape as were many characters who roamed the streets of the French Quarter. Noted authors Henry Castellanos and Robert Tallant mention the mystical cast of New Orleans characters in their respective writings, but this index actually validates voodoo doctor James Alexander's colorful existence in time and space.

One other obit is noteworthy of mention here. Louisiana "Lulu" Rebel Blackmar's notes are okay, but it is the mention of her very famous father that brings this into perspective. A.E. Blackmar was a prolific and controversial songwriter who was fined and imprisoned during General Benjamin Butler's occupation of New Orleans for publishing the "Bonnie Blue Flag." Even if you don't find things of this type, having this all computerized aids in making the research so much better for those not living in the New Orleans area.

All of this work has been coordinated between the New Orleans Public Library and The Historic New Orleans Collection so further information can be found by contacting these groups in person or online.

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PRESS RELEASES: It has been a policy of mine from the very beginning of this column format to review only books and other publications if I receive copies to examine. Two books which I will mention but can't officially recommend are *Far From Home, the Diary of Lt. William H. Peel, 1863-1865* and *Featherston's/Posey's/Harris' Brigade*. If you should be interested in either, contact Pioneer Publishing Co., P.O. Box 408, Carrollton, MS 38917 for more information on pricing and availability.

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PICTURES NEEDED: Robert Wickliffe Fenet, Bocage – 7522 Rienzi Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70809 1122 is trying to find a picture of the home of Robert Charles Wickliffe of St. Francisville. The house was called Wyoming, and it burned in 1926/27. Lydia Cooke Wickliffe, his widow moved to Baton Rouge in 1936 and built the Wickliffe Apartments behind the City Club on Church Street, now Fourth Street, next to the Johnny Rogers Filling Station. A picture of the Wickliffe Apartments would also be appreciated. (Fenet's e-mail address is BobFe3373@aol.com.)

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BROUSSARD/TRAHAN: “Broussard Descendants” and “Trahan Descendants” are two excellent CDs available from Mitch Conover, 300 Strasbourg Drive, Lafayette, LA 70506. Each sells for \$75, and if you are researching or have allied connections to these families, these are a must for your collections. Conover has attempted to do the CDs in a fashion that provides easier navigation, and he has accomplished this. Each individual on the CDs is assigned an ID number, which precedes his/her name. If that number is preceded by a +, that indicates an additional entry exists on the CD. If you need more information, contact Conover at the above address.

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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.

Correspondence to this column should be directed to Damon Veach, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. The e-mail address is ancestorslaveach@cox.net. Claitor's Publishing can serve as a distributor for self-published genealogy titles. Go to their homepage for details on how you can obtain this excellent service.