

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: One of my first columns when I started my genealogical series in the 1970s concerned the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). This was established by Congress in 1934 and is a 15-member body. It is chaired by the Archivist of the United States and composed of representatives of the three branches of the Federal Government. It supports a wide range of activities to preserve, publish, and encourage the use of documentary sources, created in every medium ranging from quill pen to computer, relating to the history of the United States.

NHPRC is composed of professional associations of archivists, historians, documentary editors, and records administrators. The administrative staff at the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. implements its policies and recommendations, advises on proposals, and provides advice and assistance to potential applicants and grantees.

NHPRC is the grant-making affiliate of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). It is NARA that protects records of historical value.

Like NHPRC, NARA was also created in 1934 and has had the grant-making authorization since 1964. Grants from the NHPRC help locate, preserve, and provide public access to documents, photographs, maps, and other historical materials, but this is only one of its many duties.

They assist institutions to preserve and make records available or accessible, and these may be found in archival institutions, manuscript repositories, and publications in multiple formats. They work closely with state and local archives, colleges and universities, libraries and historical societies, and other non-profit organizations.

The Archivist of the United States chairs the group or commission and actually makes grants on its recommendation. The other fourteen members of this body represent the President, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the Federal Judiciary, the Departments of State and Defense, the Librarian of Congress, and six national professional associations of archivists and historians.

Correspondence to this group should be directed to The National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. There are various publications available that will explain the many advantages and working of the NARA. One is the "Directory of Archives and Manuscript

Repositories.” Others are the “National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections” and “Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States.”

The first is a great addition to any genealogical library or research collection. Its entries are arranged alphabetically by state, town, and repository name. A typical listing includes name of repository, address, telephone number, hours of service, availability of copying facilities, restrictions on access, descriptions of the institution’s acquisition policy and holdings of historical source materials, and citations to published bibliographic references. Other features of the volume include a comprehensive index to subjects and proper names, special lists of institutions by type (such as corporate archives, religious archives, and state historical societies) and descriptions of local public records programs within each state.

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IMPORTANT RECORDS: Some of the most helpful records at the New Brunswick Provincial Archives are the petitions for land grants. They cover the period 1785 - 1845 and are indexed. Many of these petitions also include details of family situations and life history in the hope that these would elicit favorable response from officials in the (then) Crown Land Office.

Census records for the years 1851, 1861, and 1871 are available for most parishes in New Brunswick. These contain explicit information of age, religion, nationality, and occupation of inhabitants and are grouped by household units in which the people lived.

Probate records for the period 1794 – 1887 are organized by counties. The reports covering probated estates often include extensive genealogical data. Marriage registers, although not definitive, are arranged by counties and provide the most organized grouping of marriage records in the Province.

Church records, the precursor of modern vital statistics, were kept at the individual churches across the Province. Despite some inconsistency, they are nevertheless invaluable in their use to genealogists. Vital statistics after 1888 are available for a nominal fee from the Vital Statistics Branch, Department of Health, Centennial Building, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5C3.

Cemetery transcriptions, a relatively new collection at Provincial Archives, already embraces a significant number of burial grounds. The transcriptions are an excellent complement to marriage registers and church records. Registry office records, indexed by county, are available on microfilm. They form a comprehensive record of all land transactions in the Province and include details of family movements, family members, and land ownership. These records are for historical and genealogical use only, and photocopying is not permitted.

Miscellaneous sources open to the family historian would include newspapers, tax assessments, school returns, city and provincial directories, and poll books. Hugh A. Taylor compiled a bibliography of local historical works in the periodical press and of similar unpublished documents, and this can be consulted at Provincial Archives. The title is “New Brunswick History: A Checklist of Secondary Sources.”

Any correspondence on New Brunswick ancestors should be directed to the Director of the Genealogical Branch, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5C3.

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SHAVER INQUIRY: Yvonne S. Perkins, 2107 54th St., Lubbock, TX 79412, yvonnegengril@aol.com is looking for information on Peter Shaver, born ca1770, Mecklinburg County, North Carolina, died ca1835/36, Claiborne Parish, Louisiana. He is believed to have married Susan Anderson, ca1797, North Carolina. He was a son of John Shaver, born in 1745, Ephrate, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, died March 7, 1835, Randolph County, Arkansas Territory. He was a grandson of Peter Shaver (Schaffer) of Palatine, Germany.

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BOURGEOIS QUERY: Any information on the Bourgeois family, specifically Willis Joseph Bourgeois, born November 18, 1853, St. James Parish, Louisiana, died February 14 1913, Convent, Louisiana, would be appreciated by Beverly Landry Ferro (bevf@jas.net). Bourgeois was married to Emeline Matherne, born September 14, 1861 and died March 8, 1925 in Paulina, Louisiana.

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LECTURE SCHEDULED: Ryan Seidemann, president of Mid City Historical Cemeteries Coalition, has announced the first lecture of the year for the group. It will be held at Bluebonnet Library, 9200 Bluebonnet Blvd., on March 4th, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The topic of the lecture is “A Sacred Trust – America’s National Cemeteries.” It will be presented by Rex Kern, Director, Port Hudson/Baton Rouge National Cemeteries. This presentation is on the history of the National Cemetery Administration and the role it plays in the burial of veterans. If you have further questions, Seidemann’s e-mail address is rseidem@yahoo.com.