

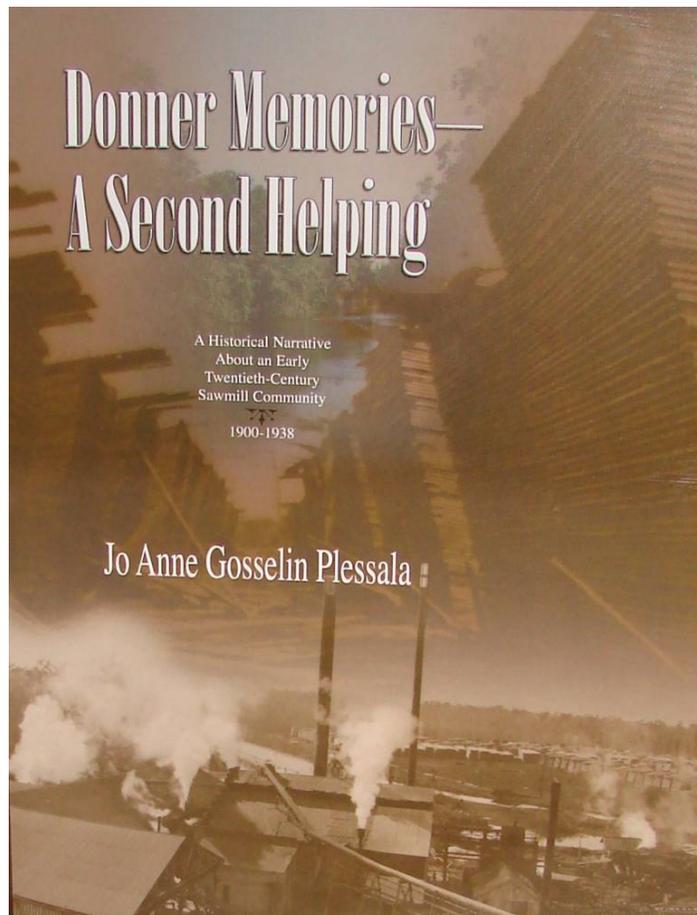
CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

DONNER MEMORIES: After eight years, Jo Anne Gosselin Plessala has completed another excellent look at the colorful community of Donner in South Louisiana. “Donner Memories – A Second Helping” is a sequel to “I Remember Donner.” Both of these books are the results of what can really be called a labor of love. Plessala was born in Donner and has always had a special connection to the town. Her mother was the town’s postmaster and encouraged her to write down whatever she learned about the early history from records and from conversations with residents and former residents of the area.



Donner was named in honor of the engineer of the first locomotive to stop at the new railroad depot in this small sawmill community. His name was Michael J. Donner, and his great granddaughter was contacted for information on the family which made such a nice addition to this second volume. Leah Durkes Esteve was eager to share the family history as additional memories to this book.

Bernard J. Donner and Mary Ann Shanley Donner migrated from Longford, Ireland to America with their two sons, Michael and Patrick. They purchased a parcel of land located at the corner of the present-day Evelina Street and Pacific Avenue in the Algiers section of New Orleans. The family resided there until 1995.

Michael married Eliza Jane Daly, and they had eight children: Joseph, William, Edward, Timothy, Frank, Charles, Richard, and Mary Elizabeth. Eliza Jane died when Mary Elizabeth was ten years old, and because it was not considered proper to bring up one girl with seven boys without a mother in the household, she was placed in a boarding school run by the Ursuline nuns.

Michael was an engineer with the Southern Pacific Railroad. He had his own engine and would pick up the train from a barge that crossed the Mississippi River between Elysian Fields Avenue and the Southern Pacific Railroad yard in New Orleans. He traveled as far west as Lafayette. One of his stops was a small town west of Schriever, Louisiana, which would become Donner. Michael lived for thirty years after Eliza Jane died, but he never remarried. Mary Elizabeth married Will Schroder, and they moved back to the old homestead in order to care for Michael in his later years.

William Donner was also an engineer, and he had the honor of taking the first train over the Huey P. Long Bridge when it was completed in 1935, and Mary Elizabeth was along for the ride. Charles Donner became Secretary of the Levee Board for the state of Louisiana and was a strong supporter of Huey P. Long. Mary's daughter Leah married David Durkes, and she ended up caring for Mary Elizabeth at the old homestead.

Leah Durkes Esteve, who provided so much of the family history, is Michael's great granddaughter. She doesn't know that much about the other children of Michael and Eliza Jane since most were deceased before she was born. She did recall that Timothy was lost in the swamp for three days before he could find his way out, and he died shortly after the incident.

This is just a brief look at what is to be found in this book. Plessala has done a fabulous job at compiling all this data. This beautiful book can be displayed proudly on any coffee-table, and all major libraries need to add this to their collection. So many stories from people that didn't appear in the first book are in this one.

Orders for the book can be sent to Jo Anne Plessala, 203 Darlene Street, Houma, LA 70364. The cost is \$28.50, postage and handling included. If copies of the first book are still available, it would be wise to obtain a copy for your collection. Plessala has done a great job adding so much data, but she has also included so many pictures and documents that the book is just simply a joy to read and study. This is a rare gem of early Louisiana history. Be sure to get a copy before it is out of print.

JEWISH RESEARCH: According to Paul Nauta, FamilySearch Public Affairs Manager (nautapg@familysearch.org), FamilySearch expanded its Knowles Collection—a free popular database of Jewish records hailing from the British Isles. The collection builds upon work commenced by the late Isobel Mordy, a well-known historian of the Jews of the British Isles. She was a retired mathematician and used a complex code to link Jewish United Kingdom families in her research. Her work yielded 8,000 names and has been very popular for Jewish family history researchers with British ancestry.

“The complexity of the code Mordy used to index her research is daunting even to the most experienced researcher,” said Todd Knowles, author and manager of the Knowles Collection and a British Reference consultant for the famous Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. It took Knowles a few years, but he ultimately managed to transcribe the records from Mordy’s work into a more easily searchable genealogy database. The great advantage of the Knowles Collection is that it links together electronically tens of thousands of individual Jews into family groups. Knowles has since expanded Mordy’s collection of 8,000 names to a collection of over 40,000. “The records come from over 100 individual sources,” noted Knowles. “That saves the researcher a lot of time and travel.”

Some of the record sources were actively maintained until the mid 1980s, so many people living today will be able to find their relatives from recent memory in the collection. The newly added names come from many types of records—censuses, probate records, synagogue birth, marriage, and death records, biographies, and more.

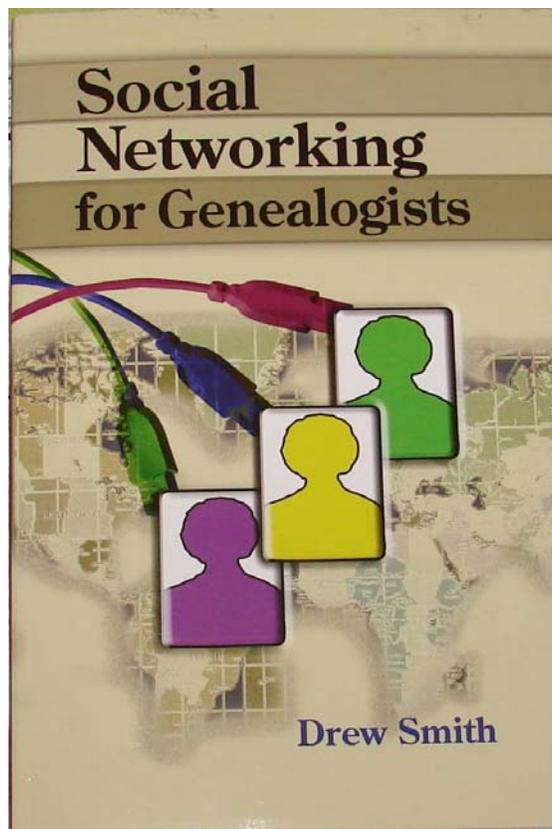
Perhaps the most interesting records added recently include over 200 Jewish Welsh marriages from a community in the city of Cardiff, original synagogue records, and patron-submitted records. Some of the families tie into the work of Malcolm Stern’s “The First American Jewish Families,” which includes families who had English ancestry.

The collection can be accessed at FamilySearch.org (<http://www.familysearch.org/>) on the Jewish Family History Resources page. It is available to download for free as either a GEDCOM or PAF file. Individuals can add their own records to the collection by contacting the collection’s author, Todd Knowles, directly at knowleswt@familysearch.org.

FamilySearch manages the largest collection of genealogical records worldwide. A significant portion of its collections come from the United Kingdom.

SOCIAL NETWORKING: “Social Networking for Genealogists” by Drew Smith has just been released by Genealogical Publishing Company, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 260, Baltimore, MD 21211-1953. Smith is an academic librarian with the University of South Florida in Tampa and an expert in digital genealogy and with a lifelong interest in family history research.

According to Smith, the Internet is in the process of changing from a collection of corporate, organizational, and personal websites to a social network of dynamic services full of user-contributed content. The benefits of participating in this universe of expanded and shared information are incalculable and will lead, potentially, to the greatest exchange of information in history. Genealogists in particular will thrive in this new Internet environment of sharing, exchanging, and interacting.



This book describes the wide array of social networking services that are now available online and highlights how these services can be used by genealogists to share information, photos, and videos with family, friends, and other researchers. Each chapter guides you through a unique category of social networking services using genealogy-related examples. From blogs and wikis to Facebook and Second Life, Smith shows how to incorporate these powerful new tools into your family history research.

Specifically, readers will find chapters devoted to the following social networking concepts and services: blogs; collaborative editing; genealogy-specific social networks; general social networking (Facebook); message boards and mailing lists; photos and video sharing; podcasts; RSS feeds; sharing personal libraries; tags; virtual worlds; and wikis.

This book is about the type of social networking that has been made possible by the development of international computer networks, the availability of network access to most homes (especially broadband access), the creation of websites dedicated to particular kinds of networking (posting photos, viewing and commenting on data), sharing books or data in personal libraries, and being able to do all this without having a computer expert present. More to the point, this book is intended to identify those kinds of social networking sites and services that will be of the most interest to genealogists.

Copies of this book are available from Genealogical Publishing Company. The price is \$23.95, which includes postage and handling. This kind of book will become even more valuable with time, and its contents are specifically directed to anyone doing genealogical research.

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