

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

LATEST UPDATE: FamilySearch volunteers reached a monumental milestone in April, transcribing their 250 millionth historical record. The incredible online initiative started in January 2006 with a few thousand volunteers and has now grown to be the largest Web-based initiative of its kind with over 100,000 volunteers worldwide. The 250 millionth record was part of the current Nicaragua Civil Registration indexing project online, one of 45 projects being indexed by volunteers. It was extracted by three different online indexers from Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras.

FamilySearch manages the largest collection of genealogical collections in the world—2.5 million rolls of microfilm and millions of additional digital images from over 100 countries worldwide.

For decades, FamilySearch has allowed the public to use its collection for free through 4,500 family history centers throughout the world. In 2005, it began to improve access to its collection by converting microfilm to digital images that could be searched online. The next step was to create an online tool that volunteers around the world could use to look at the digital images and extract relevant data that could then be published online in searchable indexes linked to the digital images. FamilySearch Indexing (<http://www.familysearchindexing.org/>) is that tool.

“What makes the 250 million record milestone even more impressive is the fact that each record was actually indexed at least twice to ensure accuracy,” reported Paul Nauta, FamilySearch public affairs manager. “The result is an amazing searchable online index for people around the world,” Nauta added.

The unique quality control process means each document is transcribed by two different indexers. In the case of the 250 millionth record, the two indexers were from Nicaragua and Guatemala. Any discrepancies in their two transcriptions were then forwarded to a third volunteer—an arbitrator—who would have made any needed corrections between the two transcriptions. In this case, that arbitrator was from Honduras. “Three volunteers, three countries, one common goal—to provide access to the world’s genealogical records quicker and more economically,” said Nauta.

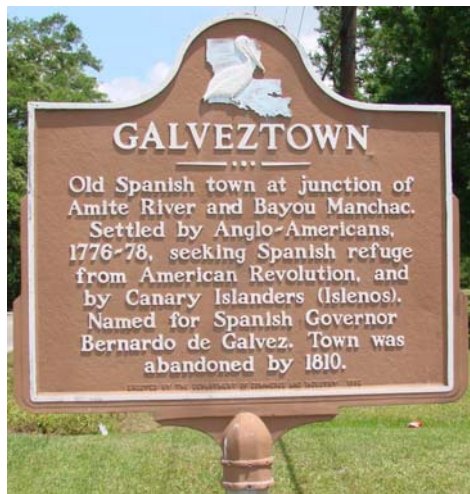
In 2006, FamilySearch volunteers indexed a total of 11 million records. “Today, thanks to the growth in our volunteer numbers, FamilySearch volunteers are now transcribing about a million names per day. At that rate, we expect to hit the 500 million milestone much quicker than the 250 million marker,” added Nauta.

Today, tens of thousands of volunteers, young and old, log on 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from all over the world to help with the ongoing goal to transcribe the world's genealogical records. Some donate a few minutes a month, others hours a day. Some do it as a sort of "pay it forward" activity because they have personally benefited in their family history research by using FamilySearch's collections over the years. Others help because they like the idea that just a little bit of donated time can help preserve historic information and make it more available for public access.

Completed indexes are ultimately made available online for public access through FamilySearch.org or through one of FamilySearch's family history centers. FamilySearch, at any given time, has over 35 online indexing projects underway—many of them international projects. "Volunteers usually have a preference for one type of indexing project over another," said Paul Starkey, FamilySearch Indexing project manager. "For example, if you have ancestors from Spain, you might be very motivated to help index the Spain Catholic Church records because it could facilitate your personal research once the completed indexes are published online."

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ARCHAEOLOGY, GENEALOGY: It is easy to understand why many genealogists are interested in archaeology, and a good example of this is taking place now at the Galveztown archaeology dig. Kathy Henderson, who attended the Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Seminar in April, told me about the LSU Union leisure class she was in. On Sunday, April 26, 2009, I drove down to the area to check it out. Pictures are better than words sometimes, so I did quite a few in order to give credit to these industrious students.



All Photos by Damon Veach

Dr. Rob Mann, LSU Regional Archaeologist, conducted this class, and as I understand it, another one is already being schedule for the next leisure sessions. Several of the students gave me a brief history of the area, but perhaps the most interesting was to know that the excavation was on the highest point where Bayou Manchac and the Amite River converge.

There is an oak tree on the property at this convergence point, and viewing it from the opposite side or when the water is low, it is evident that there is a slight elevation here. The Indians who inhabited the area named this oak the Leaning Oak to designate where this high point was. It is my understanding that in times of high water, this point has never gone under water.



Kathy Henderson and former Navy photographer Jimmy Johnson



Pottery piece showing animal face

Since this is a class project, I think it only appropriate to name the sixteen participants. Some are descendants of the early Canary Islanders who settled here. Others are just interested in history and genealogy and signed up for the class. The class members are: Pat Mayeaux, Jeanne Bergeron, Pam Melder, Virginia McAnelly, Myrna Arroyo, Althea Rasti, Joan Aleman, Patricia Comeaux, Janell and John Hickey, David Hulbert, Ausa Janney, Beverly Nuschler, Linder Potter, and Angelle Stahl.

Galveztown is one of Ascension Parish's most historic points. Ascension is located in southeast Louisiana. Bayou Manchac, the Amite River, Bayou Pierre, the Petite Amite River and the Blind River form the watery northern border with East Baton Rouge and Livingston parishes. On the east, a small portion of St. John the Baptist Parish separates Ascension from Lake Maurepas and to the south are St. James and

Assumption parishes. Ascension shares a western border with Iberville Parish on both sides of the Mississippi River.

Ascension Parish became a Spanish Territory in 1763, and Louis Judice was named the first Spanish Commandant for Ascension. In 1766, the Spanish issued land grants to Acadians from Nova Scotia and Canary Islanders. In 1778, Spain recruited settlers from the Canary Islands to help defend against the English. They were called Islenos, and they founded two settlements which were originally called Villa de Galvez and Villa de Valanzuela. In 1779, the American Revolution reached deep into Louisiana, but successfully defending the region were the Spanish and local troops of French, Canadian, Cajun, Islenos, German, African (both slave and free), and tribal natives.

An archaeological dig such as this one being conducted now by LSU Union's leisure class is important for a number of reasons, but mainly it draws attention to the importance of the region and also to the continuing research being done on the Canary Islanders that settled in South Louisiana. It was thought for a while that the Islenos was a dying traditional American subculture, but you would know that this is not true if you talked to anyone involved in this archaeological dig. Katrina did a lot of damage to property and scattered residents to places across America, but even this hurricane could not cancel the interest in this heritage. You will find descendants at annual fiestas and family gatherings around the southeastern part of Louisiana.

It is evident from what I can learn about this group that the descendants of these Canary Islanders of the Bayou Manchac and Galveztown area, as well as those in the New Orleans area, will never be forgotten. They represent a remarkable chapter in the history of the people of this state, and the importance of preserving this heritage is ongoing.



Dr. Mann and Kathy check for artifacts



Classmates examine artifacts from dig

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HISTORIC MARKERS: Don't overlook the importance of historical markers, but at the same time, you may want to make sure the data has been entered correctly. There are cases where markers have been installed with information that is not exactly the way it happened. Leroy E. Willie, a noted Baton Rouge historian, is perhaps one of the most thorough researchers in this area, and he has noted many instances of incorrect data being posted. Even though you will find a lot of data on markers, just remember to double check the information for accuracy much as you would in verifying the accuracy of something you find recorded about your ancestors. Just because it is in print does not necessarily mean it is factual.

Here is the marker located just across the Amite River in Livingston Parish that is not far from the Galveztown marker where the archaeology dig is taking place. Like Ascension, Livingston Parish is rich in history, and descendants of these early settlers take great pride in their accomplishments and strive for accuracy in all that they do.



This pride is evident in the continued work of the Edward Livingston Historical Association. Their accomplishments and future plans can be found in their publication called "The ELHAGram." You can learn more about this group by writing to them at P.O. Box 67, Livingston, LA 70754-0067. Clark Forrest Jr. is president of this group.

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SPECIAL TRIBUTE: When you think of accurate historians and markers that are absolutely correct, you will come across the name of the Mrs. Florence B. Huguet. She was a friend, and I still miss her. Visiting with her and listening to her stories about early Baton Rouge and learning how markers in Baton Rouge were not necessarily in the right places and where the actual Red Stick was located will forever be with me. She was the author of several items that are now in the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection in Mansfield, Louisiana at the historic Mansfield Female College Museum.

Some of her writings include "50 Years Ago in Baton Rouge (1960)," "The Story of Two Portraits (1960)," "Pentagon Buildings – The Famous Men Who Passed Their Portals (1961)," "The Dutch Highlanders," reprinted in 1983 and 1989, and "Zachary Taylor, A Baton Rougean (1976)." Her article on the Pentagon Buildings appeared in *Southern Living* in 1960.

The wording on the marker for the Dutch Highlands (1784-ca1880) is taken from her research over a period of fourteen years, 1962-1976. Le Comite des Archives de la Louisiane named Mrs. Huguet Preservationist of the Year in 1983. The Foundation for Historical Louisiana has also recognized this writer for her historical research and contributions to preserve Baton Rouge's historical sites.

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COLUMN INFORMATION: Correspondence to this column should be directed to Damon Veach, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. Books and society publications are reviewed if sample copies are submitted with each request, and queries are published free of charge. These queries can be any length but should have a Louisiana connection by heritage or residence of researchers working on lines in other states or countries. Dated notices should be submitted several weeks prior to the scheduled event. The e-mail address is ancestorslaveach@cox.net.