

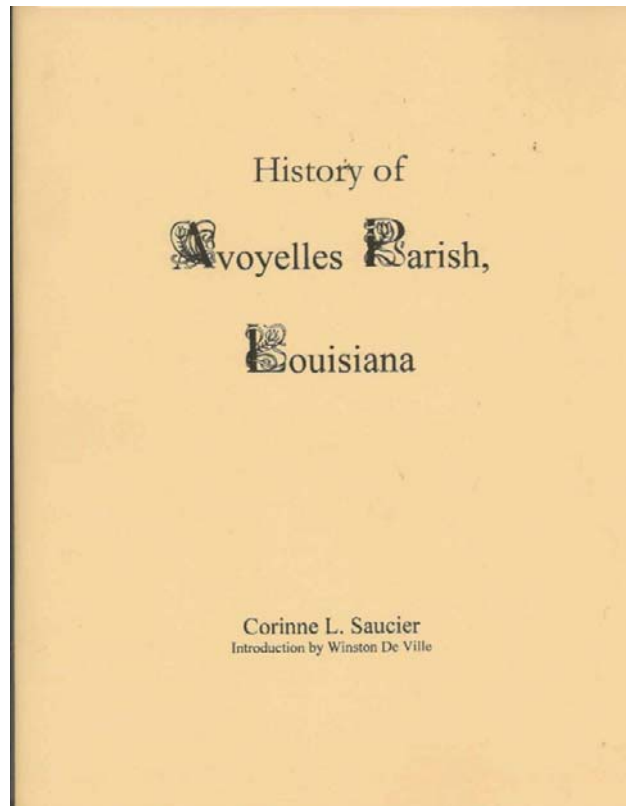
CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

Volume 2, Number 16

By Damon Veach

EXCELLENT HISTORY: Avoyelles Parish is one of the state's most historic areas, and there are many books in print concerning the various points of interest within the parish, but *History of Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana* by Corinne L. Saucier is just one of the best parish histories you will find. With an introduction by Winston De Ville, this mammoth volume is available again from Claitor's Publishing, and it is one of the most enjoyable reads you will find when it comes to historical accounts within our state.



This area of Louisiana was settled by Native Americans long before the French and Spanish arrived. There are three large burial mounds on the banks of the old Mississippi River channel in Marksville and a national park to commemorate their civilization. (There are also mounds on the Louisiana State University campus.) It is recorded that Tunicas from the Natchez tribes east of the river conquered and assimilated with the Avoyels nearly two centuries ago and are currently the largest Native American group in Avoyelles.

It is thought that Spanish and African traders were probably the first foreigners to arrive in the area around 1650, but later there was a mix of European families coming to the area especially from Normandy and other parts of France, Scotland, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Spain. These European ties set them apart from the Acadians. And even later, blacks serving under Napoleon and those loyal to France in Haiti and the French West Indies, settled in Avoyelles. These three groups led to a distinct Creole culture.

Today, the Avoyelles Parish culture conveniently falls under the larger umbrella of Cajun because of the similarities in speech, food, and various folk traditions. This is misleading actually because very little of the culture descends from the Acadian tradition. A complete study of the early history of the parish and a look at the Acadian history will show this to be true. Many references to Avoyelles show description of the people as French Creoles because of their descent from those born in the French colony.

Saucier's history is different from many histories as she compiled a lot of her data without the use of microfilm and other modern methods of recording data. Therefore much of her material could use expansion, yet what you have is the basis of a great collection of material. She was a native of Avoyelles Parish, born in 1890 and earned a degree from the Sorbonne in 1929 and her doctorate from Laval twenty years later. She died in Natchitoches in 1960.

In checking the scope of this compilation, it is remarkable what she accomplished during her lifetime. What I found most interesting in all this was the personal sketches of early residents and the histories of the different towns and communities. It just doesn't get any better than this. And this is only a small part of the text. She really covers it all in this very nice historical work.

This is a huge volume, soft-cover, and indexed. It is priced at \$98.00 but is one volume that should be in every library around the state.

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MORE RECORDS: FamilySearch is constantly updating and adding to their collections of materials available for those researching the various areas of the world. As I have stated before in this format, this is the largest genealogy organization in the world. Millions of people use FamilySearch records, resources, and services to learn more about their family history. To help in this great pursuit, FamilySearch has been actively gathering, preserving, and sharing genealogical records worldwide for over 100 years. FamilySearch is a nonprofit organization sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Patrons may access FamilySearch services and resources free online at FamilySearch.org or through over 4,600 family history centers in 132 countries, including the main Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

A project to index Freedmen Letters from North Carolina is now available. This is the second Freedmen's Bureau collection FamilySearch has worked on with the National Archives. These records provide the earliest major compilation of information on many emancipated slaves, freed Blacks, and Black Union soldiers, including names, marriages, education and employment information, and receipt of rations, health care, and legal support.

New projects in the past month include civil births from Jamaica (1878-1899), Arkansas WWII draft registrations (1942), District of Columbia deaths (1874-1959), and the North Carolina Freedmen Letters, 1862-1870.

Many projects that have been recently completed are now going through the final completion check before they become available to the public. These include the following records: Antwerp, Belgium foreigners index for 1840-1930; New Zealand passenger lists for 1871-1915; Managua, Nicaragua Registros Civiles, 1879-1984, part 3A; U.K. Isle of Man, parish registers for 1800 – 1950; Oklahoma WWII draft registrations, 1942; Pennsylvania 1910 Federal Census; Tennessee 1910 Federal Census; Tennessee (Carroll County) marriages, 1881-1939; Vermont 1910 Federal Census; Virginia 1910 Federal Census; and Washington 1910 Federal Census.

Current projects under way now and of great importance to Louisiana researchers are several French registries (Cherbourg, Coutances, Paris, Saint-Lo), several British records (Bristol, Essex, Isle of Man, Manchester, Warwickshire), more U.S. records from Alabama, Arkansas, California, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois Indiana, Iowa, U.S. military 1920 Federal Census, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Puerto Rico. There are many other records being worked now, but they are too extensive to list here. You can check them all out by going to the FamilySearch web site.

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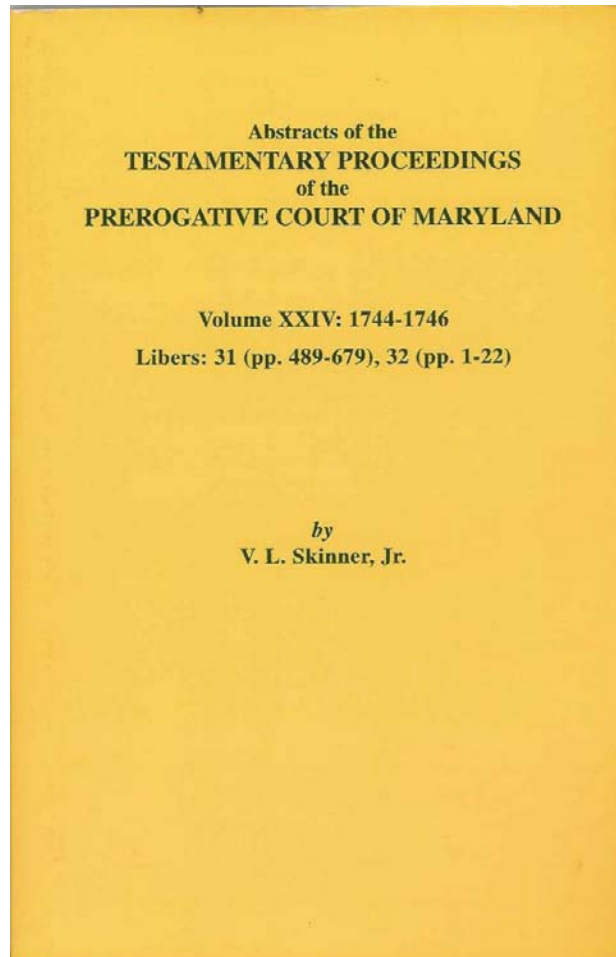
SOCIETY SEMINAR: The Lafourche Heritage Society will hold its Annual History & Genealogy Seminar on Saturday, August 14, 2010 at Envie Restaurant in Thibodaux. The guest speakers will be announced later, but it is open to the public. More information can be found by contacting the news and events coordinator, Wanda Moore, wmoore1048@aol.com, or at 115 Cottonwood Drive, Houma, LA 70360-7279.

In their latest newsletter, they also recommend that researchers check out the local history records, family papers, letters, funeral notices, and other materials on file at the Nicholls State University Archives in Thibodaux. A collection inventory is available online at www.nicholls.edu/library.com.

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LATEST VOLUME: The Prerogative Court was the focal point for probate in colonial Maryland, and I have reviewed most of them in this column format. All matters of probate went directly to the Prerogative Court, which was located in Maryland's colonial capital, Annapolis. The Prerogative Court was also the colony's court for equity cases--resolutions of disputes over the settlement and distribution of an estate.

With the volume at hand, compiler Vernon Skinner has assembled his twenty-fourth volume of transcriptions in his series *Abstracts of the Testamentary Proceedings of the Prerogative Court of Maryland*, based upon this important source for Maryland genealogists. In compiling the series, Skinner has worked primarily from microfilm copies of the Prerogative Court records. However, when necessary to resolve problems of paleography, he has consulted the original manuscripts, which are located at the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis.



The series is arranged, volume by volume, chronologically by court session. Volume XXIV consists of abstracts for the period 1744-46, as found in the balance of Liber 31 and the first 22 pages of Liber 32 of the records. In all, the latest book in this distinguished series refers to an additional 7,000 colonial inhabitants of the Province

of Maryland. For the most part, the transcriptions state the names of the principals (testators, heirs, guardians, witnesses, administrators, and so forth) as well as details of bequests, names of slaves, appraisers, and more.

It is another book from Clearfield Publishing, 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore, MD 21211. The price with postage and handling is \$35.00.

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FREE SERVICE: Correspondence to this column should be directed to Damon Veach, Cajuns, Creoles, Pirates and Planters, 709 Bungalow Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5337. The e-mail address is ancestorslaveach@cox.net. Queries and book reviews are printed as space permits, and you are encouraged to take advantage of this free service. 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.