

# **CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS**

*Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format*

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By Damon Veach



**View of the Mansfield Battle Park and Museum from the highway**

**HISTORICAL GLEANINGS:** The quarterly meeting of the DeSoto Parish Historical Society met on Sunday, August 22, 2010 at the Mansfield Battle Park Museum. The speaker, Dr. Gary Joiner, was scheduled to discuss his latest book *Lost Shreveport*, but to everyone's surprise, he decided to forego the book and explain work he had been doing to save one of the oldest cemeteries to be discovered in DeSoto Parish.

I was born in Caddo Parish in a small community called Zylks, located about a mile from the three-state marker for Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas, but I grew up in DeSoto Parish and have always loved the history of this section of the state. My home was near the International Boundary Marker, placed there in 1841. It was the first land marker placed by engineers as they marked the line northward where the Sabine River veered out into Texas. This was all a part of No Man's Land as described by Louis Nardini in his book of the same name. It is where I grew up.

I never recalled the Mansfield Battle Park and Museum being as beautiful as it was when I visited it for this meeting. It was like a new experience and a welcomed one since the discussion of the day was near and dear to my historical upbringing. If I took down my notes properly, Dr. Joiner is Associate Professor of History in the Department of History and Social Services at Louisiana State University at Shreveport. This learned gentleman completed his doctoral studies at Lancaster University in England and is the founder of the Friends of the Mansfield Battle Park, but this is only a part of his impressive resume of accomplishments.

**Dr. Joiner's presentation to the society centered on an old cemetery that was discovered when an oil company started scraping off the surface of the property involved and noted discolorations in the soil. The purpose was to run a pipeline through the property, but when the experts were called in, it was deemed to be the location of a cemetery that had been lost in time. Of course, work was immediately stopped, and with the cooperation of the oil company, Dr. Joiner began to piece together the history of this plot of ground and the result was the discovery of 25 graves, which meant that the pipeline work had to be halted immediately and then re-routed to go around the cemetery.**

**A map of the graves was done, and then the main work of identifications was begun. This is all located near Frierson in DeSoto Parish in the vicinity of Bayou Pierre. The location is also near the St. Francis Cemetery and was on property formerly owned by the Rambin family. Through continued research, Dr. Joiner has completed his study in identifying the people in the cemetery and will soon release his study to the public. Rambin, Prudhomme, Lafitte, and Dewitt family members are among those buried here.**



**Dr. Gary Joiner**

**All of this, as well as being with friends and fellow historians, made for an enjoyable afternoon. Dr. Joiner teaches Louisiana history, Civil War and Reconstruction, modern Middle East, ancient Greek history, Louisiana geography, remote sensing, and independent studies in history and geography. His research interests include the exploration, study, and preservation of Civil War battlefields, nineteenth**

century steamboats, Civil War map interpretation, regional history and the preservation of historic sites. He is the chief consulting cartographer for the Civil War Preservation Trust. His recent projects include the mapping of the Vicksburg National Military Park for the National Park Service, mapping the battlefields of Mansfield, Pleasant Hill, Monett's Ferry, Mansura, and Yellow Bayou in Louisiana for the Civil War Preservation Trust, and many more outstanding projects. His latest book is *Lost Shreveport*, but his story of this Old Gravel Point Cemetery took precedence over a book review, and everyone learned how an old cemetery was saved from destruction and will now have a metal fence around it with a historical marker.



**Val Verde Cannons in front of the museum**



**Scott Dearman, Museum Curator**



**Gay Means and Damon Veach**



**Nathaniel Means, Director, and Sudie Marie Ritter, Secretary**



**Treasurer George Meriwether Gilmer Jr. reads report; President Johnny May in background**



**Members socializing prior to the start of the meeting**

**There were 23 in attendance at this meeting, and the museum was open in case anyone wanted to check out all the exhibits.**

**XXX**

**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](mailto: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.