

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

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By Damon Veach

CONFEDERATOS: The stories about the migration of Confederates to Brazil at the end of the Civil War are not commonly known, but it was a sad period where defeat caused a loss of faith with many moving away to start all over again. Many of these families eventually returned to the United States, but there were others who stayed. These descendants are still living in Brazil, and it is sometimes difficult learning about and recording their family histories.

There were thousands of these families mostly from the southern Atlantic coast region who made their way to South America. It was a period where many lost their lives to malaria, crops failed, but those who stayed celebrated their southern heritage and their new Brazilian culture. For those who stayed, life was difficult, but over the years, many have sought to uncover the stories of what happened to these Americans. Several books can be found now which tell some of the stories.

One that has always interested me was not from the Brazil connection but that of Mexico. It seems that lots of soldiers were unhappy with the results of the war and made their way to South and Central America. Thomas Cancienne of Company B, 26th Louisiana Regiment, Confederate States of America, was paroled July 7, 1863 in Vicksburg, Mississippi by order of Captain Sam Roper, 56th Regiment Illinois Infantry after giving his solemn oath not to take arms against the United States. Cancienne was not unique in this respect. Hundreds of other former Confederate soldiers were paroled on the same day after taking the same oath.

Cancienne, however, did not return to his home on the bayous in Lafourche Parish, but instead, he made his way somehow to Veracruz, Mexico, and later to San Rafael, 80 miles north of Veracruz. He was not a part of the group that went to Brazil, but his life was of his own choosing, and making his way to Mexico satisfied his desire to get away from the life he had known before the Civil War started.

San Rafael, with its endless fields of sugarcane and its hot tropical climate, must have been reminiscent of Lafourche Parish and Napoleonville in particular. He remained in San Rafael and reared a family of 14 children. Many of Thomas' children spoke a strange dialect of French as well as Spanish.

Thomas Cancienne was a son of Pierre Cancienne of Napoleonville, Louisiana, who was the son of Oliver Cancienne and the grandson of his namesake, Pierre Cancienne, who married Margueritte Landry in Donaldsonville, February 15, 1786. The marriage certificate of Pierre Cancienne and Margueritte Landry (with spellings of Pedro Cansiani and Margarita Landri) lists Pierre's birthplace as Venice, which later became part of Italy in 1866.

Pierre Cancienne (Cansiani, Cancino) fathered Pierre, born in 1790, and Oliver, born in 1800.

The first son, Pierre Cancienne, born in 1790, was the father of Drosin and Theodule of Napoleonville, and Honore, who later moved to Plaquemines Parish.

Drosin's son, Leo Cancienne, owned Hard Times Plantation in Labadieville through which the Cancienne Canal now runs.

The only known Louisiana Cancienne to communicate with Thomas Cancienne in Mexico was Rudolf Cancienne, formerly employed as commercial accounts manager for South Central Bell in New Orleans. Rudolf died on November 20, 1972.

Acelia Cancienne of Veracruz, Mexico managed to re-establish contact with her Louisiana cousins in May of 1972, but she did not contact Rudolf Cancienne prior to his death. Rudolf never married and left no known relatives who may know of the Mexican lineage. After years of silence between the branches of the family, work has started again to try to piece together information on the family lineage.

The last known address for Acelia Cancienne dates to 1980, and the known address for her American contact was an E. Cancienne in Gretna. No further information is available on the continuing work on this lineage, but it is one of the more interesting conflicts to come out of the Civil War.

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ANOTHER LOOK: While going through the donation of books to the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection, I constantly stop just to read or scan once again books that remain important to those researching Louisiana ancestors. Three that caught my interest recently are about Livingston Parish. They also brought back great memories of my work with Gloria Lambert Kerns and Mercy Cambre. Seeing these books about to be cataloged to add to the collection brought back those times from years past when it seems there was more interest in groups working together to provide data for researchers. It is still a goal of many groups to preserve this data, but many of the groups are not as active or don't have the same spirit and interest that I recall in Kerns and Cambre.

***Livingston Parish, Louisiana: The Missing Years* is a nice one from Kerns. The items presented come from a variety of sources. A large number of them are dated between 1832 and 1875. The probate records which are dated 1878 and three years after the courthouse fire, are not listed in the Probate Index at the courthouse and are also missing.**

Old newspapers can provide a window to the past. They give researchers a picture of social, political and economic activities of a given time and place. Unlike many

Louisiana parishes, newspaper files for Livingston Parish are almost non-existent. Papers dated prior to 1912 are few in number and most are just missing. Because of the general lack of information, the items included in this publication were not selected for their content but for the time period they represent. This fills in a gap of missing history for Livingston Parish. The courthouse that burned in October of 1875 was located in Port Vincent and resulted in the loss of all records on the parish level and leaves a gap of 43 years in the parish history.

The soft-cover book from Cambre is *1840 Enumeration Census of Livingston Parish, Louisiana*. Even the foreword tells so much of the history of this parish. Clark Forrest Jr. was involved in the preservation work at this time, and he is still a leader in the continuing work today for this group.

The third book to be donated to the DeSoto Parish collection in Mansfield is *1860 U.S. Census Livingston Parish, Louisiana*, published by the Edward Livingston Historical Association. And there was Cambre's name once again associated with the work. I've worked with many researchers and preservationists over the years, and if I had to name those who have provided so much influence on the continuing preservation efforts for a given area in the state, Mercy Cambre's name would be right up there with the best and most devoted historians for her preservation efforts over the years.

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OUTSTANDING QUARTERLY: The latest *Terrebonne Life Lines* has arrived, and it is again filled with lots of great information for researchers with ties to this part of the state. What makes this one even better is the fact that each issue is indexed and makes searching for data so much easier and quicker.

In addition to the pictures and miscellaneous information, there are many topics that will give a better understanding to research opportunities in the Lafourche and Assumption areas. Gloria Gravois Hicks has presented a colorful story about the history of this area. I found her writing style and the way she told the history of this part of Edgard, Louisiana was really outstanding. From birth records to Civil War veterans' pictures to the Celina Marie Marchand Barden stories, I found this one to be of great interest. You don't find this in many genealogical publications, but the Terrebonne Genealogical Society has found a way to make research and reading more interesting, and they seem to know what researchers are looking for and present it in this delightful format.

Membership in the society is only \$25 per year, but the publication alone is worth this. If you would like to learn more, contact the society at P.O. Box 20295, Houma, LA 70360. Their web site is www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~laterreb/tgs/.

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