

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

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By Damon Veach



SOCIETY MEETING: The March meeting of the Canary Islands Heritage Society of Louisiana welcomed a delegation from the *Los Isleños* Heritage and Cultural Society of Saint Bernard Parish. The delegation, pictured above, consisted of Dorothy “Dot” Benge, William deMarigny Hyland, and Bertin “Bert” Esteves. Dot Benge and Bert Esteves were dressed in traditional Canary Islander costumes. The delegation brought a special invitation to their Baton Rouge brethren to attend the famous *Fiesta de Los Isleños* to be held at the Saint Bernard Museum Complex, 1357 Bayou Road, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana on Saturday, March 19th and Sunday, March 20th. Festivities will be from 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. each day. Crafts, live music, dancing, traditional foods, children’s activities, tours of re-constructed 18th century homes, and more will be offered to visitors, all with a Spanish accent. Visit www.losislenos.org for more festival information. Thanks to Stephen V. Estopinal of Gonzales, Louisiana for submitting this information and picture. Estopinal is the author of *El Tigre de Nueva Orleans* and *Incident at Blood River*.

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NATHANIEL BANKS: Old newspapers contain valuable information for genealogists, and one example that I am donating to the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection in Mansfield, Louisiana is *Moore's Rural New-Yorker: An Agricultural and Family Newspaper*, dated December 6, 1856. It contains an interesting article on the activities in the life of Nathaniel P. Banks prior to his military career that ended at the Battle of Mansfield.

In November of 1862, Banks was asked to organize a force of thirty thousand new recruits, drawn from New York and New England. As a former governor of Massachusetts, he was politically connected to the governors of these states, and the recruitment effort was successful. In December, he sailed from New York with a large force of raw recruits to replace Major General Benjamin Butler at New Orleans as commander of the Department of the Gulf.

According to historian John D. Winters of Louisiana Tech University in Ruston in his book *The Civil War in Louisiana* (1963), "Butler hated Banks and was jealous of his political success and his 'reputation of being the best general selected from civil life.'" Nevertheless, Butler, "swallowing his bitter pill with a show of good grace" welcomed Banks to New Orleans and briefed him on civil and military affairs of importance. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, doubted the wisdom of replacing Butler (a later Massachusetts governor) with Banks. According to historian Winters, "Welles's opinion of the military abilities of both men was very low, but he did not question Butler's skill as a 'police magistrate' in charge of civil affairs. Banks, he thought did not have 'the energy, power or ability of Butler.' He did have 'some ready qualities for civil administration,' but was less reckless and unscrupulous and probably would not be able to hold a tight enough rein on the people" once placed under Union control.

Mrs. Banks joined her husband in New Orleans and held lavish dinner parties for the benefit of Union soldiers and their families. On April 12, 1864, she played the role of the "Goddess of Liberty" surrounded by all of the states of the reunited country. She did not then know of her husband's unhappy fate at the Battle of Mansfield just three days earlier. By July 4, 1864, however, New Orleans had recovered from the Red River Campaign to hold another mammoth concert extolling the Union.

Banks issued orders to his men prohibiting pillage, but the undisciplined troops had chosen to disobey them, particularly when near a prosperous plantation. A soldier of the New York 114th wrote: "The men soon learned the pernicious habit of slyly leaving their places in the ranks when opposite a planter's house. ... Oftentimes a soldier can be found with such an enormous development of the organ of destructiveness that the most severe punishment cannot deter him from indulging in the breaking of mirrors, pianos, and the most costly furniture. Men of such reckless disposition are frequently guilty of the most horrible desecrations."

Under orders to ascend the Mississippi River to join forces with Ulysses S. Grant, who was then trying to capture Vicksburg, Banks first pushed a Confederate force up the Teche Bayou and marched to Alexandria, Louisiana, hauling off slaves, cotton, and cattle from a rich agricultural area.



Nathaniel Banks was killed at the Battle of Mansfield and his army was routed by General Richard Taylor (son of former President Zachary Taylor) and retreated twenty miles to make a stand the next day at the Battle of Pleasant Hill. Pictured above is the statue of Banks at the Battle of Mansfield State Park in DeSoto Parish.

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EARLY RECORDS: When it comes to availability of early records, there is no better source than the Clearfield Company and the Genealogical Publishing Company of Maryland. Since working one of their booths they had in New Orleans many years ago, I have kept up with their work, and most of their books can be found in the collection I've donated to the DeSoto Parish Historical Society.

A List of the Early Settlers of Georgia by E. Merton Coulter and Albert B. Saye is just one example of the excellent source books that are so important for genealogical researchers. This is a list not only of the early settlers of Georgia but of the first settlers of Georgia, and it is apparently a complete list of all those who were sent by

the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America under Oglethorpe and the Earl of Egmont.

Based on the Egmont manuscripts, now in the possession of the University of Georgia, this list of settlers appears under two headings: first, those who went from Europe to Georgia at the Trustees' expense, and, second, those who went on their own account. Covering the period from 1732 to 1741, these two lists together contain the names and details of 3,000 immigrants, most of whom were assigned lots in Savannah and Frederica, and a good number of whom would soon leave the colony for the Carolinas.

Information pertaining to each settler consists, generally, of name, age, occupation, place of origin, names of spouse, children, and other family members as well as dates of embarkation and arrival, place of settlement, and date of death. In addition, some of the more notorious aspects of the settlers' lives are recounted in brief, telltale sketches, which enable the researcher to divine something of the character of the colony and the times.

This Clearfield edition includes E. Merton Coulter's invaluable article on the first shipload of Georgia settlers who sailed on the Anne, November 16, 1732, which was appended to the second printing of this book in the 1967 edition. Priced at \$24.00, postpaid, order from Clearfield Company, 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore, MD 21211.

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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.