

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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BAYOU ST. JOHN: Several years ago, I became acquainted with Mary Louise Johnson, one of Louisiana's unsung heroes when it comes to recording and preserving the history that we all love. I haven't heard from her in quite some time, but in preparing documents and books to be donated to the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection in DeSoto Parish, I came across a typed manuscript called *Bayou St. John* that is just one of the best I've read in quite some time. The last time I talked to her was when she mentioned this, and I don't know if she ever had it published or not.

Bayou St. John is really exactly as she describes it. It is New Orleans own historic little waterway that has contributed so much to the history of this city. This is the waterway that you cross if you are traveling down Esplanade Avenue from the Mississippi River and toward City Park. As you come over the bridge, you will see the statue of a famous civil war soldier, General Pierre Toutant Beauregard, poised on horseback and looking toward the bayou.

As Mary Louise Johnson notes in her introduction, there is so much that could be learned by studying this little waterway. Before the French arrived, there were the Indians who lived along the banks in huts made from palmetto leaves and poles taken from the surrounding swamps. At the time, there were huge cypress trees laden with moss hanging over these muddy banks and many wild persimmon trees, a golden fruit relished by the Indians.

This encampment of Indians was in the area that we now know as City Park. They named this narrow stream Bayuk Tchoupicatcha or Bayou Tchoupic (the great creek). This is a little tributary off Lake Pontchartrain, and when they discovered it, they realized it was a shorter route to the Mississippi River. They cleared a path leading through the woods, and this ancient trail became known as Old Bayou Road.

It was these Indians who helped Canadian hunters and trappers and later explorers Iberville and Bienville. In fact, Bienville established the city of New Orleans here at the crescent bend of the river. In 1699, Iberville established Bayou St. Jean as a colony for France with lands being granted out for plantations. In 1701, the French built a small log house fort on an elevated mound on its west bank which would serve to defend the entrance to the bayou. This Fort St. Jean protected the people here for over a hundred years.

The area prospered with slaves coming from Africa, Canary Islands, West Indies and the Congo. Early crops were indigo, rice, potatoes, wheat, beans and cattle, but wheat was the most important crop. The Indians grew tobacco, which later became a French export.

The Village of St. Jean was established in 1719, and businesses and storage houses were built to store and protect goods. In 1730, over three hundred Germans came from the Alsace Lorraine coming by way of Bayou St. Jean to the Mississippi River and eventually settling upriver from New Orleans in what came to be known as the German Coast – La Cote des Allemands.

In this great little manuscript, Mary Louise Johnson explains the hardships due to floods, storms, heat, and diseases, especially yellow fever, small pox, and cholera. She goes into details on other hardships that most people would never think of unless they are into checking out a given area for genealogical research.

She tells of slave uprisings, voodoo, changes of ownership of land, the French periods, then the Spanish period, and the intermarriage of the French and Spanish to create the Creole culture that is still famous in the city of New Orleans today. Spanish architecture, French language, and an introduction to Marie Laveau are all contained in this manuscript.

Mary Louise Johnson is an authority on early life in Louisiana, especially in the southern part of the state. Her previous books are all now a part of the Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection, and this manuscript will also be added to this library located in the Mansfield Female College Museum, Mansfield, Louisiana. The entire Veach genealogical and historical collection has been donated to the DeSoto Parish Historical Society. This massive collection is available by appointment to those wishing to do research on their family lineage.

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NATCHITOCHEs CONNECTION: Another book from the Winston De Ville collection which should prove to be an excellent research tool for those with ancestors in Natchitoches is called *Natchitoches Documents 1733 – 1785*. This is a calendar of civil records from Fort Saint Jean Baptiste in the French and Spanish Province of Louisiana.

The calendar of Natchitoches records transcribed by De Ville covers the center of the French and Spanish period. Many of the records here are no longer extant, and this means researchers may find this to be the only evidence concerning an event or transaction in question.

Included are land sales, petitions, partnership agreements, sequestrations, proclamations and numerous other acts coming before the post's commandant and notary. It is interesting and important from a genealogical standpoint because of the mentions of marriage contracts, apprenticeships, and succession-related acts.

This is just another of the excellent contributions that De Ville has made over the years to locating, copying, and, in many cases, preserving these documents. This

book presents a primary source document that will interest anyone with ties to the Natchitoches Post. Natchitoches served as the primary gateway into Spanish-dominated Texas. It was Louis Juchereau de St. Denis who used his influence to tap into a lucrative trading opportunity that this location offered.

This book is available from Claitor's Publishing for \$33.50.

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EXCELLENT PUBLICATION: One of the more interesting sections of the latest publication from the Louisiana Genealogical & Historical Society is the section on Canarian/Spanish surnames and how to pronounce them in Louisiana. Jean Hodgeson Nauman has included a list of Canarian surnames in Louisiana. *The Louisiana Genealogical Register* is always filled with original material, and this issue is really nice.

I was also impressed with the presentation of the Reverend Peter Moriarty information from Donald Peter Moriarty II. The Reverend Peter Moriarty was born April 27, 1758 and died June 23, 1814.

Also included in this issue is information on early Veillon and Aubert families, a look at Pierre Georges Rousseau, a Revolutionary War hero, and miscellaneous data and queries. Membership in this society, which includes the publication, is \$25.00 per year, and Mary G. McKeough is editor of *The Louisiana Genealogical Register*. The contact address is P.O. Box 82060, Baton Rouge, LA 70884-2060. You can reach the recording secretary Barbara Comeaux Strickland at bcomeaux@aol.com.

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CEMETERY LISTINGS: There are many old cemeteries in the state of Louisiana that are lost in time. Others are located periodically. Many are gone from records forever. I have always encouraged researchers to make sure a given cemetery had been copied and logged in with the proper parish officials. There are always discoveries of old cemeteries, but it is then that a thorough copying of the data on the headstones should be done.

In fact, I have an old map showing the location of the known cemeteries in DeSoto Parish. I can state as a fact that it is an incomplete listing. In my own personal research and in talking with older members of my family when I was younger, I added to this old map. I'm not sure if any updated maps have been issued. However, over the years, I have located and copied burials in cemeteries in DeSoto and Claiborne parishes. It was with this in mind that I discovered an article I had clipped from the Interstate Progress in Logansport, Louisiana on August 5, 1970.

The small article was called "Forgotten," and it was written by the late Ima Jean Blackmon Cash. It tells of an old cemetery behind her parents' home on the now Cash-Blackmon Road where several pioneers of the Cool Springs Community are buried. There are six graves with monuments dating back to 1878. This burying place was known by some as the Horn Graveyard. Nearby is the old home place of W.H. and Harriet Horn, who are among those resting in this cemetery. Their tombstone inscriptions are W.H. Horn, 1801-1889 and Harriet Horn, 1803-1878. (They originally lived in Edgecomb, North Carolina and left there for Georgia in 1835, moving to Alabama in 1845. From here they moved to DeSoto Parish and what later became the Cool Springs community in 1850. They were the first Primitive Baptists in the community.)

The name on one of the markers, according to Mrs. Cash, was McNeese, and it was covered with a shelter (still standing at that time) put together with wooden pegs instead of nails and covered with wooden shingles. Other inscriptions here are: Pheby Horn, daughter of W.H. and Harriett, 1824 – 1890; F.L. Hickey, 1834 – 1908; Susane Hickey, 1838 – 1916; and R.E. McNeese, wife of F.M. McNeese, 1849 – 1888.

It was nice to see this article filed away. The Horn and McNeese families are my ancestors. The others are buried in the Cool Springs Cemetery a short distance away on the Marshall Road, six miles north of Logansport. They are all here with the Foshee, Veach, Galbreath, Adams, and Sinclair families. Others are at Belle Bower, a short distance north of here.

There is still so much to do and so little time, as a friend of mine always says. I'm told of another Foshee cemetery I'd like to find, and I know of a Smith Cemetery, another family related to my Foshee lineage and where Morris Smith Foshee earned his name.

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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.