

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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By Damon Veach

RESEARCH REWARDS: Researching family lineages is a time-consuming study, but it is also very rewarding and educational. There are many difficulties occurring along the way, but with a strong desire to learn about the past, these rewards are well worth the time spent to uncover the data.

Research involves studying records in all the states where your ancestors lived, and with so much being made available online today, the tasks become a lot easier. Of course, you may still want to travel to different areas to search out different research facilities, but you can also find lots of clues in cemeteries, newspaper files, court houses, and even in the vast numbers of genealogical collections in libraries in every state. A research vacation is an option here, and you can experience part of your past by making an appearance in the areas where your ancestors lived.

In the case of some research, records of a particular period of time can be difficult to locate. This is especially true if you live on a state line. Take my immediate family for instance. I was born near the Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas lines where they emerge at a community called Three States. I was born in Louisiana in the community of Zylks, but my parents were married in Center, Texas, some of our family reunions were in Logan, Texas, and my dad owned a business in Three States. We even drove to Atlanta, Texas and Texarkana Texas/Arkansas for shopping as well as Rodessa, Vivian, and Shreveport in Louisiana. It was an interesting undertaking to discover where the numerous records were located. You may find the situation applies to you too depending on where your ancestors lived.

This is why I became acquainted with research in Texas and particularly at the Texas State Archives. Of course, this would also apply to my own marriage which took place at the Robert Carr Chapel on the Texas Christian University campus in Fort Worth, Texas. However, Texas isn't the only place I had to do extensive study in order to find my personal records. As you go back in time, you will find other instances where more than one state or parish/county might be involved. You just have to learn where relatives were and what is available for future research.

The collection in the Texas State Archives is excellent, and like most major research facilities with genealogical collections, the census records are extremely important. I highly recommend this as the starting point for most research especially if you don't know complete details on your immediate family. First of all, search out their online catalog for guidance in finding what is available. This will save you a lot of time.

One of my original reference sources was the old card file systems. I found so much there and think a lot of the facilities still have these, or at least they have been microfilmed and still available for your use.

Next, I would search out the vital statistics indexes. These are important genealogical resources for you. Even though you may not be able to see the actual certificates, you will have access to selected indexes of Texas births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. These indexes are available for on-site use.

It is always wise to check out Confederate pension applications too. These provide the name, county of residence, and pension number for approvals, rejections, and home pensions issued by the Texas government from 1899 to 1975.

Texas Adjutant General Service Records from 1836 to 1935 are found here too. This series combines both official service record files from the Adjutant General's Office and alphabetical files created by other agencies which contain records related to an individual's service in a military unit. The database provides the name, the military organization, and the call number. Note that the listing does not include the names of all persons who served in Texas military organizations. It indexes only the names of persons who have files in this record series.

The Republic Claims series is now available in digital form as well as microfilm. It includes claims for payment, reimbursement, or restitution submitted by citizens to the Republic of Texas government from 1835 through 1846. It also includes records relating to Republic pensions and claims against the Republic submitted as public debt claims after 1846.

In another Civil War related list is the names of families that received aid through the 1863 "Act to Support the Families and Dependents of Texas Soldiers."

The Texas County Tax Rolls are on microfilm and are available for on-site use from the early years of each county through the late 1970s. Also on microfilm is the index of county records. They even have a system set up for interlibrary loan. Although these microfilm records are housed in depository libraries throughout Texas, the genealogy collection houses the film for the following counties: Atascosa, Bandera, Bastrop, Bexar, Blanco, Caldwell, Comal, Frio, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Hays, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Kinney, Llano, McMullen, Medina, Uvalde, and Wilson.

Even selected Texas city directories are available on-site. In July of 2001, the collection of past Texas telephone directories merged with the Center for American History, available for use in the reading room there in Austin.

Newspaper records are always great research aids, and this can be done on site or by interlibrary loan of the microfilm.

On March 23, 1867, Congress passed legislation that called for a registration of qualified voters in each military district. The text of this legislation can be found in the Statutes at Large in Volume 15, page 2. The commanding officer in each district was required to have a list of these voters from each county. These lists would be used to determine all who would be eligible to vote for any proposed Constitutional Convention in the state.

Texas convict records are another excellent source of individual descriptions and information regarding their incarceration. This series is available only on microfilm and may be viewed on-site or by interlibrary loan.

The last important group of records you may want to check in the Texas Archives is the Republic of Texas passports. The collection of 55 documents has been digitized and a complete listing of names is available.

This doesn't mean there aren't more records, so by all mean check out what is available. It is much better if you plan ahead before visiting a research facility. Take you known data to a given area, and go forward with your research. The path you take at first will determine whether you have success in researching a given facility. Plan ahead. Don't waste your time by being unprepared. How much you learn depends on this early planning of your time.

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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.