

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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MORE RESEARCH NOTES: As more and more genealogical research moves to the internet, genealogical societies are establishing an online presence. Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane is one of many Louisiana genealogical societies with its own website (<http://www.lecomite.org>). Most of these are simple pages with general information about the organization, while others are more elaborate. Larger groups such as Le Comité are taking advantage of the many online tools available to not only promote their society, but to provide educational material and to interact with the public.

Last year, Le Comité added a Members' Page where it maintains a library of Parish Research Guides, Finding Aids, Out-of-Print Articles from its quarterly journal *Le Raconteur*, Book Indexes, and other files about the organization. Access to these PDF files is free to members with a logon ID and password. Non-members may also purchase selected files from the organization. Prices range from \$1.25 to \$10 per file based on the number of pages. A price list is available on the website <http://www.lecomite.org/members.html>.

This past spring, the group added a new feature to the public section of its website. *Document of the Month* features interesting and significant images from the holdings of the Louisiana State Archives. These include photographs, original manuscripts, microfilm copies of documents, and maps. June's document was an 1812 land survey at Grand Prairie and July's is a 1799 French marriage record.

More recently, Le Comité established a Facebook page where it has begun posting news and happenings in the world of Louisiana genealogy. Readers are encouraged to "Like" the new page at <http://www.facebook.com/LeComitedesArchives>.

Check out this large and active group. Their dues are a very reasonable \$20 per year, considering all the benefits of membership. For more information, contact Judy Riffel at riffelj@bellsouth.net.

Not all societies have websites that are as good as Le Comite, but they seem to have better control of their data by remaining more independent in what they do as a non-profit organization. You can find these other society locations if you call up their official names on the internet. Many fall under the rootsweb listings. You can also find these listings in their publications. In reviews of the Louisiana societies, I have always listed their online contact sources. For instance, the Southwest Louisiana Genealogical Society website is:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~laslgs/swlgs.htm>

With more and more groups getting away from printed materials, the internet keeps gaining in importance. In a way, this is sad. There are so many researchers that just do not have computers. This gets back to how important library collections can mean to these individuals. Even now with so many books being online, I like the old-fashioned way of holding a book in my hand, but I can also check the same material online. Not all researchers can do this.

If you look at all this in another way, not all genealogy books are online. You still have to either buy or check them out in the major research facilities. I'm sure that someday most books and newspapers will be online, but so many genealogy books were originally privately printed in small numbers, and this may pose a major problem in the process. Therefore, checking out these books in libraries or major genealogical collections may be the only way to locate material that is important in your own family research.

In the past three columns, I have stressed how important the various records are, and it seems that the subject is endless. Once you find a clue, you immediately head in another direction to find the next link you need to complete your research. In all of this, I hope you have been writing down the titles of all the books you have checked out. Otherwise, you may be going back and doing the research all over again.

This is another reason for checking out what has been written about a given surname before you really become involved in your own family research. There just isn't any reason to do something that has already been recorded. However, along the way when you have become accustomed to doing your own research, you may come across something that needs to be checked out further. In other words, be accurate in all that you record. You may find that others before you haven't been quite as accurate.

Reading records can be very difficult at times. When you see something in a book relating to your family, it may give you cause to check into the material further. Some researchers are careless. It's just a fact. Just make sure whatever you learn or record comes out to be either corrected or noted in your own research files. The sad thing is that once it is in print, it is assumed by most people to be fact. This is definitely not always the case. Just document, and do it to the very best of your ability.

Along with recording the books, newspapers, or periodicals you may have studied in your research, be sure to log where these can be found. You may have located something in a courthouse in a neighboring parish, and later on, this same material may be needed for more research. You need to know exactly where to go to check this out.

This applies to correspondence too. Make sure you have a folder that is expandable so that you can file away letters, documents, and notes that could be valuable later

on. I can still go into my files now and learn a lot that I really didn't understand when I first filed it away. Even in some of the books I've added about my different surnames, I can always go back and learn more. What doesn't make sense at first will be perfectly clear after you have delved into your research and studied your findings. It is like a giant puzzle, and the pieces fall into place sometimes quickly but in many cases years later.

Genealogical research is not something that can be rushed. You have to take time to comprehend what you have learned. That is why recording all your sources are so important. You will not be able to remember all of what you have done over the years, but with the proper filing system, you have a better chance of collecting that missing puzzle piece.

Does it ever end? I have to say that it doesn't. What we can't find right away is just a challenge that we put away for a time and come back to it later on. Time is important, and planning ahead is what you definitely need to do. If you are planning a trip to do research, take notes of what you need to do and try to follow a plan. You can waste a lot of valuable time if you don't have a plan of what you want to accomplish.

When the plan involves travel, this is even more important. Your entire trip could be totally uneventful if you haven't planned what you want to do. After years of research, you can still do things that you didn't when you first started. If you have never been to the Mormon facility in Salt Lake City, you really need to do this. It is an experience that could possibly fill in so many links in your ancestry. Even with the internet and local libraries with inter-library loans, a visit to this Utah archival facility is just an awesome experience.

Whatever it takes, get to know your family. If you possibly can, go to where they lived and worked, where they died and are buried. No book or internet service can give you this kind of experience. Make it happen.

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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 can be any length, and book reviews are printed as space permits, and you are encouraged to take advantage of this free service. All genealogical/historical/preservation books are reviewed in this column format, but a review copy is necessary for this service. Another service is offered here too. 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. It is a way to get out-of-print books back into the system and definitely is a great assistance to genealogists who may need this information.