

CAJUNS, CREOLES, PIRATES AND PLANTERS

Your New Louisiana Ancestors Format

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CONTINUING RESEARCH: Although the internet has made research into family history easier, there are still archival collections that offer books filled with data not available online. This requires a lot of reading and browsing of materials, but it pays off for any serious researcher. Because I wanted my collection to be available to researchers, I decided to donate my massive collection of books to the DeSoto Parish Historical Society in Mansfield, Louisiana. It is an ongoing project, and I continue to learn and re-discover things in my background that I had overlooked or just had failed to locate in my own collection.

In my latest group of donations, researchers at the Mansfield Female College Museum's Veach-Foshee Memorial Library Collection will find a wealth of data in a double volume of material by Raymond S. Wright III. *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs* is an outstanding two-volume set. My complaint with the books would be the small print, but the books are so massive that it would take five volumes or more to spread it out into normal print-size for the normal reader.

This is a gazetteer describing approximately 210,000 cities, towns, hamlets, and dwelling places in the German Empire prior to World War I. To use it effectively, readers must understand its purpose, be able to interpret the Gothic font in which it is printed, and grasp how the information contained in locality entries will guide researchers to records in today's archives, record offices, and libraries.

It was published to assist government officials, merchants, and others in the identification of public services, governmental agencies, educational and religious institutions, and transportation and business facilities in each community. The entries are highly abbreviated, and the editor depended upon these abbreviations and punctuation to communicate a large number of facts about each locality.

The gazetteer provides headings for all named dwelling places in the German Empire. Independent communities (those with their own governments) are described in individual entries. Dependent localities, those under the jurisdiction of another community, normally have a one-line entry with a reference to the community to which they belong.

The Family History Library in Salt Lake City has a large collection of state and regional gazetteers from Germany. Many of these gazetteers are available on microfilm/microfiche and can be ordered at local LDS Family History Centers.

This two-volume set helps genealogists and other researchers discover the agencies that created records about people who lived in Germany. Because locality entries describe the government, court, and military jurisdictions of Germany, researchers can use this information to isolate the location of each community's records in

modern archives or government offices. This same information helps researchers determine whether original records are available on microfilm/microfiche at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, and at LDS Family History Centers worldwide.

Religious records, in particular records of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial, are found in the various parish jurisdictions noted in the work. The parish continues to be the basic unit of church government for Germany's dominant religions - Evangelical Lutheran and Roman Catholic - and most of their records remain in the custody of local churches or in larger ecclesiastical archives. Many of these parish records have been microfilmed by the LDS Church and are available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City or in Family History Centers throughout the country.

Much the same is true of court records and military records, the former containing details of probates, school records, records of births, marriages, and deaths, and civil suits; the latter containing important personal information about an individual: name, birth date, birthplace, marriage date and place, spouses' name, names of dependents, and service record. Again, using the locality tools provided by this gazetteer, the researcher can quickly determine if the records are held on microfilm/microfiche by the LDS Church.

In summing up the merits of this monumental work, it can be safely said that it is the best tool available to help genealogists identify the agencies and jurisdictions that created records about people who lived in Germany. Because the locality entries describe the government, court, religious, and military jurisdictions of Germany, researchers can use this information to identify the location of each community's records in modern archives or government offices. The same information helps researchers determine whether original records are available on microfilm or microfiche at the Family History Library and at LDS Family History Centers worldwide.

This work by Wright is still available from the Genealogical Publishing Company of Maryland, and it is available for \$300 plus shipping. This is definitely an important contribution to research, and major library collections should have this available for researchers, but it is not something I would recommend for a private library. Check with your local genealogical library to see if it is available, and if it isn't, then see what can be obtained through the local LDS Church.

You can learn more about Wright's work by going to www.genealogical.com to see what else is available on German research.

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NEWSPAPER RESEARCH: When doing family research, do not overlook the importance of newspapers in tracking down missing ancestors. There are lots of

books in print with abstracts from newspapers, so the information is available. You just have to locate it. An example of this can be found in *Genealogical Abstracts from 18th Century Virginia Newspapers* by Robert K. Headley Jr.

This is an exceptionally thorough work, for it contains genealogical abstracts from more than 7,000 issues of eighty newspapers printed in Virginia in the 18th century. In addition, where there were gaps in the Virginia papers, newspapers from nearby states were scanned for Virginia material. In selecting items to abstract, Dr. Headley looked especially for those that gave at least two pieces of genealogical data: age and place of residence, for example, date of death and names of executors, or name of spouse and place of residence.

The data provided came from marriage notices, death notices, estate sales and settlements, advertisements for runaways - usually servants, apprentices, slaves, or deserters - and court cases. Information furnished in the abstracts varies from item to item, of course. Marriage notices, death notices, and estate settlements usually provide details on next of kin, occupation, and place of residence, while notices for runaways tend to be the juiciest of all. They can provide minute descriptions down to the manner of wearing the hair, tattoos, personality, and clothing, and they sometimes give place of birth, age, date imported, name of ship on which imported, occupation, and suspected destination.

But the chief thing is that this work draws together all genealogical data in 18th-century Virginia newspapers, which is in itself a stupendous achievement. Thanks to Dr. Headley's labors, we now have abstracts of approximately 10,000 items of a genealogical nature found in 18th-century Virginia papers, and an index to an additional 10,000 persons mentioned in the notices. If you've hit a dead-end in your Virginia research, this may be the way out.

It is available in soft-cover format for \$46.50, plus \$5.50 for shipping and handling, from Genealogical Publishing Company, 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore, MD, 21211.

On a local level of research, Judy Riffel is an authority on early Louisiana newspapers, and you can learn more about her work by going to the Le Comite des Archives de la Louisiane website – www.lecomite.org/.

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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.