

LOUISIANA ARCHIVES & MANUSCRIPTS ASSOCIATION

LAMA NEWSLETTER

ARCHIVES NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

SPRING/SUMMER 2013

New Digital Collections from the Loyola University New Orleans University Archives



Students on Loyola sign in front of Marquette Hall. Left to right are Pat Born, A&S sophomore, Buddy Birch, BA sophomore, and Ann Parham, A&S sophomore.

The J. Edgar & Louise S. Monroe Library at Loyola University New Orleans has recently undertaken two exciting new digitization projects from the University Archives.

The entire print archive of the school's newspaper, *The Maroon*, is now available online in the Louisiana Digital Library. *The Maroon* was first published on November 1, 1923 by members of the newly formed BEGGARS (Beta Epsilon Gamma Gamma Alpha Rho Sigma) fraternity, the first Jesuit fraternity in the United States, under the supervision of director of student activities Fr. Francis L. Janssen, S.J. Since its inception the paper has won numerous local and national student journalism awards including most recently the Society of Professional Journalists "Mark of Excellence Award" and the Associate of Collegiate Press Pacemaker Award. The papers aren't just of interest to those looking for the history of Loyola--as artifacts of almost one hundred years of history they also contain drawings and advertisements, sports news, photos of students, faculty, and staff, and more.

Special Collections & Archives (SC&A) has almost 1700 issues of *The Maroon*, but frequent use combined with the age of the

newspapers has led to deterioration over the years. Allowing users access to the newspapers online means less handling of the papers and, therefore, less potential damage. Fundraising for this project started in 2009 and completed in the spring of 2012. The Maroons were shipped to the digitization vendor, Backstage Library Works, in July 2012. BLW microfilmed each issue, then scanned the microfilm and coordinated with OCLC to upload the digitized objects to Loyola's CONTENTdm digital library consortium, the Louisiana Digital Library. The digitized newspapers are fully searchable and were created using article segmentation.

In addition, SC&A is now undergoing its first attempt at minimal processing through large-scale digitization. The Loyola University New Orleans University Photographs Collection is comprised of photographs dating back to the early 20th century. Early photographs include some taken by famed New Orleans photographer E.J. Bellocq. Since 1949, the university has employed an official photographer, including Russ Cresson from 1949-87, Tracy Smith from 1987-89, and Harold Baquet since 1989. Photographs from the Dr. Edward Wynne Photograph Collection are also included. Dr. Edward W. Wynne was an Arts & Science graduate of Loyola University in 1939. According to his son, Michael D. Wynne, Dr. Wynne was the school's photographer during the late 1930s. The University Photographs Collection is unprocessed and unwieldy. Rather than attempting to impose an organization on the tens of thousands of photos—most of which have no identifying information—the photos are digitized and then rehoused in the order in which they're found, assigned an identifying number, and the digital objects added to the CONTENTdm collection.

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Coming Attractions: Meetings, Workshops, Seminars, Announcements

2013 Annual Meeting: Call for Papers and Planning Committee

Planning for the 2013 LAMA Annual Meeting has started and the LAMA leadership would like your help. The meeting will be held at Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport and is scheduled for Friday, October 18. Chris Brown is coordinating the efforts and seeks two to three individuals to form an ad hoc committee to assist with program planning.

An official call for papers will be distributed this summer, but all ideas for panel discussions, guest speakers, or other activities are welcome. Volunteers, potential presenters, or those with suggestions for the event should contact Chris Brown at cbrown@centenary.edu or 318.869.5462.



Chris Brown

Workshop: Care and Identification of Photographs (from daguerreotypes to digital)

December 3-6, 2013: Hosted by The Historic New Orleans Collection (New Orleans, LA).

What are the defining characteristics of individual photographic processes? How does environment affect the lives of photographic objects? In this 4-day intensive workshop, you will develop identification skills and knowledge about fine art and historic photographic processes, from the daguerreotype to digital prints. This workshop is intended for curators, collectors, archivists, collection managers, and anyone who studies or appreciates photographic prints.

The registration fee for this 4-day workshop is \$795 (STUDENT PRICE \$645) and includes a handheld microscope and a workshop notebook with lecture handouts, Quick ID Sheets for each process, and a selection of readings on photograph preservation. The Basic Photographic Sample Set, consisting of 18 identified photographic and photomechanical processes, is available with registration for \$75. Due to the hands-on nature of this workshop, the number of participants will be limited to 14.

The Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA), a certifying organization of professional archivists, will award 15 Archival Recertification Credits (ARCs) to eligible Certified Archivists (CAs) attending this workshop. The American Society of Appraisers and the International Society of Appraisers will award 24 recertification hours/professional development credits for qualified appraisers attending this workshop.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS AND ONLINE REGISTRATION:

<http://gawainweaver.com/workshop/care-id-photos-2013-neworleans/>

Gawain Weaver
Photograph Conservator
tel 415.446.9138
info@gawainweaver.com

LAMA Scholarships Available

LAMA offers scholarships (a maximum of \$300) designed to provide funding for continuing education. All professional archivists, support staff, and students who are members of LAMA are eligible. Preference is given to candidates who have not previously received the award, and who have limited access to institutional funding. The scholarship may be used to attend a workshop, a conference, a seminar, or other archival educational program. This award is intended to recognize commitment to the profession. Recipients should note that monies must be used within one year of the award date. Furthermore, recipients are expected to prepare a report for the LAMA Newsletter describing the event attended.

To apply, send a letter describing the continuing education event you wish to attend, how it will enhance your work, and why you need outside funding. Include an estimated budget in the application letter. The application letter may be mailed or emailed to:

Chris Brown, Archivist
Centenary College of Louisiana
2911 Centenary Blvd.
Shreveport, LA 71104
cbrown@centenary.edu

ARCHIVES 2013 NEW ORLEANS

AUGUST 11-17

CoSA & SAA • JOINT ANNUAL MEETING

Make CONNECTIONS. LEARN. Get INSPIRED.

ARCHIVES 2013 / NEW ORLEANS, the premier educational event for archives and records management professionals, is your best opportunity all year to Make CONNECTIONS, LEARN, and GET INSPIRED....

Make CONNECTIONS! Meet face-to-face with your colleagues in a unique conference experience that includes....

SAA Section and Roundtable meetings and CoSA work sessions that **get you in tune with others who share your special interests and challenges....**

Special Networking Events – from the Leadership Orientation and Forum to the New Member/First Timer Orientation and Forum, the All-Attendee Reception, and alumni mixers – provide **opportunities for archivists across the spectrum of experience to compare notes, interact with session speakers, and catch up with colleagues.**

The Networking Café – a place to meet up... talk to representatives of allied organizations, recruiters, and volunteer career advisors... review literature and job vacancy announcements... post your résumé... or check your email at the CyberCafé.

Take a chance! Introduce yourself to someone whose knowledge and skills could benefit your institution's next project!

LEARN! ARCHIVES 2013 brings you...

Diverse perspectives from experienced professionals and newcomers to the field – all of whom are excited about sharing their knowledge....

Thought-provoking and informative plenary sessions....

70 Education Sessions – developed specifically for archives professionals – in which speakers share innovative practices and provide practical tips that you can put to use as soon as you return to work – and thought leaders discuss research and theory that advance your profession to new heights....

New learning formats – from the EAD Hackathon (on Monday) and CURATEcamp (on Tuesday) to the Poster Pitch (on Thursday) and lightning sessions throughout the conference – all designed to provide fun new ways to learn....

In-depth coverage of an archival topic of special interest to you at Pre-Conference Programs....

Open forums and brown bag lunches at which to **exchange ideas** about advocacy, diversity, the ICA Principles on Access, the work of SHRABs, SAA's draft Strategic Plan, and so much more....

See the preliminary program here: <http://files.archivists.org/conference/nola2013/Preliminary-Program-2013.pdf>

Logging Information: Hilton New Orleans Riverside

https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=10416326

Registration Information: <http://www2.archivists.org/conference/2013/new-orleans/registration-fees>

Early Bird Registration Deadline: July 5

Hotel Reservation/Conference Rate Deadline: July 15

Host Committee Blog: <http://www.gnoarchivists.org/category/cosa-saa13/>

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The digital collection thus works as a finding aid as all known information about the photographs is contained in the item metadata. Users who want to work with the original photos can request access by using the identifying number assigned during the digitization process. Bare-bones description of the photos is provided in the metadata and drawn from a list of LOC Subject Headings, and as the metadata is fully searchable users can search the digital collection for subjects, dates, or other identifying information.

The first batch of photographs was uploaded to CONTENTdm in November 2012, and the digital collection already contains over 1200 photos. SC&A is attempting to crowd-source description of the photos by inviting identification from the Loyola community to enrich item metadata. Comments may be posted in the item record in CONTENTdm or e-mailed to archives@loyno.edu.

The Maroon and the University Photographs Collection join Loyola's Wolf yearbooks and the Loyola University Bulletins online as SC&A works towards greater exposure and availability of its University Archives. All four collections can be accessed through the Loyola University New Orleans Digital Archives webpage at <http://library.loyno.edu/research/digital/>.

Elizabeth Kelly



First page of the May 27, 1927 Maroon newspaper

“Of Kin and Cane” Exhibit and Symposium at Hill Highlights Papers of Edward J. Gay Family



From left: John Gay, Co-owner of St. Louis Planting and Vice-President, E.J. Gay Planting and Manufacturing Company; E. Phelps Gay, President, E.J. Gay Planting and Manufacturing Company; Tara Laver, Interim Head of Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library; Kenneth Gravois, Ph.D., Sugarcane Specialist with the LSU Ag Center; Richard Follett, Ph.D., Reader in American History, University of Sussex

Though the ink has long dried on countless pages of correspondence, penned by many hands over several generations in the Edward J. Gay family, the experiences these documents record come to life for the reader even today. The saga of an influential Louisiana family, rooted literally and figuratively in the cultivation of sugar cane for almost two centuries, is explored in the new exhibition “Of Kin and Cane: Selections from the Edward J. Gay and Family Papers.”

The display, presented by LSU Libraries Special Collections, showcases historical documents ranging from the Louisiana territorial period through the Progressive era that depict multiple generations of the Gay family and reflect their involvement in state and national politics, business, and sugar cane cultivation. It will be on view in Hill Memorial Library on the LSU campus, March 18 to July 6, 2013.

A symposium, also entitled “Of Kin and Cane,” was held Sunday, March 24 in Hill Memorial Library. The meeting offered an opportunity for history scholars and agriculture specialists and practitioners to explore historical aspects of sugar research, technology, and plantation management, as well as current day practices of a family sugar concern that has been in continuous operation for close to 200 years. Speakers included Kenneth Gravois, Ph.D., Sugarcane Specialist with the LSU Ag Center; Richard Follett, Ph.D., Reader in American History, University of Sussex; John Gay, Co-owner St. Louis Planting and Vice-President of E.J. Gay Planting and Manufacturing Company; and E. Phelps Gay, President, E.J. Gay Planting and Manufacturing Company.

The Gay family collection is one of the most significant groups of papers among Special Collections’ archival holdings. It has been used extensively in important works on enslaved and post-Civil War free labor, plantation economy, and the sugar industry, and offers a myriad of potential topics for research. The exhibit also features clothing and other artifacts associated with the family that are held by the LSU School of Human Ecology Textile and Costume Museum.

Perhaps what is so engaging about the Edward J. Gay and Family Papers is the multi-generational character of the collection and how those generations reflect the times in which they lived—the panoply of American, and in particular southern, history played out in the life of a family. Historical themes such as westward expansion, plantation society, the development of sugar cultivation and commerce in Louisiana, the Civil War and its lingering economic, political, and social aftermath, and the Progressive era and World War I are all illustrated in the story of this family and the documentation they left behind. Besides these weighty events, family joys and sorrows and the human experiences common to all times and places are also found among the papers of this close-knit, very prosperous circle of kin—births, deaths, heartbreaks, weddings, celebrations, travels, financial uncertainty, and familial relationships.

At the center of the collection are Lavinia Hynes and Edward J. Gay. Born in Virginia in 1816 and an established St. Louis merchant, Gay came to Louisiana as a result of his marriage in 1840 to Lavinia Hynes, daughter of Andrew Hynes, a Nashville merchant who, through his own marriage, inherited part of Home Plantation in Iberville Parish, near Plaquemine. (Much as Gay would, Hynes played a large part in managing the agricultural and financial affairs of his father-in-law, Joseph Erwin, who had established Home; both Hynes and Erwin and their families also figure prominently in the collection.) Andrew Hynes died in 1849, and Gay eventually bought out the interests of the other heirs, built a new, grand residence on the place, and changed its name to St. Louis Plantation.

A skilled businessman and effective plantation manager, Gay built up a network of real estate and sugar growing, processing, and selling operations that employed his sons and sons-in-law and connected his ongoing interests in Missouri, Iberville Parish and the surrounding area, and New Orleans. In 1884, Gay was elected as a Democrat to represent Louisiana’s Third District in the House of Representatives, defeating former Reconstruction-era Governor William Pitt Kellogg in a contentious race. He served in Congress until his death in 1889. Lavinia died in 1891.

“Of Kin and Cane” continued on page 5

News from Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane

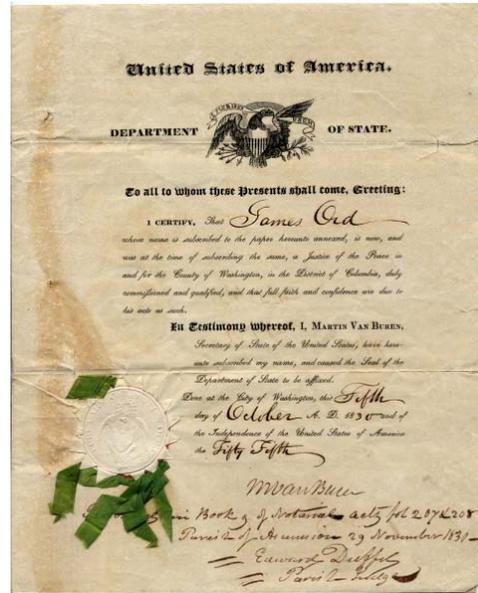
Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane and its African American Special Interest Group will hold its second "Ask the Experts" program on Saturday, June 1st, in the Research Room at the State Archives. This program will focus on African American genealogical research. Experts will be on hand to help members with the Freedmen's Bureau records, Catholic church records, vital records, and other records at the State Archives.

Judy Riffel recently compiled an inventory of two boxes of Ascension Parish civil records at the State Archives. The inventory will be published in an upcoming issue of the society's quarterly journal, *Le Raconteur*. She found several interesting items in the collection including a document signed by future President of the United States, Martin Van Buren.

The society will hold its Annual Meeting on Sunday, September 29, 2013, in Baton Rouge. Details will be posted on the website (www.lecomite.org).

Certification signed by Martin Van Buren, Secretary of State of the United States, in 1830 that James Ord was a Justice of the Peace for the County of Washington, District of Columbia. The document accompanied a power of attorney from Nicolas P. Trist to H.B. Trist drawn up by Ord in Washington, D.C. Van Buren would later become President of the United States. The documents were found in a collection of Ascension Parish miscellaneous records at the Louisiana State Archives.

Judy Riffel



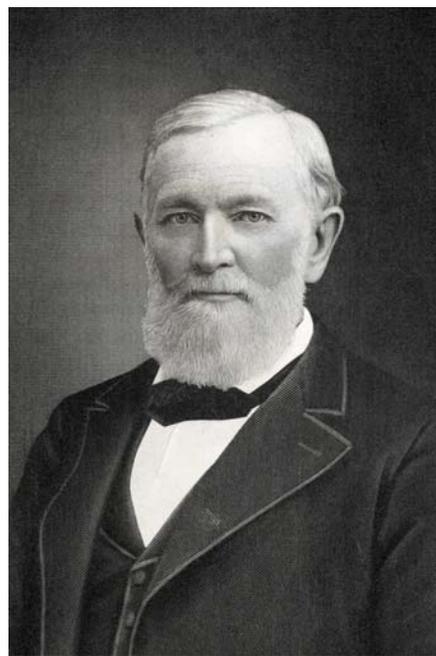
“Of Kin and Cane” continued from page 4

Edward J. and Lavinia Gay's children and grandchildren carried on the family's tradition of influence and importance in the Louisiana sugar industry, and his descendants continue to farm and advocate for sugar interests to the present day.

Jennifer Mitchell, Leah Jewett, and Tara Laver

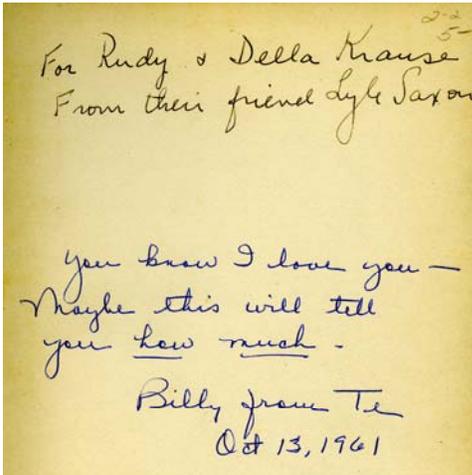


St. Louis Plantation, c. 1880. Edward J. Gay and Family Papers, Mss. 1295



Edward J. Gay engraving, c. 1880. Gay-Butler-Plater Family Papers, Mss. 4872

McNeese Acquires Della Goos Bel Krause Collection



Flyleaf of *Father Mississippi* signed by Lyle Saxon and later inscribed by Della Krause.

The McNeese State University Library's Archives and Special Collections Department recently acquired a new book collection from William Blake of Lake Charles. The collection belonged to Blake's mother-in-law, Della Goos Bel Krause (1906-1975). Mrs. Krause was a part of several founding families of Lake Charles and held a deep interest in Louisiana history and literature. She and her husband, Rudolph Krause, became friends with New Orleans writer and journalist Lyle Saxon. Saxon enjoyed great success as a writer and as the Director of the Louisiana Writers' Project. Even more than his literary work, Saxon is known for hosting gatherings of young writers, artists, and historians and serving as mentor to some of the most important names in American literature at the time, from William Faulkner to Sherwood Anderson and many others.

Saxon's friendship with the Krauses brought about some of the most important works in the collection Blake donated to McNeese: signed first editions of several of Saxon's works and a typescript of *Children of Strangers* – a facsimile of the document Saxon sent to his publisher, Houghton Mifflin.

The Krause Collection also includes signed first editions of Harnett T. Kane's works, such as *Louisiana Hayride*, *New Orleans Woman*, and *Gone are the Days*.

The oldest work in the collection is a German description of Louisiana from 1804. *Schilderung von Louisiana* is a German translation of the French *Vue de la Colonie Espagnole du Mississippi* (1803). The book includes a pull-out map of the Eastern half of the United States and the Louisiana Purchase. Place names on the map are also translated into German.

Della Krause and William Blake did not have the usual in-law relationship depicted in so many wisecracks. Saxon inscribed a first edition of his 1927 work *Father Mississippi* to his friends "Rudy & Della Krause." In 1961, Della gave the book to her son-in-law and added the inscription, "You know I love you – Maybe this will tell you how much." The two shared a life-long love of studying and preserving Louisiana's rich literary history. With this donation, Blake continues the tradition by passing the collection on to the next generation of scholars at McNeese.

The Krause Collection will enrich the many treasures held by Frazar Memorial Library. The Collection will stand alongside other rare book collections featuring first editions of American 20th Century authors such as George Washington Cable, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, Robert Frost, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O'Neill, William Saroyan, Upton Sinclair, John Steinbeck, and Tennessee Williams.

The Library will include the titles in the Collection in its online catalog which is publicly available. Although the materials in the Archives and Special Collections Department do not circulate, scholars may use the works in the Library, temporarily located in Parra Ballroom.

To use the Krause Collection, please contact the Archives and Special Collections Department for an appointment - (337) 475-5734 or archivesdept@mcneese.edu.

Pati Threatt

Translation of Favrot Papers Now Available from Tulane

Continuing a series of translations begun in 1988 by the Special Collections Division of Tulane University's Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, *The Favrot Family Papers: A Chronicle of Early Louisiana*, Volume VI, 1817-1839 (St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2012), edited and with a preface by Rien T. Fertel, is now available for sale at the Schiro Reading Room, 202 Jones Hall, 6801 Freret Street.

The volume is comprised primarily of correspondence, but also includes legal documents such as wills and petitions with inventories, applications for passports, surveyor's certificates, and bills of sale, as well as five beautiful color reproductions of Favrot family portraits and an oil painting of Baton Rouge by Joséphine Favrot.

These hard-covered volumes are on sale for \$20 each, along with the previous five volumes. A set of six is available at discount for \$100. To purchase contact Bruce Raeburn, Room 304 Jones Hall, Tulane University, NOLA 70118, raeburn@tulane.edu.

Lee Miller

Diocese of Baton Rouge Archives Department Participates in Fiftieth Anniversary of *The Catholic Commentator*



Bishop Robert Tracy blesses Ortlieb printing press in 1963, the first press on which *The Catholic Commentator* was printed.

On February 8, 2013, the Diocese of Baton Rouge celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its diocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Commentator*. This newspaper highlights the news and events that make up the diocese and is a wealth of information as well as a wonderful chronicling of our history. Unfortunately much of this history was inaccessible due to the fact that there was no index of the stories that were covered. The Archives Department partnered with *The Catholic Commentator* staff and began to devise a plan on how best to provide access to this information and preserve the newspaper long term. Because of the volume of information, it was decided that an outside vendor would be the best choice to digitize the material. After several months of research ARCASearch was chosen.

The archives staff spent several weeks combing through file cabinets and storage areas to ensure all issues were located. Issues of *The Catholic Commentator* have been produced digitally since 2006 so, for more current issues, a pdf was prepared for each issue. Ten boxes of old newspapers were mailed to ARCASearch. The final product included not only the online fully searchable database of 1963 through 2012 issues, but also all preservation tiffs and pdfs saved on two redundant external

hard drives. One of these hard drives resides in the Archives vault, and the other will be sent to an offsite location, thus providing more than adequate preservation for this valuable resource.

To help celebrate the anniversary of the diocesan paper, Archives Staff prepared and installed an exhibit entitled "*The Catholic Commentator: Celebrating Fifty Years*" which is currently on display in the ground-level lobby area of the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thruway in Baton Rouge. This display provides a look at the history of the newspaper, as well as the current and future changes in journalism. The exhibit includes a reprinted front page of one of the first issues, photographs of the staff and of Bishop Robert Tracy blessing the printing press and various items used in the production of a newspaper in 1963, such as a 1950s-era Rolleiflex Twin Lens Reflex camera, a printing cut, and a manual typewriter. The public is invited to view the display and take a button celebrating this milestone. The display will remain in the case until the beginning of June 2013.

Lisa Lewis



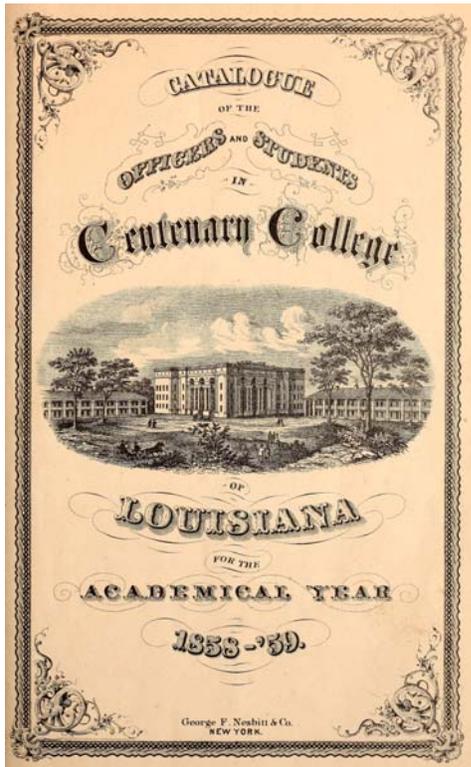
Buttons created to celebrate the 50th anniversary and digitization of back issues of *The Catholic Commentator*

Tulane University Louisiana Research Collection Library Associate Eira Tansey part of BBC Radio 4 Documentary

Eira Tansey, Louisiana Research Collection (LaRC) associate, recently participated in a BBC radio documentary about the many attempts to turn the novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* into a movie. The half-hour documentary recently aired on BBC Radio 4, and also featured commentary from Toole's friend Joel Fletcher, biographer Cory MacLauchlin, and Tulane professor emeritus Dale Edmonds. LaRC preserves the papers of John Kennedy Toole, who attended Tulane as an undergraduate.

Eira Tansey

Centenary College and Louisiana United Methodist Publications Online



The Centenary College of Louisiana Archives and Special Collections will likely remember 2012 as “the year of digitization.” During that year, we completed four projects that radically improved access to resources frequently used by our researchers.

The items selected for digitization consisted of publications by Centenary as well as the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, for which we serve as the archival repository. The Centenary material included course catalogs (1852-2010), yearbooks (1922-2011), student newspapers (1959-1990), alumni magazines (1969-1988), student literary magazines (1962-1967), and books related to the college’s history. The Methodist material consisted of the *Journal of the Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church* (1968-2010). Each item was scanned from cover- to-cover and in full color. Researchers can access them online in a variety of formats, page through a volume by choosing the “read online” option, download the PDF, or search the full text version.

The Centenary publications contain a wealth of information about student groups and activities, campus events, student reactions to nationwide events, images of the campus and community, and details about the college’s administrators and faculty.

The United Methodist publications contain valuable information about conference proceedings, reports of agencies

(e.g., boards, committees, and commissions), clergy appointments, and memoirs.

The archives has received praise from a wide variety of users accessing these resources. This includes students conducting research projects, administrators collecting historical data about the college, faculty researching the history of their department, alumni reminiscing about their past, clergy and church historians learning about their congregations, and genealogists tapping into the history of Centenary and United Methodism in Louisiana

Statistics generated by user downloads represent another way to measure the impact of these projects. By February 2013, roughly one year after the project began, our 300 electronic volumes had been downloaded over 12,000 times. It should be noted that this number does not include users who simply read the volumes online. For the record, the item downloaded most often – 1,045 times – is a set of Centenary alumni magazines (1981-1984).

These projects were made possible through the LYRASIS Mass Digitization Collaborative, a Sloan Foundation grant-subsidized program. Equally important was the process of developing partnerships with a variety of funders: Centenary’s Office of Alumni and Family Relations, the Centenary Muses, Centenary’s Women’s Endowment Quorum, and the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church Commission on Archives and History. Thanks to these organizations, the process of tapping into the rich history of Centenary College and Louisiana United Methodism is easier than ever.

To view the digital collections online, visit www.centenary.edu/archives.

For more information about this project and the works that have been digitized, contact Centenary Archivist Chris Brown at 318.869.5462 or archives@centenary.edu.

Chris Brown



Fontenot Named Preservationist of the Year



St. Landry Parish archivist Keith Fontenot works in his office at the St. Landry Parish Courthouse. / Freddie Herpin, *Daily World*

Keith Fontenot, archivist with the St. Landry Parish Clerk of Courts, has been named St. Landry Parish's Preservationist of the Year by the St. Landry Preservationist Society. In his position as archivist, Fontenot has the task of preserving the parish's oldest records, some dating back to a time before this part of the world was even in the United States.

"He is a wonderful public servant," said Athalie Dupre with the preservationists. "He is always willing to go above and beyond what he's paid for."

"He is certainly deserving," agreed his boss, Clerk of Courts Charles Jagneaux. "He is a wonderful staff member who is dedicated to preservation. He's published several books. He's quite a celebrity around here."

Those books include one on the history of the steamboat trade on local waterways, another on the history of free people of color in the early days of the parish and several more. He is also author of numerous entries in the Dictionary of Louisiana Biography and articles in the Louisiana History Journal.

"I'm just a historian at heart. I believe in expanding our knowledge as much as possible," Fontenot said.

But his day job is preserving and making available to the public the parish's vast store of records. The local records go back to 1764, and most of the earlier records are in either Spanish or French. Both countries claimed this area and alternately ruled it from time to time. Although the French sold Louisiana to the relatively new United States in 1803, that didn't end the local confusion. Technically, what the French sold was all the land drained by the Mississippi River.

"The Spanish didn't consider Opelousas to be part of the Louisiana Purchase. It technically isn't drained by the Mississippi," Fontenot said.

It would not be until 1819, seven years after Louisiana became a state, that the border was finally agreed upon. Fontenot is currently working to translate as many of these records as possible to make them available to future generations in an electronic format. It isn't an easy task.

"They are in English, French and Spanish with a lot of bad handwriting, inconsistent spellings and strange abbreviations. We have a unique heritage here that most people don't appreciate," Fontenot said.

Under his care is everything from voter rolls to marriage records, court records, every sale of land and before the Civil War, most personal property sales as well. The earliest records also cover a wide area. Over the years, nine different parishes have been carved out of St. Landry Parish, which originally extend all the way to the Texas border.

"Our collection here is a treasure trove of priceless information. In terms of primary documents, our collection rivals those of New Orleans and Mobile," Fontenot said.

This week, while translating an 1821 slave sale registrar, he was also busy creating new records.

"I'm issuing marriage licenses today. I'm a historian and archivist, and I'm creating new historical documents at the same time," Fontenot said with a laugh. "It is a balancing act."

Fontenot grew up in the Eunice area and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in history from what is now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He had an opportunity to earn a doctorate from the University of Kentucky but not the money to afford it.

"My specialty was medieval Europe, but how can you make a living in medieval history?" Fontenot asked. But it was also about this time he married his wife Arlette, who is also a historian specializing in the American Civil War. The couple had a son, Nicolas, and getting a "real" job was critical.

Fontenot joined the clerk of courts office in 1978, working in the mortgages department. But when the office began the process of indexing its records, he took on the job of transferring the oldest records to microfilm. From there, the archivist position grew. That microfilming job is now giving way to electronically scanning the records.

"If you go back 20, even 15 years, imaging was cost prohibitive. You get a lot more bang for your buck now with computers," Fontenot said.

Fontenot said he plans to retire next year after 35 years on the job but doesn't plan to stop working on local history projects.

"I'm still learning every day," Fontenot said. "I'd still like to become fluent in Latin and able to read Castilian Spanish."

Although history doesn't get much respect these days, he argues it is critical to understanding the world we all share.

"Schools today are only interested in pushing math and science. They say history is just for poor mathematicians," Fontenot said.

He argues that view is wrong — and possibly dangerous. "History gives you a wider view of reality," Fontenot said. "It allows us to get a deeper understanding of what makes us tick. If we are ignorant of our past, we are doomed to repeat it. To understand what is happening in the Middle East today, you need to understand medieval Islam. A liberal arts education expands your intellectual envelope. It gives you the intangibles that make you human."

William Johnson, Daily World

Reprinted with permission from the Opelousas *Daily World*



Louisiana

Archives & Manuscripts Association

P.O. Box 40199
Lafayette, LA 70504

LAMA MISSION AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts Association (LAMA) promotes the role of archives in the preservation of national, state, and local heritage by cooperating with Louisiana's public and private archival repositories in their work of collecting, preserving, and making accessible to the public manuscript, printed, graphic arts, and audio materials of historical significance.

Currently LAMA has 84 members: 7 organizations and 77 individual. This is down from 108 members last year. 3 organizational members are religious and 1 each is government, museum, public library, and academic. 28 members work in academic institutions; 12 in religious; 11 in historical societies; 6 in museums; 5 in government; 5 in public libraries; 3 in organizations; 1 in medical; 1 in education; 1 in consulting; and 1 is retired. 8 are students. The remaining are unknown.

Geographically 30 members are from the Greater New Orleans area; 22 from the Baton Rouge region; 12 from North Louisiana; 8 from Acadiana; 4 from Central Louisiana; 2 each from Lake Charles and the Lafourche region; one from the Florida Parishes; and 3 from out-of-state.

If you have not paid your LAMA dues for 2013, please consider doing so. Also encourage those who work with historical records to join the organization if they are not members. Membership forms are available in this newsletter and on the LAMA website.

Bruce Turner, LAMA Treasurer

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WWW.LOUISIANAARCHIVISTS.ORG



LAMA offers the following membership categories:

- Student \$5.00
- Senior Citizen \$10.00
- Individual \$15.00
- Family (2 people, \$5 for each additional member) \$20.00
- Organization (\$10 for each additional rep) \$30.00
- Sustaining \$50.00
- Patron \$100.00
- Life \$1000.00

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Total: _____

Membership in LAMA entitles you receive the *LAMA Newsletter* and invitations to the Association's annual meetings. LAMA members also automatically become members of the Southern Archives Conference (SAC), an umbrella organization of Southeastern state archival organizations, encompassing the state organizations of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. SAC meets every other year in one of the membership states.

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