

LaSalle Parish

By Lora D. Peppers

History:

Native Americans, first inhabited the area now known as LaSalle Parish. They referred to it as Octahoula, which means "Bountiful waters". The first white settlers began moving to the area in the late 1700's and were hunters and traders. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, settlers began to move to the bluffs of Catahoula Lake and the northern bank of the Little River. In 1805 when the Territory of Orleans was divided, present day LaSalle became part of Rapides parish. In 1808 it became a part of the new parish of Catahoula, and would remain so until the twentieth century. In 1833 Joseph P. Ward establishes the nationally famous spa and resort, White Sulphur Springs. It is eventually closed due to health concerns. The town of Hamps Creek began to grow as a settlement, and by 1860 it was a favorite trading spot for farmers. In 1871, the post office made a new rule that "Creek" or "Bayou" could not be part of a post office name. About that time, Andrew Forsythe, brother of a local settler named James Forsythe, was visiting Hamps Creek. He suggested to his brother that the little town should name itself Jena, after the town of Jena, Illinois where he lived. The town has been called Jena ever since. Coincidentally, James Forsythe was the father of Monroe's most beloved mayor, Andrew A. Forsythe. On January 1, 1910, Louisiana created the parish of LaSalle. Its current population is 14,216.

Research Facilities:

LaSalle Parish Public Library

3108 N. First Street, Jena, LA across the street from the courthouse. Phone number: (318) 992-5675. Mailing address: P.O. Drawer 3199 Jena, LA 71342-3199. There is no set rule as to mail-in requests, but a donation with your request is welcome. The Genealogy Room is not staffed, so mail requests are on a first come, first served basis. The library is open 8-5 M-F and 9-1 on Saturday.

The genealogy department at the LaSalle Parish Library is located in a small white building next to the main part of the library. Inside the building is a small room with genealogy materials and one computer connected to the internet. There are some hidden treasures here! Some of the books you can find in their collection: *Colonial Families of the United States of America Vols. I-VII*, *Grant Parish Cemeteries*, *First Settlers of the Louisiana Territory*, *To Catch a Pretty Feller: Letters Relating Life in Catahoula Parish In the Last Half of the 19th Century* and *Register of Voters: Catahoula Parish 1878*. They have several local family books concerning such names as Eubanks, King, Doty, Gaddis, Gainey and Pritchard. A treasure is a set of four binders full of unpublished LaSalle Parish cemetery indexes. Obituaries out of the local newspaper from December 1985-2002 are clipped and pasted into binders in order by date. Each binder is indexed. Later obits are clipped and filed into small file drawers in alphabetical order. Another treasure found is a binder with copies of a Urania newsletter published during World War II for soldiers. Called "The Rosinbelly", it was published from April 21, 1942 to Aug. 21, 1945. It included local news and well wishes. They are not indexed. Still another treasure is a binder called "Miscellaneous Family Stories". It has local family charts and stories, some hand-written. They are not indexed. Copies are 15c per page.

There is one microfilm machine, and several rolls of microfilm in the file drawers. They have the *Jena Times* and the *Olla-Tullos Signal* covering 1906 to the present. Of course there are gaps in the surviving newspapers. They also have a collection of census records from Louisiana, Mississippi, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia and North Carolina covering various years. Copies on the microfilm machine are 25c.

LaSalle Parish Clerk of Court

This is located across the street from the library. Mailing address: P.O. Box 1316 Jena, LA 71342. Phone number: (318) 992-2158. They charge a \$20 research fee, plus \$1 per page copy fee. They will search within a ten-year period for you. If you know the exact page or document number you need, the charge is \$5 plus \$1 per page copied. The hours are 8:30 to 4:30 M-F.

Some of the materials available at the Courthouse are Probate records, Plat books, Conveyances (1806-present), Marriage Records (1910-present), Civil Court and Criminal Court records, (1923 to present) and Mortgage records (1921-present). The marriage records are indexed in separate books. The

copy fee is \$1 per page. Some other unusual items found at the Clerk of Court: Record of Foreign Births, Brand Books, Enumeration of Ex-Confederate Soldiers and Widows of Deceased Soldiers 1911, Notarial Adoptions (1982-1999) Oil and Gas Lease Records (1919-1987) and Register of Clergymen.

Places to See:

White Sulphur Springs

Once a well known spa and resort in the mid 1800's with hotels, saloons and shops, White Sulphur Springs now is only a gazebo with a bubbling spring. 12 miles southwest of Jena on Highway 8.

LaSalle Parish Museum

Here you can learn about the history of the parish through photos and historical items. Located on West Bradford Street in Goodpine, LA.