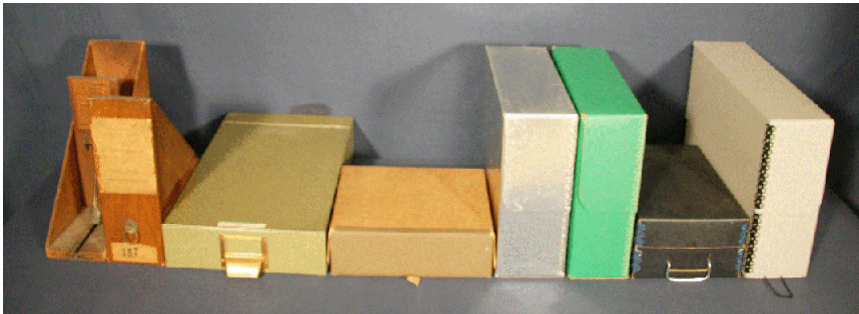


# THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS ARCHIVISTS

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## *Newsletter*

*September 2007*

*GNOA Meeting at Loyola University,  
Tuesday, September 25, at 6 p.m.*

The Greater New Orleans Archivists (GNOA) will meet on Tuesday, September 25, at **Loyola University** Special Collections and Archives on the third floor of the Monroe Library at **6 p.m.** The room is just to the right when you get off the elevator.

## *New Staff at Local Repositories*

In July, Reference Associate **Christopher Harter** <charter@tulane.edu> became the new Reference Librarian at the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University. **Lindsey Darnell** <ldarnell@tulane.edu> has become a Library and Archives Assistant. They also may be reached at Amistad at Tilton Hall, Tulane University, 6823 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118. Telephone: (504) 862-3229. Web site: <[www.amistadresearchcenter.org/](http://www.amistadresearchcenter.org/)>. —*Christopher Harter*

**Emilie G. Leumas** has become the Archivist for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans, Charles Nolan having retired on July 1. He remains working part-time for the next year as the Director of the Office of Cultural Heritage. Ms. Leumas is a Certified Archivist and may be reached at Archdiocese of New Orleans, 7887 Walmsley Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125-3496. Telephone: (504)527-5780. E-mail: lleumas@archdiocese-no.org —*Emilie G. Leumas*

**Yvonne Loiselle** has joined the staff of the New Orleans Notarial Archives Research Center as an Archival Assistant. She received an MLIS degree, with an emphasis in

archival studies, from Louisiana State University in May 2004 and then moved to British Columbia to pursue a Ph.D. at the University there. Recently putting those studies on hold, she was drawn to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She is awaiting the results of the Academy of Certified Archivists exam she took in late August.  
—Ann Wakefield

## ***Notarial Archives Research Center Guide to French Colonial Records***

The Notarial Archives has published the *Guide to the French Colonial Records of the New Orleans Notarial Archives, 1733-1767*, which was mailed to archives and libraries throughout the region. The guide is a component of a Save America's Treasures grant administered by the National Endowment for the Humanities that was awarded to the Notarial Archives in 2003. Written by project director **Howard Margot**, the guide introduces the records for the first time to the research community with an index, sample documents and transcriptions, and an overview of the project. Since the early twentieth century, the folios had been bound haphazardly and inaccessibly into eight volumes. The project involved disbinding, conservation treatment, re-housing, indexing, and extensive study of the contents of the documents. Mr. Margot's historical note, contained in the guide, offers valuable insight into the provenance and historical context of the records. Of the 1,842 folios involved, 1,486 date from 1733 to 1767 and are therefore truly French colonial records; 356 folios bound with them are miscellaneous notarial and court records dating from 1778 to about 1825.

The guide is available at [www.notarialarchives.org](http://www.notarialarchives.org). Institutions may request a guide by E-mail to [awakefield@notarialarchives.org](mailto:awakefield@notarialarchives.org). —Ann Wakefield

## ***News from Newcomb Archives***

The Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library have announced the receipt of a Stabilization Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that will be used to make important repairs and improvements to Caroline Richardson Hall. The Archives and Library also will launch a new website this November and an array of public programming, including a visit by American poet Kimiko Hahn on November 4 and 5. She is the author of seven collections of poetry, including her latest *The Narrow Road to the Interior* (2006) and *The Unbearable Heart* (1995), which received an American Book Award. The Archives and Library also invite viewing online at <http://www.tulane.edu/%7ewc/jilljacksonmemoir.pdf> of the manuscript autobiography of Jill Jackson, Newcomb alumna, nationally syndicated gossip columnist, and the first female sportscaster in the United States. —Susan Tucker

## ***Notarial Archives Research Center ATIZ BookDrive***

The Notarial Archives Research Center <http://www.notarialarchives.org/> has recently acquired an ATIZ BookDrive DIY <http://atiz.com/> for its ongoing digital project to image the indices of Louisiana Spanish colonial notaries and notaries who immediately

followed after the Louisiana Purchase. The indices are put online for research use via the A2 interface developed by Hart InterCivic <<http://www.hartinintercivic.com/>>.

The BookDrive has few moving parts, and ImageMagick open source software is used to convert images from jpg to tiff before importing them into PhotoShop for further optimizing. Advantages of this method versus flatbed scanning are two. The ATIZ captures two pages at once, and, with its v-shaped book cradle and v-shaped transparent plane, eliminates book curvature and gutter shadow.

The Center invites interested parties to come to view the equipment in operation and can provide further related information. —*Yvonne Loiselle*



### *Last Weeks for Helen Prejean Exhibit at Xavier Archives*

The exhibit “Issues of Life and Death: Inscribed Books and Other Rarities from the Library of Death Penalty Opponent Sister Helen Prejean,” mounted this summer at Xavier Archives, will conclude on Friday, October 26. Prejean is famous for her authorship of the book *Dead Man Walking*, which was adapted into a motion picture. The display may be viewed in the repository during its regular hours on weekdays from 8 to 4 on the third floor of the University Library. —*Lester Sullivan*

### *Hurricane Stories from Carville*

On August 28th, 2005, I was on my way north to higher ground like so many others from the New Orleans area where evacuation was mandatory.

When I got the news that Katrina was bearing down and that my home was in the path of the storm, I froze. All I could think was, “I’ll go to Carville, I’ll be safe there.” In hindsight, I would have been, but Memphis was higher and drier, and definitely more comfortable in light of what unfolded.

Fourteen days later, I returned to a changed world. The National Hansen’s Disease Museum in Carville was fine, but over 25,000 National Guard personnel participated in Katrina relief efforts, and several thousand of them were now calling Carville home. Our sleepy little historic district was buzzing with helicopters, humvees, and military police carrying semi-automatic weapons. Temporary tents to house the troops sprang up across acres of once-open pastureland. The GIs were doing 2-week stints in New Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish, performing search, rescue, recovery and law enforcement. Deprived of sleep in the field, everyone needed a few days to get shut-

eye and eat hot meals. They came to Carville for some down-time where everything became very basic—sleep, eat, regroup, then get back to work. Moreover, everyone needed to talk—to tell someone what he or she had witnessed, how their world had changed. My home was fine, but I was now playing host to three reporters from Tokyo TV who hired my friend Steven to shepherd them around New Orleans and environs as they filmed their documentary on the storm. There was not an available hotel room to be found for hundreds of miles.

Before the storm changed our world, I had planned an oral history fair for former employees of Carville. The employees of the former leprosarium would have to wait—no, I'd have to wait; they'd all evacuated! And there was only one thing on everybody's mind anyway.

My museum, the National Hansen's Disease Museum, is located in the Carville Historic District. Carville has a 100-plus-year history as a haven to those diagnosed with Hansen's Disease, also known as leprosy. In 1894, the Louisiana Leper Board, charged with creating a "place of refuge" for leprosy sufferers, transported the first seven patients from New Orleans to Carville—a deep and secluded bend in the Mississippi. Fear of contagion was so intense that they were not allowed public transit and were towed up the Mississippi on a coal barge.

The 350-acre sugar cane plantation was slowly transformed into "The Louisiana Leper Home." Far removed from any metropolitan area, the isolated patients pleaded for onsite medical attention—doctors from New Orleans visited bimonthly—until the State negotiated with the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul to establish a mission on the site. The first four Catholic sisters arrived in 1896. They came to nurse, educate, and care for the spiritual needs of those early souls.

When the federal government took over the hospital in 1921, it grew to accommodate 450 patients. They built a complex of dormitories, an infirmary, a recreation center, even a jail. The US Public Health Service doctors lived on two avenues of residences built on the "staff side of the hospital." The 1940s brought a viable medical treatment and a successful drug therapy, but quarantine for those diagnosed with leprosy did not end in Louisiana until 1957. The hospital subsequently relocated to Baton Rouge in 1999 and the property reverted back to the State of Louisiana who brought in the National Guard.

In September 2005, entertainment was slim picking in Carville, and the museum had the advantage of being open, free and within walking distance to the troops' tent city. Soldiers from all over the country were pouring into the museum with the same questions that the turn-of-the-century residents of Iberville Parish had asked when the first patients stepped off the coal barge . . . *What is leprosy?* (A disease of the skin and peripheral nerves caused by *Mycobacterium Leprae*.) *Is it contagious?* (Mildly . . . 95% of us are naturally immune.) *Is there a cure?* (Successful drug therapy renders patients non-contagious within days and arrests the progress of the disease.) *Are there still patients here?* (Yes, a handful stayed on after the hospital relocated in 1999.)

After quelling fears, giving accurate data on Hansen's disease and telling the Carville story, it was only natural to ask the soldiers to share theirs. The stories began pouring out: stories from MPs stationed at the Super Dome, search and rescue teams down in St. Bernard; eyewitness accounts of the wreck and ruin of familiar neighborhoods and streets still flooded. It became apparent that these stories were the oral histories that I would gather. It was unfolding all around me.

On my second day home I returned to work with a \$20 portable tape recorder and some blank cassettes, and I whipped up some audio release forms. As we continued our dialog, it was clear that not everyone would go on the record. But many did. I gathered stories from MPs, Medical Reserve Corps, PHS doctors, nurses and engineers, Corps of Engineers, helicopter crews, FEMA personnel, animal rescue and even an evacuation bus driver; all of who strolled through the doors. And the words kept spilling out. One participant requested to take the tape recorder into a quiet room alone to reminisce about what she had been through in her role as a responder. The range of emotions coming from the interviewees swung from humor to tears within a few short minutes.

Other visitors included the personnel running the temporary morgue hastily fabricated in St. Gabriel. They were also looking for an hour or two of relief from their long days of emergency work. I spoke to forensic specialists, nurses, dentists, social workers and funeral directors from around the country who came to volunteer their expertise in the sad process of reuniting the dead with their grieving families.

A hastily composed flyer I placed in the Carville armory and cafeteria about my project attracted the attention of an official Military History Detachment (MHD) deployed to take oral histories for the Army. When Maj. Anthony Randall, in charge of the 102nd Military History Detachment, walked into the museum, we became fast allies. We decided to exchange oral histories on the spot. In addition to interviewing key personnel engaged in relief efforts, the MHDs collected artifacts, hard copy and electronic documents. They stayed in the field from two to four weeks at a time.

From my tour of the MHD's workstation, I knew that the military was using a more sophisticated digital recording system than my portable tape recorder. I panicked when I realized I had to turn my analog cassette tapes into MP3s with no budget, and I had to accomplish this quickly.

I found my solution online via a freeware program called Audacity. Audacity supports uncompressed audio standards such as WAV and AIFF in addition to OGG and MP3 files. A full complement of basic effects such as reverb, delay, and compression are included. That, and a \$10 cable from RadioShack, allowed me to dump the analog files into my laptop, perform some quick edits, and then burn the files to CD as MP3s. When the MHD went home to Topeka in mid-October, I felt good about sending along my contribution of 25 interviews—for a total of 64 interviews between us.

Taking over the military's oral history project from that point on was Lieutenant Colonel Alan R. Koenig, a recent retiree of the Army Reserve, tapped by the Army to handle

postproduction of the interviews. His team produced over 400 pages of transcriptions in preparation for this experienced historian to write an official history of the joint military response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The interviews attracted other attention as well. Hurricane Digital Memory Bank representative Sheila Brennan asked to include the interviews in their website collection. The Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University and the University of New Orleans organized this project in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, it builds on prior work by CHNM to collect and preserve history online. In addition to the oral histories, I turned in several hundred photographs that I shot along with friend, Steven Singerman, documenting hurricane-damaged areas in St. Bernard and Jefferson and Orleans Parishes.

POSTSCRIPT: I am now in the process of interviewing former Carville hospital employees, the oral history project originally intended to begin in September 2005. Carville has become the Military Response Center for hurricanes in Louisiana; the temporary morgue moved 2 miles down River Road and is now a permanent structure for disaster response. We have a couple hundred new faces around Carville, most are Louisiana National Guardsmen and women who lost their homes to Hurricane Katrina and their workplace at Jackson Barracks. My friends and family are back in their New Orleans homes. I will never forget the stories that still give me a thrill of pride when I listen to voices of those who volunteered unselfish aid and care beyond the call of duty. Moreover, the Army recognized my contribution of oral histories with a public service award that was a surprise and an honor. The oral histories and photographs can be found on the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank web site <<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/browse/?collection=29>>.

(The mission of the National Hansen's Disease Museum is to collect, preserve, and interpret the medical and cultural artifacts of the Carville Historic District, and to promote the understanding, identification, and treatment of Hansen's disease (leprosy) by creating museum displays, traveling exhibits, publications, and a web presence <[http://bphc.hrsa.gov/nhdp/NHD\\_MUSEUM\\_HISTORY.htm](http://bphc.hrsa.gov/nhdp/NHD_MUSEUM_HISTORY.htm)>. Mailing Address: 1770 Physicians Park Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70816. Museum Location: 5445 Point Clair Road, Building 12, Carville, LA. Telephone: (225) 642-1950. FAX: (225) 642-1949.)  
—*Elizabeth Schexnyder*

[Ed.: Ms. Schexnyder is Curator of the National Hansen's Disease Museum. Her story, along with three captioned pictures, originally appeared in the August 2007 issue of *Southwestern Archivist* of the Society of Southwestern Archivists.]