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MAGAZINE

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Rundquist tells her family story

Rundquist tells her family story eloquently in Cajun

BY GREG LANGLEY

Books editor

October 02, 2012

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CAJUN BY ANY OTHER NAME

By Marie Rundquist

Infinity Publishing, \$11.95;
 151 pp. paperback

Rundquist subtitles this sharp little genealogy tome, "Recovering the Lost History of a Family and a People." She describes how she grew up in



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Maryland, her father's home state but always knew that the family had come from Louisiana. What she didn't know was that they were originally from Canada. They were Acadians who were expelled from their homes in 1755. That's where the tale gets a little strange.

Most people don't realize that the Acadians didn't come straight from Canada to Louisiana. First they went to England or France or states up and down the Atlantic Coast. Many of them stayed in those places 10 years or more before they gradually made their way to the Louisiana colony where they could legally be both French and Catholic.

When she began her research, Rundquist thought her mother's ancestors had come straight from France to Louisiana. Her grandmother had manufactured a genealogy that claimed just that, but then she decided to a little research of her own. She is an unusually talented researcher, and when she applied her skills to her own family history, a new picture emerged.

"My mother's genealogy, as I had discovered, revealed a hidden heritage in Nova Scotia where her Native American Mi'kmaq and Acadian family lines had forever intertwined," she writes. Tracking ancestors named Geneieve Hebert and Michel David, Rundquist visited Grand Pre, Nova Scotia; Louisiana and other sites. Amazingly, she found that prior to moving on to Louisiana, the couple had been expelled from Nova Scotia in 1755 and had first landed in Maryland on the Eastern Shore along the Manokin River — "the established seat of my father's family." The couple didn't linger long in Maryland, catching a ship to Louisiana in 1766. But Rundquist thought she might find at least some evidence of their presence lingering in Maryland. She was disappointed. "For example, the fact that the historic Washington Inn on Princess Anne's main street, famous for its homemade pies, was founded in 1755 is celebrated in the town's local history; that exiled Acadians arrived on the Lower Eastern Shore that same year is not mentioned at all."

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She had better luck in Louisiana, where records were kept by the Catholic Church. Family genealogies are usually most interesting to the families about which they are written. That is true here, but it is also true that in the process of uncovering her own family's Louisiana roots, Rundquist finds much information that is of general interest like the shifting spelling of local names. Her ancestors settled near the German Coast and soon descendants were intermarrying with the German settlers' descendants. "Appearing in census reports ranging from 1724 to 1731 of the 'Old German Village' was the name of 'Johann Rommel,' whose Rommel surname would evolve into 'Rome' and 'Rom' in Louisiana parish records. Johann, a Catholic, arrived in Louisiana with his wife and three children.

"Also enumerated for Mr. Rome was his profession (tailor), his lands (one and a half cleared arpents) and that he owned one pig and two cows. At the time of of the 1724 census, the Catholic Jacob Huber, listed as a 'native of Suevia, Germany' was forty-five years old and considered a good worker, with a wife and sixteen-year-old son. He owned one cow, one heifer, and a pig, but had no crop due to flooding. The German Huber surname softened into 'Oubre,' 'Ouvre,' and 'Hoover,' among other iterations, in later parish registers, and an undated census report shows that Jacob Huber (Oubre, Ouvre, Hoover) eventually moved to the Right Bank, a region on the west side of the Mississippi that starts two miles above New Orleans and extends in the direction of the German Villages. The Chauffe family surname stemmed from the original Schaf, may be found in St. James Parish registers, among marriages to the sons and daughters of other German families, recorded for the children of Acadians Michael David and Genevieve Hebert."

Rundquist is a big fan of DNA testing for genealogical research, and it was that process that led her to her Native American ancestry. No one in her family even knew they had a Mi'kmaq ancestor. DNA testing revealed it, and Rundquist's own careful research led her to the ancestor's name: Anne Marie Rimbault, who married into an Acadian family in Canada

before the expulsion. Others who have Acadian ancestry often find similar connections to Native American tribes, Rundquist writes, and she is an active administrator of the Amerindian Ancestry out of Acadiana geographically centered DNA project. Its members “descend from Acadians and Amerindians of seventeenth-century Port Royal, Nova Scotia.”

There are charts at the back of the book that show how the DNA information works, and Rundquist includes a bibliography at the back which will help other researchers find resources.

This is a very fine work of personal genealogy that succinctly tells a larger story through the medium of Rundquist’s family line. It will especially appeal to genealogists and local historians and provides some details about what Acadians may have experienced in 1755 when they were first sent to Maryland and other places before they got to Louisiana.

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