

Meet Your Neighbor: Robert Brevelle to head La. Genealogical and Historical Society

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By Emily Burleigh



Robert Brevelle. (Special to the American Press)

Leesville native Robert Brevelle has been appointed chairman of the Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society (LGHS).

LGHS is housed in Baton Rouge and was founded in 1953 as “the state’s preeminent organization responsible for the preservation, research and sharing of genealogical and historical materials which are beautifully unique to Louisiana,” Brevelle said.

They work closely with entities dealing with these materials, such as genealogy and ancestry libraries, historical societies, state agencies, research facilities and universities, publish journals and books, host seminars and help residents trace their ancestry.



Brevelle said LGHS' work is important because the state's history is "diverse, beautiful and interesting."

"It is fundamentally different than the rest of the country. Its people and culture reflect this uniqueness. Our mission is to be the curator of this heritage and to cultivate a love and joie de vivre of family, community and history in future generations."

At an early age, Brevelle was blessed with teachers who instilled in him a passion for history, he said. Though he majored in engineering, he kept in touch with this passion by minoring in military science and history.

His father further nurtured his interests. He took Brevelle to historic sites and museums throughout the state.

"Together, we went on tours, frequented libraries and museums and participated in archaeological digs," he said. "We even hiked and canoed to remote Native American sites across Central Louisiana from Natchitoches to Marksville."

Through his research, he has discovered his own genealogical lineage. He deepened his history education by studying genealogy and heraldry in Europe. He recalled studying at the Vatican and tracing his ancestors to 14th-century France. The experience of discovering his family's coat of arms, chapel and ancestral fief in Normandy was amazing, he said.

One of his French ancestors traveled to the Louisiana colony in 1718. He helped establish Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches. He became a renowned trader and explorer who married a Native American woman. Their children founded Isle Brevelle and were some of the first Creoles, he explained.

"I find it remarkable that after 300 years, I grew up a mere 50 miles away."

His journey of ancestral discovery also reinvigorated his Catholic faith.

"It seemed that I only interacted with the church when performing research or reading historical documents," he recalled. "Understanding my forefathers' faith and service to the church over the centuries and how it shaped nearly every aspect of how I came to be coupled with the birth of my son were the final steps in my journey to a renewed relationship with the church and my faith."

The role of chairman is the first position that Brevelle has held with LGHS, but he has served on several other boards, including the Adai Caddo Indian Nation of Louisiana.



He is excited to usher in the Society's next chapter. Currently, the society is undergoing a board "revamp" and organization restructuring. He intends to expand their online and social media presence to make the archives, publications and services accessible to more people. He hopes this mission will grow LDHS' memberships, especially for younger groups, such as college students and military personnel.

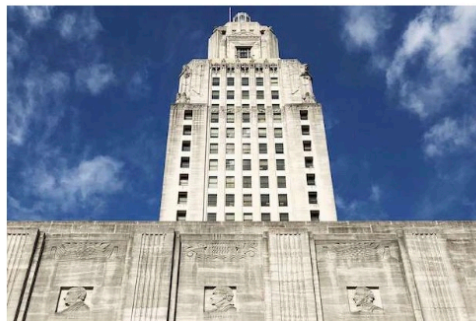
LDHS will continue to expand its educational and certificate programs, he said. Currently, LDHS offers a bi-annual seminar and the First Families certificate program.

The First Families certificate program "maintains the official registry of families who settled within the present boundaries of the state before the Louisiana Purchase and provides certificates to their descendants," he said. LGHS intends to start similar registry programs for Louisiana's indigenous Native Americans, Creoles, Cajuns and their descendants.



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