

LOUISIANA FOLKLORE SOCIETY RECORDS

(Mss. 4168)

Inventory

Compiled by
Bradley J. Wiles

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2010
(Revised 2011)

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SUMMARY

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Size | 2 linear ft. |
| Geographic Locations | Louisiana |
| Inclusive Dates | 1956-2011 |
| Bulk Dates | 1956-2000 |
| Languages | English |
| Summary | The Louisiana Folklore Society Records consists of correspondence, programs, minutes, financial records, and subject files from an organization dedicated to the study and preservation of state, national, and international folklore. |
| Access Restrictions | None |
| Reproduction Note | May be reproduced. |
| Copyright | All legal, property, and literary rights in unpublished materials resides in the Louisiana Folklore Society and/or its successor agencies. |
| Related Collections | Francis A. de Caro and Rosan A. Jordan Collection, Mss. 3197, 4089, 4164. Louisiana Folklife Program Project Files, Mss. 4730. |
| Citation | Louisiana Folklore Society Records, Mss. 4168, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La. |
| Stack Location(s) | UU:262, OS:L |

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

The Louisiana Folklore Society was preceded by the Louisiana Association of the American Folklore Society, an expansion of the New Orleans branch that had been founded in 1892 by noted folklorist and Tulane University Romance Language Professor Alcée Fortier. The LA-AFS went into several decades of decline after Fortier's death in 1914 and was inactive until the mid-1950s when the prospect of a statewide folklore organization was revived within the English Department at Louisiana State University.

In 1956, a committee consisting of Dr. Darwin Shrell, Dr. Harry Oster, and Dr. Clayton Holaday initiated efforts at founding a statewide folklore organization. On April 7 of that year they hosted the first Louisiana Folklore Program to discuss various aspects of Louisiana folklore and determine the group's structure. The event was open to the public and sought to build community interest in preserving the predominantly oral folk traditions that had been neglected since Fortier's time. The first official meeting of the LFS was held the following year along with the publication of the first issue of *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany* and the LFS-sponsored release of Oster's *A Sampler of Louisiana Folksongs* LP. LSU English Department professor Nathaniel M. Caffee was elected the organization's first president.

In 1962 the LFS incorporated as non-profit organization based at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, La., under the supervision of Clifford M. Byrne and C. A. Girard. The first board of directors consisted of Girard, Dr. Edward Socola (LSU-New Orleans), and LaRue Lyon (Minden High School, Minden, La.). The original mandate called for the organization to preserve Louisiana's folklore heritage of stories, songs, traditions, and artifacts, while cultivating and promoting art and literature throughout the state.

With the development of cultural studies and academic folklore programs at universities in the next two decades, the LFS mission refocused toward the study, documentation, and accurate representation of the traditional cultures of Louisiana. During the 1970s and 1980s, LFS leadership included several noted scholars in the folklore field including Francis De Caro, Rosan A. Jordan, Nicolas Spitzer, George F. Reinecke, and Barry Ancelet.

In 1989 the LFS was granted 501(C)(3) status and the organizational mission was expanded to promote education, understanding, and appreciation of folklore in local, national, and international contexts by gathering and disseminating information about the folklore, folklife, and folk cultures of Louisiana and the United States.

Over the years LFS membership has included university professors, professional folklorists, secondary school teachers, museum workers, graduate students, and other individuals interested in Louisiana's traditions and cultural groups. The main outlet for LFS scholarship and creative work has been the annual meetings, typically held at universities or other cultural institutions throughout the state of Louisiana. In addition,

the LFS has published a yearly academic journal (*Louisiana Folklore Miscellany*), a group newsletter, classroom instructional materials, surveys and studies, and has contributed to other projects with associated organizations like the Louisiana Folklife Center, the Louisiana Regional Folklife Program, and CODOFIL.

From the mid-1990s to present, the LFS has experienced fluctuations in growth and activity that has prompted attempts at restructuring the organization. From 1996 to 2001, the LFS looked at ways to increase its visibility through greater collaboration with state-funded institutions and making their journal available electronically. In 2010 the LFS hired an outside consultant to host a “visioning” workshop and provide recommendations on how to adapt to changes in membership demographics, revenue streams, and technological realities.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Louisiana Folklore Society Records consist of articles of incorporation, meeting minutes, correspondence, membership lists, financial records, notices, newsletters, newspaper clippings, and other records documenting organization activities, events, and membership. The first subgroup includes Administrative Records stretching back to the organization’s founding in the mid-1950s. The second subgroup consists of Subject Files, which are more recent and mark specific events in the organization’s history.

LIST AND DESCRIPTION OF SUB-GROUPS AND SERIES

Sub-Group I. Administrative Records, 1956-2010

This subgroup consists of correspondence, minutes, printed items, and materials relating to the business operations of the Louisiana Folklore Society.

Series 1. Correspondence, 1956-1998

The correspondence is comprised primarily of typed and handwritten letters, departmental memoranda, and other communications between Louisiana Folklore Society leadership and associated parties throughout the state. Much of this communication concerns the planning and execution of the organization's annual meeting and other information around group publications and projects. Of note are the earliest letters from 1956 and 1957 which detail many of the logistics involved the LFS's foundation and early operations.

Series 2. Minutes, 1959-2006

This series consists of typed and handwritten minutes from the organization's business meetings and the executive committee meetings, both of which were held during the annual gathering. The minutes from both are fairly complete from 1959-2006 and offer a full account of LFS officers, committees, and projects as they evolved from year to year.

Series 3. Printed Items, 1956-2010

This series includes announcements, newspaper clippings, newsletters, and conference programs. The announcements include memoranda, flyers, and other printed materials about LFS publications, activities, and other notices pertaining to folklorists and the folklore field at the state and national level. The newspaper clippings include several brief articles about the initial founding of the LFS, published notices about LFS meetings and events, and some feature length articles on folklore and related topics. The newsletter was published annually with some gaps between the years 1958 and 1983. These typically included membership and committee news, group financial information, and details on the annual meeting and publications. The program folders include information sheets, flyers, and posters about the annual meeting, along with other materials relating to presentations, hotel accommodations, and meeting costs.

Series 4. Legal, Financial, and Business Materials, 1958-2008

This series consists of LFS incorporation records, materials from the group treasurer's office, and other items documenting the administrative structure of the organization. Of particular note are the original certificate of incorporation from 1962, the paperwork and applications relating to the LFS's 501(C)(3) status from 1989-2002, and the treasurer's correspondence and reports from 1958-2008. The reports were typically part of the package of information received by attendees at the annual meeting.

Series 5. Membership Materials, 1957-1995

This series consists almost entirely of application and lists of LFS membership from 1957-1995. Also included are order forms for the LFS journal, meeting registration sheets, and dues information.

Sub-Group II. Subject Files, 1979-2010

This subgroup consists of subject-specific files documenting the main functions of the Louisiana Folklore Society: annual conferences, journal publication, and community engagement on folklore topics.

Series 1. LFS Millennium Conference, 1999-2000

This series contains correspondence, mailing lists, planning notes, and other documentation for the 2000 annual conference. The LFS leadership sought to make the meeting a special event in order to emphasize the beginning of a new era and help revitalize the membership. The keynote speaker was noted folk studies scholar Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett from New York University.

Series 2. *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany* Editor Files, 1989-1994

This series contains copies of published and unpublished manuscripts submitted to *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany* during Francis de Caro's tenure as editor in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the manuscript copies have editorial notes interleaved or written in the margins. The editor correspondence file includes a floppy disc with an article submission on the superstitions of the LSU baseball team.

Series 3. LFS Project Files, 1979-2010

The project files consist of various records relating to ongoing LFS projects. The series includes a grant application to the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to bring Dr. Rayna Green to the 1987 annual meeting, materials from folklore organizations outside of Louisiana, and a 2010 consultant's report on restructuring and modernizing the LFS. Of note are the records from the 1979 Louisiana Folk Arts Festival, which was sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and featured several LFS members as panelists and guest speakers.

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