

# *News from Old Mines*

## The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project

### No. 2, Fall 2015

#### FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you again to the many people who have shown their interest in this project and the newsletter. The project continues to grow in terms of the information available on the website ([www.oldmines.org](http://www.oldmines.org)), the number of posts on the Facebook page, and, most importantly, the number of people that the project is reaching. We recently surpassed 600 “likes” on the Facebook page, and the website continues to receive a healthy number of “hits” each week. More and more people are signing up for the newsletter as well, yet again widening the audience that this project is reaching.

In this edition of the newsletter, it is a pleasure to include articles by Cece Myers (on Marie Rouensa, one of the most famous women in the early history of the French presence in the region) and by Kent Bone (on his extensive work on the unique iron crosses of the old St. Joachim cemetery). In addition, you will find in this newsletter what must be one of the first documents describing the early history of the Old Mines community and the St. Joachim parish.

I hope you will also enjoy the brief article on the word “tiff,” the Old Mines community’s unique contribution to the English language! More contributors are encouraged, on subjects that could range from the history of mining in the area to family genealogy and folklore. Just about any topic relevant to the French history and heritage is welcome. Please feel free to contact the editor if you have a suggestion or are interested in contributing an article, short or long.



**LEFT:** Here’s just one of many photos from the St. Joachim Fall Festival held on Sunday, September 13 on the church grounds. This is a huge event which certainly stands as a testimony to the great affection that local residents as well as descendants from far and wide have for the church and their heritage. As always there was great food, music, dancing, games, and to top it all off, the weather was fantastic. It’s hard to imagine a more enjoyable way to spend a Sunday afternoon. You may want to visit the St. Joachim website and look at the [September 20 bulletin](#), where those who contributed to the success of the event are recognized.

One of the great pleasures of this event is having the chance to visit the church building itself (both inside and out). This is a truly historic structure, one of the oldest churches in the state of Missouri, and should always be a great source of pride for the community.

There are more photos from the event on the Old Mines French [Facebook](#) page.

## WHAT'S NEW IN OLD MINES?

Each newsletter features a list of new materials (books, articles, videos, websites) that are relevant to the study of Old Mines and the French history and heritage of the region around it. In addition future issues of the newsletter will include in-depth reviews of the most recent publications. Here's the most recent list of books and articles that are either new publications or have just been discovered or reported.

Balesi, Charles J. *Quand le cœur de l'Amérique du nord était français: 1673 à 1804*. Chicago: Union des Français de Chicago, 2003. Translation into French of *The Time of the French in the Heart of North America*.

Luer, Jack Richard; Jesse W. Francis. *Vanishing French Heritage: A Complete Study of the Vertical Log Homes of the Illinois Country*. Cape Girardeau, MO: The Kellerman Foundation for Historic Preservation, 2014.

Miller, Wm. Marion. "The Bicentennial of Sainte Geneviève Missouri." *French Review* 10.1 (Oct. 1936): 30-34.

Miller, Wm. Marion. "The Bicentennial of Sainte Geneviève Missouri (Continuation)." *French Review* 10.2 (Dec. 1936): 109-114.

All of the works listed above are also in the Bibliography that can be found on the [Old Mines French website](#).

## MARIE ROUENSA

By Cece Myers

One of the more popular figures in the French colonial setting of *les Pays de Illinois* is **Marie Rouensa**, daughter of the Illiniwek Confederation Chief Rouensa or Mamenthouensa. Her story was first documented by Pere Jacques Gravier in the pages of *Relations des Jésuites de la Nouvelle-France*, more commonly known as, *The Jesuit Relations*. Marie was his prize pupil, his most devoted candidate for conversion, deeply religious and eager to spread the Word, ultimately becoming the conduit for the conversion of many of her Kaskaskia tribe. Her dedication to Catholic teachings led her to make many decisions that would significantly impact not just her life, but the lives of her family and her community. Her marriages to the trader, Pierre Aco (Accault) and later the trader turned *habitant*, Michel Philippe dit Etienne, gave her wealth, status and power in her espoused French community as well as in her own native tribe.

Many of today's scholars of French history have studied Marie's life and the effect of her actions on her tribe and her adopted French identity. Writings by Carl J. Ekberg, Robert M. Morrissey, Sophie White, Susan Sleeper Smith, Tracy Neal Leavelle, and others, summarize the significance of Marie's relationship with the Jesuits, her embrace of Catholicism, the divisive effect of that choice on related tribes, and the resulting change in the Kaskaskia way of life. For others, of great importance was Marie's challenge to her parents' authority and ultimate compromise concerning her marriage, perhaps opening the door for other women of her tribe to have a say in their often forced marriages. And most recently, focus has been on the degree to which Marie assimilated and how it was reflected in the material culture surrounding her.

Marie was so influential that when she died, she was buried beneath her pew in the Catholic Church at Kaskaskia, a singular honor. Since her "rediscovery," she has been the subject of many lectures and conferences, monographs and book chapters. In 1999 Duke University included Marie Rouensa in their seminar on women who helped to shape America.

With all the parts and pieces of Marie's life dissected and examined, one of her most important contributions has been only briefly explored – her descendents. Her children have been listed, and we are all most likely aware of the marriages of a few of her children, but her family consists of thousands of residents of the mid-Mississippi Valley alone, not to mention the vast number throughout what was once New France.

## **Old Mines History: Original Documents**

### **Letter from Father Boullier to Bishop Rosati, January 12, 1831**

A regular feature of the newsletter will be the reproduction of historical documents relevant to the history of Old Mines. In this issue we are including a letter from Father Boullier, the first parish priest of St. Joachim, to his superior Giuseppe (Joseph) Rosati, the first bishop of St. Louis. This letter provides us with a fascinating look into the Old Mines community in the early part of the 19th century. It describes a growing community and the importance of the church as a center of this community's life. More importantly, it is perhaps the best source of information on the early history of the Catholic church in the area.

The original document is housed in the archives of the Diocese of St. Louis, an invaluable source of information about the history of the Catholic church in Missouri. It is a pleasure to provide both the original version in French (complete with some spellings typical of the 19th century but no longer used today, and with some grammatical errors) as well as a translation into English (courtesy of Kent Bone and Will Thompson).

#### *Original version in French*

Monseigneur

Conformément à vos ordres je vous envoie le résultat des renseignements que vous désirez touchant la fondation et la population actuelle du pays. Le premier établissement permanent de la Vieille Mine date de 1801; car il y a plus de 60 ans que les mines de plomb de l'endroit ont été découvertes et exploitées; mais ce n'est qu'à l'époque ci-dessus de 1801 que quelques familles créoles vinrent s'y fixer et y demeurer jusqu'à ce jour. Déjà la Mine à Breton, quoique découverte longtemps après celle-ci, comptoit plusieurs habitans qui y résidoient en permanence depuis environ 15 ou 20 ans avant l'établissement de la Vieille Mine c'est-à-dire avant 1801. Avant cette époque le pays renfermoit seulement quelques campemens de mineurs qui venoient fouiller les mines dans le beau temps et retournoient ensuite passer la mauvaise saison à Ste. Geneviève ou à Kaskaskias.

Le nombre des Catholiques augmentant de jour au jour à la Vieille Mine réclamèrent l'attention de Mr. Pratte curé de Ste. Geneviève qui vint les visiter pour la première fois en Mai 1816 et célébrer la première Messe qui jamais ait été dite dans le pays. Mr. Maxuel il est vrai étoit venu plusieurs fois aux mines, mais ce n'étoit que lorsqu'il y avoit été appelé pour visiter un malade ou célébrer quelques mariages.

#### *Translation*

Your excellency,

In accordance with your orders, I am sending the results of the information that you want about the founding and the present population of the area. The first permanent settling of Old Mines dates from 1801, for it has been more than 60 years since the lead mines in the area were discovered and worked. But it has only been since 1801 that some Creole families have come to settle and live here until now. Mine à Breton, although discovered long after Old Mines, already had several inhabitants living there on a permanent basis some 15 to 20 years before Old Mines was established, in other words before 1801. Before that time there were only a few mining camps in the region for those who came to work the mines in good weather and returned to spend the harsh season in Ste. Genevieve or Kaskaskia.

The number of Catholics growing day by day in Old Mines drew the attention of Mr. Pratte, pastor in Ste. Genevieve, who came to visit them for the first time in May 1816, and who celebrated the first Mass ever in this region. Mr. Maxwell, it is true, had paid several visits to the mines, but that was only when he was called upon to visit an invalid or perform some marriages.

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Letter from Father Boullier to Bishop Rosati, January 12, 1831

*Continued from p. 3*

Le Curé Pratte continua de visiter la Vieille Mine régulièrement tous les trois mois jusqu'en 1820 que le nombre des Catholiques augmentant d'une manière considérable ils élevèrent la petite chapelle qui existe encore aujourd'hui; après Mr. Pratte Mr. Dahmen a continué de venir les desservir jusqu'en 1828 que vous avez jugé à propos de m'y envoyer. A cette époque l'église actuelle se trouvant de beaucoup trop petite pour contenir le nombre des catholiques qui va toujours croissant, ils se sont tous employés avec zèle et avec ardeur à en bâtir une autre en Brick plus grande et plus décente. La cérémonie de la première pierre en a été faite le 9 Novembre 1829, et j'espère y dire la Messe incessamment aussi bien que dans l'église de la Mine à Breton qui n'est pas tout-à-fait finie. Quoique ce soit une chose difficile de déterminer exactement le nombre actuel des catholiques dispersés dans les pays cependant je puis dire sans exagération qu'il se monte à plus de deux milles d'après les calculs que j'ai tâché de faire à ce sujet.

Lors de mon séjour à St. Louis j'avais oublié de vous consulter au sujet des mariages contractés devant le juge. Une personne catholique s'étoit marié ainsi avec un non Baptisé. Quelques jours après elle vint me trouver pour ratifier son mariage. Pour lui faire mieux sentir son tort je refusai de le faire. Je lui répondit que le cas étoit trop grave et que je devois auparavant vous en instruire. Depuis mon retour de St. Louis j'ai appris que la même chose étoit arrivé entre deux Catholiques. Ce sont des personnes pauvres et ignorantes demeurant très loin de l'église. Je ne sais quelle conduite tenir à leur égard. Trop de sévérité les éloigneroit entièrement; trop de douceur seroit peut-être pour les autres un mauvais exemple.

Depuis mon départ de votre ville je n'ai eu aucune nouvelle de ma cloche. Je présume cependant que le mauvais temps ayant complètement suspendu la navigation, elle doit être encore à St. Louis. Mr. Roguier les obligerait infiniment s'il avoit encore la complaisance de s'informer auprès de Mr. Charles d'un baril d'huile de lin de 10 gallons que j'avais acheté et payé.

Mon Eglise n'est pas encore achevée, mon ouvrier travaille très lentement. Il n'a jamais voulu me croire au sujet des prix de St. Louis; il prétend travailler meilleur marché qu'on ne fait à St. Louis. Si dans votre réponse vous aviez la Bonté de m'en dire un petit mot je pense que M. Oueal pourroit vous les dire.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec respect

Votre très humble et obéissant serviteur et sujet

J. Boullier

Father Pratte continued to visit Old Mines regularly every three months until 1820 when, the number of Catholics growing quickly, they built the small chapel that still exists today. After Mr. Pratte, Mr. Dahmen continued to serve them until 1828 when you saw fit to send me there. At that time, the present church proving to be too small for the growing number of Catholics, with great zeal and ardor they built another, in brick and much larger and decent. The laying of the first stone was made on November 9, 1829, and I hope to be able to say Mass there incessantly, as well as at the church at Mine à Breton, which is not yet quite finished. Although it is difficult to say exactly how many Catholics there are dispersed throughout the region, I can say without exaggeration that there are more than 2,000 according to the calculations I have tried to make on this subject.

During my stay in St. Louis I forgot to consult you about some marriages contracted before the judge. A Catholic was so married to a non-baptized person. A few days later she came to me to ratify the marriage. In order to make her realize her error I refused to ratify it. I told her that the case was too serious and that I had to consult with you first. Since my return from St. Louis I've learned that the same thing happened between two Catholics. These are poor and ignorant people who live far from the church. I don't know what to do regarding their affair. Too much severity would drive them away entirely; too much kindness would perhaps be a bad example for the others.

Since leaving your city I've had no news about my bell. I presume that, the bad weather having completely stopped navigation, it must still be in St. Louis. Perhaps Mr. Roguier could be so kind as to inquire with Mr. Charles about a ten gallon barrel of linseed oil that I had bought and paid for.

My church is not yet completed. My worker progresses very slowly. He's never believed what I said about the prices in St. Louis; he claims to be working for a better price than they do in St. Louis. If in your reply you could kindly say something about this, I believe that Mr. Oueal would believe you.

I have the honor of respectfully being

Your very humble and obedient servant and subject

J. Boullier

# The Use of Hand Forged Iron Crosses as Cemetery Markers

By Kent Bone

## Part I: St Joachim Cemetery, Old Mines

The idea for this study was planted in my head as a child. On Decoration Day, I was dragged by the parents to the graveyard to visit dead people. As a short kid, I found myself standing amongst what seemed like six foot tall iron and wooden crosses. Many were leaning and the much of the cemetery was grown up in brush. That day we would meet *grandparents*, *tantes* and *n'oncles*, *cousins et cousines*, and other relatives who were also visiting dead people. There would be some French thrown about and they would tell stories at each grave about an ancestor who fought in the Civil War, came over from Ste. Genevieve or down from *le Canada*. Years later, when I became interested in these crosses, I wondered where all the tall ones had disappeared to. This is also when I noticed their absence at other cemeteries.

I was often told by the older folks at Old Mines that each blacksmith had his own design and this was the reason for the variety of cross designs. Upon visiting other cemeteries, some hundreds or a thousand miles away, and seeing many of the same designs there as well, I realized this couldn't have been the case. Each cemetery may have end motifs unique to that cemetery, but many of the designs are found throughout North America. The pointed and diamond ends are almost universal in the cemeteries I have documented so far.

The villages and neighborhoods of northern Washington County date from early 18<sup>th</sup> century lead mining settlements and camps. The area claims a founding date of 1723, based on the Philippe Renault land grant. Where the lead miners of the French and Spanish Colonial Period are buried is unknown. Known cemeteries in the area have a proven date only from the early 1800s. According to a letter of John Boullier, priest at St Joachim, written in the mid-1830s. Pere Henri Pratte of Ste. Genevieve began coming to the mining camps on a regular basis in 1816 and built a log church at the Old Mine in 1820. The Parish was established in 1828.

There are three Mother Parishes serving Northern Washington County's mining district. St. James of Potosi-Mine au Breton, St. Joachim of the Old Mine-la Vieille Mine, and St. Stephens of Richwoods-Ritchoud. There is only one surviving iron cross at St James, over 200 at St. Joachim, and perhaps a few others at St. Stephens. This disparity is not based on population density as Breton Mines has maintained the greater population since its establishment in the mid-1700s. Richwoods is a more compact village than the straggling Old Mines settlement, with a main street of businesses. The establishment at the Old Mine was always a collection of *cabanes* and *maisons* along the creek of the same name, and *voisinages* (neighborhoods) in the surrounding hills and hollers. Catholic churches at Mineral Point and Tiff were created from two of the Mother Parishes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are some iron crosses in the cemetery of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Tiff.

About 15 years ago, while driving past the Masonic Cemetery near the defunct, once booming settlement of Blackwell, with my 18-year-old helper, Josh Coleman, I was informed by him that there were iron crosses in there. I told him that was impossible because the Masons were a Protestant organization and Protestants didn't generally use icons such as statues, crosses, and paintings in their rituals. "OK, I'm stupid and blind he told me." So a few days later we went back and checked it out. "OK I'm stupid and blind" I told him. There were indeed iron crosses in there. I found it strange that there were grave crosses there, let alone French Catholics buried there. But my knowledge of that organization is limited. Possibly this was simply considered a neighborhood cemetery run by the Masons. Several questions to ask here. The two nearest Catholic cemeteries are at DeSoto or Old Mines, some twelve miles away.

In order to understand the multitude of crosses at la Paroisse de St Joachim de Vieille Mine, they must be seen in the greater North American context. Although there are many parallels with crosses of other regions, each site also has its own distinct designs.

The majority of iron crosses at St Joachim's are located in the oldest of the three cemeteries. By the 1940s many had rusted through at their stone base and fallen onto the ground. Over time, some were covered with sod where they remain hidden. Others were stacked along the fence line and soon covered in vines. This grave yard is surrounded by woods on three sides. The situation was different in cemeteries located inside of a town or open fields. The fallen simply disappeared. In the 1980s while at the oldest grave yard in Ste. Genevieve, I counted two and a half crosses there. An old fellow who lived nearby told me that when he was a boy, there were lots of iron crosses there, but over time they disappeared. Before mechanized mowing cemeteries often were grown up in brush. Often the family would cut a path through the brush to their lot to bury their dead. The tractor mower proved to be a mixed blessing. The head and foot stones and crosses became obstacles to the guy on the brush hog. Several twisted examples testify to the power of the brush hog. Putting sheep in a fenced cemetery may have been a viable and cheaper alternative.

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**FEATURED BOOK:**  
***Vanishing French Heritage***

*Vanishing French Heritage*, by Jack Richard Luer and Jesse W. Francis, was published in 2014 by the Kellerman Foundation for Historic Preservation in Cape Girardeau. This superb and exhaustive catalogue of vertical log homes in the Illinois Country is a must-read for anyone interested in the French presence in this region. The descriptions of some 50 structures impress by both their detail and the usefulness to both an expert in the field of historical preservation and the casual reader. Particularly relevant for those interested in Old Mines is the inclusion of Madame Lamarque's house on Hwy. 21. Few people may be aware that this is originally a vertical log home! [www.kellermanfoundation.org/home.html](http://www.kellermanfoundation.org/home.html).

**FEATURED WEBSITE:**  
**[www.carrollscorner.net](http://www.carrollscorner.net)**

Carrolls' Corner is evidently both a labor of love on the part of its creator, Esther Ziock Carroll, and a fantastic source of information for the history of Washington County and the genealogy of many of its families.

Favorite links on the page include those to old Washington County maps, to photos taken at the old St. Joachim cemetery, and the many churches to be found in the county. Make sure you have plenty of time on your hands when you visit the site!

### More Old Mines Records

There are numerous official and unofficial documents that can provide us with great on the Old Mines community at various points in its existence. One great source of information is the U.S. Census. In this newsletter, we feature information from the 1950 census, listing the occupations listed by the inhabitants of just one part of Union Township, Washington County, which encompasses most of the Old Mines concession.

The most prominent occupations will not be surprising to anyone familiar with the history of Washington County and the Old Mines community. Mining clearly dominates the local economy. What is remarkable, on the other hand, is the variety of occupations listed.

MINER	547	WATCHMAN	3	DRYER OPERATOR	1
LABORER	279	ASSISTANT POSTMASTER	2	FARM MANAGER	1
FARMER	120	BARBER	2	FLOWER MAKER	1
TRUCK DRIVER	37	BLACKSMITH	2	ICE PULLER	1
MERCHANT	20	CARETAKER	2	LAB ASSISTANT	1
CLERK	14	CARMAN	2	MANAGER	1
SERVANT	12	MACHINIST	2	MILL HAND	1
COOK	10	MAIL CARRIER	2	MINING ENGINEER	1
HELPER	10	OPERATOR	2	NEWSBOY	1
WAITRESS	10	PRIEST	2	OFFICE WORKER	1
FOREMAN	6	SUPERVISOR	2	PLASTERER	1
HOUSEKEEPER	6	ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN	1	POLICE SARGEANT	1
CARPENTER	5	BOOKKEEPER	1	POST MISTRESS	1
MAID	5	CARPENTER'S HELPER	1	POSTMASTER	1
SHOVEL OPERATOR	5	CEMENT FINISHER	1	ROAD LAYER	1
INSTRUCTOR	4	CHEMIST	1	RODSMAN	1
OPERATOR	4	SECRETARY	1	SHIPPING DEPT CLERK	1
SALESMAN	6	COUNTY CLERK	1	TIE MAKER	1
TEACHER	4	CUTTER	1	TREE TRIMMER	1
MECHANIC	3	DEPUTY CLERK	1	WELDER	1
OPERATOR	3	DRAY LINE OPERATOR	1		



## **“Tiff”**

A vocabulary item perhaps unique to Washington County, Missouri and the Old Mines area is the word **tiff**. Tiff mining was indeed the livelihood of many inhabitants of this region from the middle of the 19th century until the 1980's, and traces of this industry are still very much in evidence today (the community named Tiff being just the most obvious example). Until relatively recently, tiff was an important element in oil well drilling, making it a high-demand resource.

For most local residents, the word has never been associated with anything but the mineral more widely referred to as barite. Many have heard the story that the word tiff originally meant waste or garbage. Some still suggest that this was in fact the original meaning of the word in French. However, this is by no means accurate, although that such a story has been passed down through generations is hardly surprising. In the early days of mining in Washington County, when lead was the mineral being extracted and sold, the tiff that was mixed in with the lead was in fact simply discarded, considered useless.

But what about the true origins of the word itself? An investigation utilizing some resources in French are very revealing. Most importantly, it is necessary to recognize that the English word tiff traces its origins to the French word “tuf.” Certainly anyone familiar with French would agree that the pronunciation of the “u” in “tuf” could easily lead to a spelling in English using the letter “i” instead. “Tuf” in French refers to various forms of volcanic rock, and although there may not be a direct correlation between the kinds of rock found with this name found in France and the tiff/barite of Washington County, it seems likely that the French word found its way to the lead mining region and was, perhaps inaccurately, used as the name for the material found and discarded during the lead mining process.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources has a great site devoted to barite/tiff mining:  
<http://dnr.mo.gov/geology/geosrv/imac/barite.htm>.

### **The Use of Hand Forged Iron Crosses as Cemetery Markers (continued from p. 5)**

In 1993 as part of a general cleanup of the cemetery, the idea for a restoration and documentation developed. Many of the head and foot stones were broken, in danger of falling over or had been piled in an overgrown corner of this four-acre lot. It was at this time that the diversity and craftsmanship of these *croix en fer* became obvious. There were lots of different designs.

At least a third of the lot had been grown up in brush as well as the creek banks in front of the cemetery. The rear was covered in native trees that had crossed the fence line during a period of neglect in the 60s and 70s. To the west side was a jungle of introduced paradise trees from India. They spread by root runner like the poplar tree and have a smell similar to walnut trees.

Over the last 20 years much information concerning this ancient cemetery has been collected from church records and interviews with the older members of the community, descendants of those buried there. A photographic catalogue and repair work began on the stones and crosses.

There are initialed footstones that had been taken up by the grass cutters to make their job quicker. This was probably done when mowing machines were introduced. A few footstones are still in place at the foot of graves.

*Part two of Kent Bone's study of iron cross markers will appear in the next newsletter.*



Visit us on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/oldminesfrench](http://www.facebook.com/oldminesfrench).



## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Nov.27-Jan.3: [Vieux Noel in Lights](#) (Ste. Genevieve)  
 December 4-6: [Ste. Genevieve Holiday Christmas Festival](#)  
 December 13: [Le Reveillon at Felix Valle State Historic Site](#)  
 December 31: [La Guiannee in Ste. Genevieve](#)  
 December 31: [La Guiannee at Fort de Chartres](#)  
 February 6: [Queen's Ball, Ste. Genevieve](#)



## THE FAMILIES OF OLD MINES

Images from the new cemetery at St. Joachim Catholic Church





## What is Old Mines?

The Old Mines community, located in the north-east quadrant of Washington County, Missouri, is one of the oldest European settlements west of the Mississippi River. The area first attracted the attention of French explorers and settlers in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century due to its rich lead deposits (and the prospect of even more valuable minerals, which unfortunately proved to be untrue). Beginning in the 1720's, lead mining in this area became an integral part of the economic activity of the "Pays des Illinois," that region between the Great Lakes and present-day Louisiana that was settled by the French.

After the end of the French and Indian War, and towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more and more French settlers migrated to the west side of the Mississippi River, and became involved in the fast-growing lead mining operations west of Ste. Genevieve. After the Louisiana Purchase, and once Missouri became a state, the community at Old Mines still remained very much a French community, largely isolated from the massive influx of English-speaking Americans.

Even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century the families in Old Mines continued to preserve their language and traditions. Only the forces of modernization could finally compel the community to change, as paved roads, improved communication, and compulsory education put an end to the isolation in which Old Mines had long remained. Lead was replaced by tiff (barite) as the mineral which contributed to the livelihood of the majority of families in the area, but it has been many years since any mining activity has taken place. Fewer and fewer people spoke French on a regular basis, at least not in public, with the last native speakers having disappeared.

Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Old Mines community continues to value its French legacy, with a variety of annual events celebrating nearly 300 years of the French presence in present-day Washington County. Although many of the descendants of the original settlers have created a diaspora that spreads across Missouri and the rest of the United States, interest in the collective heritage, in genealogy, and in the preservation of the cultural legacy remains strong. Hopefully this project (with its website, newsletter, and Facebook page) will make a positive contribution to the exchange of ideas and information about this fascinating aspect of American history.

### **The Old Mines French Project**

Director: Dr. Will Thompson, The University of Memphis

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/oldminesfrench](http://www.facebook.com/oldminesfrench)

### **CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS WELCOME!**

Do you have an idea for an article for the newsletter? Something you would like to see included? If so, please do not hesitate to get in touch! (Contact information to the left.) The only requirement is that it should be of interest to anyone wanting to know more about Old Mines, its history, its families, its church, and its lasting legacy.