

# *News from Old Mines*

**The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project**

**No. 7, Fall 2017**

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(Part 2 of a Centennial Commemoration)

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## **FROM THE EDITOR**

As 2017 comes to a close, I will apologize for not having been more active this past year on the newsletter, website, and Facebook page. As a college professor, I usually devote most of my summer to research, as conference, teaching and administrative duties take up so much of my time during the academic semesters. Unfortunately this year my best-laid plans went unfulfilled as a Memorial Day storm dropped a tree on my house, leading to a summer full of dealings with insurance agents and contractors. All is well now, however, and I look forward to a productive 2018!

Will Thompson

## **Historic Ste. Genevieve Cemetery**

The historic old cemetery in Ste. Genevieve was opened in 1787, and remained open for nearly a century, with approximately 5,000 people being buried there (although the number of actual grave markers today is considerably lower). Now on the National Register of Historic Places, the cemetery contains numerous headstones with inscriptions in French.

Although it may sound somewhat morbid to say that you love going to cemeteries, I do find myself saying precisely that, especially as it pertains to some of the old cemeteries

in those part of Missouri and Illinois where there is a strong French heritage. Cemeteries provide tremendous insight into the French presence in the Midwest, into families and connections between families, into names (particularly how they may change over time), and into the manner in which family members are memorialized. People familiar with the Old Mines family names will undoubtedly recognize names like Boyer, Pratte, Valle, and Govrau that can be found in the Ste. Genevieve Cemetery.



More photos on page 4

# **Old Mines History: The Mineral Point Cyclone of 1917**

## **“Big Cyclone! Mineral Point Just Got Blowed Away!”**

**Par Kent Beaulne dit Bone**

In 1917 tiff mining was still done by hand with picks, and shovels, no big machines yet, but there was mechanized cleaning and grinding. This mill must have run by electricity, or coal. It was practical to build a mill near the R. R. tracks for shipping the heavy mineral.

To understand the extent of the disaster for the people of 1917, one must remember that at that time, timber, farming, and mining were the main sources of income in the County. The damages would have been an economic set-back in the affected areas, causing hardships. The crop damage would have resulted in lost income for the entire year. The fruit trees of the destroyed orchards would have taken some years to produce at the same level, as before the cyclone. The loss of the big trees which was sold to loggers, and sawmills resulted in lost monies. Twisted trees can't be cut into boards. It may have been ten or fifteen years before property owners had trees large enough to sell. Fences would have been a priority, to keep the cattle in, or keep them out of the fields. Barns rebuilt, to store hay to feed the cattle. I am not sure if crop insurance was available in 1917, or if it was, how many farmers bought it. This is a good question to research. The Tiff Mill Company had bought insurance, but not enough it seems.

A question that comes to mind nearly a century later is how many buildings in Mineral Point survived the cyclone. One for sure is the log house known as the Cole Cabin, now in state of decay. There was a Catholic Church at Mineral Point at the time; a priest is listed among the injured. Was it the same building that is now the Lions Club, or was it destroyed and this is a later church?

### ***St James Catholic Parish 1917 records; Charles M. Canning, Pastor***

*On June 2<sup>nd</sup> the remains of Frank LaChance were interred in the family lot of the Catholic Cemetery, cause of death, Cyclone. Age 59 years, a good husband.*

*On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June, the remains of Augustus Bone were interred in the Catholic cemetery, cause of Cyclone at M. Point, age 74 years.*

*On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of June the remains of Mrs. Augustus Bone were interred in the Catholic cemetery, Potosi. Cause of Cyclone. A good woman, age 70.*

Great, great grandparents Gus and Louise have no marker. Burial records of non-Catholics killed would be an important addition to the story.

### **From the Potosi Weekly Independent:**

*List of Dead; W. Thomas Le Master, age 60 years, of Potosi, conductor on the Potosi Branch R.*

*R. \* Gus Bone, age 68 years, miner, formerly watchman for the I. M. R. R. [Iron Mountain Rail Road] of Mineral Point. \* Frank La Chance, laborer, age \_ years, killed at tiff mill, Mineral*

*Point. \*Otis Goff, age 2 years, son of Frank Goff, Mineral Point. \* Amby Harper, age 11 years,*

*son Henry Harper, of Eye. \* Mrs. Sam Newcomer, age 24 years, 1 month, 28 days died at home of L. J. Newcomer, Monday, June 4th from injuries. Leaves a husband, and 3 little girls, ages six,*

*four, and two. Funeral was held in Potosi, Wednesday. \* Mrs. Gus Bone, injured, about head.*

*Died Tuesday, and buried in Potosi, Wednesday.*

## 2018 Event Calendar

This is just a partial list of upcoming events. As more information comes available, look to the website and Facebook page for announcement. Where available, links have been provided below if you are interested in additional information.

<a href="#"><u>Ste. Genevieve King's Ball</u></a>	February 3
Brigade a Renault Winter Rendezvous, Old Mines	February
<a href="#"><u>Fort de Chartres Colonial Trade Faire</u></a>	April 7-8
<a href="#"><u>Old Mines Area Historical Society History Seminar</u></a>	April
Fête a Renault, Old Mines	May
<a href="#"><u>Fort de Chartres June Rendezvous</u></a>	June 2-3
<a href="#"><u>Ste. Genevieve French Festival</u></a>	June 9-10
<a href="#"><u>Friends of the Fort Summer Ball</u></a>	July 21
<a href="#"><u>Jour de Fête, Ste. Genevieve</u></a>	August 10-12
<a href="#"><u>Ste. Genevieve Fall History Conference</u></a>	September
<a href="#"><u>St. Joachim Catholic Church Fall Festival</u></a>	September
<a href="#"><u>Old Mines Area Historical Society Fête d'automne</u></a>	October 7
<a href="#"><u>Fort de Chartres French and Indian War Encampment</u></a>	October 13-14
<a href="#"><u>Center for French Colonial Studies Conference, Kaskaskia</u></a>	October
<a href="#"><u>Fort de Chartres Winter Rendezvous</u></a>	November 3-4
<a href="#"><u>Ste. Genevieve Holiday Christmas Festival</u></a>	December
<a href="#"><u>La Guiannee at Fort de Chartres</u></a>	December 31
<a href="#"><u>Ste. Genevieve La Guiannee</u></a>	December 31



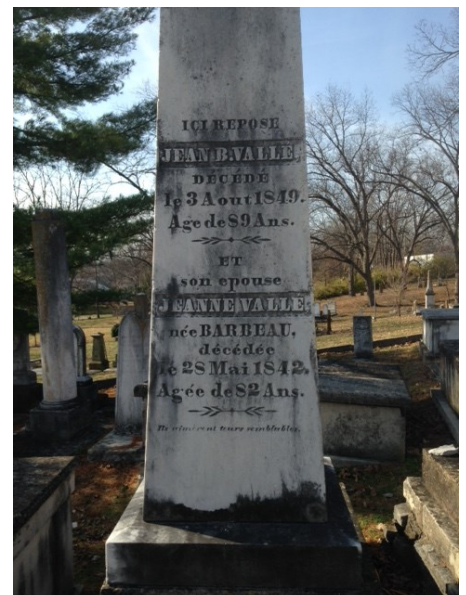
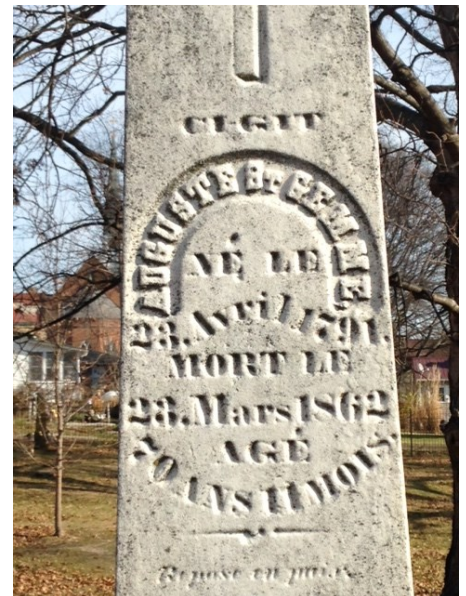
**FEATURED WEBSITE:**  
**Fort de Chartres**

[www.fortdechartres.us/](http://www.fortdechartres.us/)

A critical component of the early history of the French presence in the mid-west, Fort de Chartres continues to play an important role in preserving the French heritage, thanks in large part to various organizations whose activities are centered on the fort. Historians, reenactors, volunteers all contribute to the vibrancy of Fort de Chartres today. The many groups are featured on the fort's website.

Great features of the website include an online catalog of materials that can be found at the fort's John Guilfoil Memorial Library and a detailed calendar of events, most happening at the fort itself. If you have not visited the fort (largely a reconstruction, although there are some original features still visible), make plans to do so!

**Images from Ste. Genevieve Cemetery**





## French in the United States Today

Although French as a language of daily communication may be a thing of the past in Old Mines and other French heritage communities in Missouri, there still appear to be people listing themselves as French-speaking in this region according to the most recent U.S. census. The census language map (2011) still shows a French language presence in the area surrounding Old Mines.

You can see the most recent data mapped at the following link:

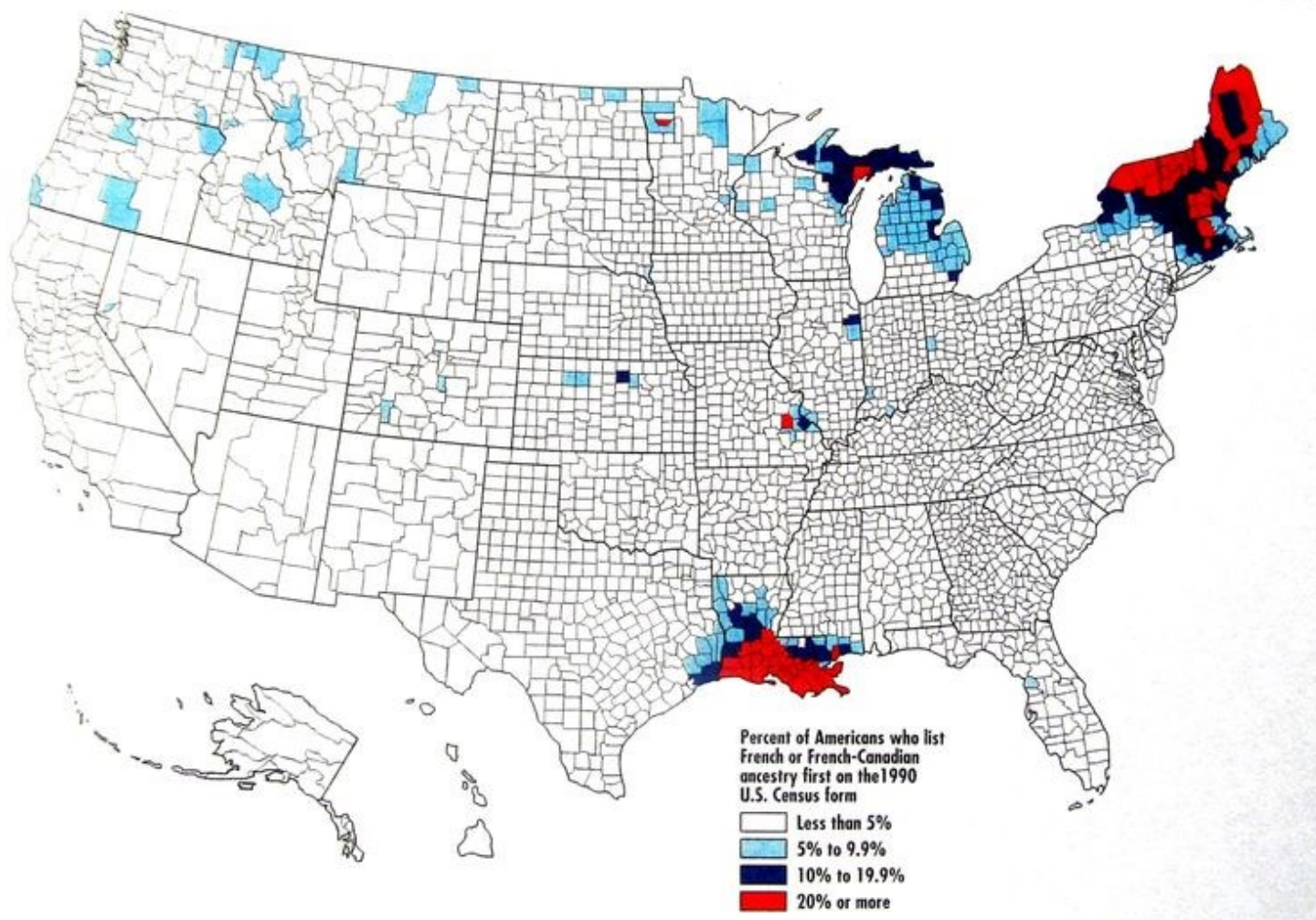
[https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language\\_map.html](https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language_map.html)

The map below from the 1990 census still showed Washington County as an isolated exception to the rule that had the only concentration of French heritage of the United States restricted to either New England and a few other areas near the Canadian border, or Louisiana.

Note that the map below traces ancestry, whereas the above link show data pertaining to actual language usage.

*Where Americans of French and French-Canadian Ancestry Are Concentrated by County, 1990*

FIG. 2-1



## 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.

Now well into 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, and interest in the preservation of the cultural legacy remains strong. Hopefully this project (with its website, newsletter, and Facebook page) will make contribute to the exchange of ideas and information about this fascinating aspect of American history.

### "Croquignole"

Or croxiole, or croquecignole, or croquesignole, or croccinolle, or croxignole, or craquignole, etc...!!

However you spell it, or however you pronounce it (yet another discussion, and there are videos online on how to do so!), there is no doubt that one of the great legacies of the French heritage in the Old Mines region and beyond is this small, fried pastry, often described as doughnut-like, but not round and with no hole, that is served at various festivals and special events, usually not lasting very long, due to its popularity!



The word itself derives from the French "croquer," meaning to crunch, certainly a reference to the texture of the pastry after it is fried. References to "croquignole" (and/or its variants) are numerous in dictionaries of Louisiana, Cajun, and various Quebec French dialects. In France itself the word is described in dictionaries as "vieilli" meaning outdated or no longer widely used.

Strangely enough, a variant of the word—krokinole—exists in Canada, but refers to a board game where small wooden disks are flicked (using one's index finger and thumb) towards the center of a board in an attempt to score points. Why the same word? Because apparently in the past "croquignole" in French could also mean to flick or flip! (It even refers to a kind of hair style!)

### The Old Mines French Project

Director: Dr. Will Thompson, The University of Memphis

Website: [www.oldmines.org](http://www.oldmines.org)

email: [oldminesmissouri@gmail.com](mailto:oldminesmissouri@gmail.com)

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.