

News from Old Mines

The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project
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From the Editor

As I mentioned in the last issue, Covid-19 has certainly taken a toll on research and the travel associated with it. Libraries and archives are closed, restrictions on travel continue, and everyone is dealing with the adaptations to everyday activities that the pandemic has forced upon us. Hopefully 2021 will provide more opportunities for travel and engagement with others, and my own personal research will be able to flourish again! In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the information in this issue of the newsletter.

French Village

Travelling between Ste. Genevieve and Old Mines (as the crow flies, at least!) one finds the small community of French Village. Originally referred to as "Petit Canada," it came into existence precisely because it was conveniently located at a half-way point for those travelling through from the Mississippi to the mining country. The names on the gravestones in the small, beautiful cemetery adjoining the church are a testimony to the French heritage of the community (Aubuchon being by far the most common name!).

The inscription on the plaque in front of St. Anne's Catholic Church in French Village is worth reproducing here: "Petit Canada (French Village) was visited by explorers and missionaries in the early 1700's. Later mid-century miners leaving the King's Highway at Bloomsdale established a permanent camp here on their way to Old Mines. The first settlers were French Canadians involved in fur trapping and mining. By 1797 there were 20 furnaces around French Village smelting ore. Although Mass had been offered by passing missionaries earlier, in 1828, Saint Anne's was established as the first permanent parish in St. Francois County.

The priest rode from Ste. Genevieve to say Mass in a log church for 18 families. Twenty years later Father John Anselm became the first resident pastor. At this time St. Anne was one of only 48 parishes in the entire state and served 525 members. The present church was built in 1871-1874 and rebuilt after a fire in 1919. At various times, St. Anne ministered to Catholics at Bloomsdale, Zell, Lawrenceton, Farmington, and Bonne Terre. As mining moved into the richer producing "[Lead Belt](#)" during the last half of the 1800's, French Village became primarily a farming area. The role of St. Anne Parish reversed and it became a mission of Bonne Terre, then Bloomsdale and Lawrenceton. From 1964 to the present it is again a mission of Bonne Terre."



From the *Potosi Journal*

Editor's note: While self-isolating, one is always looking for ways to both entertain and enrich oneself. One of my favorite activities over the course of the past few months has been to read through the online archives of the *Potosi Journal* from the end of the 19th century. Available on the website of the Chronicling American project of the Library of Congress (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90061371/>), the *Potosi Journal* occasionally gives a glimpse into the lives of the residents of Washington County, Missouri including Old Mines and the surrounding communities. The newspaper would merge with the *Weekly Independent* in 1929 as the *Independent Journal*, which exists to this day. The previous issue of this newsletter included a first batch of items from the *Journal*; here are some more:

AFTER APRIL 5 1895

May 8, 1895

A. Harrison, superintendent of the Union Mining and Smelting Co., at Old Mines, Washington County, was in De Soto yesterday making arrangements with Mr. Hardy for thirty cars of larger capacity than usual, to ship tiff. The tiff has been mined in that vicinity for ten or fifteen years; still, the supply seems to be as inexhaustible as ever. Tiff is largely used as priming for paints, and by pork packers to mix with oil in which they soak the canvas sacks for hams, shoulders, etc. The miners receive from \$3.00 to \$3.50 per ton for the mineral, delivered at the railroad station.—De Soto Gazette.

May 29, 1895

From one of the participants we learn a tight game of base ball was contested between the Shibboleth and Cannon Mines mines, at Shibboleth, last Sunday. Cannon Miners were defeated.

June 5, 1895

We are informed that George Evans, of Fertile, this county, has mysteriously disappeared from his home. He is a miner, and last Friday he quit work about 11 o'clock a.m. and went home to dinner. After reaching the house, he remembered that he had forgotten to lock up some of his tools, and started back to the mines to attend to them. Since that time he has not been seen or heard of. HE had previously turned in a lot of mineral and had considerable money about him, and as he had no reason for a voluntary disappearance, his friends fear that he has been foully dealt with.

June 12, 1895

Prof. W. P. Blanton, of the State University, lectured at the Opera House [Potosi] last Monday evening to a fair sized audience. His subject was "Womans' place in our daily lives," and was well handled.

June 19, 1895

From the St. Louis Times

Fountain Farm is a body of 790 acres of land, formerly occupied by Major Blow, but now owned by Jos. A. Duffy of this city, who uses the same for a stock farm. It is situated near Cadet, Washington county, Missouri. In one of the fields adjoining his residence on the place, a spring gushes out from a fissure in a bed of rock, and Mr. Duffy determined to utilize it to furnish a large fish pond—or lake he contemplated building—with water, and commenced to excavate the ground around the spring for that purpose. While his men were so employed they discovered what is thought to be a bed of itacolumite or flexible sandstone. In North Carolina such beds are frequently run across, but we believe this to be the only one ever discovered in this State. If Joe's discovery proves to be every thing it is represented, all that we ask is, for him to send us a green crocidolite, or "cat's eye," for the baby, and a brown crocidolite, or "tiger's eye," for the editor of this paper. We may need a couple.

June 26, 1895

After an almost total suspension for over a year, the barytes (tiff) business is reviving somewhat. Considerable of the mineral is being shipped at present, and local dealers have begun buying again.

September 18, 1895

Mattie Charboneau, a tough young lady who has been serving a six-months' sentence in our county jail for breaking into a store, was released to-day, her time having expired. Mattie will be given transportation to Texas, where she has a sister, and this county will probably know her no more.

Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park Formally Established

Ste. Genevieve's national park status is now official! In a ceremony held on November 2, 2020 on the front porch of the Jean-Baptiste Valle home in Ste. Genevieve, the Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park was formally inaugurated as the 422nd unit of the National Park Service. The ceremony had been convened just three days prior after the necessary paperwork had finally been completed at the state level allowing for the park to become operational. The park was authorized through federal legislation in 2018.

The national park status not only recognizes the unique architectural and historical significance of Ste. Genevieve, but also the extent to which the town represents the French history of the region (including Old Mines, of course!) from its beginnings up to the early years of the American presence. As the original NPS resource study states, the park "...possesses historical significance because it represents French colonial settlement, from its earliest days."

The November 2nd ceremony was presided by Michael Ward, Superintendent of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, who had briefly served as interim superintendent in the early stages of the Ste. Genevieve park's development. The speakers at the ceremony were Dale Wright (Missouri State Representative for District 116, which includes Ste. Genevieve), Carol Comer (Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources), Chris Collins (Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park Superintendent), Paul Hasler (Mayor of Ste. Genevieve), Bret Frost (National Park Service Regional Director), and Senator Roy Blunt (U.S. Senator from the state of Missouri). Senator Blunt has been involved in the process of having Ste. Genevieve's historic district named a national park for many years, and, with U.S. Representative Jason Smith, provided the primary support for having the park approved through federal legislation.

The ceremony was followed by the unveiling of the new sign across the street at the park's newly-established visitor center in the building that has long housed the Ste. Genevieve Welcome Center at the corner of South Main and Market streets in the historic district. Among the many historic structures in Ste. Genevieve, several are now under NPS administration, including the Beauvais-Amoureux house and the Green Tree Tavern (previously administered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources) and the Jean-Baptiste Vallé house (donated to the NPS by the Missouri chapter of the Colonial Dames of America).

For more information:

[Park website](#)

[Video of ceremony](#)

[NPS special resource study](#)

Below left: Newly-unveiled signage at the Welcome Center in Ste. Genevieve

Below right: Ceremony at Jean-Baptiste Valle house. Both photos courtesy of National Park Service.



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Apart from my work on Old Mines and the French heritage of the American Midwest, I also serve as the editor of the newsletter of the American Society of the French Academic Palms (contact me if you want to know what that is!). As part of my work with this group, I was in touch with Dr. James Arnold, who retired a few years ago from the University of Virginia. In an email exchange with Dr. Arnold, I came to find out that he started his career at Virginia at the time that Joseph Médard Carrière was still a professor there. As you may know (and he was profiled in the last issue of this newsletter), Carrière played a critical role in the early study of Old Mines or “Pawpaw” French in the 1930’s. Dr. Arnold reported back to me that Carrière was in fact one of the professors who interviewed him for his position at Virginia in the mid-1960’s. He remembered Dr. Carrière quite fondly, and wrote the following to me:

“Prof. Carrière, whose middle name was Médard (like the saint who has a church at the bottom of the *rue Mouffetard*), interviewed me at the Chicago MLA in 1964. Mme Carrière retired to Montréal after her husband’s death. She was a reader of *Le Devoir* when that estimable journal published a brief review of my edition of Camus’s 1939-41 *Caligula* (genetic edition, Gallimard, 1984). She sent me a very nice note. The Carrières were very reserved and very decent people. They had a pavilion on the UVA “lawn” (designed by Jefferson) in the 1960s. Here is an anecdote you may not know: when Médard arrived at Harvard University from francophone Ontario, he was shocked to learn that he was a subject of the king of England! Did you know that Prof. Carrière, whom I never called by his first name, received a prize from the Académie Française for his book on French folklore in Missouri?”

Under normal circumstances each issue of *News from Old Mines* contains information about upcoming events (this information is also share on the website). With so many events being cancelled, no listings are being included in this issue, since it is hard to confirm what may or may not be taking place in the coming weeks and months. Hopefully there will be a nice, long list of events included in the next issue in the spring!

The pandemic, understandably, has had quite an impact on services at St. Joachim Catholic Church. A message from the December 6, 2020 church bulletin: “ATTENTION ! When you attend Mass, masks ARE mandatory, upon entering & exiting the church & when you go to receive communion. They may be removed once you are in the pew. Please use hand sanitizer upon entering & exiting the church. If you are sick, have an underlying health condition or elderly, please stay home or it is recommended that you go to a weekday Mass. Per the Archdiocese, masks are mandatory while singing.”

The Old Mines French Project

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