

News from Old Mines

The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project

No. 15, Fall 2021

From the Editor

You may notice a distinct lack of material specifically regarding Old Mines in this issue of the newsletter, and for that the editor takes full responsibility! By no means are we abandoning our passion for Old Mines, but some other material that has recently been the focus of the editor's research is hopefully of interest and of use to the readers of this newsletter. With any luck 2022 will be a year of travel as we return to some kind of normal and that will include some visits to Old Mines and, hopefully, some of the great events that take place there throughout the year (and which will be reported on in this newsletter). Hope to see you there.

Les Filles du Roy

The image below has been shared on the Facebook pages of various groups interested in the French history of North America, as it commemorates the fascinating story of the « filles du roy », those young women sent to help with the colonization (and populating!) of New France. These women are the ancestors of many people who trace their genealogy back to the earliest families who settled along the St. Lawrence River, families who owed their existence to a colonial policy of King Louis XIV. A translation of the plaque can be found on the last page of the newsletter.



Fictional Accounts of the French Creoles of the Illinois Country

Will Thompson

One of the more frustrating aspects of researching the history of the French speakers who came to or who were born in what is now Missouri and Illinois is the fact that we have so few written accounts composed by the French themselves. What we do have, however, is a variety of portrayals of this population in fictional works dating from the end of the 18th century through the mid-20th century. The works listed below include some depiction of the French Creoles of this particular region as either a major component of the narrative or in a manner significant enough for inclusion here. More specifically, for the purposes of the present research, the works were chosen on the following basis: they feature in part or near totality as a locale the French colonial settlements in the American Midwest that comprised the Pays des Illinois (Kaskaskia, Fort de Chartres, St. Louis, Vincennes, Arkansas Post, as well as points further west wherever the French could be found) and include in passing or in depth a portrayal of the French-speaking inhabitants of what was La Nouvelle France and is now within the United States (excluding present-day Louisiana and the French settlements in Michigan and in New England, certainly worthy of analysis, but beyond the current geographic scope of this study).

An analysis of the manner in which the French Creoles are portrayed reveals several broad categorizations, some positive, but many of them condescending. This is perhaps not surprising given that the writers being considered were all writing in English, and were describing events that for the most part occurred far in the past. Many of the authors were undoubtedly influenced by mid 19th-century historians who were already minimizing the importance of the French presence in North America (at least in terms of the French contribution to the creation of an American identity), and negatively portraying the customs and lifestyles of the French who remained. Nonetheless, these works may interest anyone interested in the French history of the United States in that they provide us with the portrayal of a population that otherwise had no voice.

For each work, a brief synopsis is provided, as well as information about the date of publication, and the timeframe in which the narrative is situated. These works are available in print and electronic versions through a variety of sources (the author is more than happy to provide information via email to anyone who is interested in finding a particular title). There may very well be other relevant works that could be included here, but initial research has only identified the texts listed below.

Belting, Natalia. In Enemy Hands. Published 1953. Set in 1757.

Young David Cameron witnesses his father being murdered by the Chickasaw, who sell David to the Cherokee who in turn sell him to a French officer on his way home to Fort de Chartres. David's hatred of the French will (of course!) eventually abate as he gets to know his new "adoptive" family better.

Belting, Natalia. Pierre of Kaskaskia. Published 1951. Set in 1741.

This novel, intended for a younger audience, describes a young boy, Pierre, whose life is made significantly more interesting by the arrival via convoy from New Orleans of what we now call the Kaskaskia Bell as well as of a mysterious stranger, who will live with Pierre's family.

Catherwood, Mary Hartwell, "The Kidnapped Bride". In **The Chase of Saint-Castin and Other Stories**, 1894. Set in c. 1760.

In this short story Celeste Barbeau, who lives in Prairie du Pont, is betrothed by her father to a (unknown to him) notorious swindler from New Orleans. In fact she is in love with local boy Gabriel Chartrant. A fake kidnapping is coordinated to keep Celeste away from the man she is supposed to marry, but this is complicated when a band of Puant Indians actually do kidnap her.

Catherwood, Mary Hartwell. "French Settlements". Published in **Heroes of the Middle West**, 1898. Several periods described.

A very short history of the French presence in the American Midwest with some fictionalized moments.

Catherwood, Mary Hartwell. Old Kaskaskia. Published in 1893. Set in c. 1805.

This novel tells the story of a large cast of characters, both French and English-speaking, living in Kaskaskia and nearby. The greatest drama in the intrigue is caused by the major flood which forces the inhabitants from their homes, with some tragic consequences.

Dillon, Mary. The Rose of Old St. Louis. Published in 1904. Set in c. 1803.

Set at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, this novel's title is somewhat deceptive, in that the "rose" (the young woman who is the object of the narrator's attention) is not in fact from St. Louis, and barely a third of the action takes place in St. Louis or involves the "rose."

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Hall, James. "A Legend of Carondelet". Published in **Legends of the West**, 1832. Set in c. 1800.

Timothy Tompkinson is a young New Englander who, after being left penniless upon his father's death, decides to explore the country, and ends up in Carondelet, Missouri. He succeeds in charming the local (and eligible) French women, and in due course he marries Marie Dunois, becomes a coureur de bois of sorts, and settles down in Carondelet for good.

Hall, James. "Michel de Coucy". Published in **Legends of the West**, 1832. Set in c. 1750.

The action of this short story takes place in and between Kaskaskia and Fort de Chartres in 1750. The title character is swindled by a Spanish money lender from the other side of the Mississippi who kidnaps de Coucy's daughter after de Coucy cannot pay back the loan (but all ends well).

Hall, James. "The Dark Maid of Illinois". In **Tales of the Border**, 1835. No specific date for setting.

Although this short story begins with a description of the French in the Mississippi Valley, the greater part of the text is devoted to Pierre Blondo, a newcomer to North America who is travelling to the Illinois Country from Montreal with a priest for whom he serves as valet. Pierre has a romantic encounter with a young woman from an Indian village, but a love he has left behind in France holds the key to his heart and he returns to her, only to discover that she has married another man.

Hall, James. "The French Village". In **Tales of the Border**, 1835. No specific date for setting.

This short story describes a fictitious French village on the "borders of the Mississippi" (apparently west bank) providing both a general description of its inhabitants and a detailed portrayal of M. Baptiste Menou and Mlle Jeanette Duval, his neighbor and future wife. The depiction is generally that of the decline of the French presence in the region.

Hall, James. "The Pioneer". In **Tales of the Border**, 1835. No specific date for setting.

A tale within a tale of a man from Kentucky who devotes his life to seeking revenge on the Indians who killed his father and kidnapped his sister. He spends some time in Kaskaskia where he befriends a French coureur du bois.

Holbrook, Elizabeth. Old 'Kaskia Days. Published in 1893. Set in 1805.

The novel focuses largely on the Beauvais family (a widowed father and his two children, Annette and Antoine) and their friends and neighbors, many based on real people (Pierre Menard, in particular). A large portion of the action also takes place in New Orleans, where Antoine travels to conduct business and where he meets Leonie Perrine, with whom he will fall in love.

Imlay, Gilbert. The Emigrants. Published in 1793. Set in 1783-1785.

Although the town of Kaskaskia figures only briefly in this novel set in the early days of the American republic, it does have some significance as the "end of the road" for those wanting to move into the American frontier of the times. Written in epistolary form, the novel traces the fate of a ruined English family who comes to America, moving from Philadelphia, to Pittsburgh, and then to Louisville as they move further and further away from their previous lives.

Irving, Washington. "The Creole Village." Published in 1837. Set in 1832.

Written after he accompanied a surveying mission in the western United States. Probably based on the Arkansas Post. Although not entirely fictional, the writing style and anonymous nature of the places and people described make its inclusion here appropriate. Most of the text (seven pages) is devoted to a description of two men, residents of the village, who were fellow passengers of the narrator on a boat arriving at this village.

Irving, Washington. Three Western Narratives. Published in 1835-1837. "Astoria," "A Tour on the Prairies," "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville" (All set in 1830's)

These three lengthy travelogues written by Irving are certainly not fictional in their entirety, but the depictions of the Frenchmen encountered during these travels demonstrate some creative license above and beyond mere recounting of the events that transpired.

Thompson, Maurice. Alice of Old Vincennes. Published in 1900. Set in 1779.

Undoubtedly the most successful of the fictional portrayals of the French Creoles of the Illinois Country (a best-seller when published). The title character is a young woman living during the American Revolutionary War in Vincennes, which will be the site of a battle between American and British forces (the respective leaders figure prominently as characters in the novel).

Recent Books on the French Colonial Presence in the United States

Compiled by Will Thompson

The works listed below have been published between 2019 and 2021. This is undoubtedly *not* an exhaustive list but will hopefully be of interest and use to anyone reading this newsletter. The title of each work is also a link to the publisher's website for the book, where available.

- Brandao, Jose Antonio, editor and translator. [*Memoires of Michilimackinac and the Pays d'en Haut: Indians and French in the Upper Great Lakes at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century*](#). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press; Mackinac Island: Mackinac Island State Park Commission, 2019.
- Brown, Margaret Kimball. [*Reconstructing an Eighteenth-Century Village: Chartres in the Illinois*](#). Belleville, IL: Village Publishers, 2020.
- Carayon, Céline. [*Eloquence Embodied: Nonverbal Communication among French and Indigenous Peoples in the Americas*](#). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.
- Chambers, Mark. [*Gray Gold: Lead Mining and its Impact on the Natural and Cultural Environment, 1700-1840*](#). Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2021.
- Charbonneau, Hubert (dir.). [*Naissance d'une population. Les Français établis au Canada au XVIIe siècle*](#). New and revised edition. Montréal : Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2020.
- Englebert, Robert; Andrew N. Weigmann, eds. [*French Connections: Cultural Mobility in North America and the Atlantic World, 1600-1875*](#). Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2020.
- Evans, Mark L. *The Commandant's Last Ride. A Comprehensive Guide to Ste. Genevieve's Most Historic Buildings*. Second edition. Ste. Genevieve: Ten-Digit Press, 2019.
- Gitlin, Jay; Robert Morrissey; Peter J. Kastor, eds. [*French St. Louis: Landscape, Contexts, and Legacy*](#). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021.
- Jones, Linda Carol. [*The Shattered Cross: French Catholic Missionaries on the Mississippi River, 1698-1725*](#). Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2020.
- [*L'Ouest franco-américain*](#). Special issue of the *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 73, no. 1-2 (été-automne 2019).
- Laramie, Michael G. [*Colonial Forts of the Champlain and Hudson Valleys: Sentinels of Wood and Stone*](#). Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2020.
- Lee, Jacob F. [*Masters of the Middle Waters: Indian Nations and Colonial Ambitions Along the Mississippi*](#). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Libert, Steve ; Kathie Libert. *Le Griffon and the Huron Islands: 1679*. Traverse City, MI: Mission Point Press, 2021.
- Loffreda, Raphaël. [*L'Empire face aux Renards : la conduite politique d'un conflit franco-amérindien 1712-1738*](#). Québec: Septentrion, 2021.
- MacDonald, David; Raine Waters. [*Kaskaskia: The Lost Capital of Illinois*](#). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2019.
- McConnell, Michael N. [*To Risk it All: General Forbes, the Capture of Fort Duquesne, and the Course of Empire in the Ohio Country*](#). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020.
- McShea, Bronwen. [*Apostles of Empire: the Jesuits and New France*](#). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019.
- Nassaney, Michael S., ed. [*Fort St. Joseph Revealed: The Historical Archaeology of a Fur Trading Post*](#). Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2019.
- Pinnen, Christian; Charles A. Weeks. [*Colonial Mississippi: A Borrowed Land*](#). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021.
- Røge, Pernille. [*Economistes and the Reinvention of Empire: France in the Americas and Africa, c. 1750-1802*](#). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Walczynski, Mark. [*The History of Starved Rock*](#). DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press (imprint of Cornell University Press), 2020.
- Walczynski, Mark. [*Inquietus: La Salle in the Illinois Country*](#). Center for French Colonial Studies, 2019.
- White, Sophie; Trevor G. Burnard, eds. [*Hearing Enslaved Voices: African and Indian Slave Testimony in British and French America, 1700-1848*](#). New York: Routledge, 2020.

Center for French Colonial Studies Conference Videos

The Center for French Colonial Studies recently held its annual conference via Zoom. On the program were five excellent presentations on various aspects of the French presence in North America:

Michael Nassaney on Fort St. Joseph, Michigan
Peter Machonis on early French maps of North America
Randa Duvick on French trader Joseph Bailly
Mark Walczynski on Franquelin's *Carte de la Louisiane* and La Salle's Indian Colony
Carl Ekberg on Nicolas Peltier, dit Franchomme and the Fox Indian War

Videos of each of the presentations are now available on the CFCS YouTube channel at:
www.youtube.com/channel/UCH9LNYNmB3s-cajD4Hz11Ng.

Upcoming Events

(By no means intended to be an exhaustive list; readers should check each source regarding event status.)

[Ste. Genevieve Christmas Festival](#), December 3-5, 2021

[Ste. Genevieve Guillanee](#), December 31, 2021

[Fort de Chartres Guillanee](#), December 31, 2021

[Ste. Genevieve King's Ball](#), February 5, 2022

[Old Mines Area Historical Society Seminar](#), April 2, 2022 (tentative)

Translation of Text in the Image on Page 1

Between 1663 and 1673

More than 770 young women left France and landed in Quebec
Sent by Louis the Fourteenth to take a husband
And contribute to the populating of New France
They were called

The Daughters of the King

38 of them left the port of La Rochelle in 1663
Several of them orphans of the Providence Convent

La Rochelle, June 15, 2013
350th anniversary of the first departure of daughters of the king

The Old Mines French Project

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