

News from Old Mines

The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project
No. 17, Fall 2022

From the Editor

I should probably rename the fall issues of this newsletter (calling them winter instead!) as the end of the year (and the official end of fall) seems to always sneak up on me, and I suddenly realize that I need to finish up the newsletter and get it out! Bu somehow I do manage to do so.

Thanks to several new subscribers to the newsletter. As always, it's a pleasure to see so many people interested in the history of Old Mines, whatever their motivation might be.

The year 2023 is an important one in the history of Old Mines, as it marks the 300th anniversary of the grant awarded to Philippe Renault that officially awarded him land to conduct mining operations in what is now Washington County, Missouri. Renault was also the recipient of other tracts of land, including at Mine La Motte, and on the east side of the Mississippi, just north of the present-day reconstructed Fort de Chartres, where he established the settlement of St. Philippe.



There will undoubtedly be various events held in celebration of this remarkable anniversary, and readers are encouraged to check online through the different organizations involved. At this point there is a Facebook page devoted to the celebration: www.facebook.com/oldmines300 that appears to be the best source of information right now.

Finally, my most recent trip to Old Mines in September included a stay in a small rental that was right on Old Mines Creek, as the photo (above right) can attest. It was striking to spend some time in a setting that, although undoubtedly changed over the years, allowed me to feel a connection with the history of this community. The photo on the left is from the St. Joachim Fall Festival, the reason for my visit.



A View of the Old Cemetery at St. Joachim Catholic Church

The photo on page 2 is certainly worthy of a page all to itself. My extreme gratitude to Kent Bone who has provided the image, which he has been working on for some time. Kent states that the image is from 1,389 feet above the cemetery. He hopes to add more information to the image to show how the cemetery was expanded, and hopefully this information will be included in a future issue of this newsletter. Thank you Kent!



A Letter from William C. Carr in 1805

William C. Carr came from Virginia to St. Louis in 1804, shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, and quickly became involved in the quarrels over land grants and ownership that plagued Missouri in the early years of its American territorial status. According to historian William Foley, “Carr took an immediate dislike to the French Creole inhabitants, declaring that ‘the French manner of living is not only extremely disagreeable to us but is really very low’ ” (missourencyclopedia.org). This animosity is evident the letter below found in The Territorial Papers of the United States, which provides an intriguing portrait of the conditions of the lead miners in the early 19th century. Evidently the mineral riches of this newly-acquired part of the United States were considered of considerable importance; certainly of more critical interest than the rights of the people who were already living there prior to the arrival of the American administration. Carr would later become the first speaker of the Missouri Territory House of Representatives.

WILLIAM C. CARR TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, St LOUIS 14th November 1805
In Clarence Carter, compiler and editor. The Territorial Papers of the United States, vol. 18, The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806, p. 273-276.

Dear SIR Since you have done me the honor of appointing me agent on behalf of the United States to investigate claims to land in the territory of Louisiana I take the liberty of addressing to you a few lines on the subject of the Lead mines: as my attention is by the Act further providing for the government of Louisiana particularly directed to those objects.

It appears to have been made particularly the business of the Commandants to remove all intruders and unauthorized settlers off the Public land in their respective districts. But as the people of the district of S^o Genevieve in which most of the mines are situated, contended they had a right to dig mineral on the Kings domain under the former government by custom that under that section of the Act of Congress which provides “that all laws, usages and customs of the Spanish government not inconsistent with the Constitution & laws of the U. S. should be continued in force” “ they still retained the right of digging on the public land : therefore it remained doubtfull in the breast of Maj' Hunt, the Commandant for that district whether they ought to be removed as unauthorized settlers or intruders on the public land. Some time since the general thought proper to arrest Maj Hunt, since which he has ordered Col. Hammond, the Commandant at S^o Louis to go into Maj Hunts district & proclaim to the people his orders prohibiting them from digging mineral any longer on the public land. When Col. H. arrived at the mines, he found the people in such a state of agitation, concerning the Prohibition, that he extended the permission of digging mineral on the lands of the US for 20 days longer; and about the expiration of this time, the governor having changed his mind, on this subject, issued a counter proclamation, giving the people, liberty to commence mining again on the public land. It is certainly not my province, to determine whether such a custom did in fact exist under the Spanish government, or whether if it did it is continued by the act of Congress—I can only state, that whatever the grounds are upon which Miners are permitted to continue their operations on public land, it appears to me highly meriting the notice of government. Because the quantity of mineral obtained from Public land is enormous indeed, and would certainly be no small source of revenue to the treasury of the U. S.—All the mineral that is obtained, comes from public land, those parts of the mines covered by private claims, being preserved by the owners, who carry on the manufactory of lead by purchasing the mineral obtained by the people from the public land—It was not uncommon this year, after the proclamation of the governor, forbidding miners to encroach further on the public land, and previous to the time which the prohibition took effect, that single miners obtained for one days labour from 50 to \$100. This was done at the Mine a Barton part of which is claimed by Moses Austin esquire, and serves to discover the fertility of the mines & what might be done by miners who had a proper stimulus applied to induce them to labour, I estimate the Mineral raised this last summer at this mine alone to be worth at least \$50,000—The price of mineral cleaned and delivered at the Furnace, is 2\$ per hundred 275 weight: and lead is from 6 to \$6–50 and none to be had; As fast as it is smelted, it is exported,— To estimate the probable amount of revenue, which would annually flow into the treasury of the U. States by working only two of the mines, (viz, that part of mine à Burton, not included in M^o Austins grant, and that part of Mine la Motte, also, uncovered by private claims (however how much of this mine is claimed and by what particular species of title, I have not yet been able to ascertain), would be utterly impossible; because it depends on so many contingencies— Yet I am clearly of opinion, in the course of a few years it would discharge no inconsiderable part of the purchase money for Louisiana.

(continued on the following page)

Continued from the previous page.

Therefore it strikes me as being highly improper that the U.S. should be thus deprived of one of the greatest sources of wealth arising from the Purchase I would therefore respectfully submit it whether it would not be good policy in the government, not only to take some immediate steps towards terminating this rapid depreciation of the value of the public mines; But also, whether it would not be good Policy either to make some arrangements towards working them, or Letting them to the highest bidder or whether it would not be best and at the same time giving these people, who have always had permission to dig on the public land under the former government, and who have been accustomed to obtain the greatest part of their living in that manner, the greatest possible satisfaction by permitting them still to dig mineral, but upon condition that all the mineral obtained, should be deposited in the hands of an Agent, to be appointed for that purpose, and who should, further be specially charged with the care of the mines and to pay out to each, miner the usual price for clean, mineral, delivered at, the furnace, which is as I before stated \$2. p CWT: and to have the mineral smelted for the benefit of the U. States.

This, might, be effected very easily, because all the french miners are willing to receive Merchandize for their mineral which might be furnished by government & is done now, by one or two individuals, who keep merchandize for that purpose, have erected, furnaces and smelt the mineral for their own benefit. We are very much agitated here about the confirmation of the appointment of general Wilkinson. The territory is torn to pieces by partyism & contention & the most serious differences, exist between the governor and judges as to their respective powers. The spirit of party has been carried so far that it is generally believed one party or the other must fall: either the generals appointment will be refused by the Senate, or the judges will be displaced But if general W. is to be the governor, of this territory the sooner the confirmation of the appointment is known here the better will it be for the country—It may probably have a tendency to correct many of these differences & dissensions which at present menace the country with such severe evils. His appointment would be popular amongst the French but unpopular with the Americans." I have the honor to be Sir with great respect Your most Obedient Servant.

WILL. C. CARR [Endorsed] Carr Will. C. C. to Mr Gallatin

Recent Books of Interest

- Dewar, Helen. *Disputing New France. Companies, Law and Sovereignty in the French Atlantic, 1598-1663*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022.
- Beauchamp, M. K. *Instruments of Empire: Colonial Elites and U.S. Governance in Early National Louisiana, 1803-1815*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2021.
- Marrero, Karen L. *Detroit's Hidden Channels. The Power of French-Indigenous Families in the Eighteenth Century*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020.
- MacDonald, David; Raine Waters. *We Could Perceive No Sign of Them: Failed Colonies in North America, 1525-1689*. Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2020.
- Mazrim, Robert; William Weedman. *The Material World of the Kaskaskia. Archaeology of the Eighteenth-Century Guebert Site*. Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies, 2022.
- Ekberg, Carl J.; Sharon K. Person. *Dawn's Light Woman and Nicolas Franchomme. Marriage and Law in the Illinois Country*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2022.
- Hartley, Erika K.; Michael S. Nassaney. *People of the Post*. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University; Center for French Colonial Studies, 2022.
- Parsons, Christopher M. *A Not-So-New World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.
- Boyer, Mark G. *300 Years of the French in Old Mines*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021.
- Vidal, Cécile. *Caribbean New Orleans. Empire, Race, and the Making of a Slave Society*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

Upcoming Events

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

2022

December 31, Guilannee, Ste. Genevieve and Fort de Chartres

December 31, 300th Anniversary Kick-Off, Old Mines

2023

February 25-26, Brigade a Renault Winter Shoot, Old Mines

April 1, Old Mines Area Historical Society Seminar

April ?, Ecole du Soldat, Ste. Genevieve

May 20-21, Brigade a Renault Rendezvous, Old Mines

June 3-4, Fort de Chartres Rendez-vous

June 10-11, French Heritage Festival, Ste. Genevieve

June 24, 300th Anniversary Event, Old Mines

August 12-13, Jour de Fete, Ste. Genevieve

September 10, St. Joachim Fall Festival, Old Mines

September ?, History Conference, Ste. Genevieve

October 1, Annual Fete d'automne, Old Mines

October 6-8, Center for French Colonial Studies Conference, Monroe, MI

October 7, Milice de Ste. Genevieve 6th Annual Militia Encampment

October 28, Rural Heritage Days, Ste. Genevieve

Recent Articles of Interest

[This Endangered Missouri Language is Named After a Tree](#)

[Fiddler Dennis Stroughmatt Saves a French Dialect and Culture](#)

The Old Mines French Project

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