

News from Old Mines

The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project
No. 8, Spring 2018

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FROM THE EDITOR

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project has been receiving messages from people around the world who have expressed their gratitude for the website, newsletter, or Facebook page, and who have sometimes shared information that is new to me. **Below** you will see an image (early 20th century?) of the old chateau in Cousolre, France. How does it relate to Old Mines? Well, it was the birthplace of Philippe François Renault, who had the first contract to conduct lead mining operations in what is now Washington County, Missouri. And the chateau still stands today. More about Renault in this issue; I hope you enjoy it!

Will Thompson



WHAT'S NEW IN OLD MINES?

Each newsletter features a list of new materials relevant to the study of Old Mines and the French history and heritage of the region around it. Here's the most recent list of books and articles that are either new publications or have just been discovered or reported. All of the works listed above will also appear in the Bibliography on the [Old Mines French website](#).

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- Ekberg, Carl J. Louis Bolduc: His Family and His House. Tucson, AZ: Patrice Press, 2002.
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What's New in Old Mines (continued from p. 2)

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- "Mining History of the Ozarks." Our Ozarks 2.1 (February 2017): 22-28.
- Nasatir, Abraham P. Borderland in Retreat: From Spanish Louisiana to the Far Southwest. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976.
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Upcoming Events

July 21: [Friends of the Fort Summer Ball](#)

August 11-12: [Jour de Fête, Ste. Genevieve](#)

September 9: [St. Joachim Catholic Church Fall Festival](#)

September 22: [Ste. Genevieve Fall History Conference](#)

October 7: [Old Mines Area Historical Society Fête d'automne](#)

October 12-14: [Center for French Colonial Studies Conference](#)

October 13-14: [Fort de Chartres French and Indian War Encampment](#)

November 3-4: [Fort de Chartres Winter Rendezvous](#)

December 7-9: [Ste. Genevieve Holiday Christmas Festival](#)

December 31: [La Guiannee at Fort de Chartres](#)

December 31: [Ste. Genevieve La Guiannee](#)



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The Birthplace of Philippe François Renault [Renault]

This project has been fortunate to attract the attention of M. Jean Heuclin, a native of Cousolre, the birthplace of Philippe François Renault (or Renault, 1686-1755), undoubtedly the most important figure in the earliest history of the French presence in the Old Mines area, starting in the 1720's. M. Heuclin, a former dean and professor of history at the Université Catholique de Lille, has a great interest in Renault and his activities in America, and we are grateful for the information and images he has provided to help us know more about the early history of Old Mines.

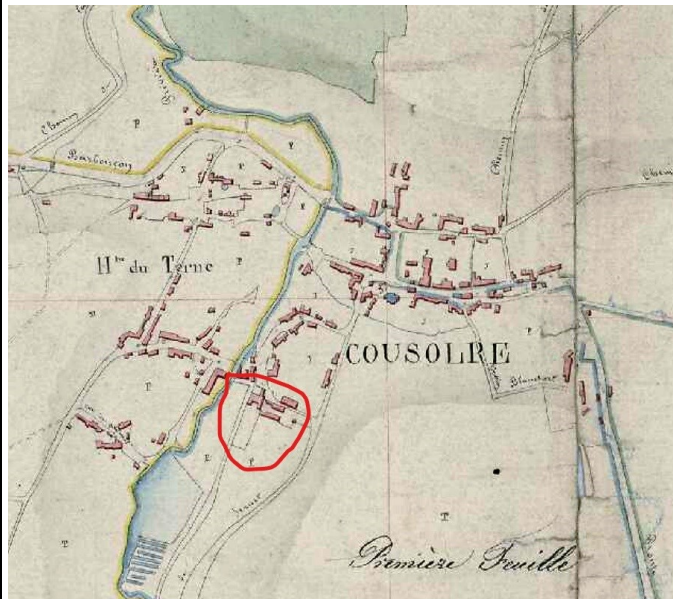
Cousolre is in northern France, right on the border with Belgium. According to M. Heuclin, Cousolre was an iron mining town from the 16th century on, and later became an important center for marble, which it remained until 1960.

M. Heuclin writes that Renault himself was the son of Philippe Renault, an ironmaster. The younger Renault married Marie Célestine Polchet in 1710. In 1719 he would embark on a great adventure, taking with him his oldest son, François-Célestin, who was just nine at the time. He left behind his wife, pregnant with their second son, and three young daughters of seven, five, and three. Renault did not come to America just to mine lead, however; like many others he undoubtedly had dreams of making his fortune by finding silver and copper, dreams that would be crushed in the end.

Here is a translation of M. Heuclin's own description of Renault's departure from his home town:

« The hasty departure seems to have been organized with his young son François-Célestin whom he took with him. It was a strategic investment for the family business. The decision to leave is undoubtedly linked to the crisis that the ironmasters were experiencing in Avesnois at the time, due to the competition from the Abbey in Liessies which had raised its levees, leading to unemployment among the ironmasters in the Helpe valley. Philippe-François is accompanied by about forty persons [in a footnote, Heuclin explains further that there were 40 men, 3 women, and 2 children].... »

As the images on p. 1 and below show, there are still some elements of the town of Cousolre that Renault knew that we can see today. Hopefully there will be more from M. Heuclin in future newsletters.



Map of Cousolre, France, with the old chateau circled in red. The chateau was the birthplace of Philippe François Renault.



The church in Cousolre. According to M. Heuclin, Renault and his father are still buried inside the church itself.

The Statue of Renault

One of the fascinating images shared by Jean Heuclin in an email correspondence is this one of a statue of Philippe François Renault that was part of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, often referred to as the St. Louis World's Fair, held in 1904. The statue was one of several commemorating major figures in the history of the Louisiana territory (others included Joliet, Marquette, and La Salle). The image below on the left is reproduced from the *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*, published the year after the fair itself, with the following description: "This statue, by A. S. Calder of Philadelphia, stood upon the east approach to the Terrace of States, near the German House." The *Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (Vol. 1) and other sources indicate that Calder won the exposition's silver medal for the statue.

The image on the right shows the statue from another angle, and would seem to confirm that the statue was indeed well known and documented at the time. Sadly, there is no information found so far (by Mr. Heuclin or the editor of this newsletter) indicating the fate of the statue after the exposition, or its current location. Hopefully further research might shed some light on the statue's fate.

If you happen to have any information about the statue, please feel free to share!



Facebook Groups of Interest

If you are interested in the history and cultural heritage of Old Mines, you may also be interested in one or more of the following Facebook pages and groups that focus on some aspect of the French presence and legacy in the mid-west. You can click on the name to be taken directly to the corresponding Facebook page. If you know of other pages/groups that might be of interest, please feel free to share on our Facebook page or send Will Thompson at oldminesmissouri@gmail.com.

[CENTER FOR FRENCH COLONIAL STUDIES](#)

[FORT DE CHARTRES STORE](#)

[FOUNDATION FOR RESTORATION OF SAINTE GENEVIEVE](#)

[FRENCH COLONIAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#)

[KASKASKIA COMPANY](#)

[KASKASKIA-CAHOKIA TRAIL](#)

[LE PAYS DES ILLINOIS](#)

[LES AMIS DU FORT DE CHARTRES](#)

[LET'S TALK OLD MINES](#)

[MINE AU BRETON HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#)

[NEW FRANCE: THE OTHER COLONIAL AMERICA](#)

[OLD MINES AND STE GENEVIEVE MISSOURI FRENCH](#)

[OLD MINES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#)

[OLD MINES KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS](#)

[PIERRE MENARD HOME](#)

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[ST JOACHIM CATHOLIC SCHOOL](#)

[STE GENEVIEVE GENEALOGY](#)

[STE GENEVIEVE MILITIA](#)

[VISIT STE GENEVIEVE](#)

[WASHINGTON COUNTY MISSOURI GENEALOGY](#)

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CONTRIBUTIONS 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.