

News from Old Mines

The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project

No. 12, Spring 2020

From the Editor

It is a pleasure to be able to send you this issue of *News from Old Mines*. A somewhat smaller issue, it is true, than most of its predecessors. Unfortunately the global pandemic that has affected all of our lives has made research somewhat more difficult for the past few months. Libraries are closed, so access to print materials and interlibrary loan has been restricted. Archives are also closed and travel has been discouraged if not forbidden, so gaining access to new materials has been impossible. Finally, many events have been cancelled, eliminating the possibility of meeting friends and colleagues and exchanging ideas about our areas of common interest (not to mention taking photos of sites both old and new!).

Nevertheless, time in self-isolation can be well spent, even with limited resources, so I am pleased to share the content of this newsletter that I hope you will find interesting. There are now more than 130 people subscribed to the newsletter, with some of you newly subscribed as of this issue. And it's free!

In other news, interest in the Old Mines French Facebook page continues to be strong. As of June 16, 2020, more than 1,100 people are following the page, and the number keeps growing! I try to post regularly, sharing information about events, videos, documentaries, photos, basically anything that could interest those of us with a passion for history and the story of Old Mines and the French heritage in the American Midwest. Contributions to the Facebook page and this newsletter are welcome! Remember, you do not have to have a Facebook account to view the page (link on the last page of this document).

If you do not already do so, you may also want to follow the Facebook page of the Center for French Colonial Studies, which is featuring bi-weekly posts of images related to the French presence in the American Midwest (including Old Mines). In fact, the most popular post on the page this year is about the old St. Joachim cemetery, with numerous people commenting on and sharing the post. (Disclaimer: the editor of this newsletter is also the keeper of the CFCS Facebook page!)

Right: Library of Congress image of Washington County tiff miners with caption "Mining tiff is a dangerous and laborious occupation because tiff mines are never timbered and all mining is done by hand labor." Photo by Arthur Rothstein, dated 1939.

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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. Other newspapers that remain to be explored for references to Old Mines in days gone by are the *Washington County News*, the *Washington Country Journal*, and the *De Soto Press*. Unfortunately none of these can be accessed online.

Below are just a few "clippings" from early issues of the *Journal*, chosen for their reference to the Old Mines area or for their entertainment value! More to come in future issues of this newsletter.

August 22, 1894

Mr. A. Harrison, of Old Mines, returned Friday from Excelsior Springs, where he went to attend the Republican State Convention. From the appearance of Mr. Harrison and the badge he wore, we think he was well pleased with the nominations that were made by an enthusiastic convention. [Editor's note: the *Journal* had a decidedly Republican bent!]

December 26, 1894

Potosi: Our town was overrun with tramps on Christmas eve. Five or six were rounded up and lodged in jail for the night, and next morning they were given time to leave town.

January 5, 1895

Cadet: The Cadet school gave an entertainment and box supper last Friday night. The entertainment consisted of recitations and dialogues rendered by Misses Maud Dickey, Minnie Icenhauer, Fannie Bouchard, Becky Boyer, Clara Dickey, Ida Dickey and Cora Secoy; Messrs. Ed Hanson, John and Fred Paul, Henry Bouchard, Julius Boyer and others. All acquitted themselves creditably.

Marshall Hodson, of De Soto, sent one of his prisoners after a bucket of coal last Monday night, and is still waiting for him to bring it.

January 12, 1895

A party of young people congregated at the Potosi Hotel last Monday evening, to listen to Edison's improved phonograph, which is owned by Dr. Fuhrmann. The evening was pleasantly spent.

January 30, 1895

Barytes: Our school began on the 16th day of July, to which some of the district was opposed, claiming it was too warm for the children to attend, and we find when winter comes on that the attendance fall off because of the cold weather. So it is impossible to please all. Our school term is seven months, and we find by the teacher's report that the average attendance during the summer months was about 59, while for the winter months it was only 47. So you can readily see that we get the most benefit from the school during the summer months. We are opposed to an all-winter school term and favor a part summer term, so as to give the little children a chance to attend, for when winter comes the distance to the school is sometimes so great and the weather so severe that they are compelled to remain at home. ON the other hand, many of the larger children are required to remain at home during the summer to lend their assistance to the work at hand, and therein lies the benefit of a few months winter school.

March 13, 1895

Potosi: On last Monday a week ago a couple of women, accompanied by Joseph Wilkinson, of Bonne Terre, struck our town and at once proceeded to look for room to put up a shooting gallery. Mr. W. rented the old Desloge store house from T. D. Castleman, agent, but not until a lamp had exploded and exploded the whole affair, did Mr. Castleman know that there were women connected with the gallery, when he ordered them vacate the house at once, at the same time they were given notice by the town board to quit the town. The explosion of the lamp came near causing a serious conflagration.

April 4, 1895

Mattie Charboneau, an incorrigible girl about sixteen years old, who was sent to the State Industrial Home from this county some time ago for breaking into a house, has been sent back here. She is too tough for the Home.

Joseph-Médard Carrière

Editor's note

As mentioned in an article in the last issue of *News from Old Mines* (for which this article is a continuation), I was recently delighted to come across an entire chapter devoted to Joseph-Médard Carrière and his legacy in an anthology of French folktales from Detroit which he collected, but which was only edited and published decades later by the *Prise de parole* publishing house in Sudbury, Ontario. The chapter on Carrière, by Marcel Bénéteau, is in French, and below you will find another selection of passages translated into English to follow up on what was published in the last issue.



Carrière was an accomplished scholar, and we are very fortunate that he chose to dedicate part of his career to studying the French language and culture of the Old Mines community. A full list of his publications about Old Mines can be found in the bibliography on the [Old Mines website](#). He is without a doubt the most prolific scholar of the people, folk tales, and French language of Old Mines.

Sadly, as the text below describes, financial difficulties prevented Carrière from continuing his studies of Old Mines. As the title of the work from which the text below is taken indicates, he went on to pursue studies on a related topic—the French community of the Detroit region—in the late 1930's, although this collection of folk tales is apparently the only published work of Carrière's related to that geographical area. Apparently this research was equally ruinous on Carrière's finances. His move to the University of Virginia in 1942 undoubtedly put an end to his research on the French communities of the American Midwest.

I reiterate my gratitude to the Editions *Prise de parole* for graciously allowing me to publish the translation below, excerpted from the French text which originally appeared in *Contes du Détroit*, collected by Joseph-Médard Carrière and edited by Marcel Bénéteau and Donald Deschênes, published in 2005.

“In 1946, he provided the introduction and the commentary for the collection *Folksongs of Old Vincennes*. But when this work appeared, Professor Carrière had already abandoned his studies in this field. The demands of university life, as well as family responsibilities are certainly factors that contributed to this change of direction. A financial report that he submitted to Northwestern University in 1939 leaves no doubt as to the difficulties of the life of a researcher: after listing his expenses for the years 1934-1939, Carrière indicates the amount of personal funds that he had to invest to finance his research, as well as the amount he had to borrow. He adds how his financial situation will keep him from continuing his research:

‘I do not regret having spent so much money on research. I have enjoyed my work very much. However, this research has ruined me financially and now life has become one big nightmare for my family and myself. Moreover, it will be impossible for me during the next few years to continue my field work.’

In fact, he never returned to this subject matter. However, this six-year burst of activity (carried out, it must be remembered, during the Great Depression of the 1930's) continues to have an impact even today, and in a completely unexpected manner. In November 2002, I was present when the original wax cylinders (recorded 68 years earlier) were returned to the people of Old Mines, in Missouri. The ceremony was very moving. Henrietta Hight, Carrière's daughter, was present to receive tribute from the community in her father's name...”

Images from Old Mines

When one gets bored during a global pandemic, one ends up doing things like clearing the cellphone of all those photos that have been taking up space for far too long. Here are just a few taken over the years during trips to Old Mines and the surrounding area (now safely stored elsewhere than on my phone!).



Upcoming Events

Sadly many events of relevance to those interested in the French heritage of Old Mines and the American Midwest have had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. For your information, below are lists of both events that have been cancelled, and those that are scheduled but for which you are encouraged to find out closer to the date whether or not the event is still going on. Stay safe!

Cancelled Events

Fort de Chartres Cannon Firing Demonstration, July & August

Friends of the Fort Summer Ball, July

Ste. Genevieve Jour de Fête, August

Ste. Genevieve History Festival, September

Center for French Colonial Studies Conference, October

2020 Events Still Scheduled

50th Annual Fort de Chartres Rendezvous, rescheduled to September 12-13

Artillery Safety School, September 12

St. Joachim Fall Picnic, September 13?

Old Mines Area Historical Society Fête de l'Automne, October 4

Annual French & Indian War Encampment, October 10-11

Fort de Chartres Winter Rendezvous, November 7-8

Prairie du Rocher La Guiannee at Fort de Chartres, December 31

Ste. Genevieve La Guiannee, December 31

The Old Mines French Project

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