News from Old Mines
The Newsletter of the Old Mines French Project
No. 4, Summer 2016

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FROM THE EDITOR
If you are interested in the history of the Pays des Illinois, then do not miss the joint conference of the Center for French Colonial Studies and the Foundation for the Restoration of Ste. Genevieve, to be held September 29-October 2 in Ste. Genevieve. There will even be a paper specifically about Old Mines! More information on page 4 of the newsletter, and full information about registration, costs, and accommodations available on the CFCS website, www.frenchcolonialstudies.org.

ST. JOACHIM CATHOLIC CHURCH FALL FESTIVAL
September 11, 2016, Parish Grounds

Main Raffle
- $5,000.00 first prize!
- Char-Broil, 4 burner gas grill valued at $250.00, donated by Paul & Ina Mae Boyer
- Samsung 32 in, LED TV, Series 4, valued at $200.00, donated by Patti Coleman Boyer, Circuit Clerk
- DEWALT 20v Lithium Ion, 3-tool Combo Tool Kit, valued at $229.00, donated by Dennis & Linda Boyer
- Singer Series 2263 Sewing Machine, valued at $100.00, donated by John & Georgia Veach Cedar

Chest Raffle
- Handmade Cedar Chest filled to the brim with household items. (Cedar Chest made & donated by Richard “Chopper” Boyer) (Household Items donated by Members of the St. Anne Sodality)

Quilt Raffle
- Handmade Quilt, 2) Decorated Patriotic Ladder, 3) Cooler Bag Picnic Basket

ENTERTAINMENT for the day! “Canyon” will be playing in the early afternoon session and “Dustin Coleman” will play in the later afternoon session!

LEFT: Those of you familiar with the old cemetery at St. Joachim Catholic Church have undoubtedly seen and admired the many iron crosses used as grave markers in the cemetery. You may be interested to know that iron crosses can also be found in other cemeteries with a strong French heritage in the region. To the left you will see a view of St. Joseph’s cemetery in Prairie du Rocher in Illinois, just across the Mississippi River from Ste. Genevieve and the mining country that includes Old Mines. Although the number of iron crosses in this cemetery is considerably smaller than what one finds in the old St. Joachim cemetery, their presence is nonetheless striking. This is a beautiful cemetery, and many French names grace the headstones to be found here. More images of the heritage sites to be found in the Prairie du Rocher area can be found on page 6.
Each newsletter features a list of new materials (books, articles, videos, websites) that are 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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In the last work, see in particular:

Nathan Elliot Marvin: “‘A Thousand Prejudices’: French habitants and Catholic missionaries in the making of the old Northwest, 1795-1805”

Sonia Toudji: “Change and continuity: French and Indian alliance in the Mississippi Valley after the Treaty of 1763”

Jay Gitlin: “Postface: Another America that matters”

Visit us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/oldminesfrench.
Henry Brackenridge’s Views of Louisiana:
an early portrayal of the French communities in Missouri

Henry Brackenridge’s Views of Louisiana, Together with a Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri River, in 1811 was originally published in Pittsburgh (Cramer, Spear and Eichbaum) in 1814. Brackenridge was born in Pittsburgh, and was sent by his family to be educated in Ste. Genevieve, what appears to be an unusual decision for an American family at the time. Views of Louisiana includes one of the most detailed portrayals of the French communities in Missouri in the period prior to statehood. The following is an excerpt from book two of Views of Louisiana, Chapter VI, “Historical Character of the Ancient Inhabitants—Change of Government,” in which Brackenridge provides his perspective on the character of the French inhabitants of Missouri as he encountered them upon his return in the region in 1810. Future issues of the newsletter will include other passages from this work, including those describing the mines and the mining communities in the Old Mines region.

“In the character of these people, it must be remembered, that they are essentially Frenchmen; but, without that restlessness, impatience and fire, which distinguishes the Europeans. There is, even in their deportment, something of the gravity of the Spaniard, though gay, and fond of amusements. From the gentle and easy life which they led, their manners, and even language, have assumed a certain degree of softness and mildness: the word paisible, expresses this characteristic. In this remote country, there were few objects to urge to enterprise, and few occasions to call forth and exercise their energies. The necessaries of life were easily procured, and beggary was unknown. Hospitality was exercised as in the first ages, for there were no taverns. Ambition soured far hence, for here there was no prey. Judges, codes of law, and prisons, were of little use, where such simplicity of manners prevailed, and where everyone knew how far to confide in his neighbour. In such a state of things, to what end is learning or science? The schools afforded but slender instruction; the better sort of people acquired in them reading, writing, and a little arithmetic. The number of those who were lovers of knowledge, and made it a profession, was small. From the habits of these people, it would naturally be expected, that they would have been unaccustomed to reason on political subjects; they were in fact, as ignorant of them, as children are of life and manners. These inhabitants were as remarkable for their tame and peaceable disposition, as the natives of France are for the reverse.

Amongst their virtues, we may enumerate honesty and punctuality in their dealings, hospitality to strangers, friendship and affection amongst relatives and neighbours. Instances of abandonment on the female side, or of seduction, are extremely rare. The women make faithful and affectionate wives, but will not be considered secondary personages in the matrimonial association. The advice of the wife is taken on all important, as well as on less weighty concerns, and she generally decides. In opposition to these virtues, it must be said, that they are devoid of public spirit, of enterprise or ingenuity, and are indolent and uninformed.

They are catholics, but, very far from being bigoted or superstitious, as some travellers have said. They were perhaps more strict observers, formerly, of the rules and discipline of their church, and of the different holy days in the calendar. Their fetes, or celebration of these days, were considered, as the most interesting occasions; the old and young engaged in them with the greatest delight, and they doubtless contributed to their happiness. Of late, this attention to the ceremonies of their religion is considerably relaxed, since other objects of pursuit and interest have been opened to their view. The catholic worship is the only one yet known in the territory, except in private families, and in a few instances of itinerant preachers.

There was scarcely any distinction of classes in the society. The wealthy or more intelligent, would of course be considered as more important personages, but there was no difference clearly marked. They all associated, dressed alike, and frequented the same ball room. They were in fact nearly all connected by the ties of affinity or consanguinity; as so extensive is it, that I have seen the carnival, from the death of a common relation, pass by cheerful and unheeded. The number of persons excluded was exceedingly small. What an inducement to comport ones self with propriety and circumspection? The same interest at stake, the same sentiments that in other countries influence the first classes of society, were here felt by all its members. Perhaps as many from unmerited praise have been formed into valuable characters, as others from having been unjustly despised have become truly despicable.”
Center for French Colonial Studies and the Foundation for Restoration of Ste. Genevieve

2016 Joint Conference

September 29 – October 2, 2016
Ste. Genevieve, Missouri

Complete information at: http://frenchcolonialstudies.org/annual-meeting/

Thursday, September 29

- Optional lunch, wine tastings, and wagon tours at Chaumette Vineyards and Winery (from 1-4 pm). Hosted by CFCS member Hank Johnson. Allow 45 minutes to drive to Ste. Genevieve.
- Spirit Reunion will convene at Memorial Cemetery at 5 pm. Cemetery residents will speak about their lives in Ste. Genevieve during colonial days. Cemetery maintained by Foundation for Restoration.

Friday, September 30

- Gather at Welcome Center for morning tours of Bauvais-Amoreux House and Felix Valle House, both properties of Department of Natural Resources, State of Missouri.
- Afternoon tours of Guibourd-Valle House
- Evening reception of wine and hors d’oeuvres at Bequette-Ribault House. Tour home and grounds.

Saturday, October 1

Conference Presentations will be held in the new DuBourg Centre on the square. Adjacent parking will be available. Catered lunch (included in registration) and dinner in the DuBourg Centre. Donuts and coffee (included in registration) will be served from 8:30-8:55 a.m. Meeting begins at 9:00 sharp.

- Tim Good, National Park Service: “Update on Ste. Genevieve and the NPS”
- Robert F. Mazrim, Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Margaret K. Brown, historian and archaeologist: “Recent Archaeology at the Bolduc House”
- Sharon K. Person, St. Louis Community College: “Illegitimate Children in the Illinois Country”
- William Thompson, University of Memphis: “Outsider Portrayals of the Old Mines French Creole Community”
- Carl J. Ekberg, Professor Emeritus, Illinois State University: “Belle Famille and the ‘Founding’ of St. Louis”
- Morris S. Arnold, Judge on the United States Court of appeals for the Eighth Circuit: “Colonial Arkansas Dames”
- Hank Johnson, Chaumette Vineyards and Winery: “The Bequette-Ribault House”

The annual meeting for Center for French Colonial Studies follows immediately.

Sunday, October 2

Exploration on one’s own of the many historical points of interest found in and around Ste. Genevieve.
FEATURED BOOK:
Carl J. Ekberg & Sharon K. Person
St. Louis Rising: The French Regime of Louis St. Ange de Bellerive

Published (not entirely coincidentally, it would appear) just one year after the 250th anniversary of the founding of the city, St. Louis Rising is an impressive work both for the quality of the scholarship (the footnotes alone are a treasure of information) and for the style which makes the work a true pleasure to read for both specialists in the field and those with a more casual interest in French colonial history. Probably the most important point to make about this work, however, is that, the title notwithstanding, it is not just about the city of St. Louis, although the contributions by Louis St. Ange de Bellerive to the early history of the city are indeed substantial. Indeed, the reader will find within this work a detailed history of the Illinois Country as a whole, featuring other settlements such as Fort d’Orléans, Vincennes, and Kaskaskia, and aspects of the French way of life in the region including architecture, slavery, and trade.

Additionally, St. Louis Rising is not just about Louis St. Ange de Bellerive, who served as commandant of the posts of Fort d’Orléans and Vincennes, and finally as commandant of Upper Louisiana in the years following the transfer of power west of the Mississippi from the French to the Spanish. St. Ange de Bellerive’s father and brother are also discussed at length, as are other critical figures such as Auguste Chouteau, Pierre Laclède Liguest, Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont, and Charles-Joseph Labuxière. Equally fascinating, though, is the information provided about those individuals whose stories are not as frequently found in many existing works, women and slaves in particular.

This work may challenge our understanding of the early history of the city of St. Louis what is now Missouri, but more importantly it provides tremendous insight into the lives of the French and French Canadians who made this region their home in the 18th century.

Upcoming Events

August 11: French Lessons presented by Dennis Stroughmatt, Red Bud, IL

August 13-14: Ste. Genevieve Jour de Fête

September 11: St. Joachim Fall Festival

September 29-October 1: Center for French Colonial Studies conference, Ste. Genevieve

October 1-2: Fort de Chartres French and Indian War Encampment

October 2: Fête de l'automne, Fertile

October 22: Rural Heritage Days, Ste. Genevieve

November 5-6: Fort de Chartres Winter Encampment

December 31: Prairie du Rocher Guiannee at Fort de Chartres

December 31: Ste. Genevieve Guiannee
A trip through the backroads of southwestern Illinois and southeastern Missouri will inevitably lead one to find vestiges, marked and unmarked, of the French heritage of the region. Below are a few examples (photographed over the course of just one afternoon) of how this heritage continues to be remembered and commemorated. In some cases there is nothing but an empty field where once a community existed. In other cases careful and dedicated restoration projects allow us to continue to appreciate the rich and fascinating history of a French presence that began in the latter half of the 17th century. For a great introduction to the sites seen here, watch the Illinois Adventure video at: www.illinoisadventuretv.org/index.asp?
What is Old Mines?

The Old Mines community, located in the north-east quadrant of Washington County, Missouri, is one of the oldest European settlements west of the Mississippi River. The area first attracted the attention of French explorers and settlers in the late 17th century due to its rich lead deposits (and the prospect of even more valuable minerals, which unfortunately proved to be untrue). Beginning in the 1720’s, lead mining in this area became an integral part of the economic activity of the “Pays des Illinois,” that region between the Great Lakes and present-day Louisiana that was settled by the French.

After the end of the French and Indian War, and towards the end of the 18th century, more and more French settlers migrated to the west side of the Mississippi River, and became involved in the fast-growing lead mining operations west of Ste. Genevieve. After the Louisiana Purchase, and once Missouri became a state, the community at Old Mines still remained very much a French community, largely isolated from the massive influx of English-speaking Americans.

Even into the 20th century the families in Old Mines continued to preserve their language and traditions. Only the forces of modernization could finally compel the community to change, as paved roads, improved communication, and compulsory education put an end to the isolation in which Old Mines had long remained. Lead was replaced by tiff (barite) as the mineral which contributed to the livelihood of the majority of families in the area, but it has been many years since any mining activity has taken place. Fewer and fewer people spoke French on a regular basis, at least not in public, with the last native speakers having disappeared.

Now in the 21st century, the Old Mines community continues to value its French legacy, with a variety of annual events celebrating nearly 300 years of the French presence in present-day Washington County. Although many of the descendants of the original settlers have created a diaspora that spreads across Missouri and the rest of the United States, interest in the collective heritage, in genealogy, and in the preservation of the cultural legacy remains strong. Hopefully this project (with its website, newsletter, and Facebook page) will make a positive contribution to the exchange of ideas and information about this fascinating aspect of American history.

The Old Mines French Project
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CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS 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.