

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

----- NATIONAL PARK

FILE NO.

NOTES CONCERNING EARLY FRENCH HOUSES

AT STE. GENEVIEVE, MISSOURI

By Charles E. Peterson

April 1940

JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

U. S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR - NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**IMPORTANT**

This file constitutes a part of the official records of the National Park Service and should not be separated or papers withdrawn without express authority of the official in charge.

All Files should be returned promptly to the File Room. Officials and employees will be held responsible for failure to observe these rules, which are necessary to protect the integrity of the official records.

ARNO B. CAMMERER,  
*Director.*

**REGISTERED NATIONAL  
HISTORIC LANDMARKS**

NOTES CONCERNING EARLY FRENCH HOUSES

AT STE. GENEVIEVE, MISSOURI

By Charles E. Peterson

April 1940

JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR - NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

CONTENTS

- I. Brief notes on French Houses in Ste. Genevieve  
and recommendation.
- II. Three Photographs of the Bolduc House.
- III. Three Photographs of the Ribault House.

# I

## BRIEF NOTES ON FRENCH HOUSES IN STE. GENEVIEVE AND RECOMMENDATION

The physical remains of the early French culture in the Mississippi Valley are now comparatively rare. Contrary to the prevailing impression there are very few really representative landmarks of the period. Few, if any, Louisiana country houses have come down from the Eighteenth Century and two great fires robbed New Orleans of most of her pre-American buildings. In the upper valley there may have been a thousand houses built by the French, but because of decay, floods, fires and rising land values there are only two or three dozen remaining. Most of these are in the town of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri.

This town was begun probably between 1740 and 1750, as an agricultural suburb of the little metropolis of Kaskaskia across the river. Not until the English occupation of the East side of the river and the Spanish regime on the West side did the place achieve any size or importance. Before the Louisiana Purchase and for a few years afterward Ste. Genevieve was a close rival of St. Louis.

Today the old part of the town is an interesting blend of French, American and German architecture. None of the houses are identified with especially important events, though several were occupied by interesting persons. The principal importance of the place is archaeological. The undersigned has been col-

lecting information on the town for over three years. The mimeographed booklet A Guide to Ste. Genevieve with Notes on Its Architecture is the only serious and extended study of Ste. Genevieve buildings that has been published. It is obviously incomplete, in fact, important new information has been secured since the publication of the last edition.

As to the preservation of the French houses in Ste. Genevieve little is being done. Two are well taken care of as private houses by those who appreciate their special architectural interest. The others are occupied as little more than shelters. None are open to the public. Demolition and alteration have caused the loss of much in recent years.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

I recommend that the National Park Service insure the preservation of one or more French houses by taking title, effecting restoration and preservation work and opening them to the public as "historic house museums."

The three most interesting to the undersigned, archaeologically speaking, are the Bolduc House, the Ribault House and the Amoureux House. They are more French and less changed than any of the others. The years of building are not known for these houses, but they seem to date from the Eighteenth Century without much doubt. The first of these, a frame house, was the home of a well-to-do Canadian French

trader. The history of the other two is not known. They are of primitive "palisadoed" construction (French, poteaux en terre; Spanish, potoes en tierra), of a type probably no longer found elsewhere in the United States.

Charles E. Peterson



II - A. Bolduc House. General View, showing plastered poteaux sur sole walls and surrounding porch. Structure originally had hipped roof.

Photograph by Charles E. Peterson.



II - B. Bolduc House. Stone kitchen leanto  
at north end.  
Photograph by Charles E. Peterson.





II - C. Bolduc House. Interior of attic, showing Norman trusses and solid log ceiling. Photograph by Charles E. Peterson.



Ribault House Ste. Genevieve, Missouri

III - A. Ribault House. General View. Exterior walls originally plastered with porch on four sides. Framing and interior are more or less complete. Photograph by Charles E. Peterson.



III - B. Ribault House. Detail of palisadoed or poteaux en terre construction. Cedar logs bougillé with clay and grass.  
Photograph by Charles E. Peterson.



III - C. Ribault House. French wrought iron  
door latch.

Photograph by Charles E. Peterson.