

EARLY STE. GENEVIEVE AND ITS ARCHITECTURE

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The colonization of the Mississippi valley began at the end of the seventeenth century—first from Canada and then by way of the Gulf of Mexico. Following the famous proclamation of La Salle, the French claimed this vast land for nearly three-quarters of a century and administrators of Versailles, Quebec, and New Orleans dreamed of a vast empire extending from the St. Lawrence to the gulf coast.

But Quebec, the capital, fell in the war with England. In 1762, France ceded the west half of the valley to Spain, and the remainder to England in the following year. Never again did she govern any part of the North American mainland.

Although the French settlements of the Mississippi valley were thus cut off from the mother country at an early date, they retained their peculiarly French characteristics and became as little islands of civilization in a vast wilderness. The foreign powers which governed these distant villages did little to change them fundamentally, and fifty years went by before the Anglo-American migration from the Atlantic seaboard engulfed them. Even today, after another century and a quarter have passed, some of the French character of these settlements still persists, and the architecture as well as the physiognomy and language of those people can still be observed on both sides of the river, particularly in Missouri.

In the "Illinois Country," as this region was called from an early date, there were at one time or another some forty Creole missionary, fur-trading, farming, mining, and military settlements. Of these none has retained more of its ancient appearance than the present town of Ste. Genevieve. The oldest settlement of the group on the Mississippi river—Cahokia, Illinois, founded in 1698—has suffered heavily from floods and the neglect of the English and Virginia governments.

Kaskaskia, founded in 1703,¹ was entirely washed away after nearly two centuries by a change of the river's course. What was left of colonial St. Louis disappeared in the fire of 1849 and the river-front development of the steamboat era.

The *Ste. Genevieve Archives*, now preserved in the library of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, have been comparatively untouched by systematic and definitive research.² Studied in connection with the colonial archives now in Europe and in California, some of which have been made available for general use, many new chapters in the early history of Missouri life will be written. The present sketch is offered only as an introductory essay on the French colonial architecture of Ste. Genevieve to enable the visitor to appreciate more what he will see there.

OLD STE. GENEVIEVE

Ste. Genevieve began its existence on the west bank of the Mississippi some three miles southeast of its present site. Although the river has altered its course since that time, the original location can be plotted today with a fair degree of accuracy. By the careful superposition of early river charts and land plats, the writer has demonstrated that the first Ste. Genevieve lay in the bottomlands directly across from old Kaskaskia.

No contemporary account of the founding of the village has yet come to light. Writers have been in disagreement as to the date almost since the town was begun.³ It was not

¹Palm, Sister Mary Borgias, *The Jesuit Missions of the Illinois Country, 1673-1763*, p. 41.

²The value of these documents, which seem to have been unknown to the historian, Louis Houck, was first revealed in Ward A. Dorrance's monograph, *The Survival of French in the Old District of Sainte Genevieve*.

³For varied discussions of this question see Houck, Louis, *A History of Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 338-43; Yealy, Francis J., *Sainte Genevieve: The Story of Missouri's Oldest Settlement*, pp. 22 ff.; Schaaf, Ida M., "The Founding of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri," in *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (January, 1933), pp. 145-50. The St. Gemme family papers, now destroyed, are said to have corroborated the approximate date of 1735. See *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, Vol. II, No. 6 (July, 1906), p. 83. Writers in general have been tempted to explain the origin of Ste. Genevieve as a shipping base for the lead mines back in the hills, but there seems to be no documentary substantiation for such a theory. St. Philippe above Fort de Chartres is known to have been the headquarters for Renault, the pioneer large-scale mining operator.

shown on maps of 1733⁴ and 1734⁵ which detail the Kaskaskia vicinity, but it can be found on a map of 1755.⁶ The writer believes that the date will be definitely determined between those years and that it probably was shortly before 1750. A thorough sifting of the archives, including the *Kaskaskia Manuscripts*⁷ can be expected to reveal important information now missing.

Kaskaskia began as an Indian mission in 1703 and soon afterwards it developed into an agricultural community. The most desirable farming land lay in the rich river bottom, and grants of it were made at an early date. Development of the west bank probably began when all bottom lands on the east side were taken up. The writer believes that this agricultural over-flow was responsible for the founding of Ste. Genevieve, which was known to be in the beginning not a compact town, but a scattered row of houses along the river. Such a simple and natural origin would not likely be recorded at the time as an important event. It was not until the Spanish regime that this small agricultural suburb acquired a fair-sized population and a separate identity.

The oldest document mentioning Ste. Genevieve viewed by the writer concerns a public sale of land at that place announced in Kaskaskia on December 29, 1750. The property had belonged to one Gaboury, deceased, and was described as "a piece of land located at Ste. Genevieve on the other bank of the Mississippi."⁸ On this land, was a house of posts in the ground with a leanto at either end and two porches. At that time, it was customary in legal papers to identify such real

⁴Map entitled "*Partie Des Illinois*," dated 1733. (Ms. 4040 C. 19, in *Service Hydrographique Bibliothèque*, Paris.) This reference and the following one have been checked by the Reverend Gilbert J. Garraghan, S. J., and the Reverend Jean Delanglez, S. J.

⁵"*Carte D'Une Partie Des Illinois pour jdee seullement*," signed by Broutin, New Orleans, August 1, 1734. (*Archives Nationales*, C11. a 126Vo. 47 D, Paris.)

⁶Map entitled "*Partie du Cours du fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi par Mr. Bellin—1755*." (Ms. 4040 C, No. 22, in *Service Hydrographique Bibliothèque*, Paris.)

⁷This amazing collection of several thousand documents is preserved in the Randolph county recorder's office at Chester, Illinois.

⁸*Kaskaskia Mss.*, Public Papers III: "*Un terrin Sise et Situe a St. Genevieve De le autre bore du fleuve du Missipy*."

estate by mentioning the adjoining land-owners. In the case of this particular document, spaces were left for such names but were not filled in, suggesting that there were no immediate neighbors, that it was an isolated development.

The oldest known grants for land at Ste. Genevieve are two made in 1752 by Macarty, the French commandant at Fort de Chartres.⁹ The census of the same year¹⁰ shows a population totaling twenty whites and three negroes, with only eight owners of land, six of whom seemed to be in residence there. The property listed consisted of slaves, domestic animals, rifles, powder, shot, and land—the inventory of a frontier agricultural community. Only one man possessed any lead.

According to a sworn testimony recorded many years later, a Baptiste LaRose was the first settler. This is corroborated by the 1752 census which shows “Larose” to be the principal citizen of the place. He had a wife, three boys bearing arms, two daughters under twelve years of age, one *volontair* (possibly a hired hand or indentured servant), one negro, six oxen, five cows, seven bulls, six *jenise* (jennets?), eight horses, three mares, fifty hogs, five rifles, three livres of powder, seven livres of lead and shot, and seven arpents of land valued at one hundred livres. If the LaRose grant or a dated reference to it can be found, the beginnings of Ste. Genevieve can be fixed beyond a doubt.

Provisions for a church on the west bank of the river were made as early as 1752. In 1759, the settlement in the *Basse Pointe*, the fertile bottom lands, was referred to as the “*Poste de Saint Joachim*” in the first entry of the oldest parish records.¹¹ It was perhaps named after the old parish on the north side of the St. Lawrence river below Quebec.

The notarial records of the *Ste. Genevieve Archives* began in 1766 under the rule of Spain and most of our knowledge of the town comes from the years following. Captain Philip

⁹*Guibourd Papers*. (Manuscript collection in the library of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.)

¹⁰The original of this census is among the *Vaudreuil Mss.* in the Huntington library, San Marino, California.

¹¹Yealy, *Sainte Genevieve*, p. 24.

Pittman of the English army was in the Illinois country in 1766 and stated that the village was then "about one mile in length" and contained seventy families.¹²

In 1769, Pedro Piernas reported that

. . . . The number of the inhabitants is 60 or 70. Counting individuals of both sexes, white and black, great and small, the population will amount to more than 600 persons. The houses are separated and scattered and for that reason the village appears of greater extent and the number of habitants greater.¹³

In 1782, the place was said to be too scattered to make its defense practicable.¹⁴ These descriptions indicate that the settlement was strung out along the Mississippi like many of the small villages along the St. Lawrence. This is not surprising, considering that most of the settlers were of recent Canadian origin.

The chief impetus to growth in population was the general exodus of the French from the east bank of the river to the west when the English occupation of Fort de Chartres began. Various censuses taken in Ste. Genevieve under the Spanish government show the population ranging as follows:

1772	691
1773	676
1795 ¹⁵	839
1796	773
1800	1163

No military construction is known to have existed in the old town. In 1770, only two officers and seven soldiers were ordered to be stationed at Ste. Genevieve¹⁶ and a house rented as a barracks.¹⁷ The greater part of the defense forces were militia who lived at home.

Back of the town in Canadian fashion, lay the long narrow fields of the inhabitants at right angles to the river and reach-

¹²Pittman, Philip, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi*, p. 50.

¹³Houck, Louis, *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, p. 70.

¹⁴Minutes of a council of war held at St. Louis, July 9, 1782. (Original manuscript in the Bancroft library, Berkeley, California.)

¹⁵Census for the new town.

¹⁶Houck, *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, p. 79.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 128.

ing to the hills. Even today, this pattern of ownership can be recognized by the fence rows. The chief product of these fields was wheat which was conveyed annually to New Orleans and which proved to be an important product in maintaining the gulf coast population.

THE NEW STE. GENEVIEVE

On June 6, 1785, Lieutenant Governor Cruzat wrote to Governor Miro:

The waters have risen so greatly from their source that they have entirely submerged the village of Santa Genoveva. All its inhabitants having been obliged to retire with great haste to the mountains [hillsides] which are one league away from the said village. They abandoned their houses which were inundated, and their furniture and other possessions which they had in them. Although the waters have now fallen, those inhabitants remain along the said coast without yet knowing the place where they can settle¹⁸

The year 1785 was thereafter known as *L'annee des grandes eaux*, and it is generally accepted as the year of the establishment of the new town.

Actually the facts are not as simple as that. As early as 1778, the river was causing serious trouble. Even then the house owned by Joseph Couture was "about to be destroyed by the river,"¹⁹ and a new settlement on Gabouri creek seems to have been forming soon thereafter. An examination of the list of official documents for 1785,²⁰ the year of the great flood, reveals no rush of land transfers in that year. The moving of the town was a gradual process over a period of time.

In 1787, thirteen inhabitants of the new town indicated its separate identity by petitioning to have their fields in *Le Grand Champs* divided from the others.²¹ *Petites Cotes* appears as the name of the new settlement.²² The location

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁹*St. Louis Recorded Archives*, Vol. II, Book I, p. 166. (In the office of the city recorder of St. Louis.)

²⁰*Ste. Genevieve Archives*, Misc. Bound Mss., No. 1. (In the library of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.)

²¹*Ibid.*, Misc., Petitions, No. 22.

²²*Ibid.*, Misc., Churches, No. 34. St. Charles, Missouri, was also known as *Petites Cotes* in this period. In the original Spanish, it is rendered *Pequeñas Cuestas*, meaning "Little Slopes" or "Hillsides."

of the church was not shifted from the old town to the new until 1794. As late as 1796, General Collot found at the old village "still a few huts remaining, inhabited by the traders."²³ Thus it will be seen that Ste. Genevieve consisted for a time of two separated settlements—Collot's map shows both—and that the transfer of location covered a minimum of eleven years.

The new settlement was built on rising ground between the north and south forks of Gabouri creek. The site was laid out in checkerboard fashion, as was St. Louis, St. Charles, New Madrid, and other colonial towns—perhaps, in accordance with a policy of the Spanish government or perhaps in emulation of New Orleans, the capital.²⁴ That this pattern was somewhat irregular was doubtless due to a lack of competent surveyors. A number of additional houses were strung out along the road to the Saline and up the south fork of the Gabouri. This development was much more compact than in the older town and it became the nucleus of the Ste. Genevieve of today.

The United States survey of 1842²⁵ by Joseph C. Brown, deputy surveyor, reconstructs the pattern of ownership in 1803. The streets divided the town into blocks, roughly, 350 by 400 feet. These blocks were in turn divided into four more or less equal parts described in deeds as "one arpent square." The more affluent inhabitants often owned a whole block but there were also men who owned scarcely more than the ground under their houses. Each building site, called an *emplacement*, was surrounded by a log palisade for protection or privacy, or both.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the town had increased considerably in size, largely because of the lawless

²³Collot, Victor, "A Journey in North America," in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1908*, reprinted from the English edition of 1826, p. 294.

²⁴That the fine points of laying out colonial towns had been considered by the Spanish is illustrated by the interesting ordinances set forth by the King of Spain in 1573. These were reprinted in *Planning and Civic Comment*, April-June 1939, Part I, pp. 17-20. In contrast, French Kaskaskia had an irregular and haphazard plan.

²⁵A copy of this plat is preserved in the files of the secretary of State at Jefferson City.

conditions on the east bank of the river which drove many of the inhabitants to the Spanish side. Already, the French population had been augmented by a number of Spaniards, Anglo-Americans, and Germans, who had come for trading, mining, and land speculation. The Anglo-Americans, in particular, took up large outlying tracts of farm land, and as the country began to fill up, for the first time hunting became less profitable and the Indian trade dropped off. Many of the French moved back to the mining country or to advanced posts like St. Charles. These new and foreign influences caused the new town to be mixed in character. None of the oldest houses is purely French.

After the moving of the village, the *Grand Champs* continued to be used for farming. In the following years, other smaller outlying tracts were also cultivated, such as the *Point à Pichet* fields on the river north of Maxwell's hill, petitioned for in 1793 by six inhabitants and the "Grand Park Common Fields" on six ground west of the new village. There seem to have been no "Commons" (*Commune*) established as was customary in neighboring villages. Outlying settlements were the French royalist colony of *Nouvelle Bourbon* and the Peoria Indian village, both nearby to the south. When upper Louisiana became an American possession in 1804, Ste. Genevieve, according to Amos Stoddard, contained 180 houses.²⁶

In 1796, according to Victor Collot, there was a fort at this place.

On the upper part of the platform on which St. Geneviève is situated, stands a small fort, of the same form and constructed with the same kind of materials as that of St. Lewis; that is to say, square, and surrounded with planks to support the earth, and serve at the same time as palisadoes. Two pieces of iron cannon of two pounders, a corporal and two soldiers, were at this time the sole defence of the place.

This position on the whole is extremely bad, being much too distant from the river to protect its navigation. The fort on the southeast is entirely under the command of the platform on which it is built, the farther you go to the back of this position, the more the ground rises gradually; and these heights being connected with each other a great length of space, and commanding each other successively, it is impossible to occupy them all at once²⁷

²⁶Stoddard, Amos, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana*, p. 216.

²⁷Collot, "A Journey in North America," p. 294.

It was inevitable that the town should change. Of his visit a few years later, Brackenridge says:

. . . . As I approached the rocky stream which winds round one side of the village and the common field of vast extent between it and the river, it was pleasing to find that the place had not undergone an entire change, although the appearance of a different style of building intermingled with the old abodes, showed that Americans had already set their feet in it. There was enough left to answer to the landscape preserved by memory, and which I had dwelt on so often, that it was as familiar as "household words." The large dwelling of the commandant, Monsieur Vallé, was still there; the inclosures of pickets, the intermingled orchards and gardens, still gave a character distinct from the American villages; while cattle, horned and without horns, were the chief occupants of the streets and highways²⁸

The influx of a large number of Germans in the middle of the nineteenth century and the end of the slave economy which supported the leading families have been important factors in the development and change of the village. The new highway will only accelerate the process. The Creole language is fast dying out and many of the old houses have disappeared in recent years. Nearly all of the French furniture has been sold to out-of-town antique dealers and even its style has been lost to memory.

Parts of the town do, however, retain some of the original French and Creole flavor even to this day and if precautions are taken to retain it, there is a fair chance that the place will become better known and will be a more enjoyable spot for traveling Americans.

FRENCH HOUSES IN STE. GENEVIEVE

With the exception of the small fort described by General Collot, a wooden church, and possibly a jail, there were no public buildings in the new Ste. Genevieve. Two water mills, a horse mill, and a pottery kiln are the only structures of industrial character recorded. At some distance from the town, cattle ranches or dairies (*vacheries*), sugar camps (*sucreries*), salt making plants, and lead mines were established. Many of

²⁸Brackenridge, Henry Marie, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West*, p. 199.

the inhabitants or their slaves worked in the mines in the winter when the farms could be left for a few months. With the coming of the Americans, plans for ropewalks, distilleries, shoe factories, and other enterprises were announced, but how many were actually operated is not known.

Houses and their dependencies made up the town. Of the latter, the barn, stable (*étable, écurie*), shed (*hangard*), hen house (*poulailler*), corn house (*cabane à mahis*), and the oven (*four*) seem to have been the most common. Mention of the outside kitchen, the slave quarters (*cabane à négres*), and the bakehouse is also made in the early records. In colonial days, such buildings outnumbered the dwelling houses of the town, but they have all disappeared, presumably because they were not kept in repair. Three examples of wellheads of stone with windlasses and their peculiar wooden tops resembling pup tents remain in the town.

The old houses which remain are very interesting, although all have undergone many changes and in most cases there is little left to indicate the original appearance. As a rule, the attic and basement are more likely to reveal the original design of the house than any other part. From the 1760s on, New English or Anglo-American influences were strong in Kaskaskia immediately across the river, and all of the French houses of Ste. Genevieve bear evidence of these influences. There is not a single structure standing which is purely French. It is only by subtracting features known to be of English origin, a study of early documents, and an examination of contemporary buildings in France, Canada, and Louisiana that the truly French building technique in Missouri can be identified.

The French house of Ste. Genevieve is closely related in general structure to that of Canada and Normandy. The greatest innovation is the porch that has been wrapped around it. The porch (*galerie*) seems to have come up from lower Louisiana and the West Indies, where it was a hot-weather convenience and a protection to plastered walls. In France, slate, tile, and thatch were most commonly used for roofing because of the scarcity of wood. Many of the earlier houses built by the French on the Mississippi, particularly

on the east side, were thatched,²⁹ but the dry midwestern climate probably made straw roofs a great fire hazard and with the passing of years they are mentioned less and less frequently.³⁰ The shingle, or *bardeau*, which came into common usage was largely a North American adaptation by the French.

There were four types of wall construction used by the local French of that time. The *maison de poteaux en terre*, literally "house with posts in the earth," was a "palisadoed" house built of timbers set upright in the ground, fastened together only at the top. Above grade, the timbers or posts were squared and when built of rot-resisting cedar they made a sound and fairly permanent structure. This type, once the most common of all, is represented by three houses still standing in Ste. Genevieve. The style is very old, having been used in the first houses of Biloxi and New Orleans, and was probably taken over from the early Spanish settlements on the gulf coast.³¹ The type is unknown in France and Canada.

The *maison de pieux en terre* was also found in Ste. Genevieve. This type of house was built of posts entirely in the round—a cruder method first mentioned at Fort Orleans in 1724.³² At Ste. Genevieve, it was used mostly for outbuildings.

The second main type, the *maison de poteaux sur solle*,³³ with "posts on a sill," was a frame house, and a massive one because of the large size of the timbers and their close spacing. The sill was supported on a stone foundation, or occasionally, as farther south, on wood blocks, keeping the frame away from the dampness of the ground. This type of structure required more skill to build but was in general more durable. Most of the houses remaining from early Ste. Genevieve were built in this way.

²⁹*Kaskaskia Mss.*, various private papers.

³⁰The roof of the St. Gemme-Amoureux house still carries a few of the roofing strips similar to those used on thatched Norman houses.

³¹Dr. George Kubler of Yale university writes that this type of construction was common in the Mexican *jacal* or hut before the Spanish conquest and was widely distributed along the gulf coast. See De Montigny, Dumont, *Mémoires Historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, p. 49.

³²*Archives Coloniales*, C13, C, 4:117-125-I. (Paris.)

³³The specification, "*de poteaux sur solle*," was apparently synonymous with "*en colombage*" and "*de belle charpente*," seen frequently in contemporary phrasing.

In the types just described, the walls were filled between the posts with clay and grass (*bouzillées*) or with stone and mortar (*pierrottées*). The former method of filling was common in Louisiana where Spanish moss was used; the latter, in Normandy. In nearly every house, these walls slope inward on all four sides to a marked degree. This characteristic, noted to be common in Canada as well, has not been explained.

The *maison de pierre*, or stone house, was brought from France and Canada to the upper Mississippi settlements at an early date. However, the type does not seem to have "caught on" in Ste. Genevieve. The old stone house near Mill creek on what is now the St. Mary's road may have been built in the colonial period, but its original character has practically been lost in alterations.

The *maison de pieces sur pieces*, the horizontal log house with "timbers on timbers," is not mentioned in the Ste. Genevieve records, although it was a common structure in Canada from early times.³⁴ The Creole apparently did not like the type as only a few small outbuildings seem to have been built in that way. Towards the end of the colonial period, there is ever increasing mention of the *maison en boulines*. This was apparently the Anglo-American cabin of round, un-hewn logs.

There seem to have been at least two different types of floor plans—the very old arrangement of a single row of rooms end on end, and the more compact scheme of two rooms deep. In certain examples like the Bolduc house, the building was divided into sections which were not connected by interior doors. Small sleeping rooms or *cabinets* were once used but they have disappeared. The leanto (*appentis*) is frequently mentioned in the early records, but none has survived, unless the stone kitchen of the Bolduc house may be considered an example. Porches were found on one, two, three, or four sides of these buildings. The Bolduc and Jean Baptiste Vallé houses

³⁴The oldest wooden houses of Canada were made of carefully hewn or sawed timbers of heavy dimensions laid horizontally and mortised into upright timbers at the corners. This Canadian type was brought to the United States as may be seen in the Joseph R. Brown house built in 1863 and now standing in Browns Valley, Minnesota. Another Canadian type was dovetailed at the corners (*en queue d'aronde*).

retain the best evidences of the porch completely surrounding the building. These porches varied in width from 4 to 8 feet and most of them were floored, although some were not.

Above the walls rose the roof frame—a massive hewn affair composed of Norman trusses arranged to support a hip roof. Originally, these were made very steep to shed water from the thatching. In the region of Ste. Genevieve, the trusses were continued for some time as a matter of habit after thatching was discarded. None of these Ste. Genevieve hip roofs remain unchanged. Gables have been substituted in order to introduce window light to the attic space. The hip framing, however, remains in the Amoureux and Misplait houses and in the marks of the rafters in the Bolduc and Guibourd houses. In late transitional examples like the Janis-Ziegler house, the economy of the American roofing system has gained the upper hand and the picturesque trusses of Old France have been omitted.

Except for a few interior doors, practically all French interior woodwork, if there was ever any of note, has disappeared. Some crude paneling found lying in the attic of the Bolduc house is practically all that has been noted. Examples of fine French paneling are known in Canada and since skilled joiners were present in the eighteenth century in Missouri, it is not improbable that some of the more pretentious buildings were so decorated at one time. Some of the early Ste. Genevieve houses, otherwise French in character, show mantelpieces and trim such as can be found in eighteenth century Virginia buildings and which are clearly the work of Anglo-American joiners.

Glass was undoubtedly expensive in Ste. Genevieve during the colonial period, since it had to be imported from Europe. Most of the humbler houses probably used paper at the windows as in Canada,³⁵ or linen as in lower Louisiana.³⁶ Collot's engraving, "Typical Habitation of the Illinois Country," probably sketched by Warin during his visit of 1796, shows a small house without window sash. However, some glass was

³⁵Benson, Adolph B., (ed.), *The America of 1750: Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, Vol. II, p. 460.

³⁶Letter from Richard Koch of New Orleans to the author.

used at Kaskaskia before the founding of Ste. Genevieve,³⁷ and mention is made of window glass in St. Louis as early as 1767.³⁸ The oldest record of glass in Ste. Genevieve is in a contract for a house for Simon Huberdeaux in 1769.³⁹ Probably the better houses of the village always had glass windows. The Guibourd house still has two pairs of casement windows similar to those of Canada and Louisiana.

Shutters (*contrevents*) were often mentioned in the early records and several examples of the interesting dovetailed type known in France can be seen in Ste. Genevieve today. The original exterior doors of Ste. Genevieve were probably solid wood "sheathed," and single with nine glass lights above and two wooden panels below, as in several examples still to be found in the town. Double glazed "French" doors were known to have been used in the Lorraine-Lisa house in St. Louis, built before 1799. They are still common in Louisiana and were probably used to some extent in Ste. Genevieve. Interior doors seem to have been made simply of "board and batten" construction.

Hardware and nails were imported into this region from an early date. Three wrought-iron door latches found in the town show a close affinity to those of Quebec. Some strap hinges are similar to those of the Atlantic seaboard, but others have characteristic French shapes as the fish-tail end of those on the Bolduc kitchen shutters or the split and curled decorations on hinges from the old wooden church.⁴⁰ While no iron was produced in Missouri during the colonial period, its use was common enough; spikes, lath nails, shingle nails, and other types of nails were frequently mentioned in the records.

Inside, the walls were plastered and whitewashed, but the ceilings were left open showing the beams and attic flooring. Paint was practically unknown and the woodwork was probably left in its natural state. Heating was effected by fireplaces leading into stone chimneys and lighting, by candles. Stoves and lamps do not seem to have generally arrived in Missouri

³⁷*Kaskaskia Mss.*, Commercial Papers, Vol. I, 1723.

³⁸*St. Louis Recorded Archives*, Vol. IV, Book III, p. 525.

³⁹*Ste. Genevieve Archives*, Contracts, No. 20.

⁴⁰A part of an antique hardware collection of Vion Papin, Ste. Genevieve.

until the end of the eighteenth century, when they are mentioned in the *St. Louis Archives*.

A document⁴¹ relating to a proposed house at Ste. Genevieve in 1770 gives a general idea of building agreements of that day. The involved nature of this contract between Boisleduc, the farmer, and Boulet, the carpenter, reveals a characteristic French love for bargaining. Neither party could write, and the argument was brought indoors where it was set down by Robinet, the clerk, more or less as he heard it:

Before Monsieur Vallé, Judge and Notary at Ste. Genevieve and his Clerk, the undersigned, was present Sieur Louis Boisleduc who has agreed to the following:

Sieur Louis Boulet contracts to build for the said Boisleduc a frame house [*maison sur solle*] 21½x26' roofed with shingles and with floors and ceilings of dressed cottonwood boards, the ceiling boards on the porch to be whitewashed on one side. The remainder shall be tongue-and-groove 1" thick, the floors with square joints 1½" thick.

Included shall be tongue-and-groove wooden shutters 4½' high and 3½' wide, the material of seasoned walnut furnished to the said contractor. There shall be three windows and two doors 6' high, likewise of walnut (or other wood) and boards tongue-and-groove, like one which the said Boisleduc shall furnish the contractor [as a sample]. Boisleduc shall also furnish the necessary ironwork, the nails and proper tools for the construction of the said house.

In addition, the contractor shall be provided with two black or white workers to assist him, their board included, along with the board and laundry of the contractor during the period of construction.

The said Boisleduc agrees to have sawn and delivered the shingles necessary to roof the said house.

The house shall have a porch 4½' wide, without floor, all around it.

The sills of the said house as completed shall be supported on blocks three feet high unless the said Boisleduc decides to have a masonry foundation, which the contractor is not obliged to build. The said Boisleduc shall deliver all the proper and necessary timber for the said house and [for this purpose] shall use only one of the men above mentioned contractor's helpers while the wood is being hauled.

The said house is to be completed according to the conditions herein stipulated and open to the inspection of experts without argument on the part of either party. As soon as the undertaking is completed the said Boisleduc binds himself to pay to the said Sieur Boulet the sum of 350 *livres* in hard dollars [*piastres gourdes*] valued at 5 *livres* each, or in beaver

⁴¹*Ste. Genevieve Archives, Agreements-Contracts, No. 5, translated from the French by the author.*

pelts or deerskins at the current rate. The said house shall be ready for delivery September 30, 1771.

The said Boisleduc shall be entitled to the services of these two hired men without interruption for the work of the farm, that is, during the planting and harvesting time of French grain and corn, and also for putting up hay. This has been agreed to, in the customary form, promising & contracting & waiving.

Done and delivered in the office, June 11, 1770, in the presence of the undersigned witnesses, after a reading, at the said Ste. Genevieve. The said Boulet and Boisleduc have stated that they know not how to sign.

Accepted, examined and countersigned.

Deguire

Vallé fils witness
Vallé

Robinet, Clerk
to the Judge.

A second document, found by Miss Josephine Boylan in the St. Clair county, Illinois, records,⁴² involves an exchange of property on opposite sides of the river. John Edgar, seeking the property of said Etienne Pagé in Kaskaskia contracts to furnish him with a house, barn, and land, in Ste. Genevieve in the later years of the colonial period. It is an example of the French migration to the west bank of the Mississippi and shows the hand of the Anglo-American builder in Missouri at an early date.

I the undersigned promise and obligate myself to build for Mr. Etienne Pagé a house of posts in the ground which is to be roofed with shingles and ceiled and floored with tongue-and-groove boards. The posts will be of white oak. There will be two exterior doors and one interior as well as four windows with their shutters.

Mr. Pagé is to furnish me with the sash and hinges and also a chimney of stone in the middle of the house, which will be 25 feet long and 20 feet wide with four foot porches on three sides. The house is to be completed and delivered subject to inspection key in hand at the end of next October.

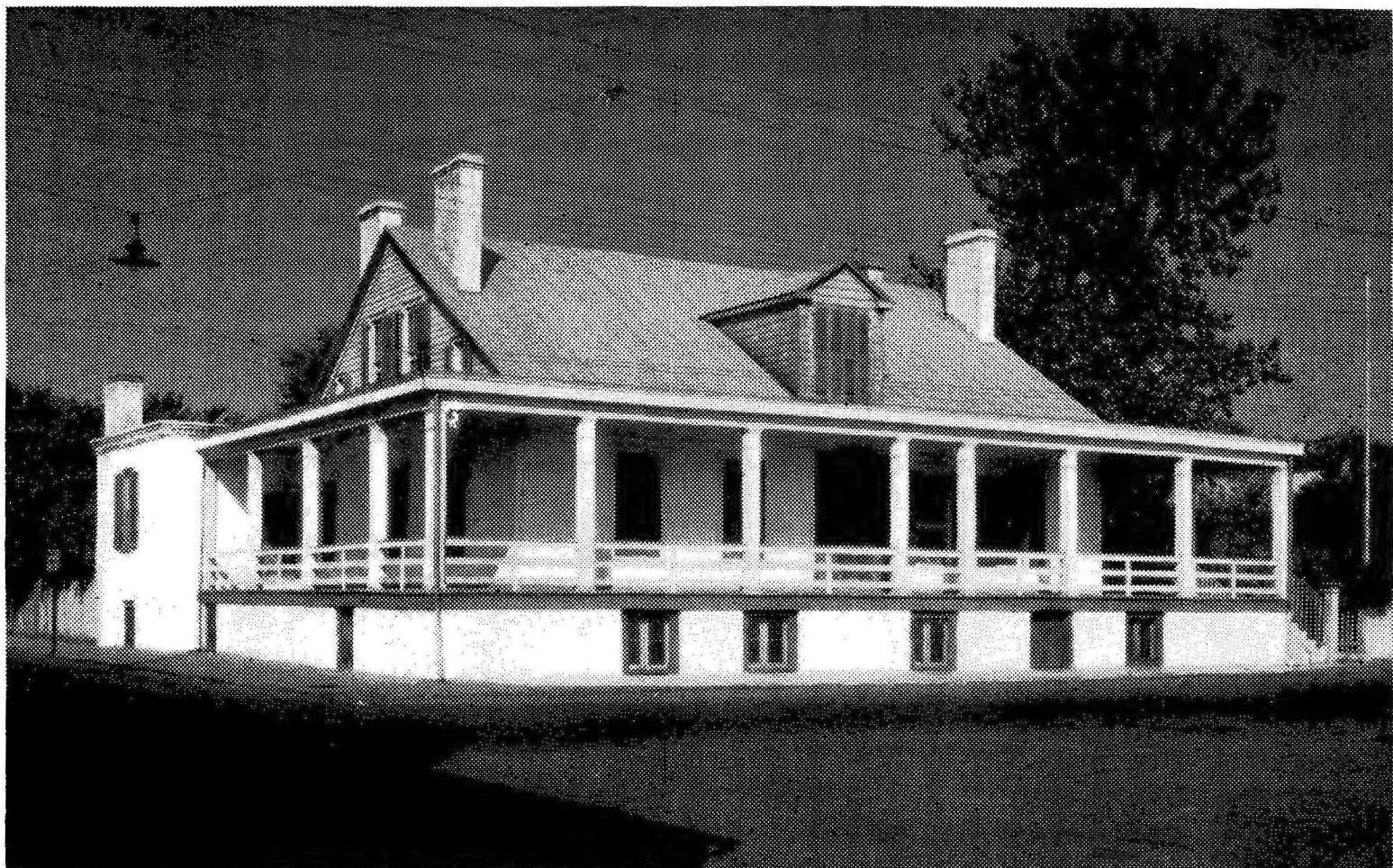
Also there is to be built a barn of white oak posts 40 feet long and 22 feet wide, roofed with shingles or with bark and with a threshing floor. This is to be completed and turned over not later than the end of next June.

I also obligate myself to purchase and transfer to the said Mr. Pagé a piece of ground of one arpent frontage and the customary depth. The said house and barn are to be built at the little hill of Ste. Genevieve and

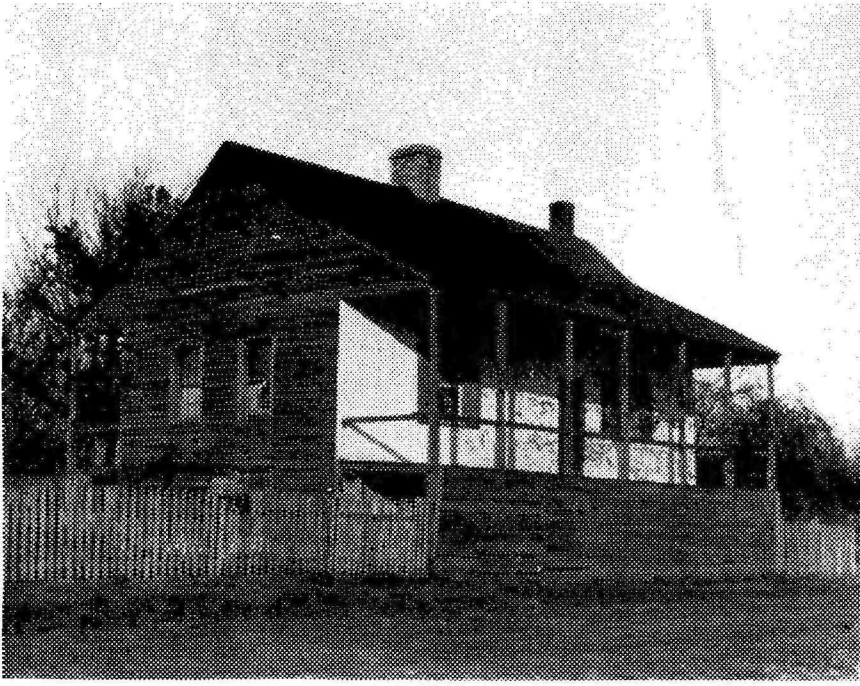
⁴²*St. Clair County Archives, Book of Deeds A*, pp. 55-56, translated from the French by the author. (Manuscript collection in the county recorder's office, Belleville, Illinois.)



LOUIS BOLDUC HOUSE



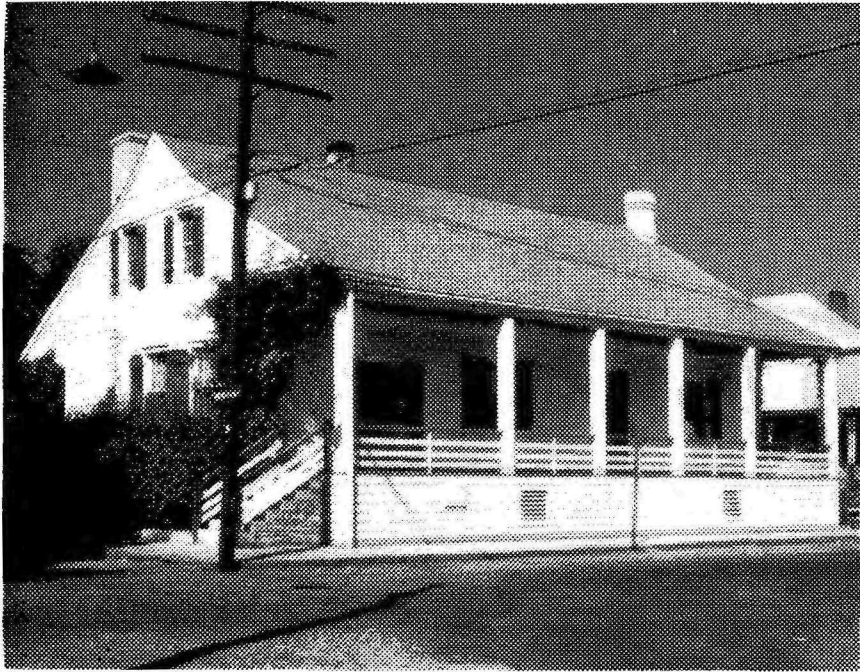
JEAN BAPTISTE VALLE HOUSE



DUNKER
BEQUETTE-RIBAULT HOUSE



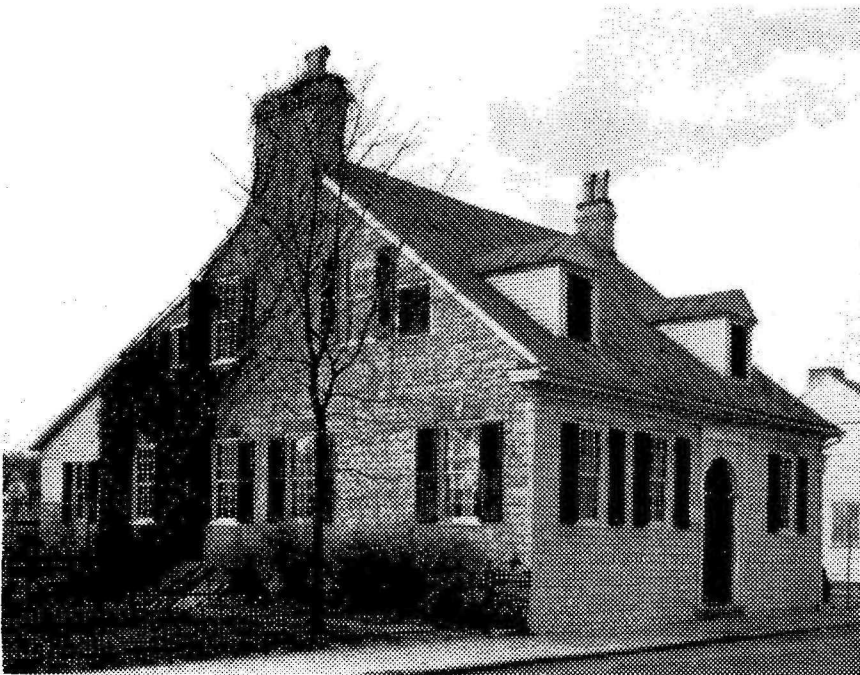
ST. GEMME-AMOUREAUX HOUSE



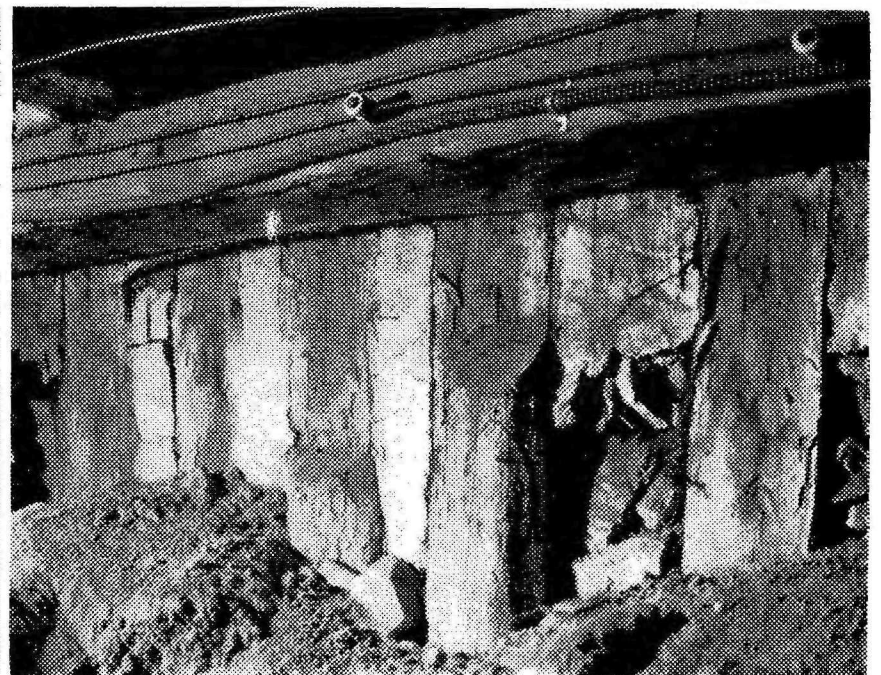
JACQUES GUIBOURD HOUSE



PRICE BRICK BUILDING



PHILLIPSON-VALLE HOUSE



ST. GEMME-BEAUVAIS HOUSE

the land to be situated in the prairie above Ste. Genevieve and of the size described above.

For the execution of these presents I mortgage to the said Mr. Pagé the two houses and other lands at Kaskaskia that I have bought from him and which he has transferred to me by a contract of even date. This for the value received from Mr. Pagé by the transfer of said houses and lands at Kaskaskia the first of March 1792.

Jno Edgar

POINTS OF INTEREST IN STE. GENEVIEVE

1. Bequette-Ribault House. This small structure is of special interest because of its peculiar wall construction of cedar posts planted vertically in the ground. It is the most nearly typical of early Ste. Genevieve houses. The posts, known locally in the eighteenth century as *poteaux en terre* can be seen today by looking over the fence and under the south end of the front porch. The house originally had plastered walls and porches on all four sides, an arrangement typical of the colonial house of this region. In spite of changes, the house has preserved many interesting details, such as the dovetailed shutters pegged with wooden pins. A detailed description of the house was recorded for the historic American buildings survey in 1938.

2. St. Gemme-Amoureux House. In certain respects, this structure seems the most primitive of all. Before the gables were added, the structure had a steep French Canadian hip roof with a 72° slope on the ends and one of 52° on the sides. Roofing strips remaining in the attic seem to indicate that the structure was originally without porches and was thatched. The original stone chimney top has been changed to brick in recent years.

Across the road from this house, lie the "Big Common Fields" where the land is still laid out in narrow strips running from the bluffs to the river. The land was formerly enclosed by a common fence maintained by the community.

3. Misplait House. This interesting little house, which seems to have come to Basil Misplait from his parents in 1804, shows features characteristic of the early French buildings. Like many of the others, the roof was hipped. The batter of its exterior walls was the familiar local characteristic, the

purpose of which has not been explained. In the rear of the house is a stone well with a tent-shaped wooden top and windlass. The form seems to be peculiarly French.

4. Janis-Ziegler House. This attractive old house with its peach-colored walls and boxwood is a transitional structure and does not have the Norman roof trusses seen in some of the older houses. It is said to have been built in 1800 and later used as the "Green Tree Tavern." The signboard may be seen in the St. Genevieve museum. The boxwood growing here is almost on the northern limits of its range in Missouri.

5. François Vallé House. Facing South Gabouri creek, this unpretentious wooden building is all that is left of the house of François Vallé II, civil and military commandant of Ste. Genevieve until his death early in 1804. In 1811, the improvements on the lot were ". . . a large one story dwelling house a Kitchen & Stable . . ." ⁴³

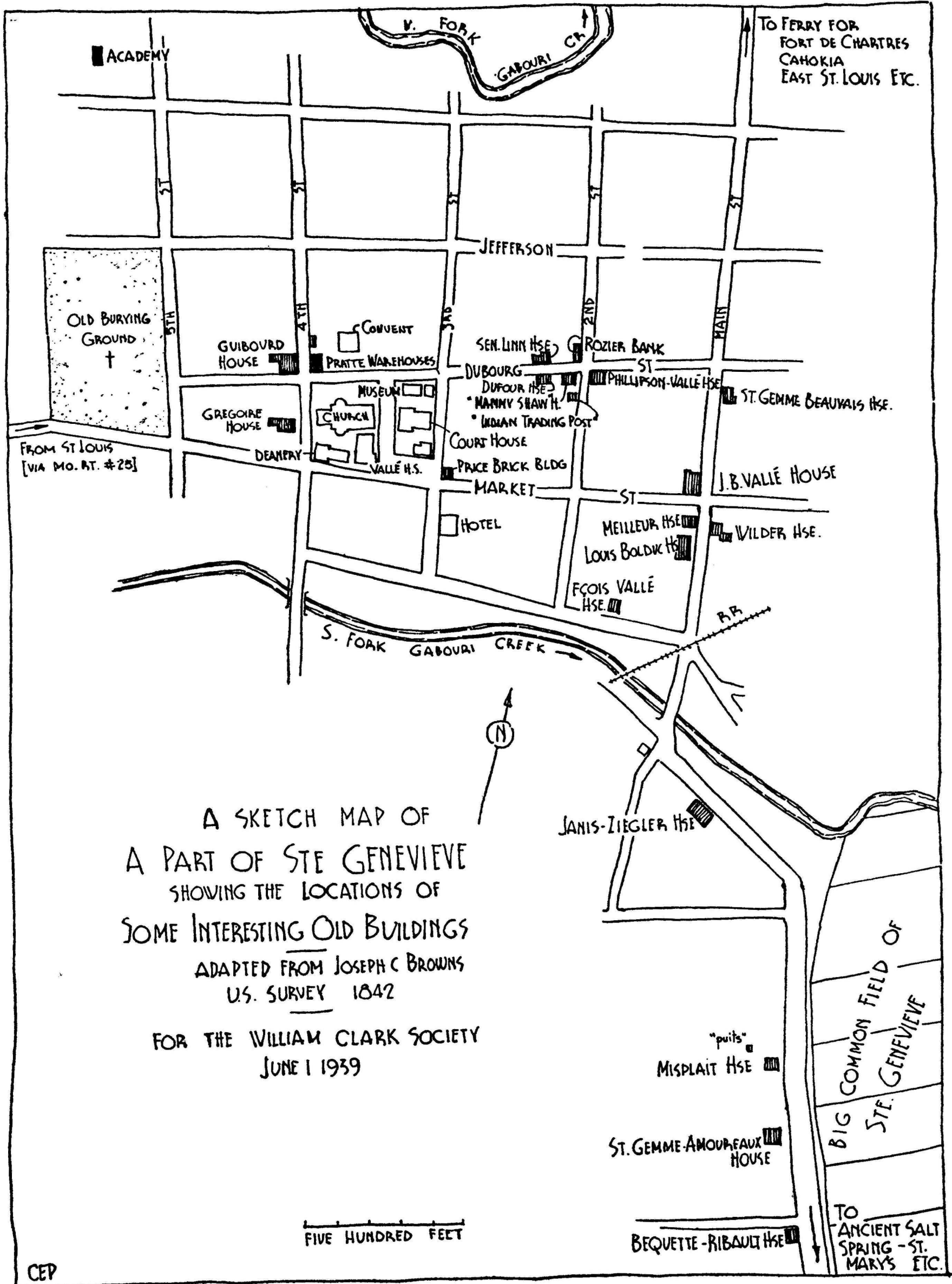
The Vallé family, originally spelled Vallée, came from Canada. Their old stone house at Beauport on the north side of the St. Lawrence below Quebec is still standing, although many changes have been made in later years. François II was born in the Illinois country in 1758. His father, François I (1716-1783), was for some years commandant in the old village of Ste. Genevieve.

6. Louis Bolduc House. This large structure is one of the least changed of the old French houses of Ste. Genevieve. It was the home of Louis Bolduc I until his death in 1815. Bolduc, a prominent merchant and slave owner, was born in the parish of St. Joachim, Canada, December 24, 1734. Miss Zoe Bolduc of the same family lives in the north end of the house today.

It is said that the frame of the house was moved up from the old town. If that is the case, it may be one of the oldest houses in the Mississippi valley. It is a good example of the all-around porch with slender posts set directly in the ground.

The body of the house is built in two sections of identical size, 26 x 27 feet, which are not connected by interior doors. The stone leanto kitchen on the rear and the attic, reached by

⁴³*Ste. Genevieve Archives, Deeds, No. 337.*



stairway from the northeast room, are unusual features. The south half of the building has a solid log ceiling with fine large Norman trusses supporting the roof.

This house has been measured in detail by the national park service. It appears in a diorama of Ste. Genevieve under construction for the Jefferson national expansion memorial.

7. Meilleur House—The Old Convent. René Meilleur, son-in-law of Louis Bolduc, built this two-story frame structure about 1815 for a private dwelling. Around 1837, the Sisters of Loretto bought it for use as a convent. Its walls are “nogged” with brick. The Flemish bond brick building immediately to the north—now doing duty as a blacksmith shop—is said to have been Meilleur’s store.

8. Wilder House. The north portion of this house, about 24 x 31 feet, is a French frame structure with Anglo-American work evident in the window trim and the mantel-piece. The house was bought in 1860 by the Wilder family.

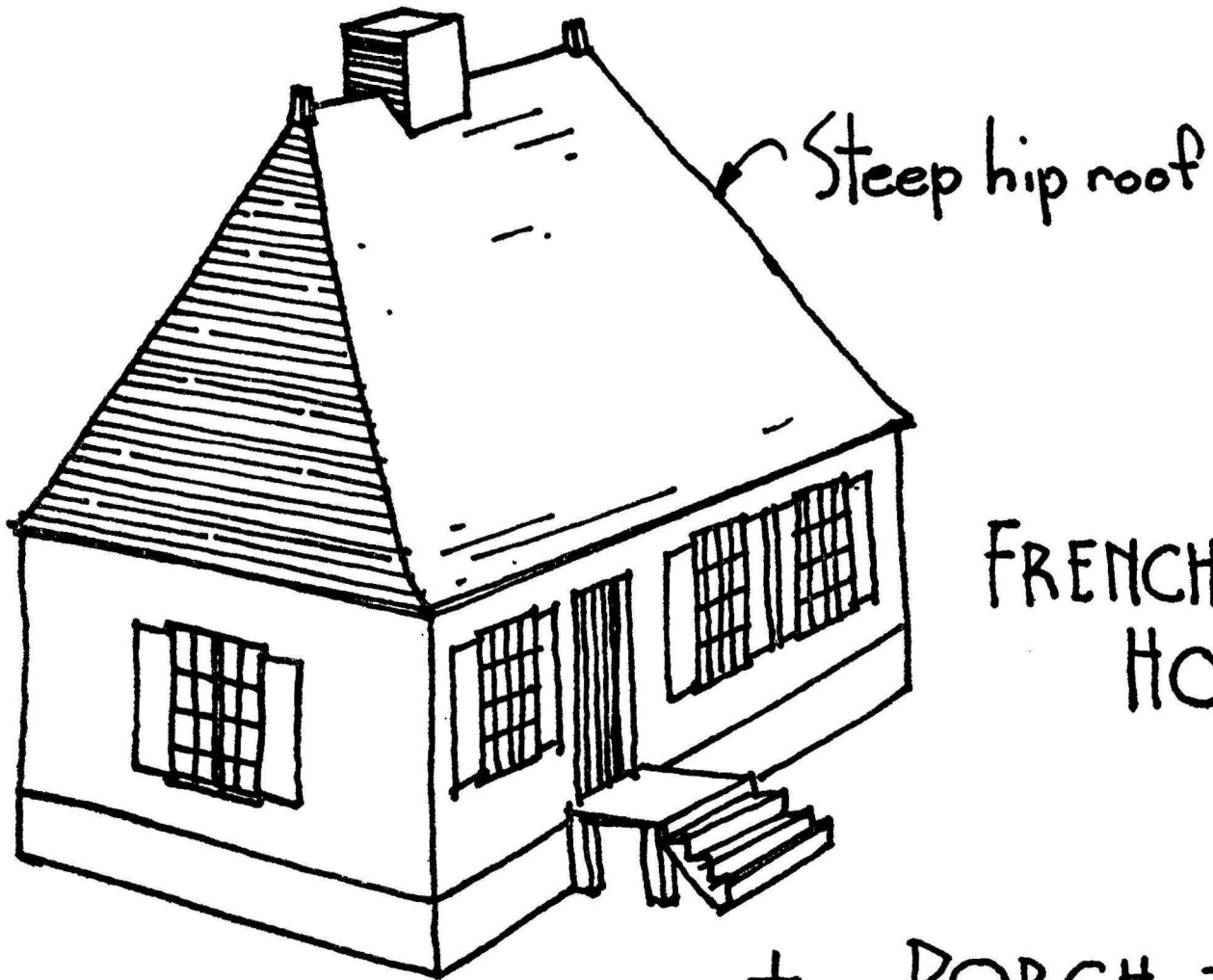
9. Jean Baptiste Vallé House. This was the house of Jean Baptiste Vallé (1760-1849), last commandant under the Spanish government. The building is a frame structure on a stone foundation, a *maison de poteaux sur solle* like the Bolduc house. It was considerably modified in the nineteenth century—particularly the roof and chimneys. The depth of the house suggests that it had a low West Indies type of hip roof like that of the Pierre Menard house⁴⁴ (built around 1800) across the river. The heavy tapered beams supporting the second floor are of great length.

The grounds of the house are attractively planted; the formal garden north of the house follows an old pattern.

10. St. Gemme-Beauvais House. This house seems to have been definitely identified as the boyhood home for several years of Henry Marie Brackenridge, well-known early western writer, who described it thus:

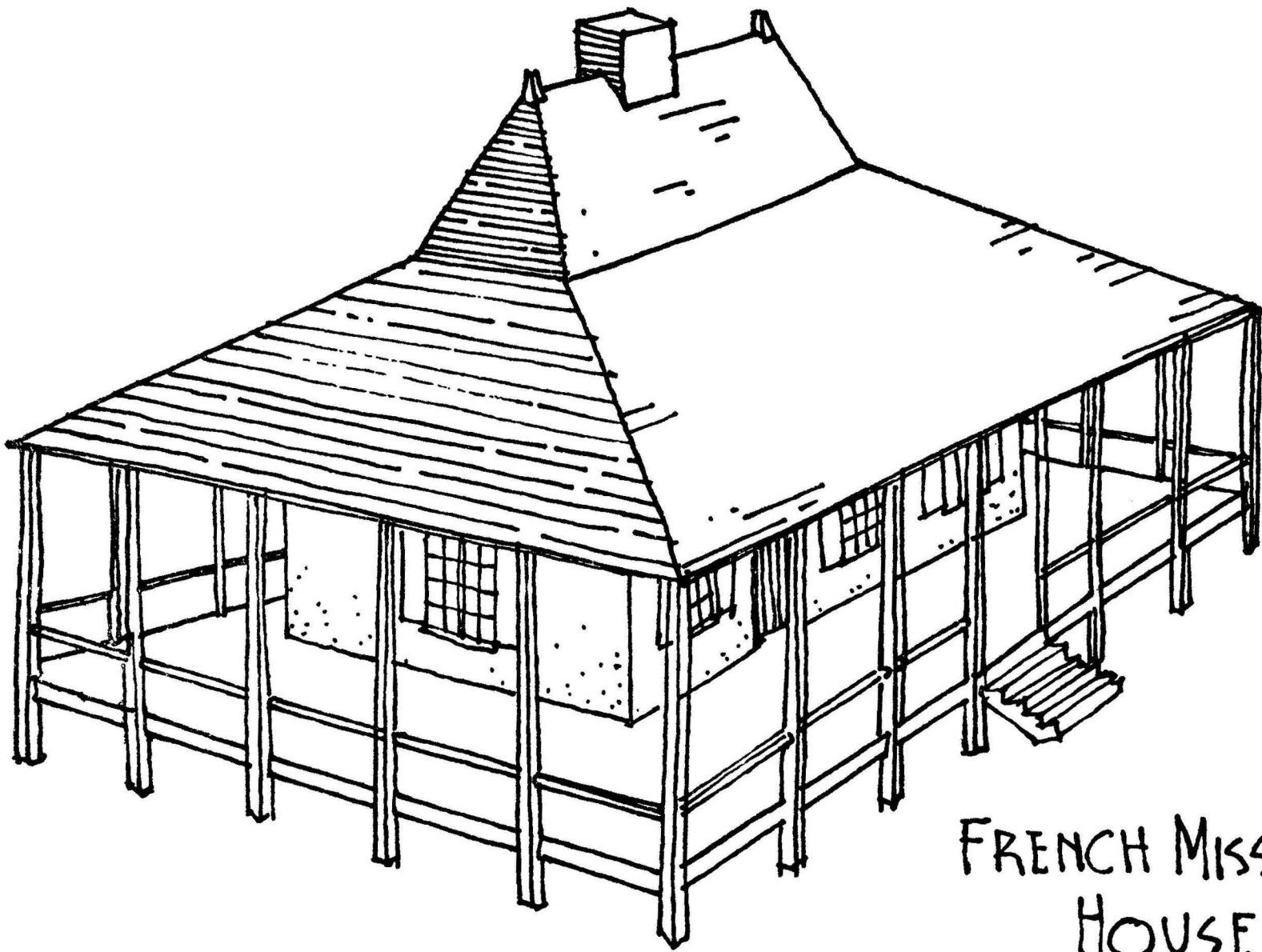
The house of M. Beauvais was a long, low building, with a porch or shed in front, and another in the rear; the chimney occupied the centre, dividing the house into two parts, with each a fireplace. One of these served for a dining-room, parlor and principal bedroom; the other was the kitchen, and each had a small room taken off at the end for private chambers

⁴⁴Maintained as an historic house museum by the State of Illinois.



FRENCH CANADIAN
HOUSE

+ PORCH =



FRENCH MISSOURI
HOUSE

Inked Drawing of a French Canadian House and a French Missouri House

or cabinets. There was no loft or garret, a pair of stairs being a rare thing in the village. The furniture, excepting the beds and the looking-glass, was of the most common kind, consisting of an armoire, a rough table or two, and some coarse chairs. The yard was inclosed with cedar pickets, eight or ten inches in diameter, and seven feet high, placed upright, sharpened at the top, in the manner of a stockade fort. In front the yard was narrow, but in the rear quite spacious, and containing the barn and stables, the negro quarters, and all the necessary offices of a farm-yard. Beyond this there was a spacious garden, inclosed with pickets in the same manner with the yard. It was indeed a garden, in which the greatest variety and the finest vegetables were cultivated, intermingled with flowers and shrubs; on one side of it there was a small orchard containing a variety of the choicest fruits. The substantial and permanent character of these inclosures is in singular contrast with the slight and temporary fences and palings of the Americans. The house was a ponderous wooden frame, which, instead of being weather-boarded, was filled in with clay, and then whitewashed⁴⁵

The St. Gemme house originally extended farther to the north. The construction of the old part is of *poteaux en terre* with a log ceiling. Posts below grade were left in the round; those above grade were hewn flat and filled with rubble and mortar. The rear wing is modern and the roof has been changed.

11. Phillipson-Vallé House. This attractive stone house, "Late Georgian" in character, seems to have been built between 1818 and 1824, when the property was owned by Jacob Phillipson. In the latter year, it was sold to Jean Baptiste Vallé. It was measured in 1934 by the historic American buildings survey. The lines of this structure, with its modillion and dentil cornice are probably as attractive as can be found in any small American house. The general effect suggests Maryland or Virginia. The stoop which once gave access to the front door was removed some years ago and replaced by the present recessed doorway.

12. "Mammy Shaw House." This house is of uncertain origin, but seemingly it is one of the older specimens in the town. The woodwork appears to be Anglo-American. The large double interior doors are said to have come from a steamboat wrecked on the Mississippi river. The name given this

⁴⁵Brackenridge, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West*, p. 21.

house is that of the widow of a Dr. Shaw. At the present time, the building is used as a painter's studio.

13. "Indian Trading Post." This little stone building is often referred to as an "Indian trading post," although no authority is known for the name. It was measured for the historic American buildings survey in 1934.

14. Rozier Bank. In the winter of 1810-11, John James Audubon, the famous naturalist-artist, came to Ste. Genevieve with Ferdinand Rozier from Henderson, Kentucky. They had known each other as midshipmen in the French navy and had been in partnership for nine years in America. Audubon did not like Ste. Genevieve and returned to Kentucky soon afterwards. Rozier stayed to found a fortune.

This stone building has been the seat of a private bank for many years.

15. Senator Linn House. This was the home of Dr. Lewis F. Linn, native Kentuckian, who moved to Ste. Genevieve in 1816. He served as United States senator from 1833 until his death in 1843.

16. Dufour House. This house stands on ground confirmed to "Parfait" Dufour after the change from the Spanish to the American government. In 1789, Dufour owned a house, 10 x 15 feet, of *poteaux en terre* differing from this structure both in size and type of construction.⁴⁶

17. Museum. This institution was opened in 1935 in connection with the bicentennial of Ste. Genevieve's founding. It contains a collection of interesting objects, mostly post-colonial, and a library.

18. Price Brick Building. John Price, a Kentucky immigrant,⁴⁷ was one of the first enterprising Americans in Ste. Genevieve. With his brother Andrew, he was engaged in trade with Louisville and Frankfort in 1798.⁴⁸ In the same year, he was granted a license to run the Ste. Genevieve-Kaskaskia ferry for six years.⁴⁹

⁴⁶*Ste. Genevieve Archives, Estates, No. 97.*

⁴⁷*Ibid., Marriages, No. 113, 1799.*

⁴⁸*Ibid., Litigations, No. 205.*

⁴⁹*Ibid., Miscellaneous No. 2, # 112.*

Price owned and probably built this brick structure, which he lost at a sheriff's sale in 1806. It is early architectural evidence of the Anglo-American migration to Missouri. Brick was not used by the French north of New Madrid, for stone was easily available and answered the same needs. Farther down the river where stone was scarce, as in Louisiana, brick had been made from the earliest days.

The fat handmade brick of this building are laid up in Flemish bond as in buildings of the Atlantic seaboard and Kentucky. The presence of smaller brick in common bond at the gables may indicate that the structure once had a hipped roof. The cornice is similar to that of the Phillipson-Vallé house.

19. Church of Ste. Genevieve. The first church in the old village seems to have been built about 1752. Two grants of land made in that year required the grantees to fell timbers for its construction. Nothing is known of its appearance. As early as 1778, a new church was under consideration and in the 1783 inventory of Francois Vallé's estate is mentioned a lot set aside for its construction. However, the old church continued in use until 1794, and tradition says that it was moved bodily to the new site at that time.

Zenon Trudeau, "Captain of the Louisiana Regiment and Commanding Officer of the Western Part of the Illinois Country," and Father St. Pierre had held a meeting of the citizens on September 7, 1793, to consider the location and construction of a church in the new town as well as a chapel at New Bourbon.⁵⁰ The Messrs. Lachance, Pratte, and Bolduc were selected as the executive committee by majority vote. Apparently there was dissension regarding the arrangement since it became necessary for Trudeau in the following year to settle the choice of the site officially and warn any objectors that they would be sent down immediately to New Orleans at their own expense if they did not contribute their assessed share of the construction cost.⁵¹

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, Misc., Churches, No. 33.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, No. 34.

The means of construction is described in two affidavits filed in the archives in connection with a lawsuit. Jean Baptiste Bequette furnished for Augustin Bertau his share consisting of 200 shingles, twenty laths, two planks 6 feet 2 inches long, two planks 5 feet long, four days of labor (*corvée*), and one load of stone. Also mentioned is that he put *bouzillage* between posts and set the planks listed. One Gravelle stated that he had furnished three posts, 108 shingles, a 10-foot plank, a 5-foot plank, a 10-foot board, a half load of stone and three days of labor.⁵² If the old structure was actually moved to the new site it must have been extensively repaired or enlarged.

In time, the wooden church was replaced by one of stone, begun in 1831 and consecrated in 1837.⁵³ This in turn gave way to the attractive Victorian Gothic brick structure begun in 1876 and dedicated in 1880. The present church is the fourth to serve the parish of Ste. Genevieve.⁵⁴

20. Pratte Warehouses. These old stone warehouses now standing on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Joseph are said to have belonged to Joseph Pratte, a merchant of Ste. Genevieve, who owned the property at an early date.

21. Gregoire House. This large brick house, the second occupied by the Gregoire family, shows Greek revival influence. The old Gregoire house built about 1799 stood immediately to the north. It was destroyed some forty years ago.

22. Jacques Guibourd House. Originally this house had a hip roof as is shown by the handsome Norman trusses still in place. It seems likely that the frame was moved here from an older location about 1800.

Jacques Guibourd, a slaveholder of Santo Domingo, came to Ste. Genevieve at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1799, he was granted the land on which the present house stands. The concession makes no mention of a house on the property at the time.

The house has been put in excellent condition by the present owner. Among the most interesting features of this

⁵²*Ibid.*, Litigations, No. 25.

⁵³Yealy, *Sainte Genevieve*, p. 111.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 135.

house are the framing of the attic and the two pairs of original French casement windows on the first floor. A brick kitchen of later date may be seen in the rear.

23. Old Burying Ground. Many of the prominent early settlers of Ste. Genevieve are buried here. Father Charles Louis Van Tourenhout lists the following: "Commandant Jean Baptiste Vallé, Jacques Guibourd, Senator Lewis Linn, Ferdinand Rozier, Henry Janis, Vital Bauvais or Beauvais, Auguste St. Gemme, Famille la Grave, Nerée Vallé and Aglacé Chouteau, Hilaire Le Compte, John Bogg, J. B. S. Pratte, Charles Hypolitte Gregoire, Marie La Porte, Colonel François Vallé, Marie Villars and Walter Fenwick."

The work of preserving this old cemetery was undertaken about 1931 by the American legion memorial park association in preparation for the Ste. Genevieve bicentennial celebration. Popular subscription began the work, which is now carried on by a special tax. Henry L. Rozier is president of the association.

24. Ste. Genevieve Academy. In 1807, a secondary school was organized by a board of citizens and in the following year it received a charter from the territory of Louisiana. The existing stone building, in Anglo-American style, was built for the school on a hill back of the town about 1810. After a checkered career, the academy ceased to exist as a school during the war between the states.⁵⁵

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 124-28.

The MISSOURI HISTORICAL REVIEW.

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