

Ste. Genevieve Green Tree Tavern

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historical Park
Missouri



NPS / CLAIRE CASEY

Since 1790, Green Tree Tavern has filled many different roles for many different people. For some, it was a beloved gathering spot, a place of business, a home. For others, it was a place where they were denied equality and freedom.

Architecture

Green Tree Tavern is a French colonial *poteaux sur sole* building meaning the vertical logs on the exterior walls rest on a wooden sill on a stone foundation. Typical French colonial architecture consists of two to four

smaller rooms. The home was built with two triangular chimneys, a wraparound *galerie*, or porch, and a raised basement. Construction began in 1790, a date determined using dendrochronology. By testing five pieces

rooms of roughly the same size. Green Tree Tavern strays from the pattern by including a large central room flanked by two or three

of wood, the house was dated as the oldest existing structure in Ste. Genevieve.

The Janis Family

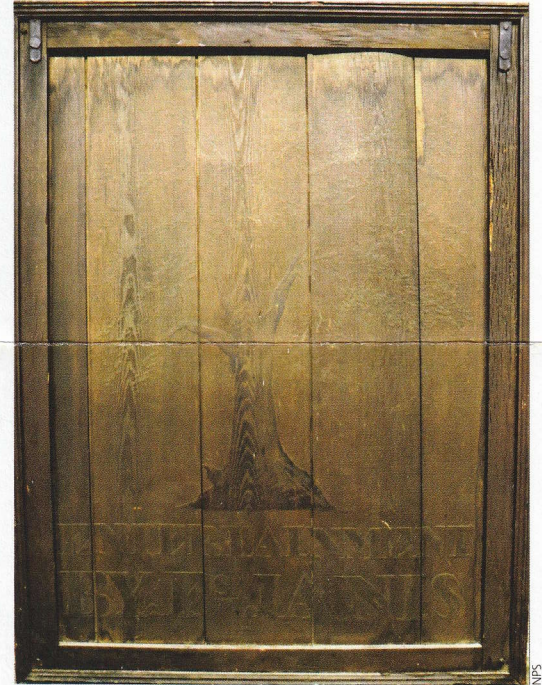
Green Tree Tavern was built for the Janis family for whom it was both a home and a business for over 40 years. Like many French colonists in Ste. Genevieve, Nicolas and Marie Janis migrated from Kaskaskia, Illinois, arriving around 1789.

The Janis family brought with them at least ten people who were enslaved, possibly more. Clarisse was one of the women born into slavery at Green Tree Tavern. Clarisse and other enslaved people were viewed as property and willed to Nicolas' son, François, with the house after Nicolas died.

After inheriting the house, François decided to open the home up as an inn. One guest wrote about his stay in 1806: "I was by no means disappointed; the landlord, a lively Frenchman, looked after my horses and his wife made me a cup of coffee with as much perfection as ever I drank at the Palais Royale or at the food of Point Neuf."

When François died, the house was sold. Clarisse was once again willed to another Janis descendent and finally received a license for her freedom in 1836. Afterward, she bought her own home just down St. Marys

Road from Green Tree Tavern where she lived not far from her former enslavers' family. Her home still stands and is now known as the Bequette-Ribault House.



A wooden sign for Green Tree Tavern featuring a carving of a tree and advertising "Entertainment by Fs. Janis." The date of the sign is unknown.

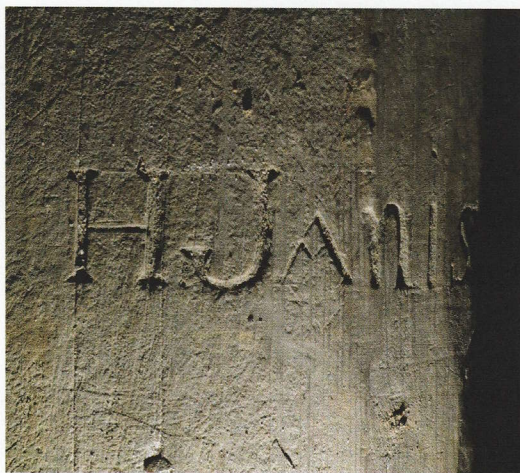
A Masonic Lodge

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 encouraged many Americans from the East to move west across the Mississippi River. Some of these individuals formed the West's first Masonic Lodge. Masonic Lodges are meeting places for Freemasons, members of a fraternal organization started by stonemasons in the medieval period.

A request was made to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for the formation of the "Louisiana Lodge" in Ste. Genevieve in 1806. The petition was approved on July 17, 1807, establishing Louisiana Lodge 109 as the first Masonic Lodge west of the Mississippi River. Masonic Lodges are identified by

several different symbols like "the square and compass." Multiple Masonic symbols were carved into porch posts at Green Tree Tavern. The porch posts with historic carvings have since been removed for preservation.

Louisiana Lodge 109 held their first meeting on November 14, 1807, using François' house and tavern as their meeting space. The Lodge quickly fell into financial trouble as it struggled to collect and send its dues to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. As a result, Louisiana Lodge 109 lost its charter in 1824. By 1826, the dues had been settled and a new Lodge formed in Ste. Genevieve.



"H. Janis" carved onto a porch post. The "A" in Janis may be a "square and compass," a Masonic symbol.



A standalone "square and compass" symbol carved onto a post that stood at Green Tree Tavern.

The Ziegler Family

The Janis family owned Green Tree Tavern until 1833 when Mathias and Barbara Ziegler bought the home. Mathias and Barbara traveled from modern-day Germany to live in Ste. Genevieve in the 1820s.

Mathias established a business with Jean Baptiste Vallé in 1827. Under their original business agreement, Mathias manufactured tobacco while Jean Baptiste ran the general store. After purchasing the house, Mathias and Barbara ran a successful tavern and tobacco shop from their home while raising six children. There are no records suggesting the Zieglers enslaved people at Green Tree Tavern. Instead, they chose to employ white servants.

Mathias died in 1835 leaving Barbara to run

the family business and care for the estate. Many of Barbara's children and grandchildren helped run daily activities at the tavern. One grandson, Lewis Ziegler, tracked daily transactions at the tavern in his daybook from 1839 to 1841. Items mentioned in his sales log include bread, beer, brandy, cigars, rubs, and glasses. Barbara and the Ziegler family ran the tavern and tobacco shop until the 1850s.

After closing the family business, their son Francis began making payments to purchase the property and became the sole owner of the house in 1860. Barbara continued to live there until her death in 1862 and the Ziegler family continued to live in the home into the 20th century.

The German Influence

The history of Green Tree Tavern mirrors changes that were happening broadly in the community of Ste. Genevieve. Though Ste. Genevieve started as a French town, people of many nationalities migrated to and through the area. After 1763, land east of the Mississippi River was controlled by British Protestants, causing French Canadians and other Catholics to move across the river. Many eastern American Indian Nations also crossed over as Europeans continued to force them from their homelands. Each political change, here and abroad, brought new waves of people to Ste. Genevieve.

Beginning around 1830, thousands of

German immigrants came to the United States. German author Gottfried Duden wrote a book in which he painted Missouri as an ideal place to live which may have inspired some of the German families who chose Missouri as their new home.

Many German families like the Zieglers settled in Ste. Genevieve. The German influx was significant. The church began offering German services and German language publications also became popular. By 1860, there were more German households in Ste. Genevieve than there were French. The German influence is still evident in the architecture and culture of the region.