



Jean Baptiste Vallé House



NPS PHOTO

From 1794 to 2010, the Jean Baptiste Vallé House served as a private residence to numerous families. Over time, the house and its residents evolved in response to social and political changes in the surrounding community.

Architecture

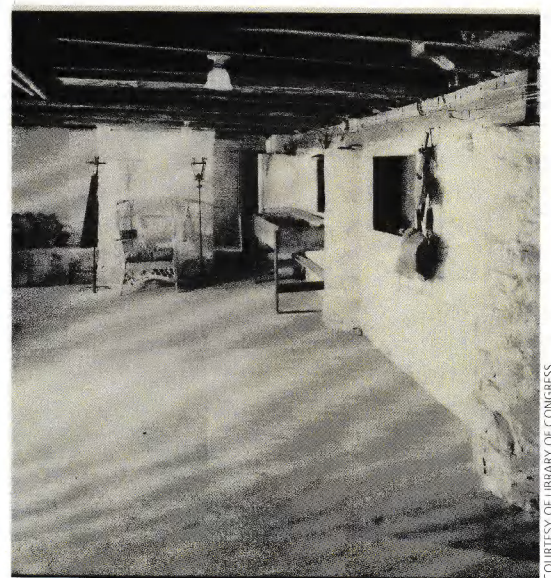
The Jean Baptiste Vallé House underwent dramatic changes over the 216 years it served as a private home. Originally built as a traditional French colonial vertical log structure with a wrap-around porch, it was constructed using the *poiteaux-sur-soie* (post-on-sill) method, with vertical timbers resting

on a stone foundation. Today, the colonial vestiges of the Jean Baptiste Vallé House are largely hidden away behind the modern plaster. Though vertical logs still form the building's frame, later additions including brick extensions and a new roof have significantly changed its outward appearance.



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Two of the home's original vertical logs are exposed within a later brick addition. The horizontal stripes visible on the logs come from the more modern lath and plaster that once covered them.



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The raised floor characteristic of French colonial homes allows for a *caveau* (cellar). This Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) photo shows the basement of the Jean Baptiste Vallé House.

The Home's First Residents

The house was built for the Vallé family. Jean Baptiste and Marie Jeanne Vallé came from prominent families of the Illinois Country and became wealthy citizens through investments in agriculture, trade, and mining. Jean Baptiste also briefly served as Commandant of Ste. Genevieve.

Much of the Vallé family's wealth was gained through the labor of enslaved people who were forced to work in agricultural fields, mines, and households. At least thirty-nine

individuals were enslaved by Jean Baptiste and Marie Jeanne at this home including Marie and her son Joseph Philibert, Samson, Madelaine, Michel, twins Joe and Peter and their mother Félicité, among others. These individuals lived separately on the property and carried out the labor required to maintain the household and estate. The National Park Service continues to research the lives and experiences of those enslaved here, and their connections to other individuals in Ste. Genevieve.

The Garden

French colonial town lots were typically enclosed by a palisaded cedar fence to keep free-roaming livestock out of the gardens. These lots often included several outbuildings, such as housing for enslaved people, barns, and a detached kitchen, as well as kitchen gardens and orchards. The people of Ste. Genevieve relied heavily on these gardens for much of their food.

The Jean Baptiste Vallé House also featured an ornamental garden, a symbol of status inspired by French aristocratic tradition. Marie Thérèse Bourgeois Chouteau, a prominent figure in St. Louis, sent Marie Jeanne rose cuttings and encouraged her to plant an ornamental garden of her own. Marie Jeanne further developed her garden by ordering roses from France. Today's garden has been redeveloped in the spirit of her original design.

Later Residents

The Vallé family remained residents of the home until Jean Baptiste Vallé died in 1849. The property then passed to his granddaughter Mary Louise and her husband, Anthony LaGrave. Anthony took ownership during a period of cultural change in Ste. Genevieve, as an influx of diverse migrants moving westward brought new tastes that influenced the traditional colonial homes. Adapting to the cultural influences of the United States, Anthony renovated the house, transforming it from its original French colonial design into a Georgian-style residence.

and social changes. Anthony altered the lower level's layout and added stairs to access a newly developed second story. These additional rooms reflected a growing interest in separating private and public spaces, a concept that was not emphasized during the earlier French Colonial period, when privacy was less strictly defined.

The renovation process continued throughout much of Anthony LaGrave's ownership. In 1870, the LaGraves sold the home to its final private residents, the Vion-Papin-Schram family, who lived there until 2010.

The 1860s renovation brought both structural



This 1949 photo from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) shows the home fully furnished and decorated in a mid- to late-Victorian style.

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The Louisiana Purchase

In 1804, the finalization of the Louisiana Purchase marked a turning point for Ste. Genevieve, as the town, and the broader Louisiana Territory, became part of the United States. Residents experienced a cultural, political, and legal shift under the new government. One major change was the transition from a legal system based on civil law to one based on English common law.

not considered citizens. In the wake of the Haitian Revolution and fears of slave uprisings, lawmakers imposed even stricter controls on enslaved people's movements and gatherings. Starting in 1835, individuals who gained their freedom were required to apply for and carry a license to prove their status. Legal enslavement in Missouri continued until January 1865.

Under French customary law, women like Marie Jeanne Vallé could own property and enter contracts in their own names. In contrast, her granddaughter Mary Louise faced more limited rights, governed by Missouri state law. Despite these changes, women in Ste. Genevieve continued to play active roles in churches, schools, courts, and local businesses.

Jean Baptiste Vallé became the civil and military leader of Ste. Genevieve, following in the footsteps of his father and brother. After the Louisiana Purchase, he maintained leadership of the community for six months, after which he became Justice of the Peace. Though laws and titles changed, the Vallé family and other wealthy community members continued to hold power under the new U.S. system.

However, the men, women, and children who were enslaved at this home were still