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Memoirs of a French Village a Chronicle of old-



J.F. Fidler

1722—Prairie Du Rocher's 250th Year—1972

STATE BANK OF PRAIRIE DU ROCHER

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POWDER MAGAZINE FORT DE CHARTRES

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INTRODUCTION

It could be said that a land without ruins is a land without memories. It follows that a land without memories is a land without a history. A people and place that tread light on the souls of the dead and vanished days is said to be timeless.

The history of Prairie du Rocher is an intriguing one. It is hoped that this attempt will stimulate further interest, and spark a comprehensive review of this timeless town.

As Edited and Recorded by
THEODORE P. FADLER

*This needs to be read with
Caution! N.M. Bellamy*

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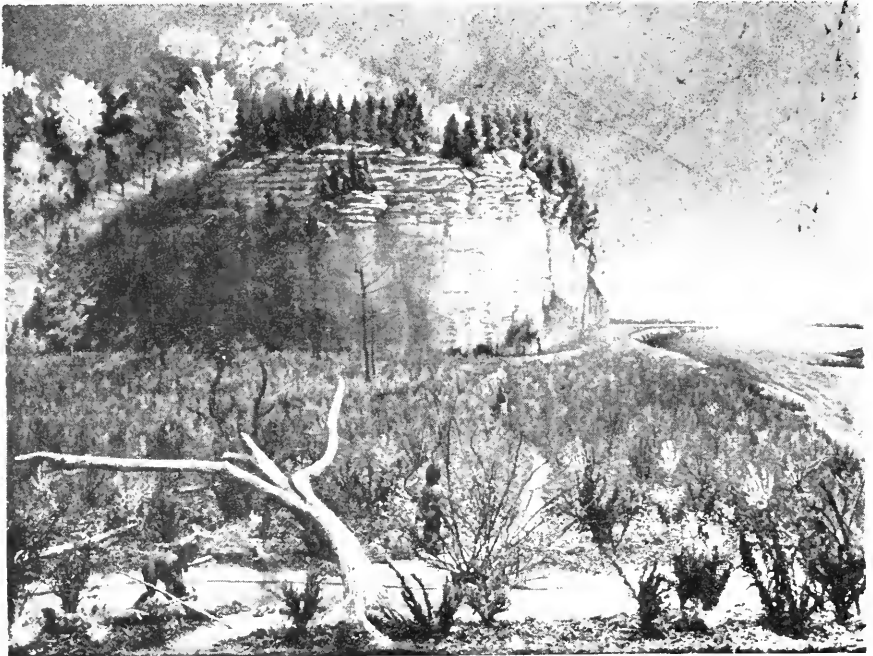
THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION

The violent days were over in the great American Bottom. The ocean bid farewell to the Mississippi region. When man came, he saw what had happened. He marvelled. Here was a fertile valley between walls of carved limestone, marble, and sandstone.

Primitive man was compelled by environmental factors in determining a habitat. The first man (people) came to Prairie du Rocher because of the rock bluffs. The bluffs offered man hope. By this time the great river no longer predominated the whole valley; however, man could never be sure of it's channel. Since floods were common, he hesitated to dwell far from the high ground lest he fall prey to the unpredictable river.

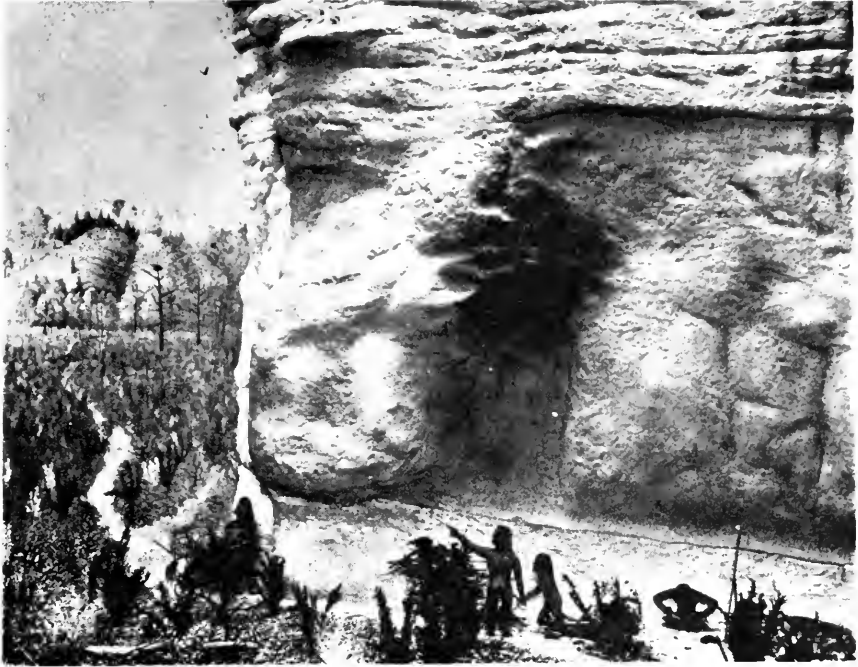
Small villages grew up in the shadow of stone. It was cold; bitterly cold. An ingenious man, some (10,000) years ago built a fire beside the rock bluff. Once the huge mass of rock was heated, it reflected warmth to the huddled villages. The fire became a necessity for survival. By this measure, man survived in the Ice Age.

Ashes from these fires can be excavated today.

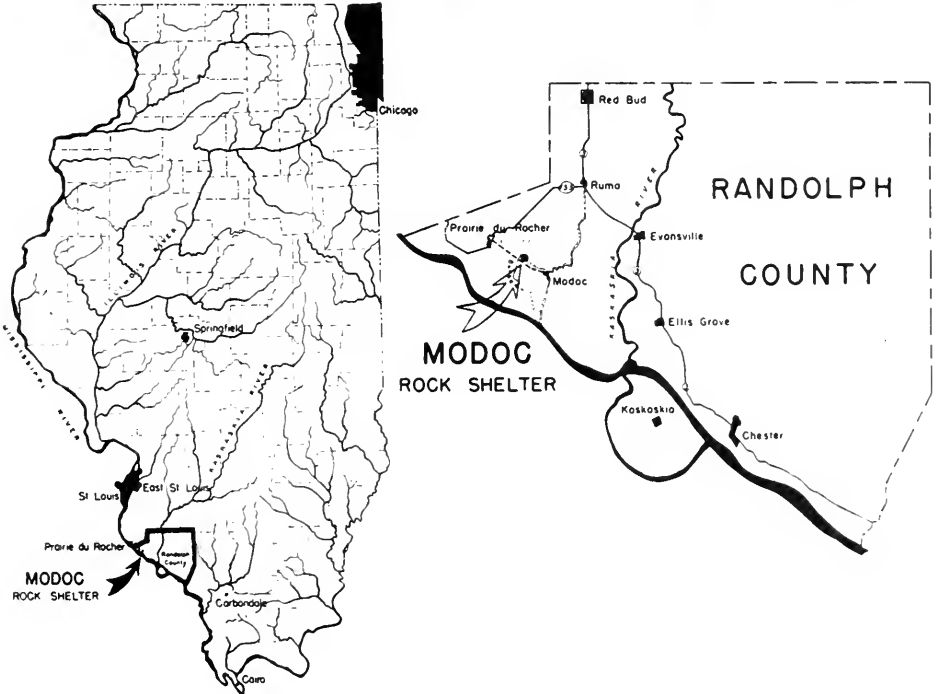


Reconstruction of the Modoc Rock Shelter and surrounding area about 4000 B.C.

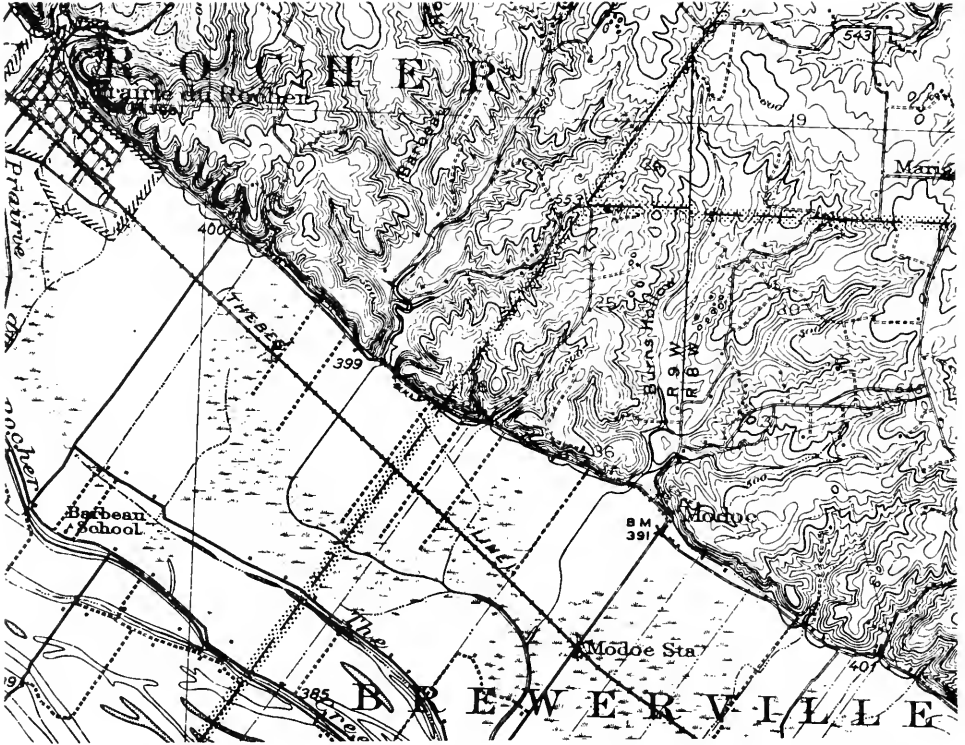
*Kampsville
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Archaic Family Group living in the Modoc Rock Shelter about 4000 B.C.



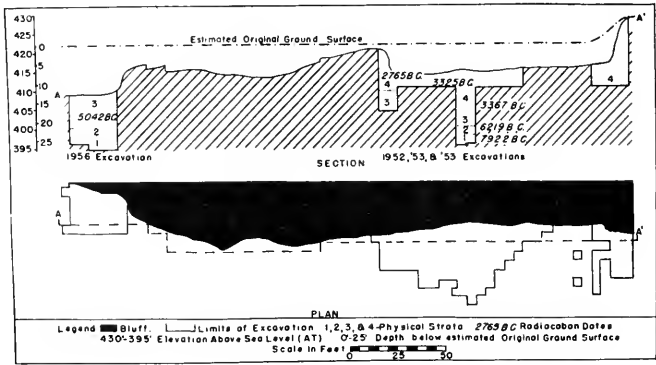
Location of the Modoc Rock Shelter



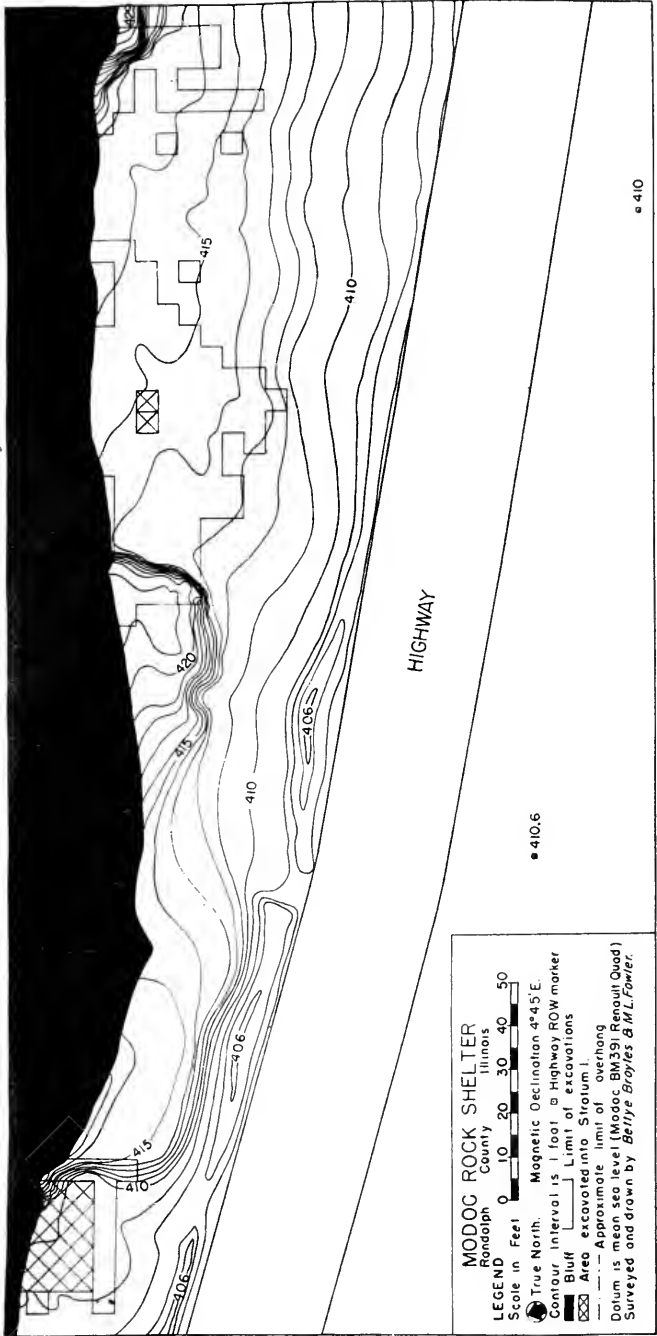
The location of the Modoc Rock Shelter showing its proximity to Barbeau Creek, the river bottoms, the bluff and upland areas.

The first inhabitants of new Prairie du Rocher were primitive, dark-skinned, mild, un-
daunted, and adverse to war. They left neither written literature nor imperishable monu-
ments.

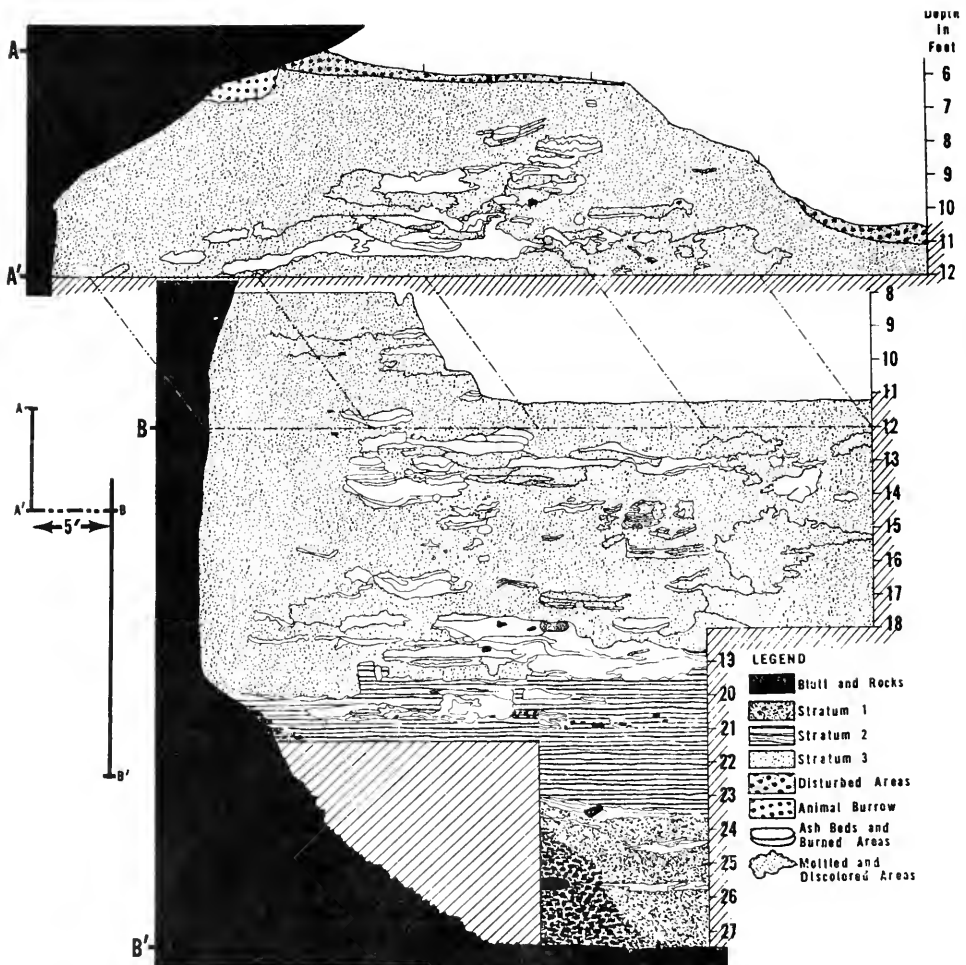
It may be interesting to note that the Prairie du Rocher area was inhabited while what
we now know as Chicago was covered by a Glacier.



Idealized cross-section of the Modoc Rock Shelter area showing the relationship of the
physical strata at the site.



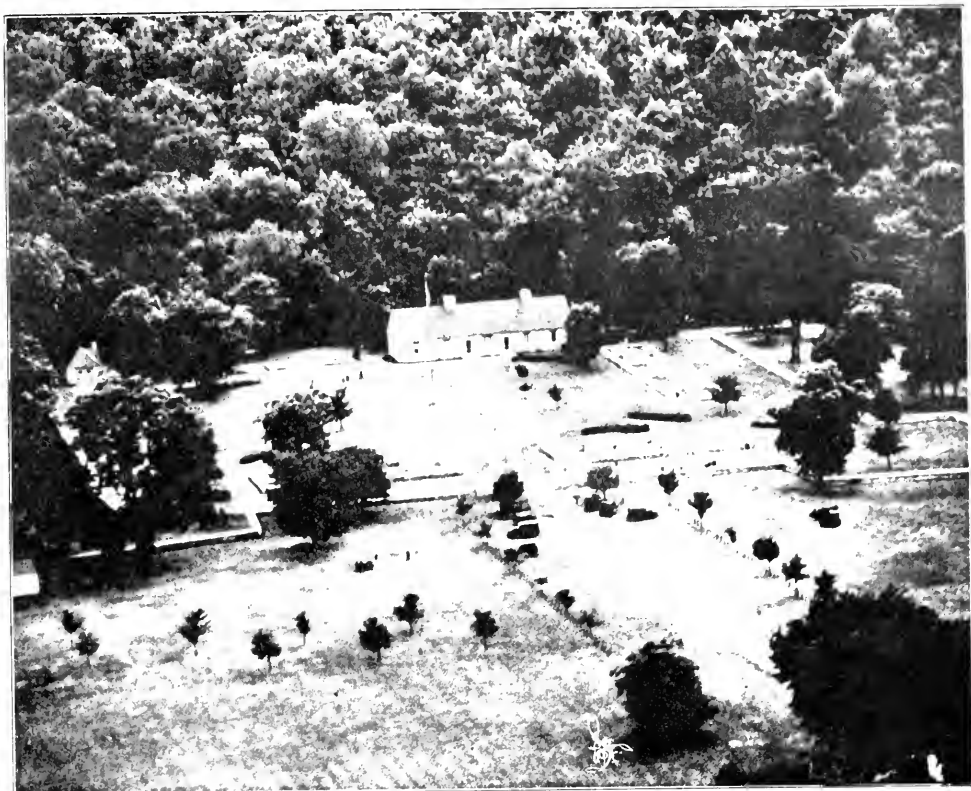
Contour map of the Modoc Rock Shelter showing the areas of excavation.



Section of southwest profile of the 1956 excavation showing the physical strata.

Early Migration: Fort de Chartres

The history of Prairie du Rocher is richly mingled with the early history of Fort de Chartres and the Catholic Church. To gain an insight to pre-settlement days one must turn back the calendar to the year 1682, when La Salle beached an expedition at the mouth of the Mississippi for King Louis XIV of France. La Salle secured the fleur de lis, and claimed the territory on the Illinois and Mississippi sides of the river for France. Later, La Salle interested the king in building a series of forts linking the French colonial territories in Canada and Louisiana.



Aerial view of Fort de Chartres State Park, Randolph County, Illinois.



La Salle at the Mouth of the Mississippi.



Louis XIV, King of France

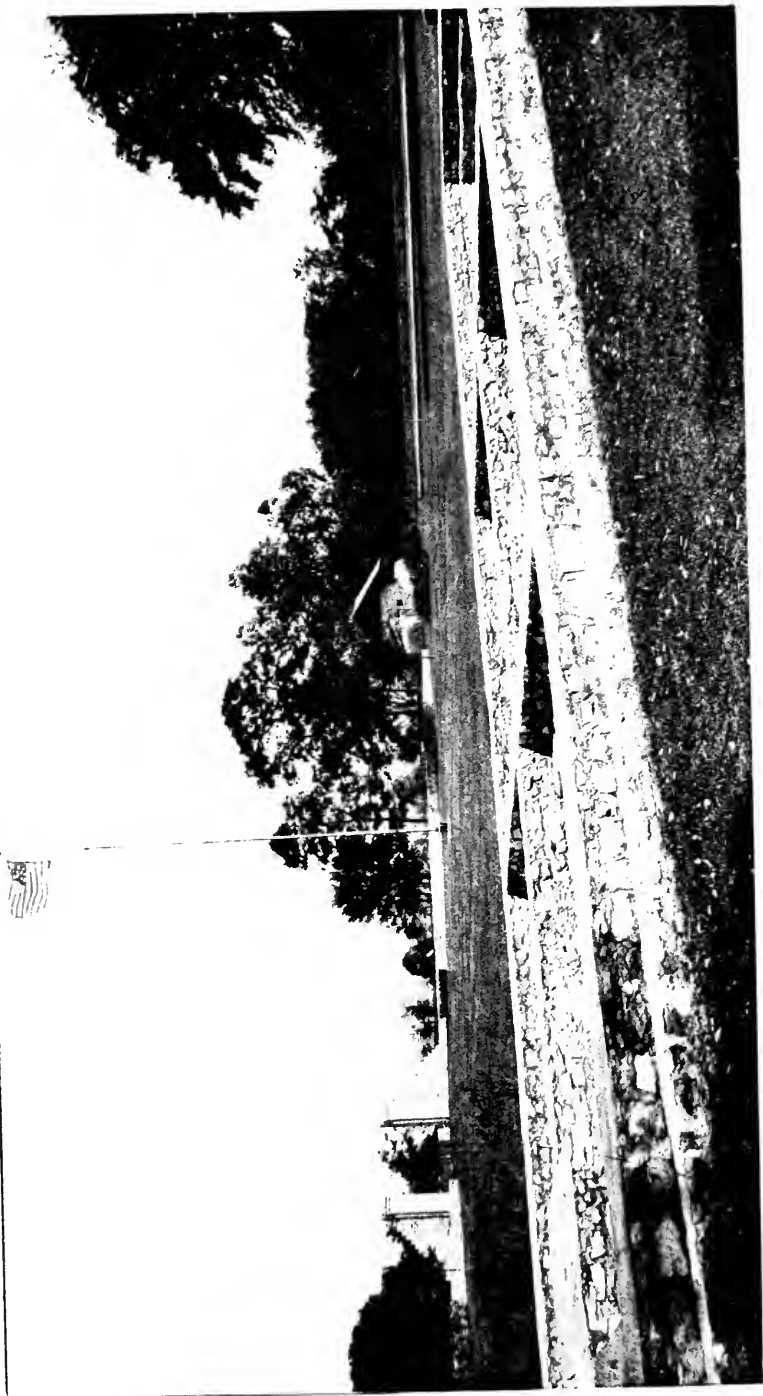
Originally, the Illinois Country was under the jurisdiction of the Canadian province of Quebec, but in 1717 it was transferred as a district to the province of Louisiana. The first commandant of the Illinois Territory was Pierre Duque Boisbriant who arrived in December of 1718 with orders to govern the country and erect in the Mississippi a bastion to forestall possible aggressions of the English and Spanish as well as to protect the settlers from hostile Indians. With alacrity he started to build the most pretentious in the chain of forts along the Mississippi, Fort Duc de Chartres--named in honor of the regent of France. This palisaded log fortification, completed in 1720 and located on the river about sixteen miles northwest of Kaskaskia, served as the headquarters of the civil, the military and the marine government of the Illinois Territory.

Jiddell Shortly after the completion of the fort, a village--Nouvelle Chartres--grew nearby. Settlers from Canada and France, confident of protection, arrived and clustered near the fort. They wondered whether the native Indians could be trusted. While the local Metchagamia tribe in the vicinity of the fort proved to be anything but warlike, in 1729, the Natchez Indians, provoked by the tyranny and greed of the French commandant, Chobart--incited a conspiracy against the French. Massacres were frequent. In 1736 the garrison of Fort Chartres marched against the Chickasaw Indians, who threatened to cut Communications between the Illinois Country and the city of New Orleans.

The focal point of this little French community of Nouvelle Chartres was the parish church of St. Anne du Fort de Chartres.

Fort Chartres was the creation of the Company of the West, or Mississippi company, which was organized by the celebrated John Law, in August, 1717, immediately after the surrender by the Sieur Antoine Crozat of his patent and privileges in Louisiana to the

French crown. This commercial company and its early successor, the Royal India Company, held away in the province of Louisiana, of which Illinois formed a part for fourteen years.



The ruins of Fort de Chartres with powder magazine intact.

Company of the West

On the 9th of February, 1718, three ships of the ~~Western Company~~ - the Dauphin, Virilante, and Neptune - arrived at Dauphin island with officers and men to take possession of Louisiana. On one of these vessels, or on the frigate La Duchesse de Noailles, which arrived at Ship island on the 6th of March following, came Pierre Duque de Boisbriant, a French Canadian, who had been commissioned first king's lieutenant for the province of Louisiana, and who was the bearer of a commission appointing his cousin, LeMoyne de Bienville, governor and commandant general of the province, in place of M. L'Epignoy removal.

HENRY O'HARA

Henry O'Hara and his family, consisting of his wife, Margaret Brown O'Hara, and ten children, left Fredrick County, Maryland, in the latter part of 1811 and moved to Nelson County, Kentucky. His children, born in order here named, were: Mary, Amellia, Catherine, James, Thomas, Samuel, Henry, Sarah, John, and Charles. The family lived on a farm in Kentucky for six years, and in the fall of 1817 set out by wagons for the State Illinois. Arriving in Illinois, they lived during the winter of 1817 in the Mississippi bottom, south of Cahokia, and in the spring of 1818 moved on a farm four miles below Prairie du Rocher, along the bluff, where they resided until 1819, then moved six miles north to claim No. 1284, survey No. 611, and from that time the place was known as the O'Hara Settlement. When Henry O'Hara left Kentucky he bought, in Beardstown, the works of their clock, and when he was established in his home, O'Hara Settlement, he had the case built at Kaskaskia and the clock works placed in it.

After the death of Henry O'Hara, Sr., which occurred in June, 1826, the clock became the property of his eldest son, James O'Hara. James O'Hara continued to reside on the homestead until his death, which occurred April 8, 1884, he being 84 years and 5 months old.

By will of James O'Hara, his youngest son Charles became the owner of the clock. This clock has, during all the years from the time it was first put in operation up to the present time, been a true and reliable timekeeper and has not been remodeled or rebuilt.

By will of Charles O'Hara, his eldest son Henry became the owner of the clock.



Residence of Henry T. O'Hara, Ruma



Mr. Henry T. O'Hara



Mrs. Henry T. O'Hara

In the early part of October, 1718, Lieutenant Boisbriant, with several officers and a considerable detachment of troops, departed by bateau (boats) from Biloxi, through lakes Pontchartrain and Maureeas and up the Mississippi to regulate affairs in the Illinois county and to establish a permanent military post for the better protection of the French inhabitants in their northern district of the province. Arriving at Kaskaskia late in December of that year he established his temporary headquarters, which was the first military occupation of the village. This however, was continued for only about 18 months.

Having selected what was considered a convenient site for his post, some 18 miles above and to the northwest of Kaskaskia, de Boisbriant thither a large force of mechanics and laborers to work in the forest.

In the spring of 1720 they had built and practically completed the fort, which was hence forward the headquarters of the company and commandants and the center of both civil and and military authority in Illinois.

The fort stood on the alluvial bottom about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from the Mississippi River and near to an older fort that had been erected by the adventures under Crozat. Midway between it and the bluffs on the east extend a bayou of lake which was supposed to add to the strategic strength of the place. It was named Fort de Chartres presumably in compliment to the Regent of France, from the title of his son, the Duc de Chartres.

The fort was built of wood and was a very considerable size, but whether it was furnished with bastions or not is uncertain. It is described as a stockade fort, fortified with earth between the rows of palisades. Within the enclosure were erected the commandants house, the barracks, the large storehouse for the company, etc., the same being constructed of hewed timbers and ship-sawed planks.

Although not a strong fortification, except as against Indian attacks, it was made to answer for a full generation the needs of its builders and its commandants who success-

fully ruled here. It formed, moreover, an important link in the lengthened chain of French post stretching from eastern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The idea of this long line of military and trading posts appears to have originated in the fertile brain of that explorer, Robert Cavelier' Sieur de la Salle. Poor maintenance and frequent flooding caused this fort to be abandoned. In 1732, a second wooden fort was built about one-half mile north of Fort No. 3. By 1747, the second fort was virtually useless because of rotting timbers. The impending signs of war with England pointed out the need for something more substantial. Therefore, the third fort, of stone, was started in 1753.



Last Relic of Fort Chartres. The Powder Magazine

France lost the French and Indian War in 1763. But because of the trouble with the Ottawa Chief Pontiac, the British renamed Chartres -- Fort Cavendish. After a severe flood in 1772, Fort Cavendish/Chartres was abandoned forever.

CURRENT PROGRAMMING AT FORT DE CHARTRES

Since the Interpretive Program was started at Fort de Chartres a little over two years ago, many changes have occurred at the park. The Visitor Center/Museum has been revamped and plans have now been submitted for its expansion into the present Park Ranger's residence when the Ranger has been relocated in a nearby house. The expanded Center will have more informative and participatory exhibits, through which visitors can utilize all their senses, not just sight and touch.

Plans have also been drawn up for the refurbishing of the Guard's House with replica period pieces based on available data of the original fort. Completion should take about two years. The Priest's Lodge is already refurbished. Restoring and furnishing buildings

will continue for many years.

This summer, in addition to the Third Annual Rendezvous to be held June 17 and 18, archaeological work will be continued. Last year an Indian village north of the stone fort was excavated, and there was some preliminary exploration of the site of the first wooden fort. This year a six weeks' archaeological dig will be conducted in the Powder Magazine and surrounding bastion. Archaeologists will be searching for remains of wall supports in the bastion to aid in the proposed restoration of the wall, evidence of a stone floor buried under the present wood floor in the Magazine, the location of a possible well site in front of the Magazine, and the location of one of the fort's latrines. Also, it is hoped that the artifacts found in the excavation will shed additional light on the culture of the 18th century French and British soldiers once stationed here.

Our French herb garden has been expanded this year to include twenty-one varieties of herbs in use by the 18th century French in this area. An herb booklet explaining the varied uses of these herbs will be available to the public at the Visitor Center.

At present, the Visitor Center hours are 9:30 - 5:00 Wednesday through Sunday. When additional interpretive staff are hired, the Center will be open seven days a week. Guided tours are available Wednesday through Friday, by pre-arrangement only, for groups of fifty and under. To arrange for a guided tour, call 284-7230 Wednesday through Sunday. On Saturday and Sunday, tours are regularly scheduled for the public at 11:30 and 2:00. Those wishing to take a self-guided tour may obtain a tour booklet in the Visitor Center whenever it is open.

CHARLES O'HARA

Charles O'Hara was born October 24, 1849. He lived here all his life, with the exception of five years, when he lived in St. Louis. He was one of the best known and highly respected men of Randolph County. His death occurred January 23, 1915.

He was married to Miss Ellen Carter of Hecker, Ill., on October 7, 1878. To this union were born eight children, two dying while quite young. The six surviving children are three sons and three daughters, as follows: Henry T., Lucy, James P., Stella J., William L. and Isabell O'Hara. He also leaves his two brothers and two sisters.

His wife died January 9, 1908, and since then he made his home on the home place and in St. Louis.



Charles O'Hara

Mrs. Charles O'Hara

JAMES R. O'HARA

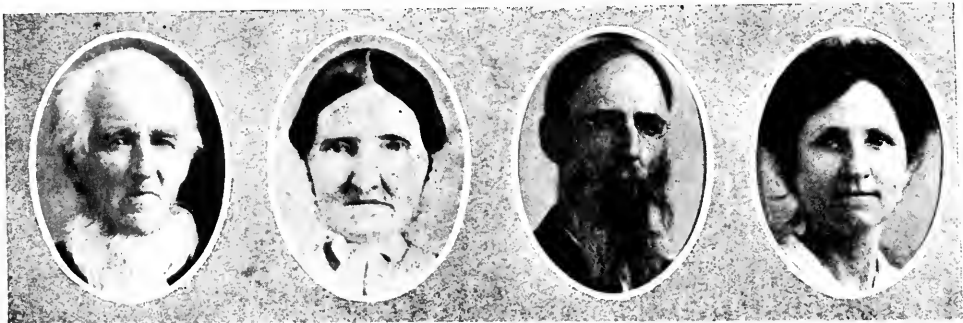
James R. O'Hara, the retired merchant, was born July 29, 1841, on the old homestead, near Ruma, Ill. After receiving his education in the parochial and public schools he attended the Christian Brothers College in St. Louis. After leaving school he worked on the farm for his father until 1867, when he bought a farm in Monroe County. In 1872 he sold his farm and went to Ruma and erected the store property; one year later he entered the general merchandise business. Later he again bought a farm of 120 acres near Ruma. In 1916 he retired from the merchandise business, and rented his farm. He has learned the valuable lesson in life -- to be contented.

His father, James O'Hara, was born in Maryland and came to Ruma in 1818, just a little prior to admitting Illinois into the union. He was one of the pioneers of Southern Illinois. He died in 1884.

James R. O'Hara married, November 27, 1874, Miss Margaret Kaveny, and the present family numbers four children -- one son, Chas. A. O'Hara; three daughters, Mary Elizabeth, Kathrine E. and Rose M. O'Hara.

Mr. O'Hara is a Democrat, and served the community as postmaster for twelve years and as notary public for eight years.

Mrs. O'Hara (nee Kaveny) was born February 11, 1858, in St. Louis, Mo. Her parents moved to Litchfield, Ill. At the age of 17 years she came to Ruma, Ill., to teach the first parochial school, and taught here from 1875 to 1877, when she was married.



James O'Hara Mrs. James O'Hara James R. O'Hara Mrs. James R. O'Hara

F. M. BRICKEY AND FAMILY

F. M. Brickey, the well known capitalist, was born November 10, 1860, in Prairie du Rocher, Ill. He attended the public schools, then went to St. Louis in 1873 and entered the St. Louis University, until 1878, and later was a student in the Jesuit College. He began business in 1881. After leaving school he learned the trade of miller. By industry and diligence he steadily advanced, became assistant miller and then head miller. He became so proficient that he could assume any position in the mill. He worked here, associated with his father, he bought wheat. In 1892 his father died and he became his successor and operated the mill until 1906, when he sold the mill to Schoening & Koenigsmark Milling

Company. Since then he devoted his time to the drainage of land and building it up. He owns many acres of rich land in the vicinity of Prairie du Rocher, within seven miles of town. He is also part owner of the Prairie du Rocher Lumber Company and F. M. Brickey and Company, general merchandising.

Mr. Brickey was married to Miss Emily J. Glad September 29, 1891. Of this union were born three children: Lorina B., Alvina P., and Edythe M. Brickey. Mr. Brickey was treasurer of the Prairie du Rocher Common schools and also treasurer of the village. Politically he is a Democrat.

The residential property of Mr. and Mrs. Brickey and family is a beauty spot of Prairie du Rocher and covers about four acres of land. Their residence is modern and up-to-date, complete in every respect, having hot and cold water system, electric light plants and all the modern improvements. The well-kept lawn, the fine shrubbery, makes this place one of the finest in Southern Illinois.

Mr. Brickey, having studied music in college, is a lover of music. He organized a band in 1881 and by his untiring efforts led the band, and to this day plays in the band. Mr. Brickey has private telephone lines. He is a member of the Hoo Hoo Order. His children have finished school at Forest Park University, St. Louis, Mo.

Mrs. Brickey was born March 13, 1868, in St. Louis, Mo. In 1872 Mr. and Mrs. Fr. Glad and family moved to Prairie du Rocher, where Mr. Glad became engineer in the mill and worked for the milling company for a quarter of a century. Mrs. Brickey (nee Glad) attended the parochial and public schools, and married September 29, 1891. She is an ideal help-mate to her husband, and not only looks after the domestic side but oftentimes assists in office work.



F. M. Brickey



Mrs. F. M. Brickey



Miss Lorina B. Brickey



Miss Alvina P. Brickey

(These biographies were taken from various sources and are all written in the present tense.)



FRANKLIN W. BRICKEY

Two years prior to Missouri's admission into the Union, October 16, 1819, Franklin W. Brickey saw the light of day in Potosi, Mo. He attended the public schools and at the age of 19 he came to Illinois. In 1838 he started in business at Fort Chartres, supplying steam-boats with wood and general merchandise. Enterprising and with great foresight he became interested in the Red Bud Mill. In 1858 he erected the present mill at Prairie du Rocher, and at that time his property in Fort Chartres had been swept away by high water. He afterwards started the general merchandise store in Prairie du Rocher. At the solicitation of Mr. Brickey, Abe Lee, a companion became his partner and remained so until 1867, when he sold his interest to Mr. Brickey, who operated the mill until his death, December 12, 1892, when his son, F. M. Brickey, succeeded in business.

Mr. Brickey twice married. His first wife was Emily Connor. His second wife was Sarah J. Brightwell. The Brickey family consisted of three sons - J. C. Brickey, F. M. Brickey and Thomas C. Brickey, and one daughter, Belle Brickey.



MR. AND MRS. M. H. PALMIER

M. H. Palmier was born June 5, 1877, near Prairie du Rocher, Ill. He attended the parochial school and after leaving school worked for his father until 1893, then he went to Prairie du Rocher and worked until 1897, when he went to Red Bud, Ill., and was clerking in the hotel and cafe. It was here he met his wife (nee Miss Dillie Miller) and married.

here January 28, 1901. Four children bless their home, viz: Phillip D., Berthram J. L., Wilmarth M., and Goldie A. Palmier.

For a short time he engaged in the liquor business in St. Louis, but finally returned to Prairie du Rocher, and in 1908 purchased the present property. In 1908 he erected the new up-to-date building containing a large hall, salon and billiard room, saddlery, barber shop. Mr. Palmier is also owner of a fine residence which he had erected on a large lot 140 x 148 feet.

Mr. Palmier is a public-spirited citizen, politically a Democrat and served the public in the capacity of village treasurer in 1906, 1909, 1911, 1912; was elected on the village board and is still a member. He is well and favorably known to the community, always ready to assist in advancing the interest of the people. He was one of the instigators of the new electric light plant and enjoys the reputation of having an up-to-date place.

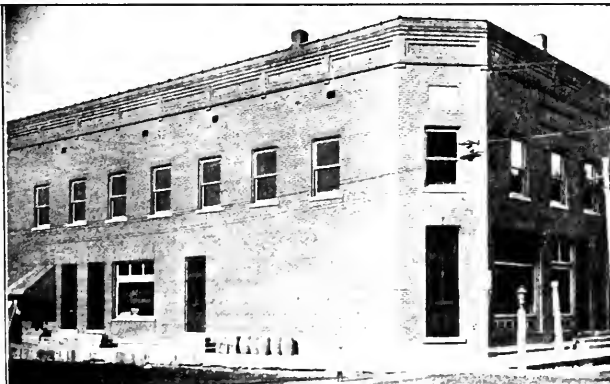
Mrs. M. H. Palmier, who is daughter of A. G. Miller, for a number of years marshal of Red Bud, was born December 12, 1883, in Red Bud, Ill.



M. H. Palmier



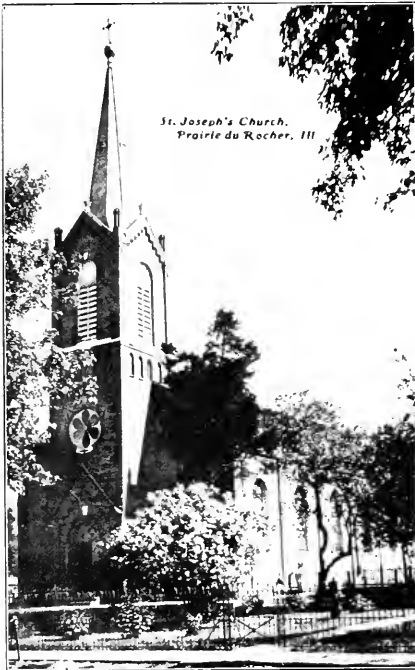
Mrs. M. H. Palmier



Palmier's Hall and Cafe, Prairie du Rocher

The Early Church and Effects

St. Joseph Church, Prairie du Rocher, Illinois, was established in 1722 as a chapel dependent upon the royally endowed church of Ste. Anne at Fort Chartres. King Louis XIV of France had dreamed of a great French empire in Mid America, but died before he could bring his dream to reality. Following his death in 1715, the regent, Philip of Orleans, ruling for the boy King Louis XV, commissioned Pierre Duque Boisbriant to found Fort Chartres in 1718 on the mighty Mississippi, midway between Quebec and New Orleans, to be the capital of the new French empire in Mid America. The fort was named after the Duc de Chartres, son of the regent, and was the functioning capital of the Illinois country, then a French possession.



St. Joseph's, Prairie du Rocher

From the beginning of the fort a church was established in the village of Nouvelle Chartres outside the walls. It was staffed by two Jesuit priests, Father Le Boulenger and Father De Beaubois, who cared for the spiritual needs of the soldiers garrisoned at the fort, and the French families of the area surrounding the fort.

Soon the swampy condition of the soil near the fort prompted some of the French settlers to move to higher ground at the foot of the picturesque rock bluffs. Jean St. Therese Langlois, the nephew of Pierre Duque Boisbriant, commandant of the king, received from his uncle the commandant, a grant of land for a village beneath the bluffs. They called it "La Belle Prairie du Rocher," namely, "The Beautiful Meadow Beneath the Rock."

A chapel of logs in what is the present and original cemetery was erected for the convenience of the people, so that they would not have to travel the muddy three miles to Ste. Anne at the fort. In 1734 this small chapel was replaced by a larger log church. A similar chapel was established at St. Philippe near what is now Renault and Harrisonville, and was called Our Lady of the Visitation. The river washed away completely the settlement and chapel at St. Philippe. In 1765, two years after all the rest of the Mississippi valley had been surrendered to the British, Fort Chartres likewise surrendered.

It was a sad day for the French in Mid America. Fort Chartres was the last place in America to fly the Bourbon flag of France, the three golden fleur-de lis on a background of blue. When the Bourbon flag was hauled down and the British flag hoisted in its place, an era had ended. Great changes were in the making.

The royal church of Ste. Anne was abandoned and soon fell into disrepair. St. Joseph chapel alone survived, and became the parish church for the area, supplanting, or rather, continuing the mother church of Ste. Anne.

In 1767 the records and sacred vessels of Ste. Anne were transferred to St. Joseph at Prairie du Rocher. The few remaining French at Nouvelle Chartres demanded them back, and a civil suit was entered in the British court. The court awarded them back to Ste. Anne. But by that time the church was without roof, and no priest was stationed there, and for safekeeping these priceless treasures were returned to St. Joseph at Prairie du Rocher, where they remain to this day and are the marvel and admiration of historians.



St. Joseph's Church - Prairie du Rocher

MR. AND MRS. JOHN P. ELLNER

Among the more prominent farmers inhabiting the region of Prairie du Rocher is Mr. John Peter Ellner of Rural Route #2. He is a native of the State of Missouri, where he was born in the town of Herman on August 18, 1872. However, his parents were of an adventurous disposition and not satisfied with the opportunities offered by our neighbor state, removed, in 1876, to Horse Prairie and later, in 1881, to Ruma, Ill. Here the family at length found a pleasant home and remained in that district. Here Mr. Ellner received his education by attending both the public and parochial schools.

His schooling over, he entered upon a busy and eventful life, Fate had not cast him into the lap of luxury, nor ordained that he should live a life of idleness and security. On the contrary, his life is a record of constant application and unremitting effort, as the man climbed ever higher and arrived at last at the very pinnacle of success. After leaving school Mr. Ellner worked on the farm of his parents until his twenty-second year. Then he spent four more years working as an assistant to several other farmers. Finally he saw himself able to become the manager of a farm, and in the year 1900 he rented a farm of 120 acres. This farm it has been his sole ambition to improve and make a model for all who behold it.

In the same year he was married. Mrs. Ellner was the daughter of Joseph Myerscough

of Hecker, Ill. In that town she was born March 6, 1876. At the early age of 11 years she began to work for her subsistence, and continued to be thus employed until her marriage. The couple have two children, Albert John and Cecilia M. C. Ellner. They have applied themselves to such purpose that Mr. Ellner was able to purchase the farm in a few years. It was in 1916 that he became the proprietor. He says that this remarkable success is due to the fact that work is his hobby.

Mr. Ellner is affiliated with the Republican party. His wife is a member of the Alter Society.



Mr. and Mrs. John P. Ellner

St. Joseph Church, the village of Prairie du Rocher, and Fort Chartres are the only living remnants of the attempt at a French empire in Mid America. Founded under the royal patronage of the Bourbon Kings of France both parish and town have survived the Bourbon kings themselves, the British rule, and finally the founding and development of the United States of America.

St. Joseph Church venerable in its antiquity and the village of Prairie du Rocher are the only living monument of the French power in Mid America. The sacred vessels inherited from the mother church of Ste. Anne are the only usable relics of a colorful epoch that ended on a note of tragedy.

The present church building dates from 1850, and was inspired by the churches of Rome. Two residents of Prairie du Rocher, returning from the Holy Year of 1850, agitated for a new church. The foundations were laid to the right of the old log church, but in 1851 came the great flood. It seemed imprudent to continue to build the new church there, for the floods had surrounded the site, cutting off access from the rest of the village. So the foundations were abandoned, and the church built at this present site. The Romanesque style, especially the flat ceiling, were copied after the famous basilicas and churches of Rome. The corner stone was laid July 19, 1858. St. Joseph was never an Indian Mission but was for the French from the Start. It is thus the only truly French parish in the diocese.

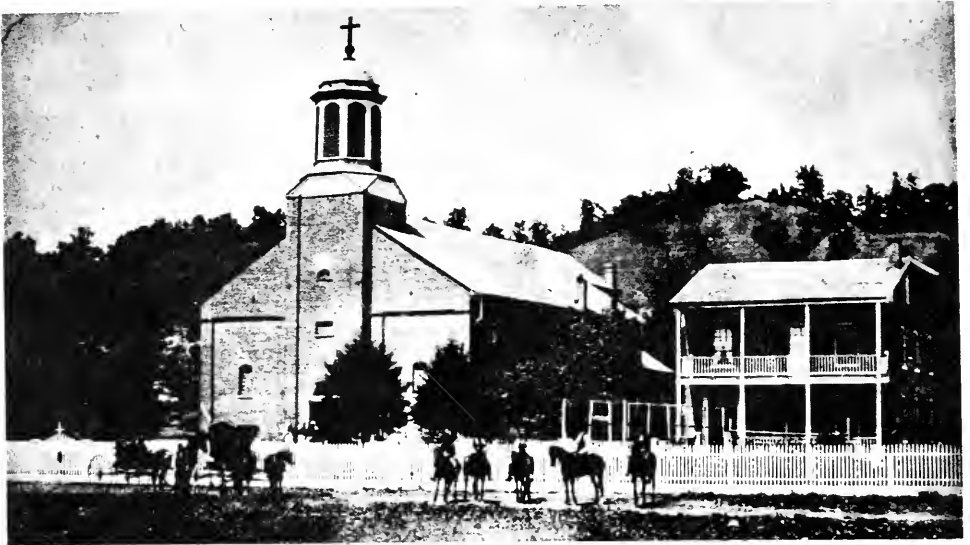
A careful examination of the parish registers reveals various important data besides the simple narrative of baptisms, marriages and deaths. The entries are all made in French. It is regretted that only three badly tattered leaflets remain of the first parish register extending to October, 1743. These pages record merely baptisms, which are signed by the Jesuit Fathers, Ignatius Le Boullenger and Nicolas Ignatius de Beaubois. Le Boullenger appears to have been the founder of the parish, and Charlecois states that in 1721, when he visited the Illinois County; Father Joseph Francis de Kerben, S. J., assisted him. Beaubois was stationed at Kaskaskia. The Jesuits probably remained in charge of the parish until Father J. Gagnon assumed the postulate in 1743.



Priests Who Served St. Joseph Church, Prairie du Rocher

- Ignatius Le Boullenger, S. J. 1721-1726
 Nicholas Ignatius de Beaubois, S. J. 1726
 J. Gagnon, Pretre Miss. Apost. 1743-1755
 Nicolas Laurenz, Pretre Miss. Apost. 1747; Pierre Mercier, V. G.
 Philibert Watrin, S. J. 1744 and 1760 (of Quebec, 1749)
 Forget Duverger, Fr. Miss. Apost. 1757-1759
 Francis John Baptiste Aubert, S. J. 1758-17-59
 Hypolyte Collet, Recollect Miss. 1757-1764
 Luc Collet, Recollect Miss. 1762-1765
 Sebastian Louis Meurin, S. J. 1765-1777, V.G.
 Pierre Gibault 1770-1791, V.G. of Quebec
 De St. Pierre 1785-1792, Cure de Ste. Genevieve
 De Valinierre 1786-1788, V.G.
 Le Dru 1789-1792, Cure des Kaskaskias
 Levadoux, V.G. 1792
 Gabriel, Richard 1793-1798
 C. Lusson 1798
 H.F. Didier 1798
 J. Fr. Rivet, V.G. of Baltimore 1798-1799
 Donation Oliver 1798-1827
 John Timon, C.M. 1826-1827, later Bishop of Buffalo
 Pierre Vergani, C.M. 1827-1828
 Francis Cellini, 1827, 1830
 P.J. Doutrelluingue, C.M. 1829-1830
 Vital Van Cloosterell, 1832-1854
 A. Mascaroni 1830-1831
 John Francis Regis Loisel 1830
 Fr. Borgna 1830
 Victor Paillaison 1830, 1831
 J.N. Odin, C.M. 1832

E. Dupuy 1832
P. Lefevre 1833
N.J. Perrin 1855-1859
Francis Recouvreur 1860, 1862
J.A. Jacque 1861, 1862
Henry Fredrick Frohboese 1864-1876
Anthony Vogt 1876
Charles Krewet 1876-1902; James Gillen 1899-1902
Charles Eschmann 1902-1911
William Van Delft 1911-1940; Stephen Freund 1940
Raymond L. Harbaugh 1940-1948
Elmer J. Holtgrave 1948-1956
Theodore Siekmann 1956-1968; Walter MacPherson & Ralph Haas
Jerome B. Ratermann 1968-1971
Eugene Bungay 1971-



Church and Rectory as originally built in 1858 and 1868 Respectively.

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MR. AND MRS. GEORGE J. SEITZ

George J. Seitz, the well-known liquor dealer, was born August 11, 1870, in Ste. Genevieve, Mo. After attending the public and parochial schools, learned the trade of butcher and at the age of 20 went to St. Louis, working at his trade for some time; then he returned to Ste. Genevieve, and in 1894 he went to Prairie du Rocher, working for Mr. Hauck, the butcher. From 1906 to 1910 he conducted a hotel and two years later, in 1912, he started a saloon and has conducted it ever since.

Mr. Seitz is a Democrat, and is popular. He acquired considerable property, and is the owner of a 260-acre farm, besides saloon and residence property.

Mr. Seitz was president of the school board for nine years and served as member of the village board for six years. He is also a member of the Prairie du Rocher band, playing the trombone. He was married to Mary E. Menard April 27, 1905, and to their union were born three boys, George L., Walter E., and Valentine M. Seitz, and two girls, Melba M. and Genevieve G. Seitz.

Mr. Seitz is fond of hunting and fishing, and is well-known in this section of the country.

Mrs. George J. Seitz, who is the daughter of Edmund E. Menard of Prairie du Rocher, Ill., was born here March 21, 1873, and is a grandniece of Pierre Menard, the distinguished pioneer settler of Illinois, also first Lieutenant governor. Her first husband, John Brickey, to whom she was married in 1894, died in 1903. There were no children to this union. Her husband was a son of F. W. Brickey, the well-known mill proprietor.



George J. Seitz



Mrs. George J. Seitz



Residence of George J. Seitz, Prairie du Rocher

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**JOSEPH EICHENSEER**

Joseph Eichenseer, farmer, was born September 17, 1870, in Madonnaville, Monroe County, Ill. His present address is Red Bud, Randolph County, Ill., Rural Route No. 3. He attended the parochial school, after which he worked for his father until 1902.

On November 9, 1898, he was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Miss Mary Vogt. The family was blessed with three children, all boys, vix: Henry A., Albert G. and Emil W. Eichenseer.

Mrs. Joseph Eichenseer is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Adam Vogt, and was born June 11, 1878, near Red Bud, Ill. After attending the parochial school she assisted her parents in the household duties until her marriage.

His present farm of 100 acres was willed to him by his father, Joseph Eichenseer.



Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Eichenseer

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## SOCIAL LIFE OF EARLY SETTLERS

### \* LA-GUI-ANNEE \*

Prairie du Rocher is the only place in Illinois that will on New Year's eve celebrate a French custom which was brought to Illinois in 1699 and has been performed yearly by the residents of their native countrymen since the middle ages.

The French, who settled in the Prairie du Rocher-Kaskaskia-Cahokia area, surrendered themselves with all the religious, political and social customs of their native France. Among their social customs relating to the new year was La Gui-annee.

The celebration of La Gui-annee had been a social custom in France 500 years before these people brought it to Illinois, and in that early day was an answer to certain social conditions of the time. The performers were the poor who sang with sacks in their hands and hopes in their heart of a gift of food for their New Year's feast.

From the records of old St. Louis, La Gui-annee was being sung there in 1804. However, there was no pressure of poverty at the fort but the singers were in costume and carried baskets as well as sacks. They were using the occasion to collect food and wine for serving at a masked ball which was the next social event of the new year.

At Prairie du Rocher La Gui-annee is strictly a social event. The residents turn on their porch lights to invite the singers. The performers are costumed and sing one verse outside the house; the house-holder invites them in and they start their song over. After it is finished, the singers and those present exchange New Year's greetings and the hostess serves refreshments.

To imagine how it was, let us go back. It is 7:30 P.M. New Year's Eve in Prairie du Rocher . . . . .

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## GEORGE EICHENSEER

George Eichenseer, farmer, was born September 11, 1878, in Madonnaville, Monroe County, Ill. He attended the parochial and public schools and then worked for his father up to the present time. On April 16, 1907, he was married to Miss Mary Anna Hoef. One son was born to them, Karl Joseph Eichenseer.

Mr. Eichenseer is the owner of a 140 acre farm. His wife was born October 25, 1885, in Prairie du Rocher, Ill. After receiving her education she assisted her parents in household duties until she was married. Mr. Eichenseer is a hard worker and has many friends.



George Eichenseer   Karl   Mrs. G. Eichenseer   John Eichenseer   Mrs. J. Eichenseer

## JOHN EICHENSEER

John Eichenseer, who gets his mail through Red Bud, Ill., Rural Route No. 3, was born March 3, 1863, in Madonnaville, Monroe County, Ill. After leaving the parochial and public schools he worked for his father until his marriage, which took place October 28, 1890. Miss Mary Wierschem was his bride. Then he bought a farm of eighty acres, and has lived here ever since.

Mr. Eichenseer reared a family of ten children - four sons, Vincent A., Leo William, Herman A., and Bernhard F; six daughters, Ida E., Christina A., Theresia A., Veronica F., Anastasia M. and Angela M.

Mr. Eichenseer is a Democrat and is well known in the community.

Mrs. Eichenseer (nee Wierschem) was born July 19, 1870, in Madonnaville, Ill., and after her school days assisted her parents until her marriage.

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You are waiting on a residential street not too far from the business district-all the houses have their porch lights on-as you look up and down the street, you see the houses bright and cheerful, still wearing their Christmas decorations. You are standing with a group of people, they too are waiting-you hear the distant murmur of voices and looking in the direction of the sound, see a shadowy group of people-you watch as they walk up the street toward you, the lights of a passing car falls upon them and you can see that they are in costume-there is someone walking ahead, leading them up the street.

The scene excites you and you find yourself trying to visualize how it would have looked two hundred and seventy three years ago-log cabins, candles flickering in the windows-a sleigh going down the street; but you have no time, you must watch to see which of the houses they will choose for their first call.

They turn from the street and go through an opening where once hung a wrought iron gate, and up the walk-they stop and stand at the edge of the porch.

You notice that everyone has become quiet - it is the strange silence of anticipation - you see him raise his arm, and you hear a cane tapping time on the porch - you say to yourself, this is La Gui-annee. The musicians start to play and sing the first verse. As they finish, the musicians start over; this time the costumed group behind him repeats the verse.

The householder, with a flourish of surprise, throws open the door and invites them in. After they enter, you again hear the music and the song. This time they will sing it in its entirety to the "Good Master and Mistress of the house and lodgers all."

You lean on the wrought iron fence, close your eyes and shutting out the words you cannot understand, listen to the music. It is folk music, plaintive and simple. Such music, you realize, always remains interesting and delightful - the song is ended.

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### JOHN SHEA

John Shea, farmer, of Red Bud, Illinois, Rural Route #3, was born June 20, 1858, in Randolph County, near Prairie du Rocher. He attended the public school and then worked for his father, Michael Shea, until 1880, when he rented a farm near Prairie du Rocher, and in 1885, he moved to the present location, where he still resides.

On September 25, 1883, he was united in the holy bonds of wedlock to Miss Katherine Faherty. Six children came to bless the family ties - two sons, William M. and Harry J.; four daughters, Mary C., Julia A., Ellen S. and Gertrude C. Shea.

Mrs. Shea died April 21, 1915.

Mr. Shea was a trustee of the Ruma Church for nine years. He is well known throughout this section and is very popular.



Mr. and Mrs. John Shea

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### ANTON SIEGFRIED

Anton Siegfried, whose address is Red Bud, Ill., Rural Route #3, was born in Elsass, Germany, July 26, 1852. After leaving school he worked for his father on a farm until 1872, when he emigrated to America, direct to Red Bud. For a while he worked on a farm, and in



1876 rented a farm. In 1888 he became a dealer in cattle and hogs. In 1891 he went to Ruma and opened a meat market. Seven years later he also opened a general merchandise store. Mr. Siegfried did not confine his buying to live stock, but also bought and sold farm lands. In 1910 he turned the meat market over to his sons and devotes his entire time to his merchandise business.

Mr. Siegfried was married August 22, 1878, to Miss Mary Melly. Eight children were born to them, Arnold J., Leo J., Emil A. and Max M. Siegfried.

Mr. Siegfried is a Democrat. He was a member of the school board for three years, and president of the Village of Ruma for two years. Besides owning the store he also owns a 120 acre farm.

Mrs. Anton Siegfried is the daughter of Mike Melly. She was born May 29, 1852, in Belleville, Ill. At the age of 7 years her parents moved to Red Bud, Ill.

\* LA GUI-ANNEE \*

Bon soir la maitre et la maitress  
Et tout le monde du logis  
Pour le dernier jour de lannee  
La Guiannee vous nous devez

Good master and mistress of the house  
And the lodgers all, good night to you  
For the last day of the ending year  
The La Gui annee is to us due.

Si vous ne voules nous rein donne  
dites nous le,  
Nous vous demondous suelemant  
one echinee,  
Une echinee n'est past gran-chose  
Elle n'a que quatre pièds de long;  
Et nous enferens une fricassee  
De quart-vingt-dix pièds de long

If it is nothing you will give  
then let us know,  
We ask only a pork back-bone you  
should bestow.  
A pork back-bone is no great prize  
'Tis only four feet long, in size  
With it we make fricassee,  
That ten and eight feet in length shall be.

Si vous ne voluez nous rein donne  
dites nous le.  
Nous vous demandons seulement la  
fille ainnee:  
Et nous lui ferons faire bonne chere  
nous lui ferons chauffer les pièds

If you don't want to give us  
anything please let us hear,  
We only ask the oldest daughter  
to appear.  
With jolly good chear we will her greet  
and we will warm her chilly feet.

Quand nous fumes aux milieux des  
bois nous fumes a lombre,  
J'ai attendue le coucou chanter et  
la colombe;  
Et le rosignol du vert bocage  
L'ambass-adeur des amoureux,  
Va aller dire a ma maitresse  
Qu'elle ait toujours le cour joyeux

When we were in the midst of the  
woods in shaded groves  
We listen to the cuckoo sing  
and the turtle dove,  
And the nightingale of the  
bower green,  
As herald of love will go and say

Qu'elle ait toujours le coeur  
Joyeux, point de tristesse  
Mais ces jeunes filles qu'ont pas  
d'amants comment font elles  
Ce sont les amours qui les revillent  
Et qui les empechent de dormir

That every my heart is joyous gay  
My heart is ever filled with joy  
and sorrow not.  
But all the young girls that are  
loveless; what is their lot?  
It is love's effects that keeps  
them wake,  
And will not allow them rest to  
take.

Nous suppliant la compagnie  
D'vouloir bien nous excuseer  
Si nous avons fait quelque folie  
C'etait pour nous deennuye.

We supplicate the Company  
it was for our recreation  
If we have committed any folly  
to be willing to excuse us.

You hear the clamor of happy voices and laughter, as greetings and good wishes for the New Year are exchanged. You look past the Christmas wreath in the window, and see the hostess with her tray; the faces of the people tell you that La Gui-annee is a warm and friendly occasion.

Soon the jovial group, accompanied by their observers, will stop at another house and repeat this performance. Thus goes La Gui-annee about the town and into the early hours of the new year.



A look into the past of the character of the early French settlers shows that they were not ambitious for wealth or knowledge, but, as one historian describes them "were content to take the world as it came and endeavored to extract all the enjoyment possible out of life and to avoid its unnecessary cares. All were devout Catholics and punctual in the discharge of their religion duties. They were eminently a social people. Instead of settling on separate farms, like the American pioneers, they clustered together in villages so that they might have the greatest opportunity for social contacts. Their physical wants were easily supplied and the great part of their lives was given to pleasure. The young people delighted in the dance, and this cheerful and innocent diversion was actually carried on under the eye of the Priest and the aged patriarchs of the village who frequently sympathized with the spirit of the gay assemblage. Old and young, rich or poor, met together in good feeling and with merriment. It was the usual custom to dance the old year out and the new year in. The numerous festivals of the Catholic church strongly tended to awaken and develop the social and friendly disposition of the people. On the morning of the Sabbath they were always found at church, but the rest of the day was devoted to social pastimes and hospitality and generosity were common virtues.

"Their costume was peculiar. Blue was their favorite color and handkerchiefs of that hue usually adopted the heads of both men and women. No genuine French-man in early times ever wore a hat, cap or coat. The "capot", made of white blanket, was the universal dress for the laboring class of people. In summer the men wore a coarse blue material and in the winter, buckskin. The women wore deerskin moccasins and the men a thicker leather. With that natural aptitude for dress, which seems to belong peculiarly to their nation, the women caught up with the fashions of New Orleans and Paris with great en-

thusiasm and adopted them, as far as they were able. Notwithstanding their long separation by immense wilderness from civilized society, they still retain all the suavity and politeness of their race. It was said that the roughest hunter, or boatmen among them, could at any time other gay assemble, with the courage and behavior of a well-bred gentleman. The women were remarkable for the sprightness of their conversation and the ease and elegance of their manners.

“The French were on friendly terms with the Indians and they could easily adapt themselves to any circumstance, making themselves at home by the camp fires of the savage. When with modes of life and dressed like them.



### A Festive Day in 1799

On a certain day in January, 1799, (the exact date cannot now be ascertained) the little village of Prairie du Rocher was all aglow with excitement. A party of soldiers had arrived. It was a detachment under the command of Col. George Rogers Clark, and they decided to spend the evening at the hospitable home of Captain Jean Baptiste Barbeau, (Barber.). Col. Clark tells of this hospitable reception and the "ball" that followed: "We went cheerfully to Prara De Ruch, 12 miles from Kaskaskia, war I intended to spend the Eavening at Capt Barbers."

“The Gentlemen & Ladies immediately assembled at a Ball for our Entertainment; we

spent the fore part of the night very agreeably; but about 12 o'clock there was a very sudden change by an Express arriving, informing us that Governor Hammliton was within three miles of Kaskaskia with eight hundred Men, and was determined to attack the Fort that night . . . . "

Col. Clark at once ordered his horses daddled in order, if possible, to get into the Fort before the attack could be made . . . . Clark's brave conduct inspired a number of young men of Prairie du Rocher to saddle their horses and accompany their intrepid leader. But the great attack never occurred. The fact, however, remains, that Col. George Rogers Clark danced with some of the belles and mesdames of old Prairie du Rocher on the night of a certain day in January, 1799.

The early French settlers of Prairie du Rocher were neither all good nor all bad, nor were they all intermarried with savage women, nor were they all "coureurs de bois". Most of them knew little more than to read and write, and their accounts, if any, were sometimes carved with a pocket-knife into the doorstep or window casing.



The Illinois Country From The Illinois To The Ohio

### C. J. KRIBS

The best teacher, it is said, is experience. C. J. Kribs, circuit clerk of Randolph County, has had varied experiences. He was born February 19, 1867, in Belleville, Ill. He attended the parochial and public schools, after which he learned the trade of harness maker in St. Louis. After a residence of five years in this city he went to Chicago and worked for four years as assistant store-keeper in the Illinois Steel Works. Then he went to Prairie du Rocher, and after a short stay went to St. Louis, working for the Metropolitan Insurance Co. He was promoted and made superintendent of the Alton district. It was in Alton that he met his wife, then Miss Susan Elizabeth Bissinger, to whom he was married November 10, 1892. Later they moved to St. Louis and in 1894 to Prairie du Rocher, where he opened a harness store; then added a full line of farming implements and general merchandise. In 1904 G. A. Reifel became a partner, the firm being named C. J. Kribs & Company.

In 1912 he was elected circuit clerk and a year later moved his family to Chester, the county seat, where the family, Mr. and Mrs. Kribs and four sons - Harold A., Lewis J. A., Charles A. and William Kribs reside.

Mr. Kribs was elected on the Democratic ticket as circuit clerk, and was mayor of Prairie du Rocher for four years. In social and fraternal societies he was honored, being president of the Prairie du Rocher Commons; a member of the Knights of Columbus, Modern Woodmen, Mutual Protective League and Chester Fishing Club.

Mrs. Kribs was born in Alton, Illinois, February 10, 1871. She attended the Alton parochial and public schools. She was graduated from the Alton High School in 1890, and is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bissinger. Mrs. Kribs' father has been in the Alton post-office department for the last 20 years; also a member of the school board for 20 years. In 1892 Mrs. Kribs took a teacher's examination in Edwardsville, Ill., for the purpose of teaching school, and after passing the examination successfully, and preparing to teach at Alton, Mr. Kribs decided it best for her to teach his little school instead. So her school was given to another applicant.

Harold Kribs was born in Prairie du Rocher, Ill., Sept. 15, 1894, and graduated from the parochial school there. He was a winner of The State Normal Course. Then he went to Alton and attended the Brown's Business College and took a general business course, graduating in 1911. After finishing school he was engaged in the office of the United States Radiator Corporation at Edwardsville as Stenographer, and the next year was promoted to inspector of the plant, and a short time after that the company sent him to Dunkirk, N. Y., as an inspector there. Later he was sent to West Newton, Pa., and then back to Edwardsville, Ill., for a short period, when the company again sent him to Pittsburg, Pa., for six months, and now he is in Detroit, Mich., as office manager at that place.

Lewis J. A. Kribs was born in Prairie du Rocher, Ill., October 24, 1897. He graduated from the parochial school there and was one of the winners of the State Normal Course. He attended the Chester High School and later on went to Sparta, Ill., for a business course, and finally finished his stenographic course in St. Louis Brown's Business College, from which he graduated in Oct. 1915.

Charles A. Kribs was born in Prairie du Rocher, Ill., September 15, 1899. He graduated from the parochial school in Chester, Ill., after having gone to the school at Prairie du Rocher until the family moved to Chester, and then finishing at Chester.

William Kribs was born in Prairie du Rocher, Ill., May 4, 1902, and attended the parochial school at that place until 1912, when the family moved to Chester, where he is now attending the parochial school and is in the eighth grade.



C. J. Kribs & Company  
Merchandise Store



Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Kribs

The ancestors of most of them had come from the Normandie, and they naturally adhered to l'usage du pays --- the custom of the country. The first settlers followed the rivers --- the only highways of those days. Every cultivateur wanted frontage, bottom ground, and high ground. So they laid out narrow strips, measured in arpents, and gave to each four to six arpents in width and ten or more in length. The houses were built in a row, each on its own land, but never far apart. Their ancestors in Canada had so long been subject to the brutal attacks of the savages that they preferred the open prairie, where no Indian could lurk behind a tree, and, in case of attack, the settlers would always be near one another.

“The houses”, writes Breese, were built in a very simple and unpretending style of architecture. Small timbers which the ‘Commons’ supplied, roughly hewed and placed upright in the ground a few inches apart, formed the body, the interstices being filled with sticks, pieces of stone and mud, neatly whitewashed within and without, with low eaves and pointed roofs, covered with thatch, or with shingles fastened by wooden pins. Those of the wealthier class were of strong, well-hewed frames, in the same peculiar, though more finished style, or of rough limestone, with which the country abounded. Porches, or galleries as they were called, protected them on every side from the sun and storms, whilst the apartments within were large, airy and convenient, with little furniture, but well-scoured or neatly waxed floors. Pictures illustrative of our Saviour’s passion, or the Blessed Virgin . . . decorated the walls . . . well calculated to inspire devotional sentiments in a people naturally and by education so much inclined thereto.”



A typical French Home at Prairie du Rocher.



Men and young men, on week-days and on Sundays wore the capot -- a garment of home-spun gray, caught about the waist by a belt of red or checkered woolen stuff, and topped off with a tuque of Norman hat with a broad ribbon about the crown and hanging down on one side. The color of the tuque varied. In the Quebec district, white; and at Montreal and Fort de Chartres, blue.

Most of the habitants made their own shoes -- soft sole, and top reaching to the knee. They were called *bottes sauvages*. Of course, they did their own tanning of hides.

Women's dress! Blue or scarlet bodice without sleeves, skirt of a different color, and straw hat while at work in the fields. The inventories of those days show a large assortment of short cloaks made of 'etoffe or calico; bodices of woolen stuff; skirts of dimity or drugget, and of white and red striped cotton or flowery calico, and handkerchiefs of many colors, made of cotton, muslin, or even silk. Jewelry was rare. Every good wife wore her wedding ring, a silver ring, and a silver cross.

"In their domestic relations", writes Breese, "they were exemplary, kind to their slaves, and affectionate to their children, loving each other as much as they should, and faithful to all their vows. In truth, the domestic circle was a very happy and a very cheerful one."



"Though there were slaves within, it was not a prison house, and such was the kindness always manifested towards them in health and in sickness that they sought not to escape from it . . . When sick or afflicted, they were nursed with the greatest care, and withal, were the recipients of so much kindness, as to become unmindful of the fetters with which a wicked policy had bound them."

As tillers of the land, the habitants in the Mississippi Valley were not very successful. They had the advantage of a rich alluvial soil, and it was perhaps not so much due to their own industry as to the soil that the crops grew.







According to Breese, "their implements and mode of using them were primitive indeed, a wooden plow, generally, and to carry their grain at harvest, small carts resembling those used by the Swiss peasantry in their vintages, with no iron about them . . . To these, if oxen were used, they were connected not by a yoke, but by a strong wooden bar, well secured to the horns by strips of untanned hide, and guided by a rope of the same material. If horses were used, they were driven tandem, at length, or one before the other, and controlled entirely by the whip and voice, without ropes or reins."

The life of the habitant was patriarchal, simple, sober, and frugal; hospitality was generous, and courtesy charming. He was satisfied with little on the principal that "contentment surpasses riches." He was retentive of the old. Why do things differently? *Ce n'est pas l'usage du pays!* -- It is not the custom of the country!

"They (the habitants) visited on feast-days and Sundays," writes Roy, "to enjoy themselves, to dance, to eat fruit, to play cards. Houses in which there was no violin were rare. The workingmen, bent over his plow or in the midst of his hardest labors, loved to sing. It was the same with the frugal, thrifty housewife, no matter how tired from her work."

"Pretexts for merry making, were many. If they killed a hog, they gave the choicest pieces to their friends. They exchanged blood-sausage and liver-sausage. St. John's fires were lighted; . . . the baptism of a baby was nearly always a pretext for a reunion of relatives and friends . . . It was not a real wedding, if it did not last three days and three nights'".



Georges Bouchard, who, in *Other Days Other Ways*, so beautifully sketched the simple, humble life of the habitant of former days, writes: "One must have lived among these men of the soil to be able to appreciate all the wholesome and exuberant gaiety, all the charm of these village feasts . . . The old fiddle, fashioned by the dexterous hand of the grand-pere, out of a length of plaine (hard maple) free of knots and a plank of fir, in the course of long winter nights spent at the corner of the fireplace, often revealed itself a choice instrument under the deft touch of the village fiddler . . . The fiddlestick was formed very simply of a lock of horsehair from la Grise (the gray mare), drawn taut on a bow of supple wood . . .



"At weddings particularly does the fiddle demonstrate its superiority over all other instruments of music. His services, retained a long time ahead of the ceremony, the violoneux arrives with a flourish and is received with enthusiasm. He is less of a hireling than a professional man called in to direct consequential and stirring entertainment . . .

"After kissing la mariee (the bride) and greeting la compagnee (the company, the guests), the violoneux allows himself to be steered into la grand'chambre (the big room, the bedroom of the father and mother) where he lays his wraps on the bed and partakes of the customary p'tit coup (little drink) . . . The fiddle is stripped of its shroud of checkered cotton to be tuned up and adjusted to the shoulder of its owner with a solemnity that compels the deepest silence. The silk kerchief wraps itself about the neck of the artist. The dancers swiftly find their places in the middle of the floor for the opening cotillon . . . In the bottom of a glass of rum the fiddler finds the fortitude to carry on to the end . . ."

Another important ceremony was the drawing up by the notary and signing of the ante-nuptial contract. This ceremony generally took place the Sunday preceding the wedding. The notary would solemnly read the contract in the presence of the relatives and friends. When he came to the part reciting the mutual dowry, he would "rush for the bride and place a sonorous kiss on both cheeks.

It must be remembered that the Commandants and officers of Fort de Chartres were mostly men of the nobility, and some of them Knights of the Military Order of St. Louis. Their families lived in the village of Ste-Anne. This infused into the social atmosphere a certain refinement and etiquette. Then, too, there was the proximity of the fort, the Fleur-de-Lis floating over its ramparts, the morning and evening drumbeats, the bugle calls, the commands of the officers and the drilling of the soldiers, the hurried departure

or arrival of messengers, the coming and going of convoys with news they brought from New Orleans.



JOHN N. LOUVIER

The oldest resident in the town of Prairie du Rocher is John N. Louvier, who was born in the village, in the year 1802, and has since lived in the town or in the vicinity. His father was Antoine Louvier, a Frenchman, who came to Illinois country when a boy. Antoine Louvier was born about the year 1767, and was ten or fifteen years of age when he came to Randolph County. He married Louise Langlois. The Langlois family was one of the earliest and most influential in the community, the first of which to come to Prairie du Rocher was Etienne Langlois.

Antoine Louvier was a farmer, and lived a short distance to the south of Prairie du Rocher. Here on the old homestead four children were born and raised. The fourth of these was John N., the subject of this sketch. Only two of his brothers, Cyprian and Benjamin, are now living, both near the town of Prairie du Rocher, John N. Louvier was born in the year of 1802, on the second day of March. There were few schools at that day in Prairie du Rocher. The population then was almost entirely French. Subscription schools were held whenever any one could be obtained to teach. Mr. Louvier only went to school three months of his life. This was to a French school, and for his English education he was compelled to look out for himself. His father was a man of good circumstances, in fact what would be called a rich man in those early times, when little wealth was known in comparison with the present, and when the inhabitants could boast only of the commonest comforts of life. He owned a farm of three hundred acres, and the work was done almost entirely by negro slaves, while the father and sons acted the part of overseers.

Mr. Louvier was married on the fifth day of March, 1822 to Mary Louise Blais, a member of the Blais Family, one of the oldest in Prairie du Rocher. Mr. Louvier was only three days from twenty years old. It was a more common practice in those days to marry at an early age than at the present. Mr. Louvier rented land from his father and began farming. He lived on rented land about five years. At the expiration of this time he had saved enough money to buy two hundred acres of land at the government price of a dollar and a quarter an acre. All this money he had earned by his own labor. When he was married his father gave him money enough to pay the expenses of his wedding day, and then left him to his own resources. The land which he bought lay on the Fort Chartres Reserve and Mr. Louvier moved on the place and farmed successfully for forty-two years. His career as a farmer was one which may well be alluded to with more pride. He began work at once with energy. He has probably been more successful as a corn raiser than any one else about Prairie du Rocher. The virgin alluvial soil near old Fort Chartres offered him a field,

and some years he was accustomed to sell as much as fifteen thousand bushels of corn. Year by year he averaged five thousand bushels. He had one hundred and fifty acres under cultivation, and this was put in with corn every year. Part of the ruins of the old fort were embraced within his farm.

Mr. Louvier's wife died in the year 1867. On the ninth of February 1869, he was married the second time to Mary Louise Barbeau, the daughter of Antoine Barbeau. Mr. Louvier has since made his home in Prairie du Rocher. By his first wife he had twelve children, of whom five are now living, four sons and one daughter. These are Eugene, Vietal, Gabriel, John and Josephine. The daughter is now the wife of Antoine Horel. All the children are living in the neighborhood of Fort Chartres. During his long life Mr. Louvier has generally voted the Democratic ticket, though he has not been particularly interested in the schemes of the politicians, and has occupied a somewhat independent position. Mr. Louvier bears well his more than three score and ten years. He was originally possessed of a stout and vigorous constitution, which years of hard labor and exposure have not affected as much as might be supposed. He is hale and hearty with the promise of many years before him. As has been before remarked, Mr. Louvier is the oldest native - born inhabitant of Prairie du Rocher, the person who, more than anyone else, supplies the link which binds the old Prairie du Rocher of the beginning of the present century - a straggling village of meanly - built log huts, in whose streets was scarcely overheard a word of English, with the Prairie du Rocher of today - a neat and pretty village, thriving with industry, and well worthy the beauty of the hills which surround it. Here Mr. Louvier's life has been spent, and here he has earned the reputation of being an honest, industrious and good citizen.



To quote Breese again: "When their isolated position is considered, separated by a long river and a vast ocean from old France, and by a trackless wilderness from Canada, . . . every institution calculated to inspire the feelings of equality and soften and subdue their native asperities would in this way contribute to swell the measure of their happiness, and what could be better adapted to this end than a religion whose holy days and fates brought the whole population so frequently together as one one common level . . . In the same dance all classes cheerfully participated . . . The black-eyed brunette, who engaged as a daily avocation in what the fashionable might consider menial services, in the ball-room, attired in her finery, full of cheerful smiles and artless coquetry, might be the leading star of every eye . . . To her a courtly Knight of the Military Order of St. Louis might bow with the most respectful obeisance, while at the same time, she was the betrothed of a poor, but honest laborer . . . and so they lived on in comparative happiness and tranquillity, laughed and danced, loved and married, and died, and these make up their short and simple annals."



MR. JOHN GRASSINGER

Mr. John Grassinger of Prairie du Rocher, was born July 6, 1836, in Bavaria, Germany, and came to America in 1850. Coming first to St. Louis, he remained there until his father died, in the same year, and left him an orphan. He worked as a gardener until 1865, when he bought the farm which is now owned by his son-in-law. He owns his present home in the town, whither he removed on his retirement from farming. In 1856 he was married to Miss Mary M. Chapen, who bore him four children, Henry J., William P., Lucille and Lizzie. Mrs. Grassinger died in 1908. Mr. Grassinger is a Democrat, a member of the Catholic Knights of America and of the school board. He enjoys perfect health and is a familiar figure in the town.



Gilbert Blais

Mrs. Gilbert Blais

John Grassinger

Maurice Frawley

MR. MAURICE FRAWLEY

A very beloved inhabitant of Prairie du Rocher is Mr. Maurice Frawley. He was born in beautiful Ireland, in County Limerick, in the year 1833. Here he spent his childhood, went through the parish school, and was married to Miss Mary Crimmins on February 4, 1859. Of their children only a daughter is still alive. They came to America in 1862, residing in New York until October, 1865, when they joined the westward tide and came to St. Louis and continued their residence there until 1872. That year Mr. Frawley and family moved to Kidd, Monroe County, Illinois, and rented the Waddle farm, which they continued to till until 1913, when on account of old age Mr. Frawley retired and took up his residence at Prairie du Rocher. Mr. Frawley looks back upon a life of toil, yet filled with the happiness of having gained his livelihood by honesty and sacrifice.

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MR. AND MRS. GILBERT BLAIS

Mr. Gilbert Blais was born December 20, 1840, in Prairie du Rocher and after going to school, spent his youth on the farm of his mother. Here he learned all the secrets of successful farming and was finally able to go to farming on his own account. He now married Miss Mary E. Louiver. She was a native of Prairie du Rocher, where she was born on the Commons on January 24, 1849. Her father was Henry Louiver.

The couple then entered upon that life of farming, and the improvement of their land, which went on uninterrupted until the death of Mr. Blais. This occurred February 1, 1887. The results of their efforts were so marked that they came to win a farm of 120 acres of the choicest land and improved in every respect. Five children were born to them, one son, Thomas G., and four daughters, Olive O., Leona E., Anna S. and Zoe L. The family includes also a daughter of Mrs. Blais by a former marriage, Mary G. Kerr.

Nor had they been idle socially, for they were well known in a circuit of many miles and beloved of a wide circle of friends. The husband was a devoted Catholic, and the wife has at various times done a good deal for the Church. She is a member of the Altar Society. After the death of her husband she took up the management of the farm, continuing his good methods and keeping the family together.

Every home is a universe in miniature. Here, too, powers and influences of great moment are continually at work. But within the family the forces making for great and lasting ends spring forth from moral and spiritual sources and lie in the soul of the man and woman. Thus, the most beautiful aspects of the family radiate from its relations to the Church, this everlasting fountain of peace and happiness. Without this inestimable feature social standing and industrial capacity dwindle into insignificance, and with it relatively unacquainted human beings rival mighty potentates and emperors.



### Indians and Climate

By the time the early French arrived, the Mississippi had laid layer upon layer of rich silt on the land for decades. They copied the Indian way of planting corn in the spring, forgetting about it, and harvesting it in the fall. Since there was no need to till the soil, the populace had leisure time. Why the Indians did not build a great culture can be explained partially through the humid climate.

The American Bottom is humid and moist which produces a lassitude and inertia that hangs heavy over the valley. Consequently, creative work is to a large extent inhibited. Visitors to Prairie du Rocher who sleep in the bottoms often comment how difficult they find it to rise in the morning, and how this sluggishness increases with the heat of noon. Exhaustion from this languor is soon dispersed with as the visitor returns homeward. The climate is partially responsible for the preservation of many old interesting buildings; moreover, for the calmness, and peacefulness which is characteristic of its' inhabitants.

Strangely enough the French settled at Prairie du Rocher before the Metchigamias Indians with whom we associate this area.

Illinois consisted of at this time five basic Indian tribes known as the "Illinois Confederacy":



## HENRY KER

The father of Henry Ker, a leading farmer in the neighborhood of Prairie du Rocher, was a man than whom few have seen more varied vicissitudes or led lives of more remarkable adventure. His name, like that of the subject of our biography, was Henry Ker, and he was born at Boston, Massachusetts, the son of English parents, who were temporarily residing at that place. He lived but a short time in Massachusetts. The family moved back to London where Henry received his education. He seems to have been born with an adventurous disposition, and habits of personal courage and daring.

He left London in April, 1808, for Charleston, South Carolina, and thus began a series of travels which extended over eight years. He traveled through the Carolinas westward to the sources of the French Board river, and followed its current down to the Holston to the Tennessee, and then by the waters of that river and the Ohio and Mississippi, stopping at various places along the banks to learn something of the nature of the localities and the habits of the people, he at last reached New Orleans. In the summer of 1809 a visit was made to some of the West Indian Islands, particularly Jamaica. Leaving the West Indies, the vessel on which he took passage to Savannah was shipwrecked, and he was compelled to return to Kingston. He next found his way to New Orleans, from which he ascended to the sources of the Red river, and spent some time among the different Indian tribes. Among his other adventures he killed a snake thirty-eight feet in length. He also discovered a mine of platina, but fell under the suspicion of the Indians and was sentenced to be killed. He was suddenly rescued by the chief's daughter, much after the manner in which Pocahontas interfered in behalf of the life of Captain John Smith.

He then traveled South, and passing through the province of Tula, arrived at the City of Mexico. In February, 1814, he bethought himself of returning to the United States, but before getting out of the country was captured by a band of banditti. His faithful negro servant, Edom, his companion through many days of toil and danger, was killed, but Ker himself gained the friendship of the leader of the band by his skill in medicine, and was permitted to escape. He immediately started for the United States, and traveled extensively through Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and up the Atlantic coast to New York. He published a book at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in 1816, which describes at length his "travels through the western interior of the United States, with a particular description of a great part of Mexico, or New Spain, and accounts of thirteen different tribes of Indians."

Such was the father of Henry Ker. He came to Randolph County in 1816, and located at Prairie du Rocher as a physician, and at the same time opened a store for dry goods and general merchandise. This was in the year 1816. Soon after coming to Prairie du Rocher he married Felicite Fascair, who was born and raised in Prairie du Rocher. She was a member of one of the early French families. Henry Ker died on the eighth of June 1828, having spent his life since 1816 in Prairie du Rocher, with the exception of three or four years, during which he resided at Ste. Genevieve, Mo. His life had been eventful. He was a man of fine natural talents, and good education, as is shown in the volume he left behind him. His wife Felicite lived till February 1846.

Henry Ker had four children, Ambrose, John, William, and Henry, of whom all are dead except the youngest, Henry, the subject of this biography. He was the posthumous child of his father, born on the Twenty-second of January, 1829, while his father had died in June, seven months preceding. The village of Prairie du Rocher was his birthplace, where also he was raised and went to school, going two years to a French school, and nineteen

months to an English teacher. This was all the schooling he enjoyed. French was the language of his mother and the family, and he was unable to speak English till seventeen. His mother remarried a farmer, Antoine Langlois, and Mr. Ker worked on a farm from the time he was able to be of any use. He drove a horse-mill at Rocher, two miles below Prairie du Rocher, then the only mill of the kind in the country.

He remained at home till seventeen years of age, and then began life for himself by hiring out to work on a farm at six dollars a month. He worked about three years in this way. In 1849 he was working for Mr. Brickey, of Prairie du Rocher, for ten dollars a month, when a party was organized to visit California, the discovery gold having recently been made in that country. Beside Mr. Ker, Antoine Blais, Dr. McDonald, Dr. Smith, Captain Whiteside, of Waterloo and several others were numbered among the members of the expedition. Starting in April, 1849, the party reached California by the overland route the succeeding October. Mr. Ker at once went to work at mining gold, and continued pretty closely at it during the time he remained in California. He succeeded in accumulating about two-thousand dollars. The party kept together as much as possible. Among their adventures was a skirmish with the Indians. In October, 1850, Mr. Ker sailed from San Francisco, and reached New Orleans by way of the Isthmus of Panama, whence he proceeded up the Mississippi to his home in Randolph County.

In the spring of 1851, that following his return home, he rented land and settled down once more as a farmer. The prospects were favorable for a good crop, when the high water of that year swept everything away, and left him without resources with which to begin again. In May of the same year he was married to Mary Brown; who died in childbirth the following February 1852. The year following the disaster by the overflow Mr. Ker again began as best he could, and rented land on till 1856. His second marriage occurred two years after the death of his first wife, in February, 1854 to Mary Phegley, the daughter of Jacob Phegley. Miss Phegley was born in Ohio County; Kentucky, August eight, 1823, and was about twenty-two years old when she first came permanently to Illinois. She was a sister of William Phegley, who had been Mr. Ker's companion and partner during his life in California. He has had two children by his present wife, Mary and William H. The daughter is the wife of Frank Cirnino, who lives in the neighborhood of Prairie du Rocher, Ill.

In 1856, Mr. Ker bought the property on which he now resides. He purchased about two hundred and ten acres, one hundred and forty at two dollars and fifty cents an acre, and seventy at six dollars. In 1861 he bought an additional seventy for thirteen dollars. None of this land was in cultivation at the time of coming into Mr. Ker's hands. The spot now occupied by his buildings, was a dense growth of brush and forest, where now is a richly cultivated and productive tract of land. His farm is composed of three hundred and twenty-eight acres, and is one of the richest and most fertile in the bottom. His neat and substantial residence was erected in the fall of 1870.

Mr. Ker, like a large number of the most successful and substantial members of Randolph County, had no resources with which to begin his career. Even after he had made a start everything he was worth, in 1851, was swallowed up in the overflow of that year. Mr. Ker stands well as a man of honesty and integrity, and has won a good reputation as a prosperous and substantial farmer of enterprise and good management. He has made his way by industry and economy, and in carving a farm out of the wilderness growth with which its site was covered, he added not only to his own material prosperity, but given an example, which if it were more generally followed, would add greatly to the resources and wealth of the County.





The habitat of the Metchigamis was originally west of the Mississippi and they really became a part of the confederacy by adoption when they migrated to Prairie du Rocher between the years 1718-1723. They have impressed their name on the lake and state of Michigan.

The habitat of the Kaskaskias was the region between Lake Michigan and Lake Peoria. They have impressed their name on the village and river of Kaskaskia and the mound in Clinton County.

The habitat of the peorias was the region of Lake Peoria. They have impressed their name on the lake and city of Peoria.

The habitat of the Cahokias was the region of Cahokia and the American Bottom. They have impressed their name on the village, creek, and mound of Cahokia.

The habitat of the Tammarois was the region of southeastern Illinois. They have impressed their name on the town of Tamaroa.

The Metchigamis were a small tribe of about one hundred. They have never made much of a name for themselves, for they were a peaceful lanquid people who were content with little, had no great ambitions and rather enjoyed having the French around.

History traces three small villages in the immediate area. Just as one comes into town on Route 155 from Ruma, there was a village at now where is a concrete bridge crossing a creek. There was a second village on the bluffs just south of town, and another to the west.

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### MR. AND MRS. CHARLES HAUCK

Charles Hauck, the well-known dealer in horses, mules and cattle, was born May 31, 1864, in Ste. Genevieve, Mo. He attended the parochial and public schools, and after leaving school became an apprentice of Louis Naumann, learning the butcher trade. He followed this trade in Ste. Genevieve until 1889, when he came to Prairie du Rocher with strong arms and a willing heart and started a meat market in this place. He bought cattle and did his own work slaughtering. Later he began dealing in horses and mules. He assisted in organizing the bank in 1906 and has been director since.

On August 8, 1888, he married Miss Mary Sucher. One son, Archibald N., came to bless the home.

Mr. Hauck is a Democrat, a trustee of the village for twenty-two years; director of the State Bank of Prairie du Rocher, and trustee and treasurer of the Commons, and is rated as one of the substantial citizens of Prairie du Rocher. Ill.

He built a large home. In 1899 he bought 190 acres of fertile soil and built three big barns. Mr. Hauck, buying stock for a radius of over 30 miles, is well and favorably known. He is a member of Fort Chartres Association, and is also known to be a good supporter of the Catholic Church.

Mrs. Hauck (nee Mary Sucher) was born on a farm near Ste. Genevieve September 19, 1866, and is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Sucher of near Ste. Genevieve, Mo.



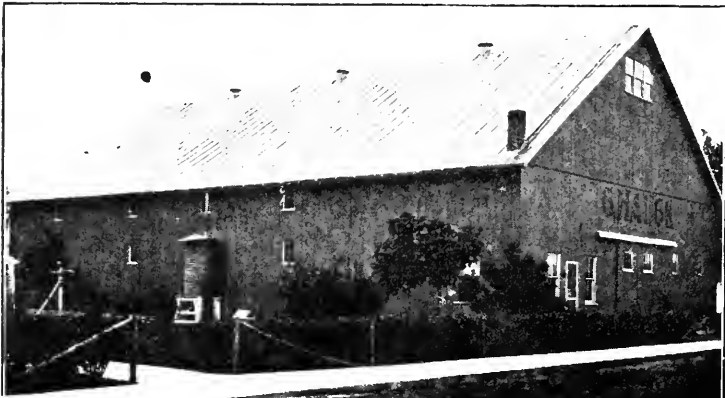
Chas. Hauck



Mrs. Chas. Hauck



Residence of Chas. Hauck, Prairie du Rocher



Chas. Hauck's Live Stock Barn, Prairie du Rocher

## Early Crops and Flowers

The crops of the early French settlers were cultivated by themselves and by slaves or indentured servants. The settlers of Prairie du Rocher were much given to the cultivation of small fruits, and flowers. Cherry, apple, peach and plum trees grew in every yard. Large beds of flowers were cultivated, and wild flowers were gathered in abundance to adorn homes and church.

As late as 1825, when LaFayette visited Kaskaskia, Cahokia and St. Louis, the French inhabitants searched the woods for wild flowers and the banquet hall at Kaskaskia and the Jarrott Mansion at Cahokia, where he and his entourage were feasted and dined, were literally filled with flowers.

There have really been three predominant crops in the county of what might be considered the staple products that have engaged the attention of the agriculturist. In very early times, Indian corn was the principal product. Later, the castor bean was largely cultivated, and was considered a most profitable crop. Still later, wheat became largely planted, and continued as the best crop of the county.

The principal varieties of timber are black oak, white oak, shell bark and pig nut hickory, sugar maples, linden, black gum, persimmon, red slippery and white elm, black ash red bud, dogwood, sassafras, cottonwood, sycamore, honey locust, hackberry, box elder, sweet-gum, white ash, swamp oak, burroak, white and black walnut, pecan and white maple. The timber served as fuel and was also used for building purposes.



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### KILLIAN COERVER

Killian Coerver, the well-known miller, was born in Monroe County, near Waterloo, Illinois, on April 10, 1861. He attended the parochial and public schools and also St. Vincent's College at Cape Girardeau, Mo. After leaving school he learned the printing trade, and then clerked in a dry goods business a short time, and at the age of 18 he started to work in the circuit clerk's office. From December, 1882, to 1886, he served as deputy county treasurer, when he was elected on the Democratic ticket as county treasurer of Monroe County and served from 1886 to 1890. On October 1, 1890, he went to work at the office of Koenigsmark Milling Company, Waterloo, Ill., and remained there until 1906, when the Schoening-Koenigsmark Milling Company, Prairie du Rocher, Ill., was incorporated and Mr. Coerver became a stockholder in this new company and was elected secretary-treasurer and general manager. In 1911 another company was incorporated, known as the Salt Lick Milling Company, Valmeyer, Illinois., of which Mr. Coerver was made general manager, and in 1913 he was elected secretary and treasurer of this corporation also. He

is a member of the Knights of Columbus of the East St. Louis, Ill., Council.

Mr. Coerver was married September 10, 1885, to Miss Mary Schuell of Waterloo, Ill. Three children were born to this union: Fred H. Coerver, who at present is assistant secretary of the Prairie du Rocher corporation; Walter H. Coerver, who holds a similar position with the Valmeyer corporation; Amanda M. Coerver if the only daughter at home.

Mr. Coerver is president of the Fort Chartres Association of Prairie du Rocher, Ill., and is one of the leading men in the community. He is a staunch member of the Catholic Church.

Mrs. Coerver was born in Waterloo, Ill., March 24, 1864, the daughter of John Schuell, a well-known jeweler.



Residence of Killian Coerver,

Prairie du Rocher

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### Horses and Cattle Introduced

Horses and cattle were introduced in this vicinity very early. It is said the cattle came from Canada, while the horses were of Arabian strain and were brought from the Southwest by the Spaniards. It is not to be understood that the cultivation of the soil was of a very high order in 1772, and for some decades after. Utensils were crude. The plows were of wood and were usually drawn by oxen. The oxen were fastened together by the horns, by means of a flat piece of wood, not as later on yokes as was customary with the English. Wagons were usually small two-wheeled carts, made by the early settlers themselves, usually with little iron, and were pulled or pushed by hand, seldom by horses or oxen.



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## MR. AND MRS. FRANK H. MOSKOP

Every community contains a few men of remarkable business ability, men who have risen to enviable success in some branch of trade. They deserve the public gratitude for their contribution to its prosperity no less than they win general admiration for the manner in which they have risen into eminence and won the hard struggle of life. Such a character is Mr. Moskop, the well-known manager of the Nanson Commission Company.

He was born January 28, 1866, in Monroe City, Monroe County, being the son of a prominent farmer. After finishing the parochial and public schools he worked for a time for his father, being employed in operating a threshing machine. In 1895 he took employment in a flour mill at Harrisonville, Ill., as engineer. Then, in 1900, he became the salesman for Southern Illinois of a Chicago firm that manufactured harvesting implements; a position which he held for three years. Then he removed to Prairie du Rocher. On January 1, 1903 he became connected with the Nanson Commission Company, with which he has been affiliated to this day.

His marriage with Miss Elizabeth Stiegler occurred February 3, 1891. She was the daughter of a well-known farmer of Madonnaville, Ill.; was born September 27, 1868, and lived at home until shortly before her marriage, when she lived with the Austin James family for nine years. She is a member of the Altar Society. Mr. and Mrs. Moskop have four children - Charles P., Armin J., Louise M. and Cecelia M.

The company of which Mr. Moskop is manager has grain elevators in Valmeyer, Mayes, Fults, Renault, Riley Lake, Jones Ridge, Raddle, Jacob, Wolf Lake, Grimsby and Prairie du Rocher. He owns, further, a palatial home on the city limits of the town. He was a member of the school board, on which he has served for nine years, and is an active Republican. His favorite sport is automobiling. He is a devoted member of the Church, and has been industrious in furthering its welfare.

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## Early French Government

In 1717 the Illinois country became a district of the French Province of Louisiana, and was governed by a major commandant, who, besides exercising military powers supervised fur trading and agriculture. Other district officers were a doctor, a notary, and interpreter, and a judge who administered the coutume de Paris or common law of Paris. Each village maintained a militia company, the captain of which was an agent of the district, judge and the major commandant.

Although there was no legal basis for local government, that function was admirably performed by marguilliers (church wardens) elected by the parishioners of the Catholic churches of Cahokia, Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher. In addition to accounting of church property, the marguilliers passed acts concerning the time of harvest, fence repair, and in short the general welfare of the village.

We refer on another page to the election of judges for the district. One of these judges, in later days, was M. Andrew Barbeau, who was present at the corner-stone laying of St. Joseph's Church, on July 19, 1858, when a new brick church was erected.



**Jean St. Theresa Langlois**

It has been difficult to trace the line of descendants of this founder of Prairie du Rocher. In a document of December 30, 1740, we learn that the late Etienne Langlois married Catherine Beaudrau, a widow, and had the following children; Marie Louise, who married Pierre Messenger; Marie Josefine, m. Louis Populus sieur de St. Photes; Toinette, m. Pierre Boucher de Monbrum sieur de Soudray; Francois, Louis, Girard, Perine and Auguste. These last five were minors. From other sources it is learned that Etienne had two brothers, August who lived at Kaskaskia, and Louis. What relation the notary Pierre Langlois was to these is not apparent. He was married to Catherine Normand Labriere, and had two children, Pierre and Marie Louise. The latter signed a marriage contract with Pierre Lefebvre of Vincennes, October 9, 1785. Pierre Langlois died in 1789, and his widow took oath to the inventory of the property December 14, of that year.

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**MR. AND MRS. HENRY I. BARBEAU**

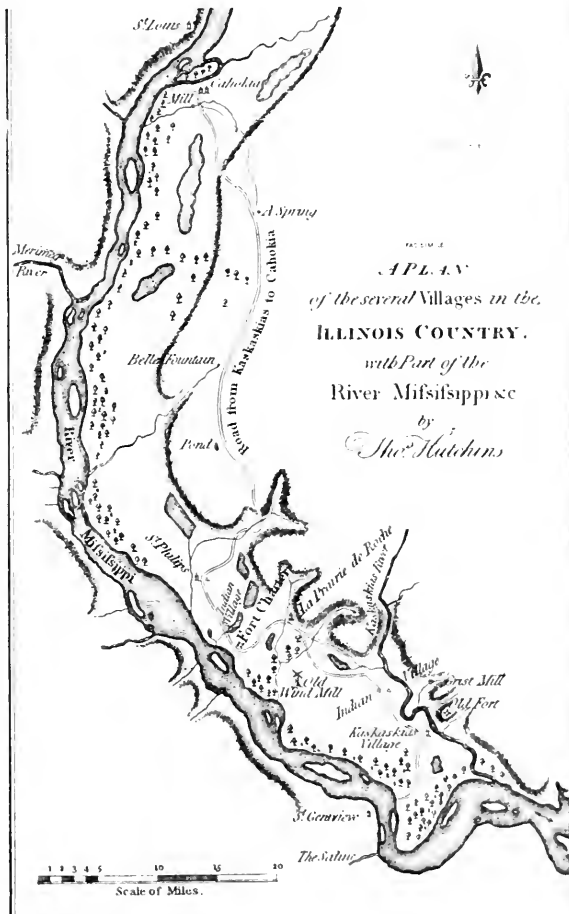
The name of Barbeau, so well known in all Randolph County, was never more honorably borne than by the present head of the family. His ancestors have lived near Prairie du Rocher for generations. His father Henry Barbeau, who died in 1902, was born in the vicinity of the Commons. Both this gentleman and his wife, who lived until 1915, were well known through the length and breadth of the county.

Henry I. Barbeau was born on the farm where he now resides, on February 1, 1863. He attended the parochial and public schools, and after this studied the science of farming under the effective tuition of his father. He remained on his father's farm and succeeded to the management of it when his father retired. This was in 1882. In the same year Mr.

Barbeau was married.

Mrs. Barbeau was born in St. Louis, Mo., on April 22, 1861. Her father, whose name was McCaron, died soon after, when she came under the care of relatives in Prairie du Rocher. She received a good education, after which she taught school for three years near Ruma. Here she made the acquaintance of Mr. Barbeau, which resulted in their marriage. Seven children were born to them: Harry J., Frank W., Edward, Louis J., Leo A., George A., and Ella J. Barbeau.

Besides the care of his large farm, which comprises 450 acres, Mr. Barbeau has been deeply interested in public matters. As superintendent of highways of Randolph County he earned the gratitude of all citizens. He is prominent in the affairs of the Democratic party and a member of the Knights of Columbus. Even these duties leave him some leisure for the pursuit of his favorite hobby, which is automobiling. He must be an able man who can unite in one life such varied interests, and yet pursue each of them so successfully. Some men may be great in one thing, and do that one thing admirably, but it is the versatile man, the character who is large enough to find enjoyment in many things, and at the same time with ability to attain prominence in all of these activities, who may be said truly to stand forth from the multitude and constitute greatness.



## Early Legal Transactions

Reference is made in Kaskaskia records, as far back as 1778 to legal transactions. One pertains to the death of Antoine Cottinault, in which a scribe of the house of M. Barbeau, captain of militia and commanding the said place of Prairie du Rocher, sought the privilege of being appointed administrator, and to have a guardian chosen for the minor children. This petition was resented by the spirited widow, and its prayer was, though first granted, soon resented. She was rather permitted to act as guardian for her children, and to enjoy, and make use of her goods whatsoever they may be without interference of anyone, whoever he may be. The property thus placed in her care included a tannery. A sign of the commercial life of Prairie du Rocher at so early a day in its history.

Another reference is to Instruction to George Rogers Clark from Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia, in which Clark is instructed to spare no pains to conciliate the affection of the French and Indians, as their friendship was of great importance to the struggling Union of States as then constituted.

Another reference is to a strict command by Colonel Clark, prohibiting the sale of intoxicants to Indians or Negro slaves, or to lend or rent to any red or black slaves their house, buildings, and courts, after sunset or for the night, for the purpose of dancing, feasting or holding nocturnal assemblies therein.

Still another reference is found relative to an election at Prairie du Rocher held on May 17, 1779, at which election, two magistrates for the district were chosen. The first judge chosen was M. Jean Baptiste Barbau, captain of the militia, and the second judge chosen was M. Antoine Duchafour du Louvieres, lieutenant of said militia.

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### MR. AND MRS. FRED J. WIERSCHEM

One of our literary geniuses has remarked that the history of any locality is but the history of its great men. The destinies of splendid empires are shaped by the personalities of their rulers, and a whole people sometimes owes its prosperity to the energies of one man, who stands at the head of the state. And in a community this principle is even more forcibly demonstrated, for here the thoughts of a few leaders permeate to the farthest boundaries and shape the thoughts of the masses. Viewed in this light, how significant do the biographies of prominent men become!

The subject of our sketch was born in Madonnaville, Monroe County, on August 3, 1868. He was one of a family of fourteen children, whose father was John Wierschem, a known farmer. He attended both the parochial and the public schools, and then remained at home, assisting in the work of the farm until the death of the father in 1892. In that year Mr. Wierschem decided to become master of his own farm, and accordingly bought the farm of 65 acres situated on Rural Route #3, Prairie du Rocher, Ill. This has been his home up to the present time.

On November 30, 1893, he was married to Miss Zoe Thuillier. She was born in September 1872, a daughter of the widely-known farmer, Emil Thuillier of Prairie du Rocher, and lived at home up to the time of her marriage. Her life has been notable for great devotion to the Church, which she is constantly helping. She belongs to the Altar Society. The four children of their marriage are Louis E., George A., Robert J., and Augusta E. Wierschem.

In 1912 Mr. Wierschem entered public life, when he was elected to the office of road commissioner. This important office he has filled with that industry and devotion to public welfare which has been the guiding policy of his whole life.



## ANTOINE BLAIS

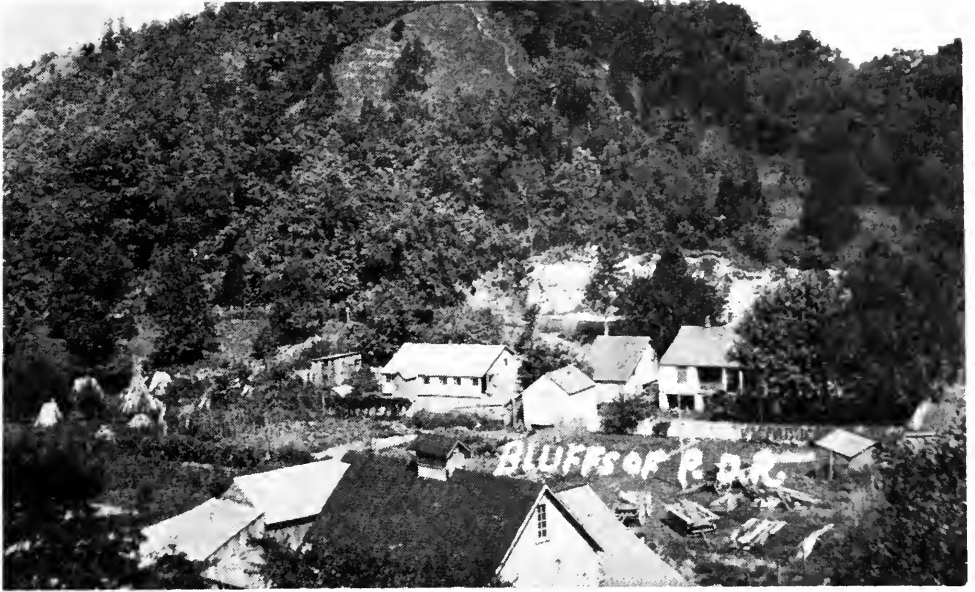
The old town of Prairie du Rocher has undergone, perhaps, fewer changes than any other locality of Randolph County. Its foundation dates back to the early part of the previous century. Its growth has not been rapid. The French population of which, its inhabitants were at first entirely composed, has here retained its distinctive character more closely than elsewhere, and a considerable proportion of the present residents of the village are descendants of the families who were identified with its history a century ago.

The Blais family is one of the oldest in the town. The first of the name to make his residence in Prairie du Rocher was Blais, a Frenchman whose ancestors had emigrated from France to Canada, some time before the coming of to the Illinois country. He devoted himself to the quiet pursuit of farming, the common occupation of the inhabitants, and was a leading man of the village. He reached an extreme old age, and died in the year 1783. One of his sons was Antoine Blais, who married Teresse De Choche, Gabriel De Choche, the father of the lady in question, and the grandfather of the present Antoine Blais, was a native of France, and an old resident of Prairie du Rocher. Antoine and Teresse Blais had been born and brought up in Prairie du Rocher. They had six children, of whom only four grew to maturity. Antoine, who received his father's name, was next to the oldest in birth, and is now the only surviving one of the family in his generation, all his brothers and sisters being dead.

Antoine Blais was born in Prairie du Rocher, on the twenty-seventh of August, 1809. He was brought up in the village, and received his early education in the subscription schools held in the town. At the age of seventeen he left home, and went to Ste. Genevieve, Mo.; and there learned the trade of blacksmith. Two years after he was in St. Louis, Mo., a place at that time of small size in comparison with its present proportions, and here he followed his trade. He went to St. Louis in 1828, and remained there four years, till 1832. At this latter date he returned to Prairie du Rocher, put up a shop, and engaged in the blacksmithing business. In July of the same year his marriage took place to Miss Lucy Conner, a daughter of Henry Conner, one of the early Sheriff's of Randolph County, United States Marshall under the administration of John Quincy Adams, a prominent Whig politician, and a leading man in public affairs. Mr. Blais' residence, for several years, in Prairie du Rocher was unmarked by any event of unusual importance. Fourteen years after his marriage, in 1846, his wife died.

In the year 1849, Mr. Blais formed one of a party, numbering also among its members Drs. Smith and McDonald, and several others from Prairie du Rocher and vicinity, which set out for California to swell the throng of enterprising and adventurous men which that year crowded the Pacific Coast, incited by the hopes of fortune held out by the wonderful stories of the golden wealth of California. The party was six months in making the overland journey, beginning the trip in April and arriving in California the following October. An ox team carried their outfit, and their progress was necessarily slow. Mr. Blais at once went to work mining gold upon his reaching the mines. He continued in California till 1851, and at that time had succeeded in accumulating about five thousand dollars, meeting with better fortune than the average of California adventurers. In 1857 he sailed from San Francisco on his homeward journey. Crossing the Isthmus he reached New Orleans, where (with little doubt, through the rascality of the keeper of the hotel) he and his partner were robbed of the greater portion of their hard-earned money, while at dinner. Mr. Blais returned to Prairie du Rocher, and there engaged in the merchandising business, buying out the store of a friend who was contemplating a visit to Europe. A few months after his return from California, Mr. Blais married his second wife, whose maiden name was





## EDUCATION

Since they were rather uniform in pattern, it will doubtless yield a clearer picture if the common points of the pioneer schools are given rather than giving short references to each one.

Nearly all of the first school houses were built of unhewed or round logs and had roofs made of clapboards that had been split from some convenient oak of large size. These boards were generally two feet or more long, about eight inches wide, and were often laid without the use of nails, poles being used on each course to hold them down. These weight poles were fastened by pegs or tied bark and withes. Altogether it was a serviceable and durable roof, even though one could "see daylight" through it.

Heat came from a large fireplace. Where stone was convenient, the fireplace might be built of it. More often it was built of logs with a clay or stone lining. The chimneys, generally "stick and clay", were double walled pens thoroughly plastered, inside and out, with clay. Weathering often caused this clay to crumble away, exposing the sticks. It was not an unusual thing to see where this had occurred, and fire had burned holes in the chimney. Both fireplace and chimney were outside the building proper. These fireplaces were not in anywise puny affairs - - - they often accommodated cuts of wood four feet or more long. In many cases, the teacher agreed, as part of his work, to cut the necessary firewood. The hearth was of stone or filled-in earth.



St. Joseph's School, Prairie du Rocher

When not of earth, the floors were generally of puncheon construction. In making a puncheon floor, slabs were split from a log, the edges straightened and the upper surface smoothed by use of broadaxe or adze. This method of construction did not produce a very tight or smooth floor, though it was a substantial one.

The ceiling, when present, was generally made of boards split from some forest tree. They were laid upon ceiling joists, made of poles that might occasionally be somewhat smoothed by use of a broadaxe. These ceilings were often not more than 7 feet high. Smoke from the fireplace soon gave it a brownish tint that gradually deepened as one moved nearer the fire. In numerous cases the ceilings would be omitted, and one gazed directly at the roof.

The inside walls were often left with only the "chink and daubing" finish. Coat racks were made by boring small holes in the logs and driving pegs into them. On these the shawls, coonskin caps, and homespun clothing were hung. Larger shelves were placed at convenient places about the room. On one of these shelves the wooden water bucket and drinking gourd would be found. Other shelves of proper size and heights were arranged for writing desks at which the pupils stood with quill pen and oak gall-copperas ink to do their writing on foolscrap paper. The room would not be complete without two pegs above and behind the teacher's desk. On these two pegs the switches and pointers reposed, for corporal punishment was the rule of the day.

Former School for Black Children



The idea that the window area of a schoolroom should be one-fifth or more of the floor area had not been born. One or two were considered as sufficient. There are recorded instances of a log being omitted on one side of the building in lieu of a window. In winter the light of the fireplace helped some. Altogether the school room was dimly lit.

Thus far the forest immediately about the building has furnished the materials used. In the matter of seats this still held true. for the benches were generally from logs split in half. The flat side of the log was smoothed by axe or adze. With a large auger, holes were bored in the rounded side of the half logs, and large pegs were fitted to serve as legs for the bench. In the early school, desks for the pupils were seldom seen.

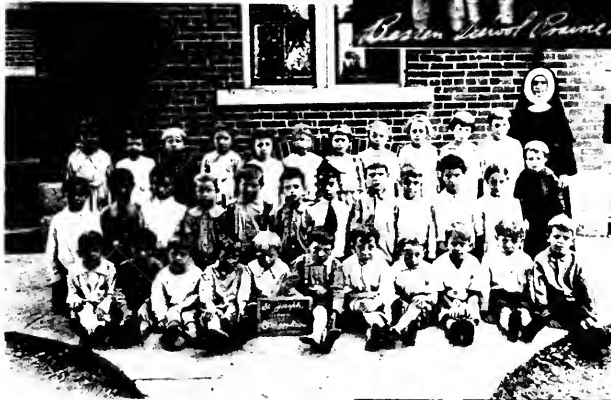
Writing paper was comparatively rare. Slates were used for "doing sums" and for some writing. Even at that they were not so common and 'may I borrow a slate' was frequently heard. From time to time it was necessary to clean the writing from these slates. In order to facilitate the process, a pupil would spit rather liberally upon the slate. Occasionally this saliva was removed with a rag. Generally the palm of the hand was used for rubbing, and any surplus moisture was mopped off with the sleeve. This is certainly not a very attractive description, but it really happened that way..

Lunch was generally brought to school in baskets. Boys and girls sat on different sides of the house. Some of the more careful teachers insisted upon pupils cleaning their boots and shoes before coming into the building. High top leather boots were standard for boys. Girls wore high top shoes. In summer most of the boys and girls went barefoot. Head



Class of School Children —  
About 1880

School Children—1925



School Children—About 1920

Class of '1936  
Prairie du Rocher  
High School



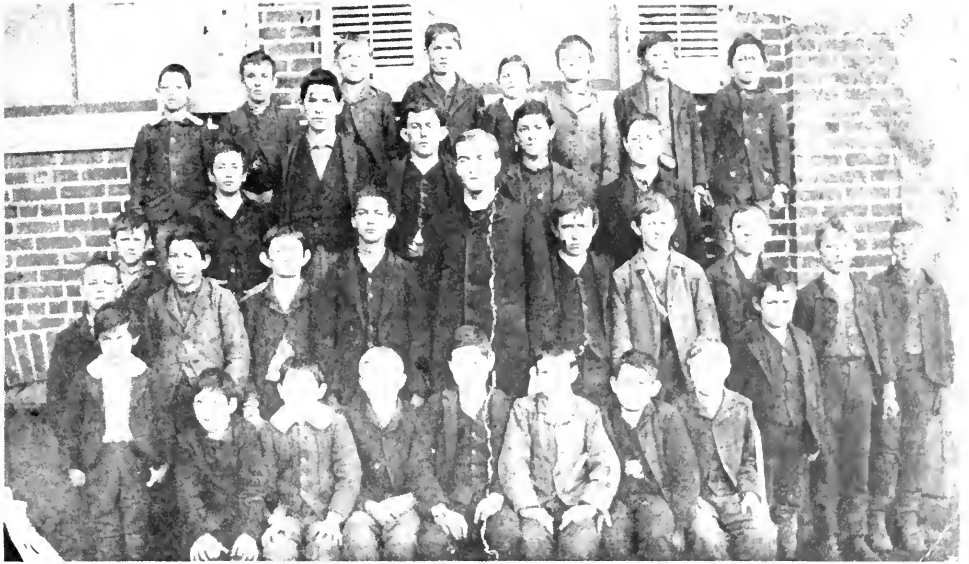
lice and scabies were frequently to be found.

Bullpen, wolf on the ridge, stink base, hat-ball, old sow, cat, sling dutch, lap jacket, one and over, and move up, games almost unknown now, were the prevailing ones for boys. Girls were sometimes admitted to a gentle game of cat or wolf on the ridge, but more often they had to be content with games like ante over or as it was sometimes called 'andy' over, London Bridge, Lemonade, go in and out the window, drop the handkerchief, skipping rope or some adaptation of a singing game.



To lend a little variety to school life an occasional spelling bee was held, a debating club or literary society met, or a singing school was held at night. The pupil who could 'spell the school down' was much admired. The singing school offered a bit of culture and a chance for the young people to do a reasonable amount of courting.

Textbooks were rather scarce, but a spelling book was considered indispensable. There were some reading texts, but the opportunity for selection was generally limited. Bibles, such copies of the classics as were to be had, books of history, along with almost all printed matter that came to hand, were used. Arithmetic texts were not at all plentiful, and one still finds manuscript forms of such books used in the first schools. Many subjects, considered indispensable now, were then unknown. Art consisted of a few pictures slyly produced by pupils who were careful to avoid the teacher's attention while doing this work. An occasional teacher with some ability to sing had singing lessons. Physiology and hygiene were practically unknown. When such texts as were then used are found, they call forth broad smiles by their statements. Grammar texts were very formal and were used only by the more advanced pupils. 'Language' was practically unknown. Geography was reduced to a little more than an outline. Civics was hardly known, while manual arts and handicrafts lay far ahead.



The grades as we think of them today had not come. One progressed in school determined almost solely by the individual. Technique for teaching had not been formulated. Then, as now, an occasional capable teacher with a vision became the inspiration of the youngsters. On the average the schoolmasters were a strict and domineering sect, adhering closely to limited knowledge that was theirs. Generally they were active practitioners of the 'no licking, no larpin' creed. Often the teacher was an itinerant, staying only a term or so while he boarded around and then moving on about as mysteriously as he had come. To know that the pupil was studying it was sometimes required that they study aloud. The teacher, like a trained choir leader, could select and listen to any voice among the babble.



Despite the limited equipment, the teacher's cultural attainments were above those of most of the other young men of the community, hence, some young lady, often a pupil,

selected him as a likely prospect for a husband. Being human, he was generally a willing victim, and 'itinerant' days were ended.

Most teachers were men. An occasional girl or woman, endowed with unusual tact or daring, became a successful teacher, but they were exceptions. The overgrown and often rude boys generally required the brawn of a man to 'teach' them.



Since an organized free school system was not in general operation, these early ones were often 'subscription' schools, the teacher being paid by the parents of the pupils attending.

It is interesting to note that formal Education in the true sense of the word, for the area of Illinois actually began in the area of Prairie du Rocher, by the later village of St. Anne when in June 16, 1659, the first Catholic Bishop of Quebec arrived in the person of Francois de Montmorency de Lavel, with the title of Bishop of Petraea. Quebec numbered hardly 500 inhabitants, and the whole of Canada perhaps 2200 souls. Lavel organized a complete system of education: primary, technical, and classical. His seminary and preparatory seminary trained young men for the priesthood. In 1678 he founded an industrial



school near later St. Anne to provide the colony with skilled farmers and artisans. His seminary developed in the course of centuries into the now famous Laval University. He was a man of undoubted patriotism, and threw the full weight of his powerful personality into the balance whenever there was question of proper administration, progress of the colony and its defense against the marauding savage.



Parochial School Built In 1885

At an early date in history, Illinois was assured of strong support for the education of its youth. In 1785, only two years after the thirteen states had signed a treaty of peace with Great Britain, Congress passed a law for the great unorganized territory west of New York and north of the Ohio River, of which Illinois was a part. This established support for the public schools.

The law divided the land into townships of thirty-six sections each, each section to comprise 640 acres. Everything earned on one section out of the thirty-six was to pay for the public schools. Two years later this became part of the Northwest Ordinance, which also declared for freedom of religion and excluded slavery from this territory.



Music Room addition to early Parochial School. Choir, Mayme Donjon, Louise DeWitt, Augusta Chaudet, Nora LaRose, Zella Chaudet, Mary Mudd, P. G. Ehresmann, Organist.

When the new settlers arrived, they built one-room schoolhouses. Some were on the

open prairie, and children had to walk miles to attend school. Besides, they had to help feed pigs and get the cows into pasture before they left for school in the mornings, and after school had to bring the cows back to the barn. Yet the farm children went to school as long as they could, for they wished to get an education.

According to publication #8 of the Illinois Historical Library, education in Prairie du Rocher was first recorded as early as August 1816 when Benjamin Sturgess gives notice "That he has opened a school at Prairie du Rocher, where he will teach the usual branches of English Education, viz: Writing, Reading and Common Arithmetic, also English Grammar, Geography, Surveying, Astronomy, Latin and Greek languages. He thinks Prairie du Rocher is as healthy as any place in the American Bottom," which may have been understood at the time as not a very improbable statement. He declares that "good board can be obtained at moderate terms and so forth."

It cannot be exactly determined who many of the early teachers were, or where they held these classes. By 1820 Charles McNabb of one of the first Americans to settle in Prairie duRocher, was teaching school in English. (During the pastorate of Father Charles Krewet Two-thirds of the population of four hundred were French, German and English). In the 1850's a small frame school of one room was built almost directly opposite the present church. An additional room was added to it in 1931. The parochial school was opened in the early sixties of the last century in this building. Under the supervision of Father Krewet and at a cost of \$5000 the large brick building which took the place of the smaller frame school was erected in 1885 directly across the street from the rectory. It accomodated 175 children. In 1885 two lay teachers and three Sisters of the Most Precious Blood constituted the faculty. In 1893 a tornado damaged the school building to the extent of \$1,300.

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Peter Gregory Ehresmann was born January 22, 1872, to Peter Ehresmann and Catherine Ruegemer of Richmond Minnesota. He attended the College of St. Francis in Wisconsin and graduated from St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota. He taught school in Vincennes, Indiana, about two years before coming to Prairie du Rocher. He arrived here by boat in September, 1900 and taught here until his retirement as teacher in 1935. He continued as organist in St. Joseph's Catholic Church until 1942. He served the community as City Clerk from 1937 to 1957. He died July 17, 1959.



P. G. Ehresmann

Mr. Ehresmann was succeeded by Mr. Albin Schrage from Clinton County.

Following Mr. Schrage's resignation, Mr. Harry Dearworth, a former teacher of the local school, was persuaded to return to "Rocher and "head" the school in 1946.

In 1959 Sister Eustacia Goeckner was appointed principal; followed by Albert F. Hennrich in 1961.

In 1951, a school building was erected by the church at a reported cost of \$275,000. In 1959 two temporary class rooms were added.

The cornerstone was laid at the present school in early 1971. The new building has a present capacity of 125. Cost was reported at \$140,000. A canopy connects this school with the church-owned building.



School Children Celebrating 1971 Rendezvous, Prairie du Rocher School, Sept., 1971

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## MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH J. HOEF

Mr. Hoef is one of those citizens who have come to our shores, leaving their native country, and seeking a new home in a new world. In early times all of our people crossed the seas, but their hardihood and enterprise has all but been forgotten. Those who emigrated in more recent times serve to remind us of the dangers and privations attending the long voyage from another continent. Mr. Hoef was born in Cobenz, Germany, on March 16, 1851. He came to America with his parents in 1865 and settled in Madonnaville. Here he attended the parochial and public schools, and after finishing his schooling helped on the farm of his parents. The father died in 1878, the mother in 1892, on August 17th.

But previous to this Mr. Hoef had taken a farm for himself. In 1883 he rented 54 acres of fertile bottom land near Prairie du Rocher. This soil, with the careful management which he gave it, yielded abundantly and brought him such prosperity that he purchased it in a short time. In 1889 he bought land adjoining to his and became the possessor of 240 acres. The large farm, situated on Rural Route #3, has been his home to the present time and has become a perfect farm in every sense as a result of his industry and prudence.

Mr. Hoef was married in 1884, on October 28, to Miss Elizabeth Crewet. His wife was a daughter of Nicholaus Crewet, the organist and school teacher of Saint Viett. She was educated in the public school and academy in Buechlein, Germany, and after her father's death in 1868 she came to America to be housekeeper for her uncle the Reverend Crewet of Prairie du Long. She remained in this capacity until her marriage. Her work for the

Church has been notable, and she is a member of the Altar Society. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Hoef are Mary A., Katherina W., and Elizabeth M., the eldest being the wife of George Eicheuser.

Mr. Hoef is a Democrat, a member of the Catholic Knights of America and an ardent autoist. He is a faithful worker for the Church.



State Bank of Prairie du Rocher

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### The Commons

The following article was taken from the Red Bud Review on March 2, 1901.

“By reason of a bequest in 1730, inhabitants are now exempt from taxation.”

The village of Prairie du Rocher, Ill., has a fund that is unique. This little town, which is located in Randolph County a few miles southwest of Red Bud, and not far from the Mississippi River, was officially founded in 1722.

What were known as the “Common Fields” of Prairie du Rocher were granted to the village in 1730 by Jean St. Theresa Langlois.

The early French settlers held the possession of their lands in common. A tract of land was fixed upon a common field, in which all the inhabitants were interested. To each villager was assigned a portion, the size depending upon the size of his family. Fixed times were assigned for plowing, sowing, harvesting and other agricultural occupations.

The land was usually granted to each villager in long, narrow strips, partly, it is said, from an old custom in France, and perhaps to insure more efficient production against the Indians and other foes while engaged in the arduous work of tilling the land. A fence surrounded the whole enclosure, but the individual lots were not divided from each other.

Besides the "common field", another tract of land was set apart as commons. All the villagers had free access to this place as a pasture for their stock. From this they also drew their supply of fuel.

In 1852 a portion of this land was leased for ninety-nine years, and a part of it was sold. Several thousand dollars were realized from these transactions, and the fund is now controlled by a special committee of villagers. The money was loaned for a long time to the farmers of Randolph County at interest payable annually.

"From this source the village derives so much money that the six hundred inhabitants are almost wholly exempt from taxation, all because of an idea more than one hundred and seventy years old of sharing things in "common".

One half of the common fields were sold at general auction in 1852. The lands sold for prices ranging from 1.50 to 4.00 per acre. On May the twenty-first, 1859, there had been \$11,856.40 accumulated in the commons fund. In 1851, F. W. Brickey was elected Chairman of the board of trustees for the commons fund and also Chairman of the school board.

The election for common trustees are held every two years; first Monday in April.

Present board members are; Lavern Doiron-sec. treas., Arnold Steibel-Pres. Floyd Melliere, Phillip DeRouse, and Ted Fadler-trustees.

At present, there is about \$52,000 principle which yields approximately \$2,000 which is used by the board of education for the children.



St. Luke's Mills of Prairie du Rocher

MR. AND MRS. PAULIN DIDIER

Our country, which has been called the melting-pot of nations, has received citizens from every quarter of the known world. All races and peoples have sent their representa-

tives to swell the numbers of our population. And of all these nations none has done more for America than France. Who can ever forget that it was the courageous Frenchmen who first penetrated the wilds of the new world, and, not content with a mere sailing along the coast, ascended its rivers and explored the interior of an unknown and dreaded wilderness? They settled vast areas such as the Mississippi Valley, which was for centuries a New France. Nor could the subsequent waves of emigration from the eastern states entirely obliterate this French civilization, which survives to this day in many names and customs found throughout the Middle West. Mr. Paulin Didier was one of those Frenchman who came to Illinois during the last century.

He was born in France on December 26, 1845, and emigrated with his parents in 1847. The family settled in Cahokia, then a thriving city. With the decline of importance of Cahokia, the elder Didier left that place in 1854 and secured a farm in the vicinity of Prairie du Rocher, Ill. Here they remained, and here the parents died in 1888. The son, who had lived with his parents all this time, now came into possession of the farm, which consisted of 85 acres. Under his care the soil yielded plentifully, and as a result his prosperity increased, until he became known as one of the most successful farmers of the district. He died a wealthy man, his death occurring in 1907 on the eleventh of March.

Mrs. Didier was before her marriage, Miss Leonline Bige. Her father was the well known Lawrence Gige, a farmer of Prairie du Rocher. She was born here on March 10, 1858, and had her education in the parochial school. Upon leaving school she lived in the home of her parents, where she became a master of the various household arts and learned all that must be known by the farmer's wife, which is indeed not a little. It was her perfection in this respect which contributed much toward the success of her husband. No children were born to this couple. Since the death of her husband Mrs. Didier has continued to reside upon the farm, which has been rented. She reserves a part of the farm for the raising of chickens, which is her favorite occupation, and to which she devotes all of her time.

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### W. A. BLOW AND JOSEPH BLOW

Among the prominent inhabitants of Prairie du Rocher who are natives of the locality is Mr. W. A. Blow. He was born September 9, 1860, on a farm near the town. He finished the public school and then became the right-hand man of his father, a place which he occupied for twenty-seven years. Finally, in 1887, he rented his own farm. This land became his property in the short space of six years, in 1893, and included 70 acres, but was not large enough to satisfy the ambitious owner, who in the course of time more than doubled it. At the present time he is the proprietor of 155 acres of splendid farm land, situated on the bottom, on Rural Route #4. His parents are now dead, his father having died in April 1912 and his mother in April 1914.

On May 15, 1889, Mr. Blow was married to Miss Lucy Gressinger, a daughter of the widely-known farmer John Gressinger. She was born on August 5, 1868, near Prairie du Rocher, and lived at home until her marriage. Her most prominent characteristic is her activity in behalf of the Church. The children are Perry W., Edgar G., Augusta E., and Rosa A. Blow. Mr. Blow has lately become interested in stock raising, which is beginning to supplant general farming on his grounds, and spends his leisure time in his automobile. He is a familiar personage for many miles about his home. The Church has often had occasion to show him gratitude for his faithfulness.

Mr. Joseph Blow was an emigrant to America, although he came to our country at a very early age. His first place of settlement was the city of St. Louis, Mo. Here he lived until his marriage and then removed to the vicinity of Prairie du Rocher, becoming a farmer. He is remembered as a very successful farmer. In fact, anything which he undertook prospered. He died February 12, 1912. His wife (nee Lala Dapron) followed him in death on April 8, 1914.

## Of General Interest

Many old towns and historic locations lay claim to the statement "Washington slept here". Well, Prairie du Rocher cannot make this boast; however, a group of 'Rocher trap-man along with a detachment from Fort de Chartres marked a first when they captured the good General along with his soldiers at Fort Necessity. The events leading to this "only capture" of our first President is worthy of note.

Early in the year 1750, news came to Fort Chartres that the English was urging the Northern Indian tribes to wage war on the French settlers. This prompting came to a head in 1753. In the spring of that year, the Marquis Dequosno, Governor of Canada, sent an expedition to the valley of the Ohio to assure its possession for the French by Actual military occupation. Marin was in charge and the French built Forts Prosq'ilo, loBoouf, Mao-hault and Vonango in Pennsylvania. The English didn't like this, and Dinwiddie, Governor of Virginia, sent George Washington, a twenty-one year old Adjutant General of the Virginia militia, to give the French, who found on this territory which France claimed because of discovery by Lasalle, notice to move. Washington had a force of about two hundred men and had been instructed to build a fort at the Fork of the Ohio, near the present site of Pittsburg. Contrecoeur, a French officer, heard the English intended to take possession of this important strategic location, so he immediately built a stockade there which he called Fort Duquesne.

Contrecoeur, as soon as he completed work on Fort Duquesne, sent one of his officers, Coulon de Jumonville with thirty men "to bear summons to any Englishmen he might find in the valley warning them to retire from the French side of the high mountain range (Alleghenies nor disturb the English in their territory, as the French were "Wishing to maintain the harmony which prevailed between the two crowns."

On the morning of May 28, 1754 Washington was led by his Indian guides to Jumonville's camp. The French were taken by surprise and cried: "To arms!" Washington ordered his men to: "Fire!" - - - That started off the bloody and unnecessary "French and Indian War."

Jumonville and eight of his men fell; one man escaped to take the news of the attack to Fort Duquesne, the rest of the French were taken prisoners.

It so happened that, Coulon de Villiers, a brother of Jumonville, and a Captain of troops at Fort de Chartres, was making a delivery of supplies to Fort Duquesne from Fort de Chartres. He asked Contrecoeur for permission to avenge his brother's death, which the French considered a murder, as there was no declaration of war between England and France at that time.

Washington had retreated to Great Meadows (in what is now Pennsylvania) where he received reinforcements and had hastily built Fort Necessity.

Coulon de Villiers with the troops that had come with him from Fort de Chartres and troops from Fort Duquesno - - - about 500 in all - - - surrounded the Fort on June 28th, 1754, Washington signed the articles of capitulation on July 3rd, 1754. And that surrender to Captain Coulon de Villiers of Fort de Chartres is the only one ever made by our Own General GEORGE WASHINGTON.

## TWO HISTORIC EVENTS

Two hundred and fifty years ago the village of Prairie du Rocher was founded. That was an historic event, worthy of some record. Two hundred and fifty years ago a book was

written, and published, which has been a first-seller ever since, and has been re-published countless times, and read by tens of millions. Its title is known throughout all the world, it is "Robinson Crusoe." It was written by Daniel Defoe, an Englishman, who founded his story upon the experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a castaway on the lonely island of Juan Fernandez. We link these two historic events, in this publication, because of the striking fact that both were born in the same year.



Historic Brickey Home at Prairie du Rocher

### The Brickey House

Nearly every town has an old house with an interesting story. Prairie du Rocher has several, one of which was the Brickey house. Unoccupied for many years, this large three-story, square-framed house with its wide porches, stained glass, shuttered windows, and mansard roof attracted the attention of the most casual visitor to the village. It stood among large trees on a generous plot of ground below the bluff, it silently proclaimed the the hospitality that once was known there. The fine iron fence that enclosed the grounds emphasized its air of detachment.



John Brickey



To know the story of this old house one must go to the Chicago of the late 1860's and learn something of another building that Uranus H. Crosby built there in 1865. Crosby, a wealthy distiller, decided to contribute to the culture of Chicago by erecting a magnificent opera house. W. W. Boyington, a noted architect, designed a splendid structure that Crosby had constructed on the corner of Dearborn and Washington at a cost of more than \$600,000 -- a great sum for that day. It quickly became a showplace of the pre-fire city.

Chicago was proud of the new building. Crosby quickly learned, however that owning an opera house was expensive. In 1867, less than two years after its completion, he announced that he was broke and also expressed an intention of disposing of the opera house and 305 works of art through a nationwide lottery.

Elaborate preparations for the event were made. Some 210,000 tickets -- each of them numbered and bearing a nice engraving of the opera house -- were printed and offered for sale at \$5.00 each.

These were sold within a few weeks, and on January 21, 1867, drawings were made in the opera house before a large and interested audience. The number drawn for the grand prize was 586000, and the owner of the winning ticket was Abraham Hagerman Lee of Prairie du Rocher.

There being no telegraph in Prairie du Rocher, a notice that Lee was the winner was sent to a law firm in St. Louis and relayed from there to Belleville. From Belleville, a messenger was dispatched on horseback to notify Mr. Lee. Before this messenger reached him, however, two men who had seen a news report of his good fortune in a St. Louis paper hastened to Prairie du Rocher to relate the good news or perhaps with hopes of doing some fast trading.

The two men found Lee reading to his sick wife. Neighbors soon heard the news and hastened to offer their congratulations. The messenger from Belleville arrived later in the evening. It is said that Mr. Lee answered the door in a long nightgown, and the messenger bowed low before him as he delivered the official notice. None of the messages, official or otherwise, seemed to disturb or excite Mr. Lee unduly. He even indicated a slight vexation and remarked, "I wish they had to swallow the opera house." But he carefully guarded his ticket while he continued to care for his ailing wife.

A few days later, when his wife's health had improved somewhat, Lee went to Chicago to meet Crosby, requesting at the outset that publicity be avoided. Lee indicated a willingness to sell his claim for \$200,000. Crosby accepted the offer and paid that amount to Lee who quietly went back to Prairie du Rocher. Crosby once more was in full possession of the opera house, and he had profited to the extent of about \$600,000 from the sale of lottery tickets.

Shortly after his return from Chicago, Lee built the residence that recently stood. Two years later he died in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the house was bought by F. W. Brickey, Lee's partner in the operation of the Prairie du Rocher grist and flour mill. Since that time it has been known as the Brickey House, noted for its hospitality and sociability and as a local center of culture.

Before his death, Brickey expressed a wish that if none of his children chose to make it their home, the house should be given to some charitable organization. In the event no use was made of it, Brickey asked that the home remain unoccupied or be dismantled.

The Brickey mansion long abandoned but still reflecting past glory, burned to the ground early Sunday morning, April 5th, 1970, ending a story which began with a lottery ticket more than a hundred years ago.

The fire was discovered at 2:45 a.m. when already out of control. Prairie du Rocher firemen concentrated their efforts in protecting business places across the street. Blazing sparks and debris were carried more than a block by the strong draft.

The Red Bud Fire Co. was alerted and arrived in Prairie du Rocher about 3:15 a.m. and remained on stand-by for an hour. The last of the frame structure fell about 3:45 a.m.

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During the 1930's, industry finally arrived in Prairie du Rocher in the forms of two quarries. The Prairie du Rocher Quarry owned by Al Stotz, and the Columbia Quarry. These quarries mine limestone and rock from the same bluffs that the French used to construct the new fort in 1750. It may be noted that the quarries are the largest, oldest operating lime-rock quarries in the United States.

The Cemetery at 'Rocher is the oldest Cemetery in continuous use in all of mid America. It started about 1722 as the Church yard surrounding the old log chapel of St. Joseph's. It is the only parish and Community Cemetery the town has ever had, and burials have taken place in it continuously for over two centuries. Here lie buried Jean St. Theresa Longlois, the founder of Prairie du Rocher. Likewise buried in what once was the sanctuary of the old church, are the bodies of Father Luc Callet (died 1765) and Father Joseph Gagnon (died 1755) both were pastors of St. Anne at Fort Chartres, originally buried there and transferred to Prairie du Rocher in 1786. About 1935 all graves were levelled and footstones were buried, so that today this ancient burial ground presents a beautiful sight with its smooth green lawn and a contrast of varied colored markers.

On September 8, 1971 A.D. a memorial was erected "To mark the site of the sanctuary of the original church of St. Joseph and to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the first baptism recorded in the parish September 8, 1721. St. Joseph church and cemetery were located in the middle of the first village of Prairie du Rocher. Here lie buried the remains of Michigamea Indians, early French adventurers, black slaves, victims of wars, massacres, floods, and plagues. Veterans of all wars of the United States and Pastors and parishners, of St. Joseph Church of three centuries - May they rest with God."



Until 1800, Prairie du Rocher was a completely French village. The French had made no great improvements in the village, but they were content and went about their farming in a carefree manner. They managed to live in peace and harmony with the Indians. When with the Indians, the French acted like Indians, and when the Indians were with the French, they tried to act like Frenchmen. This may have been what impressed Christian Schultz when he visited the village in 1810. He describes Prairie du Rocher as,

"Being a continuous prairie of the richest soil, . . . an old French settlement of about

forty families, who are all Roman Catholics, and support a confessor and a chapel of their own. This village is built upon a very contracted scale, the streets being barely twenty feet wide . . . The people of this settlement all live by tillage, and in their outward appearance seem but a few degrees superior to their savage neighbors; the Indians yet, when accosted, they immediately discover their national trait of politeness.'

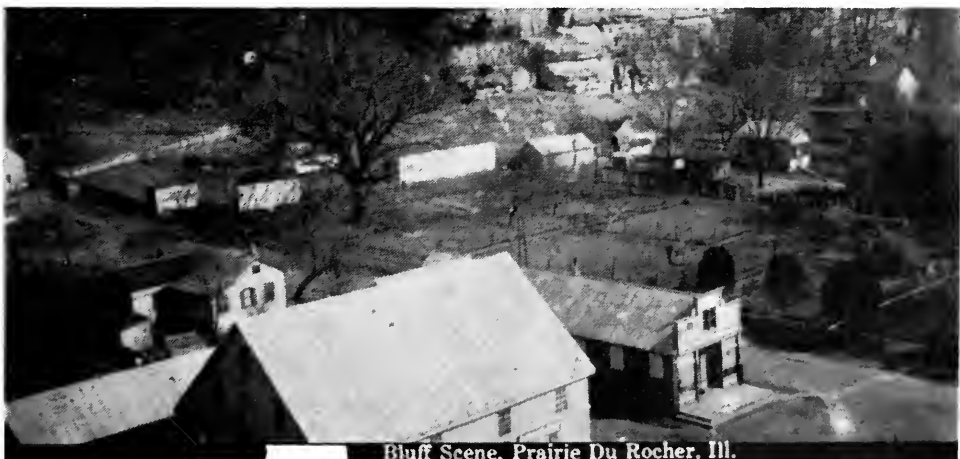
Prairie du Rocher received another bad review in 1823, when it was described as,

Its' (Prairie du Rocher) situation is low and unhealthy, and during wet season is very disagreeable. The houses are generally built in the French style, and the inhabitants are, with few exceptions, poor and illiterate. The streets are very narrow and dirty. Here is a Roman Catholic chapel, which is its' only public building. In the vicinity, is an extensive common, which is attached to the village, and is under to controul six of the trustees. Prairie du Rocher in 1766 contained 14 families; at present, between 30 and 40 . . . Few Americans have as yet disturbed the repose of the ancient inhabitants of this place, nor is it probable they ever will, as it possesses no advantages, and is withal very unhealthy.

The constitution of 1818 in Illinois provided that no more slaves could be brought into the state, but that the old French settlers were allowed to retain their slaves. The village was incorporated in 1825, but the inhabitants saw no great need for the incorporation, and it was soon abandoned. This same process was repeated in 1835. The mosquitos were not late arrivals in Prairie du Rocher as evidenced by the reminiscences of J. F. Snyder, who visited the settlement in 1839,

"I also have a lively recollection of the mosquitos there, Prairie du Rocher more numerous, and more voracious than those of Kaskaskia. The Barbeaus Antoine our host and hostess, were unalloyed specimens of the non-progressive exotic Creole race that originally settled in the American Bottom, dark-complexioned, black-haired, and black-eyed, slow-motioned, contented, sociable, and very kind and hospitable."

Despite the mosquitos, Prairie du Rocher seems to have been infested with an industrious spirit about the middle of the 19th century. In 1840, William Henery, an American, built a steam mill to process the wheat grown in the area. This mill was constructed on the site of the present day, H. C. Cole Milling Company.



Writing in 1859, E. J. Montague describes the inhabitants and the commercial aspects of the village as,

"The history of Prairie du Rocher presents no marked event. It was strictly a French village for more than a hundred years, and the orderly inhabitants quietly pursued their various vocations, enjoying their social amusements undisturbed. They were happy, contented people, unambitious, and careless of wealth or distinction. They were free from that strife, contention, and turmoil, which attends an uninterrupted stream of quiet joyous happiness.

The place now contains one first class flouring mill; four dry goods stores; two grocery stores; two furniture stores; one saddlery shop; one boot and shoe shop; one wagon shop; one wagon manufactory; two carpenter and cabinet shops; two hotels; one church no resident priest.

With the advent of the 20th century, Prairie du Rocher seems to have faded quickly from the history books. The Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois published in 1907, went as far as to say that Prairie du Rocher had become extinct. However, as the village started its 181st year of existence, the great iron machine arrived in Prairie du Rocher in 1903. A brick hotel sprang up near the depot, and many people predicted that Prairie du Rocher would now lose its' unique isolation and quickly succumb to the hustle and bustle of the modern world. Mail now arrived on the train, to such far away places as St. Louis, Missouri. The original railroad line seems to have been a part of the Iron Mountain Line. Today, the Missouri Pacific Line runs through Prairie du Rocher, servicing both mills, but the passenger service has been discontinued.



A big celebration was held in 1939 of the Golden Jubilee, Fiftieth Anniversary of the Priesthood, of the Very Reverend William Van Delfth, pastor of St. Joseph's Church. Prairie du Rocher was either flooded or threatened by floods in 1943, 1944, 1946, and 1947. Construction of an extensive levee system was started in 1949. Since 1949, there has been no great threat of floods and many of the inhabitants remain skeptical of the ability of the levees to restrain the flood waters, if the occasion arises.

In 1948, Doctor Couch left Prairie du Rocher, and the residents have searched in vain for a resident doctor since then.

The old Creole house, was built about 1800. It is located directly across the street from the present day post office. An iron fence extending from the old Brickey house remains in front of the property. The Creole house was drawn and photographed by W.P.A. architects for historical reference. According to Thomas J. Conner, who was a local mer-

chant and historian for many years until his recent death, the Creole house was the birthplace of Henry Clay Hansbrough, who later was elected as a senator from North Dakota, and served his state in the U.S. Senate for 18 years.

The old Kaskaskia Trail Hotel is now demolished. Until very recently, it was the home of Mr. Al Siedle. This house served as a stagecoach stop on the trail between Cahokia and Kaskaskia. This house was also believed to have been constructed in the early 1800's. The old slave quarters and an outside brick oven was torn down when Mr. Siedle produced the house in 1938.

In 1956, Father Theodore C. Siekman was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's Church. He became very interested in the history of Prairie du Rocher and the church which serves it. The Illinois Historical Society visited the village in 1959. The society was welcomed by Mayor William M. Shea and then was treated to a dinner in the school basement. Father Siekman spoke to the society and explained some of the uniqueness of Prairie du Rocher. Painstaking arrangements were made in 1965 under the direction of Father Siekman for a Bi-Centennial Celebration of the parish to be held on May 25, 1965. He established the beginning of the parish as 1765 -- co-inciding with the abandonment of the old chapel of St. Anne within Fort Chartres. On May 25, 1965, a Solemn Pontifical Mass was celebrated at St. Joseph's Church, with the Bishop of the Diocese, the Most Reverend Albert R. Zuroweste, D.D., in attendance. Some of the old vessels and chalices, which had been brought from the chapel of St. Anne in 1765, were used in the Mass. The Mass was attended by the villagers dressed in Indian garbs, or in the old costumes of their ancestors. After the Mass, a candlelight procession was made to the old cemetery, which was the site of the original church and village of Prairie du Rocher. The procession included oxen, horses and buggies, the villagers and their friends. At the cemetery, the heritage of the site was recounted, and various old French songs were sung. A temporary museum had been set up in the school building, to which the inhabitants contributed the tools, letters, and momentos of their ancestors. The rich and varied history of Prairie du Rocher was revived on this day in an illuminating and wonderful manner.

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## JAMES DUNCAN MUDD AND FAMILY

The influential farmer, James Duncan Mudd of Prairie du Rocher, is a member of the oldest family of settlers in Randolph County. Indeed, his family has been in America since the very earliest days, having come over to Maryland in the time of Lord Baltimore. This band of stout-hearted Englishmen set out from their native shores in 1633 and sought religious freedom in the new world. They established the Church in North America and guaranteed religious liberty, where until then there had been only Puritan fanaticism. The Mudd family were original settlers of this colony. After the Revolution, when the tide of westward emigration set in, Thomas Mudd and his wife Johanna Carrick Mudd, proceeded to Kentucky, where they were among the earliest settlers. They settled in Spencer County. This Thomas Mudd had seven sons and two daughters, the third son being Francis. Francis Mudd was born in 1795 in Maryland, emigrated to Kentucky with his parents, and there grew to manhood, with such slight educational advantages as the wilderness afforded. In the War of 1812 he volunteered, and served throughout the war. He was with Jackson at New Orleans when that great general with his regiments of stalwart pioneers won one of the most brilliant victories that we ever achieved over the British. On his return he was married in 1819 to Louisa Gough, and three years later emigrated to Randolph County. Thus the family had been among the very first settlers of three states, Maryland, Kentucky and Illinois. Francis Mudd claimed a farm in Section 29, Township 5, Range 8, and lived here the peaceful and busy life of the pioneer farmer until his death in 1863. He has six sons and six daughters.

One of these sons was James T. Mudd, the father of J. Duncan Mudd. He was born on

November 12, 1820, and was brought as a child to Randolph County. He was reared in his father's log house, a building without any glass in its construction, but as a good home as any pioneer could boast. He attended a subscription school, that being the only kind in the settlement. He lived with his parents until he was employed in "breaking the prairie" near the present site of Kidd, Monroe County. In the spring of 1844 he traveled on horseback to the lead mines in Wisconsin. His fortunes as a prospector were various, but he finally returned to Randolph County no richer than he had left it, excepting for the experience, which must have been sufficiently valuable in itself. If he had done nothing else, he had proved that the adventurous spirit of the Mudd family was not dead in its latest representative.

James T. Mudd was married on January 27, 1846, to Miss Emiline E. Owen. She was of Welsh descent and of a family that had early settled in South Carolina. Her mother was an Adams, and she was born on October 6, 1825. After his marriage Mr. Mudd rented a farm in southeastern part of Horse Prairie. In 1849 he sold one of his horses for fifty dollars and bought with this money forty acres of government land. This was located one-fourth mile north of Ames Post Office, Monroe County, and he built upon it a log hut of one room. In August, 1854, he sold this tract and purchased 120 acres in Prairie du Rocher Commons. He built a home on lot 39, and lived there until his death, which occurred on July 29, 1897. His wife died on February 11, 1895. His children were; William L., Francis J., Henry F., George M., James D. and Veronica, of whom George and Henry died in youth, while Veronica died in 1899 at the age of thirty-two. The others are all married and prosperous.

His son retains a vivid memory of the primitive agricultural devices of the pioneers. The grain was sown by hand, harvested with a cradle and threshed with a fail, or sometimes trodden out by horses. It was tossed in the wind to remove the chaff. Even after all this labor there was almost no market for grain. Hogs were fattened, dressed and hauled to St. Louis or Kaskaskia, where they brought two cents a pound. The women were forced to cook at an open fireplace, and to spin and weave their clothing. In spite of these hardships, the elder Mudd was proprietor of 380 acres in 1881. He gave 100 acres each to his sons, William and Francis, and began to clear the forest anew. In 1897 he had 130 acres in cultivation. He was forced to go to Ruma to church, the French language being in use at Prairie du Rocher. He was a devoted Catholic and a careful father.

James Duncan Mudd was born on January 13, 1862, and attended the district schools until his sixteenth year. He continued his studies at night and passed a teacher's examination, teaching for one term at the age of twenty. Then he became a farmer, at first on rented land, together with the small remainder of his father's farm, and then exclusively on his father's land, when that had become larger. After his father's death he was able to buy the farm from the estate. At present he owns 440 acres and a residence with plumbing, bath, sewerage system and furnace--surely a model country home. He is the owner of an automobile and lives the life of a gentleman. He is very popular in all circles and has been on the school board for many years, as well as trustee of the Commons. He has been a stockholder and director of the Prairie du Rocher State Bank since its organization. He is the most prosperous man in his community.

His marriage to Miss Agnes Vogt occurred on October 27, 1897. She was born in Covington, Ky., on November 10, 1868, being the daughter of Clemens Vogt, and was for many years the housekeeper for the priest at Ruma. Their children are Justin J., Mildred M. and Dorothea D. Mudd. The family is very devoted to the Church. Mr. Mudd was in his youth an altar boy, then a member of the choir for fourteen years, and since that time has been a trustee for six years. Mrs. Mudd is a member of the Altar Society. Both are noted for their contributions to the Church.

Mr. Mudd has all the characteristic energy and enterprise of his ancestors. He is a worthy member of a family which has helped to make the history of the nation. The rest-

less desire for adventure and activity of the Mudds is his predominant trait also, while he mited with his vigor a great share of prudence and business ability. He attributes his success to the fact that he has never had an idle moment or contracted a debt which he could not meet. While he was a grain farmer his cattle and poultry always paid running expenses, while the income from the grain was a clear profit. He is one of our most successful farmers and a man who is the backbone of his community. He has always had one ideal: to do his best and place his trust in the Most High, nor has he ever been disappointed in his expectations. He is a model citizen and a good Christian.



James T. Mudd



Mrs. James T. Mudd



Residence of James Duncan Mudd, Prairie du Rocher



James Duncan Mudd



Children of  
Mr. and Mrs. James Duncan Mudd



Mrs. James Duncan Mudd

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The Village of Prairie du Rocher was incorporated Aug. 19, 1837, at the first meeting, the following officers were elected: For President of the Board: Alexander Pitre, For trustees: Joseph Godaire, Jr., Michael Duclos, Jean Marie Gaudaire, Joseph Blais. For Clerk, William Henry.

Since then, some of the Village Presidents who served are;

- 1838 - Alexander Pitre
- 1839 - William Drury - 1843
- 1844 - Andre Barbeau
- 1845-1870, due to the devastating floods of this period, the Organization of the Village was abandoned. It was re-organized in the year 1871, with Mr. F. W. Brickey being elected President.
- It seems during these years, the Village Board elected the president from among themselves.
- 1872 - President - John Brewer
- 1873 - P. W. Unger (appointed by Board)
- 1874 - H. D. Hammack (appointed by Board)
- 1875 - P. W. Unger
- 1876 - F. W. Brickey
- 1878 - Louis Chaudet
- 1879 - F. W. Brickey - 1892
- 1888 was the first year the President was elected by the people.
- 1893 - Louis Chaudet
- 1894 - Louis Chaudet
- 1895 - A. L. Brands
- 1896 - Louis Chaudet - 1903
- 1903 - A. L. Brands
- 1904 - H. P. Moreau
- 1905 - P. J. Gillen
- 1906 - George Reifel
- 1907 - A. L. Brands
- 1908 - Geo. Reifel
- 1909 - C. J. Kribs
- 1910 - Charles Hauck
- 1911 - C. J. Kribs
- 1912 - John Bachelier
- 1913 - Geo. Reifel
- 1914 - Chas. Hauck

In subsequent years, records are rather sketchy and most of those who served as pres-

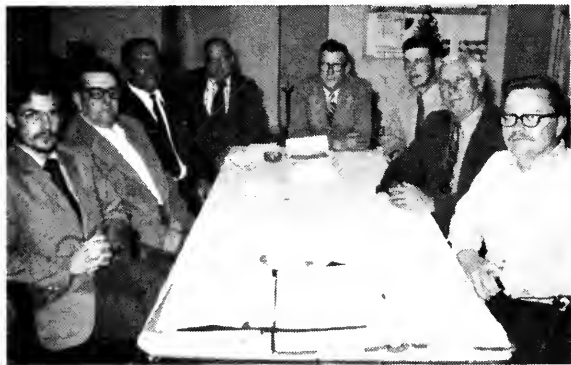


ident are listed but some may be omitted, due to loss of records. Many of those previously mentioned served during later years also.

W. H. Conner, Charles Modor, John T. Finley, Elmer Laurent, D. P. Schilling, Ralph Melliere, Arnold Steibel, S. J. Lolan, Arnold Mudd, Jr., William Shea, Gus Rako, were some of the people who served as Village President. As mentioned, some names might have been omitted due to loss of records.

Over the years some major projects were undertaken and completed, such as the New Village water plant, for which the contract was let in the month of April 1940. This was undertaken with the help of Federal funds dispensed under the WPA. Since that the water plant has been enlarged and remodeled. In more recent years, the Sewer System was built with the help of a loan from the Farm Home Administration. And finally this year, 1972, a completely new water plant was built, housed in a new building, with the latest in water plant machinery.

The present Village officials are: S. J. Lolan, President. Theodore W. Fadler, Clerk. Virgil Ray, John Laurent, Cletus Menard, Larry Durbin, Theodore P. Fadler, Clyde Brewer are Trustees. The Village Treasurer is Donald Heizer. The Chief of Police, Robert Doiron, and Floyd Godier is Fire Chief.



Present Town Board



Town Board of 1908

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All historical families and decedents are taken from the 1875 edition of the Historical Atlas Map of Randolph County, Illinois.

### W. S. CONNER

There are few citizens of American blood, native born in Randolph County, who date their birth back as far as does Mr. W. S. Conner, a resident of the southern part of Township five -- eight. He was born within a quarter of a mile of his present residence, in the year of 1815.

He was the son of Henry Conner, who was born in Maryland and moved to Kentucky when ten years old, about the year 1795. The Conner family is of Irish extraction. The name was formerly spelled "O'Connor," in which form it will be easily recognized as belonging to a numerous family in Ireland. Henry Conner was about twenty-two when he came to Illinois from Kentucky in the year 1807. He located at Kaskaskia then the central point and commercial emporium of the Illinois settlements, and for three years worked for Colonel Pierre Menard. While here he married Miss Elizabeth Barnet, a native of Madison County, Kentucky. Henry Conner then moved to Monroe County, and settled on a farm in the American Bottom, at a point four miles south of what is now known as Chalfin Bridge. He continued farming here till about the year 1812, when a fire swept away his buildings, whereupon he returned to Randolph County, and settled on the farm now owned and occupied by William Phegley. Here on the twenty-first of October, 1815, William S. Conner was born the third of a family of seven children. Five of these, three sons and two daughters reached maturity. All are now deceased with the exception of Mr. Conner, who is therefore the sole representative of the family generation.

Henry Conner was a man of prominence and influence in Randolph County, in his day. In 1814 he was elected Sheriff of the County, when the jurisdiction of that office extended from the boundaries of St. Clair County to the mouth of the Ohio. He filled the office of Sheriff for seven successive years. He was United States Marshall for the district in which Randolph County was included, under the administration of John Quincy Adams. He filled several other offices, and during his life-time took a leading part in public affairs. He was an active Whig in politics, and was popular with the members of that party. He died in March, 1832, at Kaskaskia, and his remains now repose in the old cemetery at that place.

William S. Conner lived in the County till the death of his father. He then went to St. Louis to embark in business for himself, but after a stay there of only a few months he struck out for the Illinois river country, whose settlement had then but recently been begun. The localities which he traveled (in 1833) were new and uncultivated, among which were Peoria and Tazewell counties, new among the richest and most populous districts of Illinois. This section was his home for four years. The lead mines of the Galena region next offered themselves as a field of enterprise. Here Mr. Conner spent twenty-one years in mining lead, principally in south-west Wisconsin and Iowa. He acquired an intimate and practical knowledge of the processes of mining but met with varied vicissitudes of fortune. It was during his residence in Wisconsin that he married Nancy Stonier, a native of the State of Pennsylvania.

In 1858 he returned to Randolph County, and settled within a quarter of a mile from the place of his birth, on land inherited from his father. Mr. and Mrs. Conner have had six children, of whom three are living, Harriet Louisa, Alice and Lucy. The oldest daughter, Harriet Louisa, was married to Charles Phegley, and now lives in Pettis County, Missouri.



Conner's General Merchandise Store, Prairie du Rocher



Conner Lumber Company, Prairie du Rocher

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### Prairie du Rocher Today

#### (CONCLUSION)

In summarizing or evaluating the history of Prairie du Rocher, one must note the impact that historical events and influences have made on present day, Prairie du Rocher. The community is today, as it was in the 1700's, basically an agricultural community. The farmers no longer live in the village, but they remain the basic economic factor in the village. The farm lands which surround Prairie du Rocher, are among the most fertile and bountiful soils in the world. Those lands are selling for prices of \$500.00 to \$700.00 an acre, compared to the prices of \$1.50 to \$4.00 an acre in 1859. The limestone bluffs, from which the French obtained stone for the construction of Fort Chartres, today provide livelihood for many of the villagers. The cemetery in which the inhabitants bury their dead in 1972 is the same one in which their ancestors buried their loved ones as early as 1722. The rock bluffs and the wide Mississippi River isolate the community from the outside world today, as they did in the early years. The mosquitos remain as numerous

and voracious as they were in 1839; and the damp, wet, unbearable, and unhealthy conditions return during the wet months. The population today is approximately 750, a gain of only 250 since 1859, over a hundred years ago. The old, distinctly French names such as Barbeau, Bievenue, Langlois, Louviere, De Rousse, and Duclos, still appear on the village registers, but the influence of the French is not limited to the inheritance of names. Over 90% of the residents today, belong to the Roman Catholic Church. The Church remains the center of the community. The majority of the villagers today, are complacent, contented, unambitious, good-natured, and happy-traits directly traceable to their ancestors. Most of the villagers remain to an amazing degree, as Montague described it, "free from that strife, contention, and turmoil, which attends the pursuit of wealth and political preferment." In order to observe this living historical heritage, one need only attend the annual church picnic, rendezvous, or witness the group of villagers dressed in 18th century costumes, on New Year's Eve, who move from house to house proclaiming the end of another year, in the old familiar words of the La-Gui-Annee.

### The Song of Prairie du Rocher (Le Chanson de Prairie du Rocher)

les francois m'ont donne' mon mon.  
 quand ils sont venus s'installer ici.  
 ils ont tranvaille', ils ont danse' ils ont joue'-  
 ils ont chante' des chansons gaies.  
 ils sont alles a la messe tous les dimonches (1722-1765)  
 et ont porte' leur croix avec patience.  
 je suis un petit village tranquille et croche'  
 mon mon est Prairie du Rocher.

(The French gave me my name;  
 when they came here to stay.  
 They worked, they danced, they played;  
 They sang happy songs.  
 They went to Mass every Sunday,  
 And bore their troubles with patience.  
 A small village quiet and hidden away -  
 My name is --- Prairie du Rocher.)

Then haughty British red coats came,  
 Tried to fetter me in chains.  
 So many from this tyranny did flee,  
 When the Union Jack replaced the fleur de lis. (1765-1779)  
 But a few staunch men chose to remain,  
 And for posterity preserve my name.  
 A small village quiet and hidden away -  
 My name is --- Prairie du Rocher.

Next the restless yankee came,  
 To play his little commercial game.  
 Many a change he wrought o'er my face,  
 Yet my natural beauty he could not erase.  
 But my sons in their complacent ways,  
 Accepted their fate, no resistance did raise. (1779- )  
 A small village quiet and hidden away -  
 My name is Prairie du Rocher.

Time goes on in its own exacting way,  
Still the hopes for fulfillment remain today.  
Despite the neglect through the years gone by,  
Traces of my historic past refuse to die.  
And the church's lofty spire so pure and fine,  
Ever reminds my children of things Divine.  
A small village quiet and hidden away -  
My name is --- Prairie du Rocher.

### Comment

Prairie du Rocher, the oldest, continuing and cohesive (town-like) settlement on the "Great River Road" and in Illinois has a rich heritage.

Certain dates are conflicting in sources due to terminology such as: erection, beginning, founded, claimed, terminated, ended, and completed. However, in 1959, Essayist Ernest E. East wrote to Father Theodore Sickmann, Pastor of the parish:

"Several years ago, when at Peoria, I wrote a brief essay on the claims of cities or towns to the title of 'the oldest town in Illinois'. It was published as a Historical Note in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society.

I gave the palm to Prairie du Rocher."

So while the world moved on after the end of the French in the North West Territory, Prairie du Rocher, Fort de Chartres, and the old cemetery lives on, the last vestige of the French empire in America.

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ON IT'S

250th Anniversary

The Village Trustees



(left to right) Theodore P. Fadler (Finance); Clyde Brewer; Cletus Menard (acting mayor); Theodore W. Fadler (Clerk); S.J. Lolan (past mayor); John Laurent (systems); Virgil Ray; Larry Durbin.



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*North County News*

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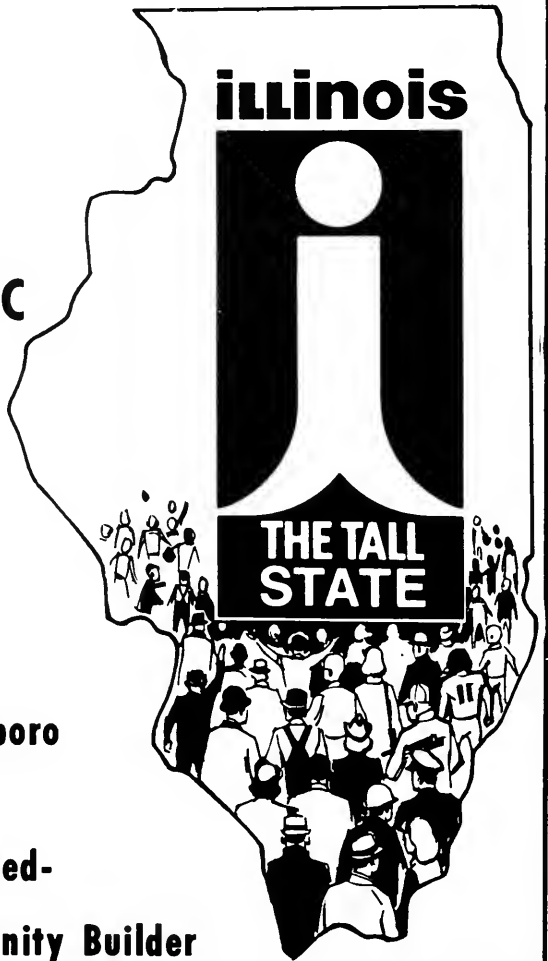
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DISTRICT NO. 134

**Prairie du Rocher, Illinois**

congratulates the town on it's 250th anniversary



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 SUSAN DOIRON  
 JAMES MODGLIN  
 TAMMY McBRIDE  
 DAVID TOCKSTEIN,  
 LAURA BROWN  
 GARY KREBEL  
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 ALICE NAEGER  
 BART LAWRENCE  
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 JEFF STONE  
 SHARON JUELFS  
 BRIAN MUDD  
 EVELYN FADLER  
 LYNDEN PRANGE  
 MR. ALBERT HENNRICH  
 (superintendent & teacher)

BRIAN HENNRICH  
 TERRY PORTER  
 not pictured -  
 CAROL BRUEGGEMANN  
 RICHARD BYRAM  
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# CONGRATULATIONS!

To Historic Prairie du Rocher on It's

250th Anniversary

6th grade

class org.

' 1971-1972



## Class Motto:

Teaching furnishes the mind only with materials of Knowledge; It is **THINKING** on our part that makes what we are taught ours!

RONALD DETERDING  
LINDA DINAN  
RICHARD KNIGHT  
ANITA NAEGER  
MICHAEL DONIUS  
DONNA RODENBERG  
STEVE RENNISON  
TERRY McBRIDE  
ANGELA REINHOLD  
GREGG FRAZER  
KIM RAY  
GARY JUELFS  
PAULINE ROY  
JOHN JOHNSON

ROSE ANN REINHOLD  
RONALD SCHNEIDER  
RONALD MOLLET  
PEGGY FAUSZ  
ROGER HOOTEN  
BRENDA PORTER  
STEVE PRANGE  
BRENDA DONJON  
DAVID SCHALLER  
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CONGRATULATIONS TO A GRAND OLD TOWN ON IT'S 250th ANNIVERSARY

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