

THE FILSON CLUB HISTORY QUARTERLY

VOL. 50

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, APRIL, 1976

NO. 2

LOUISVILLE'S FRENCH PAST

BY ROBERT A. BURNETT*

The French explorer, La Salle, was probably the first European to see the falls of the Ohio River and the future site of the city of Louisville during his expedition in 1669-1670. Like many early French visitors to the new world, La Salle was a transient; and after France surrendered most of its American empire to Spain and England by 1763, there were at best 80,000 French inhabitants scattered throughout the vast wilderness that had been New France. The impact of the French colonial interlude in North America seemed to be confined primarily to the largest French settlements along the Mississippi River in Louisiana and the St. Lawrence River in Canada.

The French Influence from Settlement to 1820

After the period of explorations the value of land development at the Ohio falls went unnoticed until 1773 when Dr. John Connolly of Pennsylvania requested and received a patent for 2,000 acres south of the falls as a reward for his services fighting the French in the French and Indian War. Connolly sent Captain Thomas Bullitt to survey the land grant. Captain Bullitt was the descendant of the French Huguenot, Benjamin Bullett, who changed the spelling of the family name from Bullett to Bullitt, after he arrived in Maryland in 1685 from Languedoc, France, following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had provided French Protestants religious toleration.

The Bullitt family moved from Maryland to Virginia and from there Thomas Bullitt crossed the mountains to survey Dr. Connolly's land and then continued his career as explorer, soldier, and friend of George Washington. But his son, Alexander Scott Bullitt, and his wife, Priscilla Christian, the niece of Patrick Henry, settled at Oxmoor Farm near Louisville in 1784. Before Alexander Bullitt's death in 1816, he had served as president of the Kentucky constitutional convention of

*ROBERT A. BURNETT, Ph.D., teaches history at the University of Louisville where he also serves as university ombudsman.

1799 and as the first lieutenant governor of the state. His son, William Christian Bullitt, and grandson, Thomas W. Bullitt, inherited Oxmoor Farm and continued the prominence of the family in the Louisville area.¹ This brief sketch of the Bullitt family is illustrative of the contributions of French Huguenot families who fled religious persecution at home, settled on the Atlantic coast, migrated to Kentucky and Louisville, and joined with Anglo-Saxon settlers to provide the backbone of the pioneer stock which transformed a frontier village into the city of Louisville.

After Bullitt's survey, the first settlers did not arrive at the falls of the Ohio until May 27, 1778. Led by General George Rogers Clark, they initially occupied Corn Island, but celebrated their first Christmas at their newly constructed fort on the mainland. Here these English settlers were joined in their celebration by Jean Nickle, a Frenchman who had stopped to repair his leaky boat before departing for Kaskaskia. Nickle entertained the party with his fiddle, playing dances then the rage in Paris, but these were too sophisticated for the pioneers unaccustomed to the music of a Paris salon. The evening was saved when Nickle gave the slave, Cato Watts, some strings to replace the worn ones on his fiddle and Watts enlivened the party with popular tunes of the frontier.² If the refinements of French culture were not well received at the first settlement at the Ohio falls, French settlers were.

Typical of the early French arrivals was Antoine Ganiem who moved from Kaskaskia in 1779 and constructed a log cabin on the corner of Main and Tenth streets which was noted for its unique French veranda on three sides and its grape vines in the yard. Like many of the early settlers Ganiem was involved in the defense of the region and was killed on an expedition against the Indians.³

In August 1784 Jean de Crevecoeur, a native of Normandy, arrived from New York. On his trip across the Allegheny Mountains he met another Frenchman, who knew no English and accompanied him to the falls of the Ohio. De Crevecoeur's companion had come to Philadelphia from France in 1783 to make his fortune, but had failed and was seeking a new start in Kentucky. In de Crevecoeur's judg-

¹ J. Stoddard Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville: First Settlement to the Year 1896* (2 vols.; Chicago: American Biographical Publishing Company, 1896), I, 366, 524 and II, 393, 414.

² Elvira S. Miller, "Louisville's First Christmas," *The Christmas Journal*, volume 3, number 3, 1901, pp. 1 and 5.

³ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 50. Ganiem's widow died of malaria in 1784 and in her death bed delirium announced she was never married to Ganiem. Unfortunately this was sufficient evidence for frontier law to deprive the Ganiem's thirteen year old daughter, Elenor, of her inheritance. The Ganiem property was eventually purchased by another Frenchman, John Tarascon of Shippingport, who donated it in 1811 as the land upon which the first church in Louisville was built.

ment, he had failed because he had been born into the rank of French society and had never been taught the meaning of work. After arriving in Louisville de Crevecoeur built a sawmill and employed his French companion in the hope that he would learn that in America it was more honorable to work than not to work.

De Crevecoeur's diary gives us a description of early Louisville. He noted with amazement that the town was not one of tents and huts but of spacious, well laid out streets and elegant, well painted two story houses. He counted sixty-three finished houses, thirty-seven in progress, twenty-two elevated without being enclosed, and over one hundred cabins. The community had great expectations. There was much talk of agricultural and commercial opportunities and a great interest in education especially the establishment of a university. He was also surprised to see one Sunday afternoon seventeen persons, the men in silk stockings and the women with parasols, enjoying a boat ride on the river. But most appealing was his discovery that in all families he met, there existed "a cordial and social harmony."⁴

This friendly settlement attracted Michael Lacassagne, a well educated and refined Frenchman. He rose to prominence as a wealthy merchant and served the community as a delegate to the Kentucky Convention in 1787, as a trustee of the town council, and as its first postmaster. He startled his neighbors by building as his home a French cottage with a veranda on three sides and a beautiful garden in the French tradition. His home became a popular rest stop for visitors to the settlement including Bishop Benedict Flaget, a native of Billom, France, who was entertained by Lacassagne in 1792.⁵ Lacassagne's home challenged the community to investigate new architectural styles and his French cottage was followed soon by the construction of the first brick and stone houses.

The settlement had in 1780 been named Louisville for the French King Louis XVI to honor the French alliance and to aid the American colonists during the revolution, and its growth seemed assured by its location at the falls which broke the voyage down the Ohio to the Mississippi. This strategic point attracted traders, indeed it was two Frenchmen, Messrs. Peter Tardiveau and John H. Honoré who established the first intercourse between the Monogahela River and New Orleans. Their first voyage in 1782 was marred by Indian raids and all of Tardiveau's cargo was plundered. Subsequent trips proved more profitable, and trade became established on a regular basis. These river

⁴ Jean de Crevecoeur, "History of Louisville," *Louisville Monthly Magazine*, Volume 1, number 1, January 1879, pp. 29-37; number 2, February 1879, pp. 78-83; and number 3, March 1879, pp. 121-125.

⁵ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 52, 54, 85.

pioneers eventually settled in Louisville and remained successful merchants until their deaths.⁶

Other Frenchmen were attracted to Louisville because of its business opportunities. Aaron Fontaine, for example, a French Huguenot, immigrated from Virginia with his family of twelve to Harrods Creek in 1796. Eventually he settled on land at the bend in the river west of Louisville which became known as Fontaine Ferry due to the busy boat landing owned by the family. Aaron's daughters married some of Louisville's most successful young men, Fortunatus Cosby, Edmund Bullock, Thomas Prather, Alexander Pope, George Rogers Clark Floyd, and John Jacob; and his son, James, became a well known Louisville tavern proprietor. Direct descendants of this family still live in Louisville and one member, Fontaine Fox, achieved national fame as the cartoonist of the "Toonerville Trolley."⁷

After 1789 another French element was introduced into the community—the French families driven from their homeland by the turbulent revolution which attacked the monarchy, the aristocracy, the Catholic church, and the wealthy bourgeoisie. One such émigré family, that of Joseph Barbaroux, settled first in the village of Harrods Creek. Here they built a red brick home and operated a flour mill in a stone building before moving into Louisville to pursue other business interests.⁸ While some émigrés from the revolution settled, others just passed through the area as did the Duc d'Orleans, Louis Philippe, the future citizen king of France in 1830 and his brothers the Duc de Montpensier and the Duc de Beaujois, who toured the Kentucky frontier in April 1797.⁹

The French settlement in Louisville reflected diverse backgrounds—colonists from New France, Huguenot refugees, Catholic priests, émigrés from the French Revolution—but the combined French influence had been felt in the town where Beargrass Creek flowed into the Ohio River. Indeed the French insisted that the creek itself had been named by early French settlers "Barre Grasse," meaning the large obstacle to navigation, the falls, south of the mouth of the creek.¹⁰

While Louisville was thriving, it was not to go unchallenged as the dominant settlement at the falls of the Ohio, and the biggest threat came from Shippingport. Shippingport was settled in 1806 by a group

⁶ *The Louisville Directory 1832* (Louisville: G. R. Clark Press, Reprint 1970), pp. 102-104; Ben Casseday, *The History of Louisville: From Its Earliest Settlement Till The Year 1852* (Louisville: Hull and Brother, 1852), p. 62.

⁷ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 52, 375-376; II, 385.

⁸ Lucian V. Rule, "Oldham County History," March 31, 1922, Barbaroux Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky).

⁹ Huntley Dupre, "The French in Early Kentucky," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, 15 (April, 1941), 85.

¹⁰ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 64.

of French families who had fled to America to escape the terror of the French Revolution. Their leaders, John and Louis Tarascon, left Tarascon on the Rhône River and landed at Philadelphia in 1798. Moving to Pittsburgh they established a shipbuilding and mercantile operation, but the Ohio falls proved an obstacle to western trade and the Tarascons sent their brother-in-law James Berthoud to purchase land south of the falls for a settlement. Berthoud, whose real name was Hervé de Belisle, Marquis de Saint Pierre, and whose wife, Julia, according to the family history, had been a lady in waiting for Marie Antoinette, purchased forty-five acres in 1803 and hired the French surveyer Valcour to lay out a town.

The Tarascons, meanwhile, had organized a group of French immigrant families including the Berthouds, another brother-in-law John Schrader, the Dr. James Offands, the widow Sardou, whose husband had died of yellow fever during the trip from France, the Avalonds, the Fouches, and the Cerfs to move to Kentucky. They arrived in 1806 and named their settlement Shippingport because all goods had to be carried, or in French *porté* from the head to the foot of the falls and vice versa. In addition to their commercial operations, the Tarascons opened a flour mill in 1807, and the community rapidly became a busy port under the direction of its trustees Nicholas Berthoud, James Berthoud's son, Anthony Maquille, William Maquille, Fortunatus Cosby, and Thomas Prather.¹¹

From 1810 to 1820 Shippingport rivaled Louisville as the most important port in Kentucky. Its population exploded from 98 in 1810 to over 500 in 1820. All shipping from Louisville had to be hauled overland to Shippingport for transportation west and south, and salt from the mines on the Salt River was delivered to Shippingport for shipment to New Orleans. In 1813 the first steamboat arrived at Shippingport and on July 7, 1820, thirty-three were docked at the port while others were being repaired on the beaches of Sand Island.¹² Shippingport's success was largely attributed to the enterprising Tarascons who combined a strange mixture of practical business sense, speculation, and idealism which was eventually to lead to failure.

The Tarascons in partnership with the Berthouds had owned six mercantile and shipping operations in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Louis-

¹¹ Mary Verhoeff, "Shippingport," undated manuscript, Mary Verhoeff Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky), pp. 2-3; Ernestine Levi, "Traditions of Shippingport," March 7, 1921, Ernestine Levi Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky) pp. 1-4; Henry McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs* (Louisville: G.R. Clark Press, Reprint 1969), p. 158; John J. Crnkovich, "Tarascon Junr., James Berthoud and Co. and the Development of Shippingport, Kentucky" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Louisville, 1959), p. 2.

¹² Joseph Barbaroux to Martin Picquet, Louisville, July 7, 1820, Barbaroux Papers.

ville, and Shippingport. In 1807 after some unexpected losses of ships and a personal disagreement between the Tarascons and Berthouds, the partnership was dissolved.¹³ The Berthouds turned to less speculative business dealings and the Tarascons continued in shipping and began plans for a new and enlarged flour mill.

The new Tarascon mill was completed in 1817 and was considered at that time to be one of the largest and most modern in the United States. It had taken seven years to clear away the trees on the building site and under one of the felled trees, approximately one hundred and fifty years old, was discovered an old iron hatchet, an artifact no doubt from some early exploration, possibly that of La Salle. Construction of the six story, 102 feet tall, stone mill took two years and when finished it was furnished with the finest and most expensive new equipment, some of which was purchased in France. Water brought from the Ohio in a large flume provided the source of energy for turning out five hundred barrels of flour a day much of which was shipped to New Orleans. The mill, constructed at a cost of \$150,000, became the symbol of Shippingport's success.¹⁴

The Tarascons continued to promote Shippingport and encouraged other French refugees to move to the town which was becoming a charming French community bound together by language and culture. It was not, however, a closed society; indeed John Tarascon sold one of his Shippingport lots to Sarah Porter, the mother of Jim Porter, the Kentucky Giant.¹⁵

John Tarascon's home was one of the most elegant in Shippingport and was noted for its famous rope-walk, a long covered room where ropes were made. It was the focal point of Shippingport society and hosted many visitors including Bishop Flaget and Father Stephen Badin, originally from Orleans, France. It was thought to be one of the houses used by Aaron Burr, Harman Blennerhassett, and James Wilkinson to plot the "Spanish Conspiracy," an enigmatic adventure in disunion or

¹³ E. Montule, *A Voyage to North America and the West Indies in 1817* (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1821), p. 77; Crnkovich, "Tarascon Junr., James Berthoud and Co. and the Development of Shippingport, Kentucky," pp. 18-20.

¹⁴ McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville*, pp. 87, 96, 163-164; Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 72; Montule, *A Voyage to North America and the West Indies in 1817*, p. 78. To suggest that the hatchet discovered at the site of the Tarascon mill was left by the La Salle expedition raises the question of whether La Salle actually reached the falls of the Ohio. Since La Salle's maps and journals disappeared before they could be transcribed, the claim is debatable. The majority of scholars believe that La Salle did reach the falls in 1670 while seeking a route to China. See Henry Putney Beers, *The French and British in the Old Northwest: A Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964), p. 2. For the argument that La Salle never reached the Ohio River during the 1669-1670 expedition see Charles Kerr, *History of Kentucky* (5 vols.; Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1922), I, 47.

¹⁵ Crnkovich, "Tarascon Junr., James Berthoud and Co. and the Development of Shippingport, Kentucky," p. 28.

land speculation out west.¹⁶ This is unlikely since Burr was in Louisville in 1805, the year before Shippingport was settled. The Tarascons were more than hospitable; they were generous and public spirited. They promoted the improvement of transportation locally, circulated nationally a letter calling for the construction of wagon roads to the west, urged the building of a canal around the Ohio falls, and requested the United States Congress to lend funds for the building of a local hospital. At their own expense, the Tarascons financed the clearing of the important channel by Sand Island in the Ohio. Louis Tarascon also sold his fine set of surveyor's instruments to the Louisville trustees in 1818, and they became the standard for testing all other such instruments for years. John Tarascon, a faithful Catholic, donated the property in Louisville on which the first permanent church in the area was constructed in 1811.¹⁷

If French laymen were instrumental in developing the towns at the Ohio falls, it was courageous French priests, especially Stephen Badin, Benedict Flaget, and John David, who established and maintained Catholicism in frontier Kentucky. The French immigration into the area had, the priests thought, warranted the building of a church, but despite the concentration of French in Shippingport the first church was built in Louisville. A letter of Charles Nerinckx, a Flemish priest, describing the French in 1807 may explain in part the reason. Nerinckx noted that trade and wickedness dominated the society of the area and singled out the French as "the worst portion of the people, and few catechisms in the language are bought, few confessions heard, but plenty of curses uttered. There is, however, an old French dragoon of ninety years who goes monthly to his duty."¹⁸

Father Badin was more optimistic than Nerinckx and had been urging Bishop Flaget as early as 1805 to provide Louisville with a permanent priest. Badin visited the French community almost monthly from 1806 to 1811 and working with John Tarascon and the "virtuous Mrs. Tarascon" they began plans for a church. Badin's confidence was confirmed for although contributions were made by the community generally, most of the \$2,100 in subscriptions for the church came from French Catholic families—the Tarascons, Berthouds, Offands, Raymonds, Gilleys, Honorés, De Gallons, Cirodes, Du Ponts, Perots, Col-

¹⁶ Newman F. McGirt, "Tarascon of Shippingport at the Falls of the Ohio," *West Virginia History*, VII (January, 1942), 95; Kerr, *History of Kentucky*, I, 434-456.

¹⁷ McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville*, p. 160; Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 67; Crnkovich, "Tarascon Junr., James Berthoud and Co. and the Development of Shippingport, Kentucky," pp. 22, 36.

¹⁸ Quoted in Sara Ann Buetenbach, "The Development of the Catholic Church in Louisville" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Louisville, 1941), p. 11; Ben J. Webb, *Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky* (Louisville: Charles A. Rogers, 1884), p. 290.

mesnls, and Audubons. St. Louis Church, named for the pious French king, Louis IX, was dedicated in 1811. The congregation was three to one French and its first trustees were Father Badin, who also continued as priest until 1817, John Tarascon and two non-Catholics, Worden Pope and John Gwathmey. Guy Ignatius Chabrat, from Chambre, France, the first priest ordained by Bishop Flaget, replaced Badin as priest in 1817.¹⁹

If Shippingport was too lax in its faith to claim the first Catholic church, its fame as a center of secular delights was spreading rapidly. An English traveler, Mr. E. Montule, arrived on board the *Vesuvius* from New Orleans on June 16, 1817, and noted in his diary, "I landed, and presented a letter of introduction to M. Tarascon, the richest inhabitant here, by whom I was perfectly well received." Shippingport, he continued, contained "some pretty detached houses, for the most part brick, the proprietors nearly all French, perfectly at their ease."²⁰ Henry McMurtrie's *Sketches of Louisville*, published in 1819, described Shippingport as the "Bois de Bouloigne" of the area, and its resort atmosphere attracted all classes on Sundays and holidays.

The town had many beautiful parks and gardens but by far the most popular was Elm Tree Garden where a race course drew large crowds. But marbles and craps were also popular pastimes and wagers often fought over the outcome. Wells supplied Shippingport's drinking water and distilled water was provided those who preferred it, but the *pièce de résistance* was the Napoleon Distillery which offered guests the finest European liqueurs.²¹ Shippingport's entertainments were enjoyed by all, but some special occasions were reserved primarily for the French community, such as the wedding festivities of Adelaide Offand and Francis Lacouturie in March 1809²²

French was spoken as a second language in the Louisville-Shippingport communities and a Professor F. Lauzin advertised in the Louisville *Western Courier* on August 28, 1812, French language instruction at ten dollars per quarter for those taking lessons in their own home and, for the bargain hunter, lessons were offered at eight dollars per quarter for those willing to meet in groups. The French atmosphere in the communities at the falls continued to attract French settlers and visitors. The prominent botanist, Constantine Rafinesque, settled in Shippingport for several years before joining the faculty of Transylvania Uni-

¹⁹ Webb, *Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*, pp. 289-290, 450-451.

²⁰ Montule, *A Voyage to North America and the West Indies in 1817*, p. 77.

²¹ McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville*, pp. 161-162; Levi, "Traditions of Shippingport," pp. 7-8.

²² Gabriel Dizay Diary, March 9, 1809, Dizay Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky).

versity in 1818. His explorations of the falls of the Ohio resulted in the first serious scientific study of the area.²³

The French resident who gained the most fame was, of course, John J. Audubon. In 1807 he journeyed to Louisville with a friend, Ferdinand Rozier, and together they opened a general store. The business prospects pleased him, and he brought his wife, the sister-in-law of James Berthoud, to Louisville where their son, Victor, was born at Gwathney's Indian Queen Hotel in 1809. These years at the falls were generally happy ones for Audubon, and he wrote, "I shot, I drew, I looked on nature only."²⁴

While the number of pictures in his portfolios increased to several hundred, Audubon's business failed, and in 1819 he was briefly incarcerated in the Louisville jail for debt and was released only after declaring himself bankrupt. He moved to Henderson, Kentucky, for several years, where again he failed in business and returned to Louisville to reside with Nicholas Berthoud. For income he painted landscape panels for river boats and portraits, including those of the Berthoud family which presently hang in Louisville's Speed Museum. When business was very slow, he painted street signs. His son worked for the Berthoud's counting house to supplement the family income. In March 1824 Audubon left Louisville for Philadelphia, a business failure, but a confirmed ornithologist.²⁵ The origins of Audubon's *The Birds of America* had begun in Louisville.

The French Impact—1820 to 1860

As Louisville and Shippingport continued their race to become Kentucky's gateway to the south and the west in the 1820s, Portland emerged as a rival to both during this decade. The town of Portland was settled in 1814 by Frenchmen from Alsace who built the first wharf and village.²⁶ The new town became an immediate rival to Shippingport only a half mile away since its port was larger, and the first major road linking Louisville, Shippingport, and Portland was completed in 1818 making it just as convenient to transport goods from Louisville to Portland as to Shippingport.

The major development affecting the three communities in the 1820s was the construction of a canal around the falls. Both Portland and Louisville enthusiastically supported the project and even though the

²³ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 9-10, 84.

²⁴ Francis Hobart Herrick, *Audubon the Naturalist: A History of His Life and Time* (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton-Century, Co., 1938), I, 186-196.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 325-327; Casseday, *The History of Louisville*, p. 155.

²⁶ McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville*, p. 164; Casseday, *The History of Louisville*, p. 137; Mary Verhoeff, "Portland," undated manuscript, Mary Verhoeff Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 3.

canal separated Shippingport from the mainland thus making it an island, Louis Tarascon vigorously promoted the plan. The Kentucky legislature approved the project in 1825 and the canal was officially opened in 1830.

During the canal's construction, Mr. Lapham, one of the engineers on the project, resided in Shippingport and kept a diary of his experience for the years 1826 to 1830. He was impressed by the charm of the French community and established a close friendship with Victor Audubon, who had remained in Shippingport after his father departed. Lapham and Audubon spent much of their leisure time together hunting in the woods or collecting various specimens, for Victor, like his father, was a naturalist. Audubon also gave Lapham drawing lessons and loaned the visitor books from his library. Another Frenchman, Mr. d'Etiste, who operated a popular inn opposite Lapham's boarding house, befriended the engineer who in turn leveled a lot near the canal in 1829, where d'Etiste planned to construct an amphitheater. Occasionally Lapham was invited to dine with James Berthoud, then the postmaster. On one visit he met the United States Engineer, Mr. Beauford, who reviewed Lapham's plans for locks and bridges on the canal. Although Berthoud proved to be a valuable contact, Lapham complained in his diary that when Berthoud was absent from the community no mail was available.

Lapham witnessed the excitement of the presidential election of 1828, especially in the lively discussions at the d'Etiste Inn, where the Jackson Democrats were in a majority. Indeed when General Jackson arrived at the Ohio falls in January 1829 on his way to Washington, the community provided the new president an enthusiastic welcome.

Lapham particularly enjoyed his visits to the New Albany, Indiana shipyards where in August 1829, he counted at the foot of the falls, ten steamboats at Shippingport, seventeen at Portland, and ten at New Albany. These figures reflect the relative decline of commerce at Shippingport, and when the canal was completed the community's diminishing importance intensified and the migration of inhabitants to Portland and to Louisville began.²⁷

The Tarascon enterprises were also in trouble after being dealt a severe blow by the national financial crisis of 1819. By 1825 John Tarascon was penniless and had to sell his flour mill to a friend, Joseph Barbaroux, upon whom Tarascon became dependent for support. John Tarascon's misfortunes both financial and personal, his wife had died in 1820, appear to have motivated his suicide in 1825, but his brother

²⁷ Increase Allen Lapham Diary 1826-1830, enlargement of microfilm (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky), February 19, May 9, August 4 and 6, October 12, December 25, 1828 and January 22, April 27, May 29, August 5, 1829.

Louis continued the fight to restore the family fortune which focused on regaining control of the mill. In desperation he stole a key to the mill and barricaded himself inside. When Barbaroux tried by force to retake the mill, Tarascon accidentally shot him. Barbaroux was only slightly wounded, and the battle was continued in the courts which awarded the property to the Tarascon children if they paid Barbaroux \$2,800 for the improvements he had made to the mill. But the mill simply failed to compete with the new steam mills operating in Louisville and the Tarascons were unable to make the payment. By 1834 they had lost all rights to property in Shippingport.²⁸

Disillusioned by the family losses in Shippingport, Louis Tarascon turned to utopian socialism for escape. Holding to his dream of building a wagon road across the country to the Columbia River, he began plans for a series of new towns along the proposed road naming the first Startspoint and the last Perfection. These communities were modeled after Robert Owen's experiment in New Harmony, Indiana, which Tarascon had visited, and were to be communal settlements where celibacy was to be "guarded against by early and other marriages." These aspirations were dashed when national enthusiasm for canal building reduced interest in wagon roads.²⁹

The decline of the Tarascon empire paralleled the commercial decline of Shippingport. But the death blow to the French community was a devastating flood in 1832 which virtually demolished the town, leaving only the house of John Tarascon standing as a stark reminder of the town's former charm. After the flood, most of the French families moved to Portland, but a few, like the Berthouds, settled in Louisville. The former "Bois de Bouloigne" now became the home of fishermen and of workers in the cement factory built on the island. Elm Tree Garden became a city dump.

In the 1830s Louisville won the race for dominance at the Ohio falls and by 1852 had incorporated Portland and Shippingport into its city limits. If the "Robber Town," as some citizens of Shippingport and Portland called Louisville, had triumphed, well into the 1840s the canal highway linking Louisville and its western suburbs remained unsafe, for the "Gentlemen of the Road" continued to rob individuals and coaches which traveled between the three settlements on the river. This barrier to communication helped Portland maintain its identity as a separate community, and the French influence remained strong there.

²⁸ Crnkovich, "Tarascon Junr., James Berthoud and Co. and the Development of Shippingport, Kentucky," pp. 46-56. The mill was eventually purchased by the Louisville Cement Company and used to grind cement until a fire destroyed it on August 29, 1892. Webb, *Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*, p. 290.

²⁹ McGirr, "Tarascon of Shippingport at the Falls of the Ohio," p. 98.

Portland had the distinction of having built the first tramway or street car line in the nation and before it was incorporated into the Louisville system, two of its three managers were Frenchmen, Messrs. Letelle and Dupont.³⁰ Portland also proudly claimed the St. Charles Hotel, the most prominent and tasteful in the area and considered the precursor of Louisville's Galt House. The French style and charm of the St. Charles was attributed to its owner and operator, Charles Maquaire, a native of Paris and one of the early settlers of Portland.³¹

Portland continued to receive French settlers until the late 1830s when the immigration abruptly ceased. Among the new inhabitants from France were Charles Desmouzon, who operated a general store; Henry Dacquet, employed by Charles Maquaire in his mercantile business; August Bary, a tailor; Paul Villier, initially a clothier and owner of a coffee house before joining Charles Maquaire in the mercantile business and succeeding him as operator of the St. Charles Hotel; Martin Nippert, a former school teacher who sold boating supplies; and Louis Fosse, a merchant who had been in Napoleon Bonaparte's bridge builders corps and had survived the general's disastrous march to Moscow. Indeed Fosse returned to France for a visit in the 1850s and was decorated for his military service to France by Emperor Napoleon III.

The new arrivals often intermarried with the French in Portland thus maintaining the homogeneity of the French community. For example, Henry Dacquet married Charles Maquaire's niece Malvina Payelle, Nicholas Albert married Anna Hoin, Justin Nippert married Augusta Bary, Charles Desmouzon married Mary Lambermont, and Paul Villier married Thaise Maquaire.³²

The Frenchmen of Portland were primarily concerned with the commercial and mercantile activities of the community. Some women also found a place in the business world, for example, Mrs. Cerf's popular millinery, "My Ladies Chapeau," provided the latest fashion in the French style.³³ But despite these secular concerns of Portland's French, a growing interest in building a Catholic church developed. As in the case of building the St. Louis Church in Louisville, Father Badin organized the movement, established a parish and brought Father Napoleon Perche, a native of Angers, France, from New Orleans in 1839 to be the first priest. The first committee of management for the new church included three French businessmen, Charles Maquaire, Louis

³⁰ Ernestine Levi, "Traditions of Portland," May 6, 1907, Ernestine Levi Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky), pp. 39-40. *Courier-Journal* (Louisville (Louisville)), May 12, 1935.

³¹ John A. Lyons and Michael K. Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port—Louisville, Kentucky: History of the Parish, 1839-1964* (Louisville: n.p., 1964), pp. 12, 19, 70; Levi, "Traditions of Portland," p. 13.

³² Lyons and Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port*, pp. 21, 52, 70-71.

³³ Levi, "Traditions of Portland," p. 25.

Fosse, and Eugene Perrot, a dry goods merchant born in Lacote, France. The fourth member of the committee, Mr. Bannon, represented the new Irish immigrants which were moving to Portland. The committee made plans for a church, which was named Notre Dame du Port, and began collecting funds for its construction. Three thousand dollars was subscribed, two-thirds from Portland's Catholic community mostly French and one-third from sympathetic Catholics in New Orleans. The new church was formally dedicated by Bishop Flaget on October 3, 1841.³⁴

The sermons at Notre Dame were originally given in French during which the Irish members of the congregation went outside to smoke. The church records were also maintained in English and French "in order that nobody could be ignorant of them."³⁵ The first baptism at Notre Dame was of Joseph Jacquemin Lambermont and the first funeral was of Xavier Marchand. The initial communion class consisted of Gilles Lambermont, Francis and Gabriel Bary, Henry Hubert, James Novier, Francis Gilardin, Louis Chamagne, Lawrence Albert, Michael and Sigisbert Reynaud, Arnold Gassain, Claudius Cordier, and John, Peter, and Louis Fosse. Only young Gustave Vantrat failed to be confirmed. Among the young girls confirmed were Victoria Bary, Louisa Chamagne, Julia Gilardin, Ann Mary Hubert, Mary Lambermont, Josephine Cordier, Ann Compagnon, Mary Fosse, and a Swiss descendant, Mary Portman.³⁶

Father Perche did not take to the frontier life in Kentucky after the refinements of New Orleans and was replaced by Father Evremond Harissart, an ascetic priest originally from Paris, who served from May 1842 to January 1843. Father Jean Vetalle, a native of Montpellier, replaced him and served for eighteen years. Father Vetalle's reputation spread throughout the area and even Indiana settlers came to hear "Le bon cure." He held cosmopolitan church retreats where French, English, and German were spoken, and his missionary work extended to Bullitt and Hardin counties. On May 6, 1845, he recorded in the Baptismal Register an interesting note reflecting the breadth of his ministry: "I baptized a colored man by the name of Dic, belonging to Mr. Colmesnil, . . . near Shepherdsville. He was forty years old. He died the 9th of this month."³⁷

The French community was as interested in education as in religion. Indeed the French of Shippingport had built a school for their community but after the 1832 flood it was moved to Portland and located

³⁴ Lyons and Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port*, p. 46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 56-57.

on Missouri Avenue near Thirty-fourth Street. Mr. Lincoln was the first schoolmaster of the Portland school which was a day school for French children, a night school for French adults, and on Sundays a Methodist church for Rev. Butterfield's congregation.³⁸

To serve the French community's educational needs, Bishop Flaget in 1842 permitted the Sisters of Loretto to open, across the street from Notre Dame, St. Benedict's Academy, popularly called Cedar Grove Academy. It quickly established a reputation as one of the finest girls schools in the region and according to the Catholic Almanac of 1843 provided instruction in reading, rhetoric, composition, botany, natural philosophy, astronomy, mythology, mental philosophy, chemistry, fancy needle work, lace work, and bead work. The academy became Loretto High School in 1925.

The young French boys were trained to meet the business opportunities of the bustling port and with considerable success. Nicholas Commandoux, originally a ship's carpenter, built and operated a major shipyard in Portland, Martin Nippert developed a thriving business in ship supplies, and J. D. Colmesnil of Louisville owned one of the largest warehouses near the docks.³⁹ The Portland wharf was the focal point of the community, and the French assumed a major responsibility for keeping it modern and in good repair. When the city treasury was short of funds for repairs they were loaned by Paul Villier, Charles Maquaire, and A. Vatable; the city's civil engineer, William de Bra, supervised the remodeling and repair work; and J. B. Boulanger, Francis Lenoir, Victor Bary, Anthony Mangin, A. B. Dazy, and August and Peter David provided the labor.⁴⁰

Portland's seven-member Board of Trustees was responsible for maintaining the community's wharf, school, market, and roads; for providing public safety and sanitation services; and for licensing businesses, a key source of revenue. Prominent Frenchmen had served on the board from its beginning, most notably Nicholas Commandoux and John Millet, and indeed, they often held a majority of the positions. In 1842-1843 Nicholas Albert, August Bary, Charles Maquaire, and John Millet held four of the seven seats, and in 1851-1852 August Bary, Phillip Dupré, Paul Villier, and Nicholas Albert, who was also chairman, were trustees.⁴¹

The trustees demonstrated great interest in the public school and paid for the services of August Reynaud, Anthony Mangin, Martin

³⁸ Levi, "Traditions of Portland," pp. 33-35.

³⁹ Lyons and Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port*, pp. 55, 62; Verhoeff, "Portland," pp. 2-3, 5.

⁴⁰ *Town of Portland, Trustees Minutes, 1842-1852* (Archives, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky), pp. 33, 225, 245, 274, 301, 385, 436, 438.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 438.

Nippert, Anthony Mongie, Victor Bary, and Mr. Vanmetre, all Frenchmen, to keep its bell, benches, bookcases, windows, gates, and privies in good repair.⁴² It took its task of hiring the school's teachers most seriously, indeed it discharged one "on account of her not speaking the english [sic] language plainly and not possessing the faculty of good government in her school."⁴³ However, the trustees were quite pleased with the services of the two French women hired as teachers, Miss Mary Hubert and Mrs. Susan Merchant.⁴⁴ The school also served public functions, but with conditions. The Portland Musical Association, for example, was granted permission to use the building after school hours provided "no riotous or disorderly conduct should be allowed."⁴⁵

An increasing problem for the trustees from 1842 to 1852 was law and order. In 1848 the office of town marshall was established on the motion of John Millet. In addition to enforcing the laws, the marshall was charged with the "authority to cause the cleansing of all the allies [sic], privies, cellars, and back-yards, which in his opinion need cleansing, and to order the removal of all nuisances, and of all matter, either animal or vegetable, which can affect the health of the citizens of Portland." The trustees then faced the difficult problem of employing an honest marshall, a position, incidentally, for which no Frenchman ever applied. Some in the French community, however, did find themselves in violation of the law. Mr. Fosse was charged with not keeping his property clean; August Bary, with keeping a disorderly coffee house; Edward Fouget with operating a business without a license; and William A. Carmigey with breaking the peace.⁴⁶

A major source of the town's revenue came from classifying and licensing business; this process revealed the diverse occupations of the French community in Portland. Grocery licenses were awarded to Matthias Gaquemin, Paul, Nicholas, and Mrs. Nicholas Villier, Gabriel Payelle, Charles Desmouzon, and Mrs. Perse.⁴⁷ A drug store license was given A. Delime.⁴⁸ Paul Villier and Charles Maquaire were provided licenses to operate iron stores.⁴⁹ Dry goods businesses were licensed by Mr. Persett, Victor Bary, Charles Maquaire, and Paul Villier.⁵⁰ Coffee house licenses were given John B. Lonjenate, Victor Bary, and Messrs. Fosse, Delaporte, and Reynaud.⁵¹ Licenses to operate wagons were taken

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 60, 137, 214, 239, 271, 274, 385, 416.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 336.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259, 287, 292, 437, 460.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 140, 143, 171, 191, 308, 484.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 288.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 218, 288.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 287, 380, 443, 460.

out by Bernard Nippert, Charles Demonier, Georges Burdelier, Georges Strumier, and Nicholas Villier.⁵² Phillip Dupré and Marx Hongre were sold huckster or peddler licenses.⁵³

The town's income was allocated for services: the wharf, the school, the marshall, and in 1847 to pay the Frenchman, Anthony Mongie, to build a town market-house "after the pattern of the lower Market-house in Louisville" with a five foot high fence "sufficiently strong to prevent the intrusion of animals." Other funds were provided for street and turnpike repairs and miscellaneous other services which were often provided by Frenchmen, Martin Morrez, Victor Bary, Anthony Mongie, Gilles Hubert, Andrew Vert, and Messrs. Hulett and Le Blanc, for example.⁵⁴

If most of the town's services were for the living, some were for the dead. The community's chief undertakers, coffin makers, and graveyard keepers were two Frenchmen, Anthony Mangin and Anthony Mongie.⁵⁵ Some funerals, such as Charles Maquaire's in 1853, were still in the French manner with the casket carried from the home to the church and finally to the cemetery.⁵⁶ Today one of the best reminders of the French settlement in Portland is the Portland Cemetery with its surviving gravemarkers with the names Albert, Caillot, Delime, Millet, Verlet, Villier.

One of the most impressive buildings in Portland by mid-century was the Marine Hospital, a fine example of Doric architecture on High Street near the river. The hospital was free and maintained at the expense of the United States Government for needy retirees of maritime and naval service, which aided the many river boat captains who chose to reside in Portland. This tribute to the influence of Portland had been constructed in 1849 but by 1851 the Louisville, Frankfort, and Lexington Railroad was completed and this proved to be the death knell to Portland as a major commercial center. The rapid increase of Irish and German immigrants to Portland diminished its French flavor.

While Portland still retained the largest concentration of French families, Louisville's French community was playing a significant role in its growth and development between 1820 and 1860. The most important social occasion during this period was the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to Louisville in May 1825. Of course this was a community affair, not just a French one, but the French played a major role in planning the celebration. Louis Tarascon served on the welcom-

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 442, 448, 452.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 353.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 353.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 203, 220, 226, 239, 324, 327, 346.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 131, 155, 240, 245.

⁵⁶ Lyons and Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port*, p. 20.

ing committee and J. D. Colmesnil served on the city's board of trustees, which appropriated the largest sum to date for a public reception—\$200. Lafayette's visit was a gala event with schools dismissed and young girls dressed in white, strewing rose petals along the Marquis' path through the streets.⁵⁷

Such occasions were, of course, rare and everyday life was more mundane. Economically the French in Louisville were involved mostly in shipping, mercantile and financial affairs with Honoré, Tardiveau, Colmesnil, and Berthoud the best known. In addition M. Hugonin erected a sawmill near the river, the French firm of Twis and Barbaroux owned a hydraulic foundry on Washington Street at Floyd Street, and C. I. and A. V. Du Pont operated a paper mill on Twelfth Street near the river. John Colmesnil was a member of the first planning committee for building a bridge across the Ohio River. James Berthoud was instrumental in incorporating the second insurance firm in the state and the first in Louisville and in chartering the first bank of Kentucky. His son, Nicholas, was a charter member of the Louisville and Portland Canal Company. William Fontaine Bullock, a descendant of French Huguenot stock, was prominent in helping form the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, and Messrs. Bidermann, Du Pont, and S. M. Lamont were organizers of the Louisville Board of Trade.

The oldest financial institution still in existence in Louisville today, the Liberty National Bank and Trust Company, was originally called the German Insurance Company when incorporated in the 1850s. Despite its name, the first president, Jacob Laval, was a member of the French community who had previously been "a distiller of alcohol and pure spirits and dealer in foreign and domestic liquors." Less famous Frenchmen but equally important in providing community services were the grocer Barenne Veret, the shoemaker Alexander Poillon, the baker John Falloure, and a bank employee, M. Julien, who became a local hero overnight when he caught a bank robber in the act and singlehandedly apprehended him.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Casseday, *The History of Louisville*, p. 155; Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 68; McGirr, "Tarascon of Shippingport at the Falls of the Ohio," pp. 99-100. On his way to Louisville from Nashville on May 9, 1825, Lafayette was forced to abandon ship and swim to shore when his ship, the *Mechanic*, hit Rock Island and sank. Local traditions disagree as to whether the Marquis swam to the Kentucky or to the Indiana shore. Nevertheless he was on the Indiana side of the river when another boat picked him up for the remaining portion of his trip to Louisville. William J. Morison, "The Ohio River: Architect of Southern Indiana History," unpublished manuscript, October 1, 1973 (Archives, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 33.

⁵⁸ McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville*, p. 135; *Louisville Directory 1832*; Casseday, *The History of Louisville*, pp. 198-199; Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 100, 249, 304, 321; R.C. Riebel, *Louisville Panorama: A Visual History of Louisville* (Louisville: Liberty National Bank and Trust Co., 1954) p. 199. Scattered in The Filson Club manuscript collection indicate these French businessmen maintained contact with other Frenchmen in Philadelphia, St. Louis, New Orleans, and in the French Society of Tumbichee settlement in Alabama.

The French played a relatively minor role in Louisville politics although from time to time one would be elected to the city's governing board. As noted earlier French culture did not thrive in early Louisville and with the city's growth, economic concerns continued to predominate over cultural interests. Consequently a French society and culture as such, which so influenced New Orleans, did not take root in Louisville. Of course the French community had remained small and probably never exceeded more than one thousand persons at one time.

Educational developments did interest Louisville and its French. However, McMurtrie's history noted that "the grand object" of education was to teach one "to know how to make money."⁵⁹ Still William Fontaine Bullock, who represented Louisville in the state legislature in 1838, personally drafted and secured passage by his advocacy of the act which created a system of common schools throughout Kentucky.⁶⁰

The violent anti-foreign Know-Nothing movement of the 1850s had no grievance with the French, who were accepted members of the community by this time, and leveled its attack on the recent German and Irish immigrants to Louisville, culminating in the Bloody Monday riots in 1855. Indeed by 1860 the French remained active but increasingly assimilated members of the Louisville community. The 1852 census figures listed in Ben Casseday's history include no first generation French, but cite over 18,000 Germans in a total population of 51,726.⁶¹

The Last 100 Years: French Contributions and Assimilation

The Civil War divided the loyalties of Louisvillians as it had divided the loyalties of the nation. French descendants in Louisville fought for the Union and for the Confederacy but most must have shared some pride that "Louisville's most outstanding military hero," according to Robert McDowell in *City of Conflict*, was a Kentuckian of French descent, General Lovell Harrison Rousseau.⁶²

Rousseau was born in Lincoln County in 1818 and was left on his own at fifteen after his father died. His first job was breaking rock on the Lexington-Lancaster turnpike project. He came to Louisville and though largely self-educated, studied law and in 1840 was admitted to the bar in Indiana. He served as a member of the Indiana Legislature in 1844-1845 and was elected to the Indiana Senate after serving as a company commander in the Mexican War. He returned to Louis-

⁵⁹ McMurtrie, *Sketches of Louisville*, p. 125.

⁶⁰ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 231.

⁶¹ Casseday, *The History of Louisville*, p. 247.

⁶² Robert E. McDowell, *City of Conflict: Louisville in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Louisville: Civil War Roundtable, 1962), p. 186.

ville in 1849 and became a popular trial lawyer and a senator in the Kentucky Legislature.

Rousseau was appointed Brigadier General of the Louisville home guard, and when the Civil War began he rallied Union men to his banner as the commander and organizer of the famous "Louisville Legion" or 5th Kentucky Infantry. He was promoted to Major General after the Battle of Perryville and fought in the major engagements in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. After the war he was elected a United States Congressman from Kentucky, but lost a close race for the United States Senate to Louisville's James Guthrie in the state legislature. He remained an active Radical Republican until his death in 1869.⁶³

In Portland Paul Villier led the French supporters of the Union and personally outfitted a unit called the "Villier Guard." But many French descendants were loyal southerners. Indeed Martin Nippert spent a short term in jail for his rebel sympathies, and Minnie Nippert, the organist at Notre Dame du Port, once created a near riot after mass by playing "Dixie" on the organ. Not far from Notre Dame was Greenbush, a swampy marsh now a part of Shawnee Golf Course, which served as a depot for Confederate mail and volunteers heading south.⁶⁴

After the Union was preserved, a spirit of new nationalism accompanied by confidence in the country's industrial growth engulfed the United States. Ethnic origins became less important, and Louisville's French descendants faded into the expanding population of the city. French descendants continued to make their mark in Louisville history but the story is one more than ever of personalities, for the French community, as such, was widely dispersed. J. Stoddard Johnston's *Memorial History of Louisville*, published in 1896, listed 481 biographies of Louisvillians and though the preponderance claimed Anglo-Saxon ancestry, of those who could trace their ancestry to Europe, 55 claimed to be of French stock, 3 more claimed some French blood, and 4 were married to French women. Of the other Europeans there were 47 Germans, 10 Dutch, 4 Swiss, and 2 Swedes. Louisville still maintained one direct contact with France, a French consular office located at Preston and Lafayette streets, but the French impact on Louisville was still largely based on the contributions of the city's French descendants.

The best known link with old French communities in Louisville, Shippingport, and Portland was John D. Colmesnil. Although born in Haiti, his father, Louis Gabriel de Colmesnil, was of the French

⁶³ Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 131, 169, 195, 222; Lewis and Richard H. Collins, *History of Kentucky* (2 vols.; Louisville: John P. Morton, 1924), II, 392-393; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, pp. 36-40, 186.

⁶⁴ Lyons and Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port*, p. 79.

nobility and held the title of Marquis. John Colmesnil's two nieces of the de la Point family had married John and Louis Tarascon and this tie brought him to Louisville for a visit in 1811. He married I.A. Honoré's daughter and settled in Louisville where he prospered in the dry goods and barge businesses. After beating Nicholas Berthoud in a barge race to New Orleans, which set a new record time of thirty-six days, he became a local hero.

Colmesnil's reputation as "the personification of honesty" earned him the respect of James Guthrie who took him to Washington as an assistant when he was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. Returning to Louisville as one of its most esteemed citizens he became one of the richest merchants in the city. The financial crisis of the 1830s reduced his fortune and he retired to his estate "Paroquet Springs" near Shepardsville. There were few in Louisville who did not know and respect Colmesnil, and he was persuaded to return to the city where he died in 1871, a symbol of the aristocratic French tradition of early Louisville.⁶⁵

A symbol of the French Huguenot past was personified by James Trabue who had moved to Louisville from Franklin County in 1834 and established himself initially in the dry goods business. His continued success in business reflected the industry and integrity of the French Huguenot stock. He became President of the Franklin Insurance Company, Director of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, a member of the University of Louisville board of trustees, and a trustee of Cave Hill Cemetery. He served as a member of the Louisville Board of Aldermen and was its president for two years. His son, Edmund Francis Trabue, continued the family's prominence as a Louisville attorney.⁶⁶

Louisville's French played an important role in the cultural development of the city after the Civil War. One example was Reuben T. Durrett, born in Henry County in 1824. His French ancestors included the sixteenth century jurist, Jean Duret, and physician, Louis Duret, and his grandfather was one of the first French Huguenot settlers of Kentucky. Reuben Durrett was a graduate of the School of Law of the University of Louisville, a member of the city council, editor of the *Louisville Daily Courier*, and the first president of the Public Library of Kentucky. He was also the founder and first president of The Filson Club, the Louisville repository of Kentucky history. His personal library was one of the outstanding private collections in the state, and it drew Theodore Roosevelt to its sources while writing his book on win-

⁶⁵ *Louisville—Past and Present: Its Industrial History As Exhibited In The Life and Labors of Its Leading Men* (Louisville: John P. Morton and Co., 1875), pp. 216-221.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

ning the American west. Durrett was himself a prolific author and specialized in historical works including many sketches of Louisville's past.⁶⁷

One of the most active patrons of the arts was Richard Jouett Menefee of another Kentucky family of French descent. He was the grandson of the famous Kentucky painter, Matthew Jouett and the son of Richard H. Menefee, a United States Congressman. He actively promoted public charities and encouraged the development of the arts in Louisville. Indeed his son Speed S. Menefee won three awards in a Paris art show in 1904, and his works were exhibited in the Palais des Champs Elysées.⁶⁸

In the areas of public works, education, charity, and society French descendants also made their mark. Charles Hermany, who was of French, German, and English extraction, was the chief engineer and superintendent of the Louisville Water Works from 1861 until the turn of the century. A. V. "Fred" DuPont, a direct descendant of the Du Pont family of Delaware, a member of which had come to Shippingport in the 1800s, arrived in Louisville in 1854, became a director of the First National Bank, a major stockholder in the Central City Coal and Iron Company, and initiated a movement to establish technical training centers in Louisville. He was the chief benefactor of the first school to teach shop and drawing and in 1892 made the proposal to the Louisville School Board for the establishment of Du Pont Manual Training School.⁶⁹ Two of Louisville's most famous charity organizations had their origins in France, The Sisters of the Good Shepherd and The Little Sisters of the Poor. Under the sponsorship of Bishop Flaget, The Sisters of the Good Shepherd opened the first house of the order in America in December 1842 on Eighth Street between Walnut and Madison where they sheltered the city's female delinquents and derelicts. One of the first houses of The Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States was established in Louisville where the sisters, none of whom spoke English fluently, opened a large house on Tenth and Magazine streets in 1869 for the care of the aged poor. The house was usually filled with 150 black and white senior citizens who were provided for with what the sisters could obtain from voluntary contributions from the community.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 254-257; Elvira Miller Slaughter, *Confessions of a Tattler* (Louisville; Fetter, 1905), p. 94.

⁶⁸ J.R. Todd Scrapbooks, J.R. Todd Papers (Filson Club Manuscript Collection, Louisville, Kentucky), volume I; Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, II, 604.

⁶⁹ William H. A. Carr, *The du Ponts of Delaware* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1964), pp. 218-219; *Courier-Journal* (Louisville), November 23, 1941; Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville*, I, 241-242; II, 346.

⁷⁰ Webb, *Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*, p. 407; Lyons and Lally, *Our Lady: Notre Dame du Port*, p. 200; Johnston *Memorial History of Louisville*, II, 126-127

Perhaps the most beautiful and flamboyant leader of Louisville society after the Civil War was Sally Ward, whose mother was a Flournoy, another French family of Kentucky. On a visit to France of the Second Empire she impressed Parisian society with her charm, wit, and knowledge of French. She was introduced to the Empress Eugenie and was toasted by Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, and Pierre Jean de Béranger. If Louisville's Sally Ward pleased Paris society, Paris returned the compliment with the visit of Sarah Bernhardt to Louisville in 1881 when her performance in Dumas' *Camille* at Macauley's Theater was considered one of the dramatic highlights of the era.⁷¹

As Louisville continued to expand, the French were dispersed in the new suburbs of the city and some helped develop and name these new neighborhoods. Bidermann Du Pont, Fred Du Pont's brother, was the proprietor of the Louisville Paper Mill which also became a famous resort. A well dug at the site in 1858 struck sulphur water which gushed at two hundred and thirty gallons a minute and rose forty feet in the air. Capitalizing on this surprise Du Pont opened a spa with over one hundred baths which remained a popular resort for years. Du Pont became president of the corporation for the famous Southern Exposition of 1883 which was held on property Fred Du Pont had purchased for \$400,000 and which was eventually donated to the city as Central Park. Du Pont also owned land south of the park, which was known as Du Pont Square, and after the exposition he successfully developed it as a new residential area which became known as St. James-Belgravia Court.⁷²

The "Jerusalem" section of Butchertown, Spring Street east of the Louisville and Nashville tracks, was named in honor of a native Frenchman, Jacob Schiebe. Schiebe settled there after arriving from Syria where he had served many years as the confidential valet of the French Governor, who resided in Jerusalem. Schiebe reminisced frequently of his experiences in Jerusalem, and his unique home which included a small vineyard and kitchen garden became known as "Jerusalem" as did the neighborhood generally.⁷³

Finally there is a sector of Germantown known as Paris Town, which was developed after 1870. The area is centered at the intersections of Schiller (formerly Du Puy), Vine, and Highland (formerly Adair) streets, but the name Paris Town has survived in oral tradition

⁷¹ Dupre, "The French in Early Kentucky, p. 90; Slaughter, *Confessions of a Tattler*, p. 79; Riebel, *Louisville Panorama*, p. 108.

⁷² *Courier-Journal* (Louisville), November 23, 1941; Riebel, *Louisville Panorama*, p. 134; Edwin Love Tonne, III, "A Brief History of the St. James-Belgravia Court Area." (Unpublished Political Science Senior Thesis, University of Louisville, 1970), pp. 5-6.

⁷³ Diomedede Pohlkampf, *Butchertown of Yesterday* (Louisville: Rogers Church Goods Company, 1946), p. 7.

only. Speculation is that the Paris Towners were so called because they were non-German and looked condescendingly upon the Catholic, working class section of Germantown on the southwest side of Beargrass Creek. Another theory as to the origin of Paris Town is that the area was populated by immigrants from the Alsace-Lorraine provinces of France which had been annexed by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.⁷⁴ Indeed there were natives of Alsace-Lorraine named Bohne, Conrad, Parr, and Frantz living in Louisville at this time but there is no proof that they inhabited the area known as Paris Town.

The French had played a distinguished role in the history of Louisville and one far out of proportion to their limited numbers. Their French heritage was undeniable, yet few came to conquer for France or to implant French culture in a new land. Indeed most came to America fleeing a troubled homeland and willingly accommodated themselves to the conditions in their new country. Thus from a nation whose colonial policy historically has been one of assimilating foreign populations to French culture, came French settlers who were themselves culturally assimilated into Louisville. In the twentieth century the descendants of these French settlers have been scattered throughout the city and often their names may no longer look or sound French. The reminders of this French past are now limited to the fleur-de-lis on the city's flag, the regal statue of Louis XVI gracing the court house lawn, a recent gift of Louisville's sister city, Montpellier, and a few street and place names, old and new—Dumesnil, Fontaine Ferry, Place Montpellier, Place Rouge. L'Alliance Francaise does, however, remain an active promoter of French culture in the city.

Looking to the future, Louisville officials are investigating the possibility of obtaining the cooperation of the French government in creating a four hundred foot waterspout in the form of a fleur-de-lis in the Ohio River in sight of Shippingport, Portland, and Louisville. What a spectacular tribute this would be to Louisville's French past, a notable one, which history will not permit Louisville to forget.

⁷⁴ Interview with Father Jerry Eifler of St. Terese Church, Paris Town, Oral History Tape (Oral History Center, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, 1974).