

# Les Nouvelles

*The newsletter of French Colonial America and the Centre for French Colonial Life*

*July, 2019*

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## **A Message from Executive Director Geoff Giglierano**

***“Behaving in a manner not unlike beavers....”***

It’s been quite a while since we have had the opportunity to communicate directly with our friends, members, and supporters, so we wanted to get back to a regular schedule of updating information for you. One of the ways to summarize what has been going on with French Colonial America – formerly known as New France: The Other Colonial America – is to make the comparison to beavers. And it’s not just about being really, really busy. Remember that a key aspect of what beavers do is to build. And that is precisely what we have been doing since the creation of our organization in early 2017. We are building programs and exhibits, experience and a knowledge base, while adding new facilities and operations at the Centre for French Colonial Life campus in Ste. Geneviève, Missouri.



*West view of Bolduc House built circa 1788/1793, showing the kitchen garden and grape vines. Taking care of these grounds and gardens and utilizing them in telling the story of what life was like in the colonial era is a high priority for us.*

And yes, at this point, we understand that there are those of you who are a bit confused on the structure of all of this. Therefore, please permit me to provide brief explanation. The “campus” in Ste. Geneviève consists of five historic colonial-era and early American structures (three of which are open at various times for guided tours and programs) and a 7,000 square-foot modern education and exhibits facility that opened to the public last year. The properties are owned by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Missouri (NSCDA/MO), which started this effort with their ground-breaking restoration and refurnishing of the historic Bolduc house between 1948 to 1958. As the campus grew, a separate non-profit 501( c )3 corporation was created to raise funds, provide professional management,

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## **Director's Message, cont.**

and organize programming for the operation. This group, which began functioning in early 2017 with a board that included a mixture of NSCDA/MO members and community leaders from outside that organization, was initially known as New France: The Other Colonial America. However, due to an issue with that name having been copyrighted by an individual who subsequently refused to permit the organization to continue using it, the name of the group was changed to French Colonial America (FCA). While this has caused some confusion, it's not at all a bad thing, as the new name actually works much better on a number of levels.

Currently, FCA is contracted by the NSCDA/MO to provide management and programming services at the Centre for French Colonial Life campus in Ste. Geneviève, which brings us back to the matter of being as "busy as beavers" AND the subject of "building." The NSCDA/MO has made an offer to the National Park Service that would permit NPS to take over ownership of some or all of the campus buildings in Ste. Geneviève. It remains to be seen how this will work out, and to what extent FCA may or may not continue to be involved with operations at the Centre for French Colonial Life.

Nonetheless, we are obligated and committed to a process of building for the present and the future of the campus: we are making every effort possible, given our current resources, to expand and professionalize the operations and programming for learners of all ages. Therefore, in addition to opening the education and exhibits facility and providing tours for groups and the general public, we are:

- Improving collections management for the site
- Conducting significant maintenance efforts on the Bolduc House
- Maintaining and improving the gardens
- Refining the programs offered for schools and homeschool families
- Increasing our participation in community-based events such as the annual French Heritage festival and monthly art walks
- Adding special events of our own, such as The French and Indian War Day
- Reaching out and developing working relationships with other historical sites and universities
- Developing a program of living history presentations
- Re-opening the Linden House (our former gift shop and offices) as the Hands-On History House with participatory activities for young people
- Presenting a schedule of special exhibits that includes the recently-opened "Living Off the Land: Hunting, Fishing and Gathering for Wild Food in Upper Louisiana."

In addition to our activities in Ste. Geneviève, we also are working on growing our impact around the region and beyond. FCA is more than just the Ste. Geneviève story. Among the various projects currently in development, we are working with HEC-TV to help create a documentary about the Battle of St. Louis during the American Revolution. The potential audience for this is significant and will materially help us

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## ***Director's Message, cont.***

in achieving our goal of sharing the importance of this history of the relatively little-known stories of colonial-era Upper Louisiana. Consequently, when I turn in my monthly reports to our FCA Board President, Tandy Thompson, she usually says something to the effect of, "Wow, we were busy this month." But we have to be. FCA and NSCDA/MO – like other groups associated with owning and operating historic sites are facing huge challenges: "business as usual" for house museums and other history education facilities does not work terribly well these days as we compete with so many other forms of education and recreation for people's time and attention. Yes, it's a lot of work, and the path forward is not always simple or obvious. But we will keep doing the best we can. If you haven't been to Ste. Geneviève lately to see our progress, please come for a visit and we'll be very happy to show you what's new and exciting.



*Our new temporary exhibit "Living Off the Land"*

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## ***More Than Just Mud: The Bolduc Bousillage Project, by Director of Operations Robbie Pratte***

So many visitors, specialists, townsfolk and employees seem to concentrate on the large timbers in these French Colonial structures. And for good reason, too: they're often quite large, and one can imagine the effort that must have gone into not only erecting them, but first, removing bark and branches and shaping them with axe and adze. But the other half of the equation is just as important.

“Bousillage” is the mixture used to fill the spaces between the logs in French Creole vertical timber construction. This form of chinking as it was used in this region consists of mud, straw, clay, and animal hair. When it contains rocks it is called pierrotage. Both act as a filler and binding agent between the logs, and provide additional insulation for the structure. Over the years, cracks and holes have developed in the Bolduc's bousillage due to weathering and the actions of various squirrels, mice, birds and wasps. In 2011, former Bolduc House Museum Executive Director, Lesley Barker, led an effort to repair some of the bousillage damage and whitewash the structure, but little has been done since. Starting in early May, French Colonial America started addressing holes and making repairs in the bousillage of the Bolduc House. Initially, the project was expected to only take 2-5 “dedicated days” before the house would be ready for a much-needed whitewash coat. However, once the repair was started, the staff and volunteers realized how much more there was to be done in order to prepare for the new coat of whitewash.

The process is slow, and often only one or two strips of bousillage get touched up in a day. However, we would gladly take our time for a quality job than cut corners to finish faster.

Part of what makes it so tricky is that it largely is the top two inches or so are getting repaired and theoretically, those top two inches of bousillage shouldn't have straw in them. Straw can cause cracks and channels in the bousillage that allow moisture to get in, further eroding the mixture. Lime can also be added to help ensure that bugs don't do damage, but it isn't absolutely necessary. as lime is a key element in the whitewash. As the heat picks up, fresh applications dry and crack, often demanding a second or third coating to create a smoother surface. Carpenter bees are no help either! They are particularly fond of a particular small section to the left of the rear door, where the holes they make have been sealed three times just since early June!



*Volunteer Bill Stange patiently patches bousillage*

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## ***Bousillage Project, cont.***

We believe that the bousillage application will be completed in July which will allow us to begin the whitewash phase of the repair process. We are working with employees from Mississippi Lime to create the perfect whitewash recipe. If all goes well, the project should be complete before the August heat and humidity rolls in!

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## ***Battle of St. Louis Projects, by FCA Board Member Stephen Kling***

French Colonial America is working with HEC-TV on a full-length documentary on the Battle of St. Louis and the Attack on Cahokia during the American Revolutionary War. Release of the documentary is planned for May of next year. In connection with this effort, French Colonial America plans on unveiling next year's temporary exhibit on The American Revolutionary War in the West with a major emphasis on the Battle of St. Louis. Ste. Geneviève sent sixty militiamen under Charles and Francois *fils* Valle to aid St. Louis at the time it was attacked. As the defenders only totaled 310 men, this was a vital contribution.



*Sword belonging to the Valle family, which probably was carried at the battle; this artifact is in the NSCDA/MO collection and will be included in the exhibit*

The exhibit will be coordinated by Geoff Giglierano with the assistance of *The Battle of St. Louis, the Attack on Cahokia, and the American Revolution in the West* authors Stephen Kling of St. Louis and Kristine Sjostrom of Seville, Spain. This exhibit will feature weapons, artifacts, uniforms, documents, dioramas, and other items relevant to the period and will take up the entire museum space of the Centre for French Colonial Life.

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## ***Battle of St. Louis Projects, cont.***

A museum booklet is being created for the exhibit featuring not only images from the exhibit, but unparalleled coverage of the American Revolution in the West by authors such as Kling, Sjostrom, United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit Morris Arnold (author of many books and articles on Colonial Arkansas), Professor Kenneth Carstens (George Rogers Clark expert), Thomas E. Chávez (author of *Spain and the Independence of the United States*), Molly Long Fernandez de Mesa and Mary Anthony Startz (St. Louis and Ste. Geneviève Militia lists), Frances Kolb-Turnbell (author of a forthcoming book on the Spanish Borderlands), and Ste. Geneviève historian Robert Mueller.

The exhibit will open in conjunction with the release of the documentary. Opening day festivities are being planned.



*Scene from the Battle of St. Louis, courtesy of Stephen Kling; images like this will be featured in the exhibit*

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## ***Collection Management Progress Update, by Curatorial Assistant, Peter Davis***

Following the excitement generated by the opening of the Centre, there existed a need from a curatorial standpoint to update and overhaul the collection. Hundreds of artifacts were moved to both the exhibit floor and curatorial lab in the new building. After learning “PastPerfect,” the computerized museum

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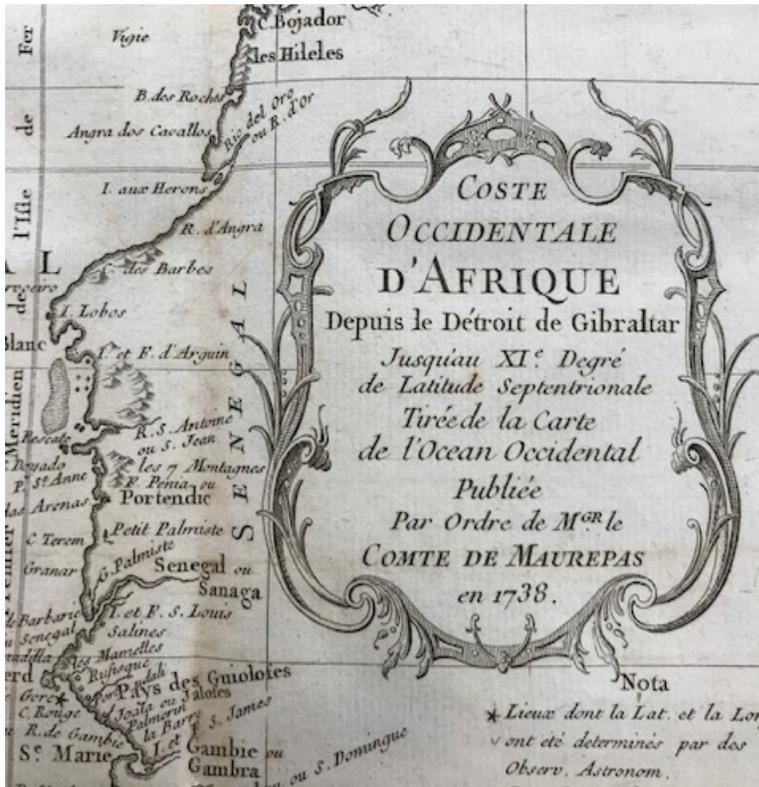
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## Collection Management Update, cont.

collection inventory program, I had to update the location of the artifacts. For five months I did this as well as recording information on new artifacts that had been purchased or donated for display in the Centre. As of now, 211 additional items have been photographed and entered into our collection. Shortly after beginning this lengthy overhaul I discovered that many pieces in the collection had been inventoried more than once with non-matching accession numbers. Dozens of artifacts had no pictures accompanying them, something that proved to be maddening at times. Sorting this out was important in order have an accurate accounting of our holdings.



Our work on management of the growing collection now emphasizes detail and historical accuracy. For example, when accessioning porcelain pieces, it is important to pay close attention to the existence of maker's marks. This mark can reveal the nationality of the piece and the time period it comes from. A fair amount of the collection is china and other types of period tableware. Other new additions include a number of Spanish patriotic-themed and military buttons, an iron candlestick, an 18<sup>th</sup> century iron adze head, pieces of original colonial-era hewn structural timbers, and much more. Of course, one cannot display everything, but by working closely with outside experts and researchers, our in-house team has created a balanced approach to preserving and showing our rich and diverse collection illustrating life in Upper Louisiana.

Among the items recently added to our collections is this original French map of the northwest African coast, dated 1738. It shows considerable detail, including Senegal and Gambia, where the French obtained many of their enslaved workers during that time period

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## ***New Special Exhibit opens: "Living Off the Land"***

A new special exhibit entitled "Living Off the Land: Hunting, Fishing, and Gathering Wild Food in Upper Louisiana" opened to the public on May 4, 2019. The exhibition explores the ways that wild animals and plants were harvested by the various peoples -- both Native Americans and settlers of European descent -- who lived in this region during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It is on view at the Centre for French Colonial Life. On our opening day, visitors were able to discuss the history of hunting, fishing and gathering wild foods with historian Jim Duncan, primary consultant on the project. Jim, along with FCA Board Member Stephen Kling, loaned us most of the artifacts used in the exhibition. Many of the cases used in the exhibit were repaired and improved by expert carpenter Gary Boedefeld.



The key element within the story in this exhibit is that hunting, fishing and gathering was another aspect of life in which information and technology was exchanged between different cultures. This was particularly important for the European settlers, who came from a society in which hunting was primarily an activity of the elite classes, and most ordinary people did not have a tradition or background in hunting. The exhibit will be open until April of 2020 and features a selection of historic images and original 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century artifacts, including various hunting accoutrements, fishing gear and rare firearms such as an English-made "Carolina" flintlock trade gun and a Spanish "miquelet" musket.

*Among the items in the exhibit is this 18<sup>th</sup> century powder horn with decorative incised carving that indicates use by Native Americans*

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## **Reviewing Materials from our Archaeological Digs**

One of the truly enjoyable aspects of working for FCA is that we always are learning new things. A great source of information comes from the archaeological record. In just the last few weeks, we have begun examining the archaeology materials from the 2017 dig that recently were returned to us from Robert Mazrim's lab in Illinois. As we learn more about what we have in our archaeological collection, we will have a better idea about what they can tell us about everyday life in the late colonial era, and how some of these pieces can be used in our future exhibits.

In the initial review, in which we were assisted by anthropologist and historian Jim Duncan, we found there are significant items associated with trade between European settlers and Native Americans, such as two small trade silver pendants, venetian glass beads of various sizes, and "goose shot" of the type often used by French colonists to pay native Americans for various jobs. Firearm-related pieces include the side-plate from an inexpensive pistol, a fired lead musket ball, and a musket flint. There are also household items such as numerous fragments of European and Chinese ceramics, a bone knife handle, and an almost intact 18<sup>th</sup> century two-tined fork.

Among the most interesting items are large quantities of largely unsorted animal remains including bones and teeth. Many of the bones show evidence of butchering, such as saw and knife marks. To get a better idea of the exhibition and research potential for these faunal artifacts, FCA board member Dr. Peter Raven has facilitated a connection for us with zooarchaeologists at Washington University. We scheduled a visit in early June with Ximena Lemoine of Wash. U. to do an initial survey of these remains, as well as the large quantity of bones and teeth that were found behind the Bolduc House in 2015. As it was determined that the materials do warrant further examination, Ms. Lemoine took most of the collection back to the laboratory where she and her students can study the items further. We look forward to sharing what we learn from them in the not-too-distant future.



*A Snell sample of some of the faunal artifacts found behind Bolduc House in the 2015 dig supervised by Dr. Margaret Brown. This sample includes bones of domestic cattle and pigs, as well as wild animals such as whitetail deer, a large fish, and rodents. Note the butchering marks on the cattle bones.*

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## **Opening of the “HANDS-ON HISTORY HOUSE”**

On Saturday, March 23, 2019, FCA opened of a new interactive learning facility – the Hands-On History House -- on the museum campus in Ste. Geneviève at the historic Beauvais-Linden House located at 116 S. Main Street. The Hands-On History House offers participatory activities, demonstrations, craft projects, and games to help children, families, homeschoolers and life-long learners explore aspects of everyday life in this region during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It is open to the public on Tuesdays (primarily for homeschoolers), and on Saturdays for the general public. A modest admission fee of \$2 per person is charged.



Under the leadership of FCA Education Program Coordinator Sandy Puhse, the project team developed programming for the Hands-On History House that will explore three Missouri History themes during 2019: The French and Farm Life; The French and the Mighty Mississippi; and The French and the Native Americans. Among the activities for our visitors to the Hands-On History House are learning French vocabulary and songs, visiting a recreated trading post, doing “chores” from the colonial era, feeding the goats, handling and identifying archaeological fragments, hearing stories by the fireplace, and trying on reproduction period clothes.

*The “trading post” at the new FCA Hands-on History House*

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## **A Message From the FCA President, Tandy Thompson**

As Geoff has written, we have been busy as beavers. It is unusual for a new 501(c)3 to hit the ground running as hard as we did with as many moving parts as there are in this operation. Furthermore, we have conducted our first audit and are pleased to report that the accountant working with the auditors said it was perhaps the “cleanest” first-year audit of a new 501(c)3 he had ever been involved with. We also want our supporters to know that of every dollar we receive, over 80% of it goes directly to programs, and less than 20% is spent on development and administration! Please know your donations, whether for a membership or for operations, are greatly appreciated and spent responsibly. Thank you!

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## **July-December 2019 Calendar of Events**

### **JULY**

#### **Saturday July 20<sup>th</sup> and Sunday July 21<sup>st</sup>; Traditional Arts and Crafts Show -- Artisans Showcase**

During this arts and crafts show, organized by ASL Pewter of Ste. Geneviève, The Centre for French Colonial Life will share in hosting traditional craftspeople from around the country, demonstrating their skills and selling hand-made traditional items. There is no charge to visit the Centre and meet the crafts people who will be set up inside (as well as those who will be at ASL Pewter, which is located a few blocks away at 183 South Third Street in Ste. Geneviève). The Centre will be open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM both days.

### **AUGUST**

#### **Sat August 10<sup>th</sup> & Sun August 11<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 PM to 4:00 PM; Community Event - Jour de Fete**

We will offer special "Director's Tours" during the annual Ste. Genevieve street festival which features arts and crafts, food and music; The Centre offers convenient parking for the festival (\$10 per car) and will host "Project Pioneer," a regional genealogy program highlighting the history of Ste. Geneviève-area German and French families.

### **SEPTEMBER**

#### **(Day and time to be determined) – Native Americans in Missouri**

Join a public discussion about Native Americans in our region, both past and present. Contact the Centre for details.

### **OCTOBER**

#### **Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm; Special Holiday Event -- Night of the Werewolf**

Rendezvous at the Centre for this family-friendly autumn event and enjoy an evening filled with lantern tours of Bolduc House, s'mores and cider, games, storytelling around the campfire, and a simulated hunt for the legendary werewolves of Ste. Geneviève. Admission will be charged for this special event.

### **NOVEMBER**

#### **Saturday November 16<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM; Community Open House -- "Ste. Geneviève County Day".**

Residents of the City of Ste. Geneviève and Ste. Geneviève County (with proper ID such as Driver's License) are invited to visit the Centre for French Colonial Life and receive free guided tours of the historic Bolduc House. These special free Bolduc tours will last 30 minutes and take place throughout the course of the day.

### **DECEMBER**

#### **Tuesday December 31<sup>st</sup>; Guignolee Watch Party**

The Centre for French Colonial Life will host a "Guignolee" Watch Party as we await the traditional French Creole Guignolee group of Ste. Geneviève. Enjoy a performance by musician/storyteller Dennis Stroughmatt and see the Guignolee group perform their historic folk song and dance at both the Centre and the Bolduc House.

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**Yes, I want to renew my membership or to become a new member!**

- Enclosed please find a check for \$50 for a family membership
- Enclosed please find a check for \$30 for my individual membership

Yes, I want to make a donation!

- Enclosed please find a check for \_\_\_\_\_ as my donation
- I have contacted my employer \_\_\_\_\_ (employer name) for a matching gift

NOTE Please make checks payable to "French Colonial America" or FCA

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Any questions? Please call 573-883-3105 or email [Info@FrenchColonialLife.org](mailto:Info@FrenchColonialLife.org)

Please mail to:

French Colonial America  
198 Market Street  
Ste. Geneviève, MO 63670

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