

FLORISSANT VALLEY QUARTERLY

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HFI KNOWS HOW TO THROW A PARTY!

Historic Florissant Inc. held its annual benefit dinner, and judging from the smiles (and the donations!) a good time was had by all. Photos and report inside.

page two

ANCIENT PICTURES OF AN OLD FAMILY

See some historic faces from the Chambers Family in these early photos shared by a descendant.

page seven

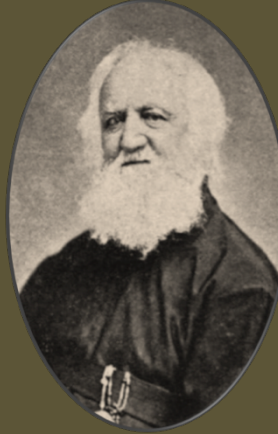
THE FLORISSANT BRANCH OF THE COUNTY LIBRARY

The County Library was established over 75 years ago, but Florissant pulled out before it joined back in—and it was all about taxes!

page six



DeSmet



Van Assche



P. Hawkins



Verhaegen



Elet



Verreydt

ST. STANISLAUS BICENTENNIAL

Sketches of the Eighteen Men and Women Who Arrived in Florissant Two Centuries Ago

BISHOP LOUIS WILLIAM VALENTINE DUBOURG had wanted to bring the Jesuits to St. Louis for a long time. His first request was in 1814. He made second, third, and fourth requests over the years. His fifth request, in 1823, worked. They didn't have much choice but to move—their mission at White Marsh, Maryland, was about to go under due to lack of resources. In Florissant, Bishop DuBourg would give them a working farm, 220 acres of land, the management of a parish, and some modest annual federal assistance to establish a school for Native American children and to conduct mission work among Native tribes. They traveled the old Cumberland Road to Wheeling, Virginia, and the Ohio River. *Continued page 4*

Florissant's Quadruplets

The Fahrenkrog family of 1085 Cheyenne Drive in Florissant made headlines across the country when Ruth Fahrenkrog gave birth to four healthy boys on August 25, 1967. Multiple births ran in Ruth's family she said. Her aunt gave birth to twins and her sister did so twice.

The children were born at DePaul Hospital, then located on North Kingshighway. The *Post-Dispatch* reported that this may have been the first time quadruplets were born in St. Louis. The doctor said "they're just a bunch of wonderful screaming kids," and that mom was fine, too.

When the reporter asked Richard Fahrenkrog, an engineer with Sverdrup and Parcel, what home would be like now, he indicated that remodeling their three-bedroom home—or finding a bigger one—was high on the list. The family already had six children under age 9. They did move to a larger home on Belair Terrace the next year.

Richard Fahrenkrog died tragically in 1969. Mayor James J. Eagan set up a trust fund for the family, shown below in December 1967. (*Newspapers.com image*)



Americana Corner Makes Grant to Preserve Taille's Colonial History

Americana Corner has made a generous \$5,000 grant to the Florissant Valley Historical Society to make improvements to the visitor experience at Taille de Noyer, as well as fund repairs to the physical plant.

Philanthropist Tom Hand is behind the grant program, which complements his other work detailing American colonial history and its first century of expansion. "We all should be grateful for the blessings of this wonderful country," he states on his AmericanaCorner.com webpage. It is his mission to preserve, research, and share that history.

The FVHS Board of Directors extends its heartfelt thanks to Mr. Hand and Americana Corner for supporting Taille de Noyer, one of the few remaining colonial era houses left in St. Louis County.

The *Florissant Valley Quarterly* shares news and educational articles about local history, and is published four times each year by the Florissant Valley Historical Society, Friends of Old St. Ferdinand, Inc., and Historic Florissant, Inc. A complete set of bound issues is held by the St. Louis County Library, and electronic issues since 2017 are made available online after six months at www.florissantvalleyhs.com. Uncredited articles are by the editorial team.

Mary Kay Gladbach, Editor

Historic Florissant Inc. Honors Veterans at 2023 Annual Dinner

by Dr. Gina Siebe

Historic Florissant held its Annual Benefit Dinner at Catering to You Banquet Hall on Sunday, March 19. It was a sold-out event. The red, white, and blue theme was a Salute to Veterans. Members of the VFW Post 4105 were in attendance and all veterans were honored. **The Florissant Police Color Guard** presented the colors and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mary Kay Gladbach, a veteran of a different sort, received a Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in historic preservation while a 1940's quartet sang fun songs and harmonized beautifully singing *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy* and other songs. They received a standing ovation and requests to return next year. Through reservations, raffles, and Fund-A-Need donations, Historic Florissant raised money to pay for scanning of documents and photographs

Mayor and Mrs. Lowery, Nikki Dumm and Chief Fagan, and the FPD Color Guard



The 1940s Quartet provided entertainment!



Andrew J. Theising, Managing Editor



Catholic Sisters in the 1800s

by Anna Vogel

Nineteenth century American Catholic sisterhoods of European origin usually featured two categories of Sisters.

“Choir Sisters” had nothing to do with music, but rather managed the teaching, education, and other professional work, and also the leadership of the convent. They were often well-educated. “Coadjutrix Sisters” performed the physical labor of the convents: cleaning, cooking, gardening, etc. Generally from poor backgrounds and with limited education, these Sisters wore distinctive clothing that marked their status. They were separated from the Choir Sisters during meals and recreation.

This followed the class system of Europe and reflects on the woman’s family’s social class when she entered the convent. Bishop DuBourg discouraged this hierarchy, but it is what Mother Duchesne knew, so she continued with the tradition. Though Mother Duchesne kept this tradition in theory, it doesn’t appear that this is what she practiced per a letter that mentioned Duchesne from a pupil, Ellen Mullanphy Chambers:

Her days were spent in unending labor. The rising sun found her in the garden, digging, planting, or gathering the ripened fruit and vegetables. On washdays she hung out the clothes, took them in, and sprinkled them so they would be ready for those who were to do the ironing. Besides manual labor, she taught the higher classes several hours each day and found time to read aloud for half an hour or so each day from some spiritual book to her little community. Holidays found her in the convent parlor making vestments for the altar and canopies and banners for the many processions that used to take place in the little church and village. No work was too hard for her and no matter how much there was to do, nothing however small was neglected.

History Walk Plaque to Honor Sheila Williams

As one of the five founding members of Historic Florissant Inc. in 1969 and for a lifetime of volunteerism, the late **Sheila Williams** (1928-2021) is being recognized for her contributions to her community with a permanent sidewalk plaque to be placed on the History Walk along St. Francois Street. The dedication will take place on May 3rd at 5:30 across from Florissant City Hall. Mayor Tim Lowery will say a few words along with her family. Everyone is invited.



Lots of smiling faces at the tables!
Anna Jewson photos

Jesuit Bicentennial *Continued from Page One*

The group finished their river journey on flatboats at Shawneetown, Illinois. There, they left their trunks and supplies with a trusted friend to be sent by steamboat to St. Louis at a later date. The group then walked the 150 miles to St. Louis. They saw the city for the first time on May 31, 1823. The Jesuits have never left. Here are brief sketches of the 18 people who made that harrowing journey.

FATHER CHARLES FELIX VAN QUICKENBORNE, Superior and Master of Novices. He was the leader of the group and its mission. He was the first to visit Florissant, with Father de la Croix at St. Ferdinand's guiding him on the trip from St. Louis to Florissant. He moved to the Kansas missions by 1832, and died in 1837 at age 49.

PETER JOHN DESMET, Novice. *(photo on cover)* Ordained in 1827 at St. Ferdinand's with Van Assche, Elet, and Verreydt. His story has been told in past issues of the *Quarterly* (most recently in the April 2020 edition, available online). He spent a considerable amount of time in Florissant between his various missions and was buried at the seminary in 1873 (Jesuit graves were relocated in 2003 to Calvary Cemetery).

JUDOCUS VAN ASSCHE, Novice. *(photo on cover)* Ordained in 1827 at St. Ferdinand's with DeSmet, Elet, and Verreydt. He was the longtime pastor of St. Ferdinand's. While his colleagues traveled the country, if not the world, Van Assche stayed put. He died at Florissant in 1877 and was buried at the seminary. He was a strong young man and his strength was very helpful on the long trip to St. Louis. Many of these early Belgian Jesuits came to the US in 1820 on the same ship as Father Charles Nerinckx, a founder of the Sisters of Loretto. When the Sacred Heart Sisters left St. Ferdinand's during his pastorate, Van Assche contacted his old friend to send the Loretto Sisters to Florissant.

PETER JOHN VERHAEGEN, Novice. *(photo on cover)* Among the first two novices to be ordained a priest. He was ordained by Bishop Rosati early in 1825 at Barrens in Perryville. Father Verhaegen went on to become the first President of St. Louis University in 1832, and the Superior of the Missouri Vice-Province of Jesuits by the 1840s. He wrote an early history of the Missouri Mission work in Latin that is the basis for much of the history we know today.

JOHN BAPTIST SMEDTS, Novice. Among the first two novices to be ordained a priest. He was ordained with Verhaegen by Bishop Rosati early in 1825 at the Barrens church in Perryville.

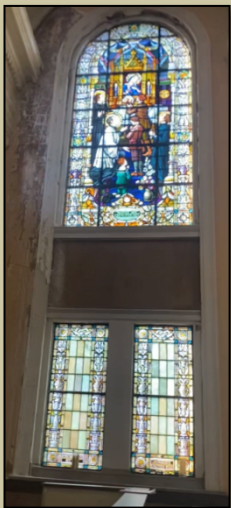
FELIX LIVINUS VERREYDT, Novice. *(photo on cover)* Ordained in 1827 at St. Ferdinand's with DeSmet, Elet, and Van Assche. He was given charge of the missions of the Missouri plain, begun by Father de la Croix. Like DeSmet, he engaged in mission work among the Native tribes while working assignments in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa.

JOHN ANTHONY ELET, Novice. *(photo on cover)* Ordained in 1827 at St. Ferdinand's with DeSmet, Van Assche, and Verreydt. Elet had recruited his friend and roommate John Smedts to join the group of Jesuits going to America. He became the second President of St. Louis University.

FRANCIS DE MAILLET, Novice. Mr. de Maillet had been a seminary student in Brussels and chose to follow Father Charles Nerinckx to the United States on the 1820 voyage. He did not complete his studies and left the Jesuit order soon after arriving in Florissant.

FATHER PETER JOSEPH TIMMERMANS, Assistant Master of Novices. He was born in Turnhout, Antwerp, Belgium. He did not survive the heavy labors of the new mission and died on May 31, 1824—exactly one year after arriving at St. Louis.

The Stained Glass Windows at St. Stanislaus



The magnificent and extremely colorful stained glass windows that line the chapel walls at the old St. Stanislaus Seminary on Howdershell Road were designed to tell the Jesuits' story by highlighting a particular pioneer early in the movement. Each of the 12 windows cost a mere \$250 back in 1923. Designed and installed by Emil Frei and his crew of German art glass craftsmen, these intricate works would cost upwards of \$2,000 per square foot to replace today.

An effort to raise the needed funds for the initial project was launched in 1922 with a souvenir publication sent out to friends and benefactors. The document explained that the work featuring devotion and ministry were to inspire the young novitiates as they attended daily religious services in the chapel. By October 1922, the funds for three windows had been secured. The names of each donor is displayed at the bottom of the windows, some being individuals and other donated by Catholic organizations. Viewing these inspiring works is not available presently, as the property is closed and up for sale. The future of these works is in doubt, and their fate will be in the hands of the next owner. *Image and article by Jim Farmer. The Jesuit Archive and Research Center, 3920 West Pine Blvd., contributed information to this piece.*

BROTHER PETER DEMEYER, Coadjutor. He joined the Jesuits just a year prior to the move to Missouri. He too was on the trans-Atlantic trip with Father Nerinckx, which was “long, stormy, and tedious” according to one account. The ship, for a time, had lost use of its sails and rudder. It floated aimlessly for three days. When a privateer boarded the ship with the hope of looting it, he was shocked by the conditions and allowed the captain to purchase food, water, and wine (which had been stolen from an earlier raid). It was not long before the ship sprang a leak and the entire population of the ship had to help work the pumps by hand 24/7 while they were at sea. Finally, the ship docked at Baltimore after a 2 ½ months-long journey (that’s probably a month longer than it should have been).

BROTHER HENRY REISSELMAN (Rysselman), Coadjutor. Born in Holland, came to the US in 1820. He was a brother in the Trappist order before it was dissolved, having served at Monk’s Mound in Cahokia (meaning he had been in the St. Louis area, left there for Maryland, and promptly returned to the St. Louis area). The Trappists were also the first order of priests to work at St. Ferdinand’s, with John Mullanphy acquiring a house for them.

BROTHER CHARLES STRAHAN, Coadjutor. He also came from the area of Turnhout in Antwerp. He left the Jesuit order shortly after arriving in St. Louis.

ISAAC AND SUSANNA (SUCCY) HAWKINS, Enslaved Husband and Wife. (*son Peter Hawkins photo on cover*) (The story of the Hawkins, Brown, and Queen families was told in the *Quarterly* from July 2020, which is posted online. It is also featured in the FVHS book *In the Walnut Grove*.) It was Isaac who proved to be most skillful navigating the boats at night on the Ohio River. Their son, Peter, was born at St. Stanislaus on May 8, 1824, about one year after arriving. Peter lived his entire life on the Jesuit estate.

THOMAS AND MOLLY BROWN, Enslaved Husband and Wife. Molly’s job was to help with the washing and sewing. A Jesuit record noted that both of them “are often infirm” and that Molly was “indeed very ill.” Thomas and Molly were moved from Florissant to St. Louis University’s location in the city. Thomas had been called “intelligent and trustworthy,” and was made a supervisor of other enslaved workers. Modern researchers suspect that Thomas purposefully disrupted his work as a form of protest (e.g., overspending budgets, breaking tools, etc.).

MOSES AND NANCY QUEEN, Enslaved Husband and Wife. The historical record is unclear on this family, and understandably so. It is believed that the Queen and Hawkins families were related. There was a young man named Peter Queen (not to be confused with Peter Hawkins) who made the trip from Maryland to Missouri, suggesting that there may have been more than 18 people in the caravan. Peter Queen, at age 17, became a source of anger for Father Van Quickenborne (apparently easy to do—even Jesuit reports of the day described him as difficult and even “despotic.”) This Jesuit leader ordered that Peter be taken and sold to a man in St. Charles. After Van Quickenborne’s departure from St. Stanislaus, the Queens repeatedly petitioned Father DeTheux to buy Peter back and return him to the seminary grounds. DeTheux gave in and reunited Peter with his family in 1832. ■

Sources:

Catholic University, *Studies in American Church History*, Vol. 13, p 145. 1932.
Garraghan, G. J. *Jesuits in the Middle United States*. Vols. 1, 2, and 3. 1938. Esp. V.1, chaps 1-4.
Garraghan, G. J. *St. Ferdinand de Florissant*. 1923. Slavery, History, Memory, and Reconciliation Project. <https://www.jesuits.org/our-work/shmr/family-histories/>

Cover images from Garraghan (1923, 1938) and from *In the Walnut Grove* via Jesuits.org (used with permission).

Historic Saint Louis Spring House and Garden Tour on June 10th

Historic Saint Louis, a consortium of 24 historic sites in the St. Louis region, are working together to present a House and Garden Tour scheduled for Saturday, June 10. Houses will each have their own theme. The Gittemeier House will have quilts on display and the Gardeners of Florissant will be on hand to discuss native plants and flowers. Taille de Noyer will have its display of wedding dresses from across the ages. Please join us!

Fees vary by site, and sites across the region are participating. Admission is \$5 donation at Taille and a donation of your choice at the Gittemeier House.

Participating sites can be found on Facebook or online at <http://historicsaintlouis.org/participating-sites-summer/>



Mary Kay Gladbach Honored by Historic Florissant, Lt. Governor



Mary Kay Gladbach has received two important honors in recent months. Most recently, she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Historic Florissant, Inc.—of which she is a founding member. At left, **Dr. Gina Siebe** presents Mary Kay with the Historic Florissant honor in March. (HFI image)

In November, she received the Senior Service Award from **Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe**. This award recognized her long commitment to service in the Florissant area. Below, **Mayor Tim Lowery** and Lt. Gov. Kehoe pose with Mary Kay, and her award. Congratulations Mary Kay, and thank you for your ongoing leadership in our community! (Theising images)



Plaster Progress at Taille de Noyer

Plaster, paint, and other interior repairs continue at Taille de Noyer, thanks to a generous grant from the Trulaske Family Foundation. Robert Boesing, below, removed about 500 pounds of damaged plaster from this space alone! Come see the progress throughout the spring.



FVHS image

The St. Louis County Library and Its Florissant Branch

The St. Louis County Library celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2022, but Florissant has been part of the system for less than 60 of those years. When the library district was created in 1946 and opened in 1947, several cities were considered exempt.

The Missouri Supreme Court ruled that any city already having a publicly-funded library would not have to pay the library district tax (and therefore would not participate in the county library program). This initial rule applied to several cities, including Ferguson, but not Florissant.

Florissant filed a court petition, though, stating that the city had funded a modest two-room library in the Citizens Bank Building on Rue St. Francois since 1941, and therefore should not be taxed by the library district. The city's court action was successful.

However, as suburbanization boomed around Florissant, the city started annexing adjacent territory. The court had ruled that once a territory was in the library district, annexation would not remove it. That meant that the areas annexed by Florissant paid tax to the city for the city library and also to the library district for the county library. This double-tax situation proved intolerable to residents and politicians alike.

In 1962, Florissant voters approved a major \$2+ million public improvement bond issue that included the construction of a building at Bangert Park that would be leased to the county library system. The city formally merged its city library with the county system in 1964 and the new building opened in 1965. It has remained an important part of the St. Louis County Library system ever since.



At New Florissant Valley Library Branch

The Heller siblings (James, Martin, and Laura), of #20 Hammes Drive, enjoying the new library on opening day. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 Jun 1965; *Newspapers.com*

Old St. Ferdinand Update

by Anna Vogel

Restoration continues in the buildings at the Shrine and there is still a lot to do. Here is our quarterly update.

The Schoolhouse: Our event rental space is scheduled to open on April 1st for events. Through insurance and through fundraising efforts, this space has been updated and brought to code. New floors have been installed and new lighting is scheduled. A fresh coat of paint is on the walls and trim, along with new stain on the front staircase. All the furniture and appliances were lost in the flood, so new round and rectangular tables have been purchased. The final touches are an upgraded heating system and new curtains on the windows, all to minimize noise and deaden sound. Help us spread the word that the schoolhouse is open for business.

The rectory, convent, and church: Restoration is a much slower process. The plaster continues to dry out, so humidity levels continue to be monitored. The flooring in the church has been repaired and stained. Upcoming work includes painting the interior, installing carpet on the altar, restoring the museum cases and the contents, and getting everything back in place. We continue to make progress as the humidity levels fall. We hope to be open for tours in mid-summer.

Historic Reeb House Burns

(compiled from HFI sources)



After the fire. HFI photo



HFI File Photo of the house.



Reeb family, 1893. HFI

On February 20, 2023, a devastating fire erupted at the historic Reeb House on Rue St. Charles, facing the Old St. Ferdinand Shrine complex. A man has been arrested and charged in the suspected arson.

The Reeb House was built by Antoine Reeb c. 1890. Reeb was a French immigrant and an active member of St. Ferdinand's church and school.

The house is notable because of its mansard style roof. Though this was a very popular design in St. Louis, only two examples survive in Florissant. Reeb also built the landmark home next door on Rue St. Charles.

The fire caused extensive damage and restoration will be a challenge. The house is privately owned. It would be devastating if the historic district lost this significant structure.

Early Florissant Faces

Anne Withers Dollimore recently allowed FVHS to copy some of the oldest Chambers family photographs. Photography first came to St. Louis in 1848 with the arrival of Thomas Easterly. He produced daguerreotypes, like these, until 1865.



Above, three dapper young gentlemen. At left is Bartholomew Chambers, born at Taille de Noyer in 1837. His oil portrait hangs in the parlor at Taille. The others are unidentified.



Right, Ellen Mullanphy Chambers LaMotte, born in 1818 in New York, and moved to Taille de Noyer with her parents in 1821. She knew Philippine Duchesne and is quoted in the story on page 3 of this issue.



Left, John Mullanphy Chambers, born at Taille de Noyer in 1822, and died in 1861. His widow, Sarah E. (Walsh) Chambers lived at Taille de Noyer from the 1880s through the 1910s.

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Mark Your Calendars!

MAY

- 3: Sheila Williams Plaque Dedication, 5:30 near City Hall, 990 Rue St. Francois
- 6: Valley of Flowers Weekend— Log Cabin open 10-3 at 1065 Washington Street, \$Donation
- 7: Valley of Flowers Weekend—Taille de Noyer open 1-4 pm, 1896 S. New Florissant Road, McCluer Campus, \$5
- 14: Happy Mothers Day to our wonderful moms, aunts, sisters, and role models!
- 21: FVHS 65th Birthday Brunch! Details at right > >

JUNE

- 10: Historic Saint Louis tours, 10-4, various sites, various admission prices; Gittemeier House and Taille de Noyer are participating
- 18: Happy Fathers Day to our wonderful dads, uncles, brothers, and role models!

HOLD THE DATE: FVHS Annual Dinner Sept. 24th

FVHS 65TH BIRTHDAY BRUNCH! **Sunday, May 21 at Taille de Noyer**

After Florissant's centennial celebration in 1957, many folks thought that there should be a group to preserve the city's wonderful history—and the Florissant Valley Historical Society was born the next year! We're 65 and going strong! Come celebrate with us at a delicious brunch and see a special exhibit!

Where: Taille de Noyer, 1896 S. New Florissant Rd.

When: May 21 starting at 11:00 a.m.

Tickets: Required in advance, \$25 each, online or in the mail to FVHS, P O Box 298, Flo Mo 63032-0298

Info: 314-409-9478 or florissantvalleyhs@gmail.com

www.florissantvalleyhs.com/make-a-donation

Tour the house and see our second floor restoration work, starting at 1:00.

PROCEEDS BENEFIT TAILLE DE NOYER