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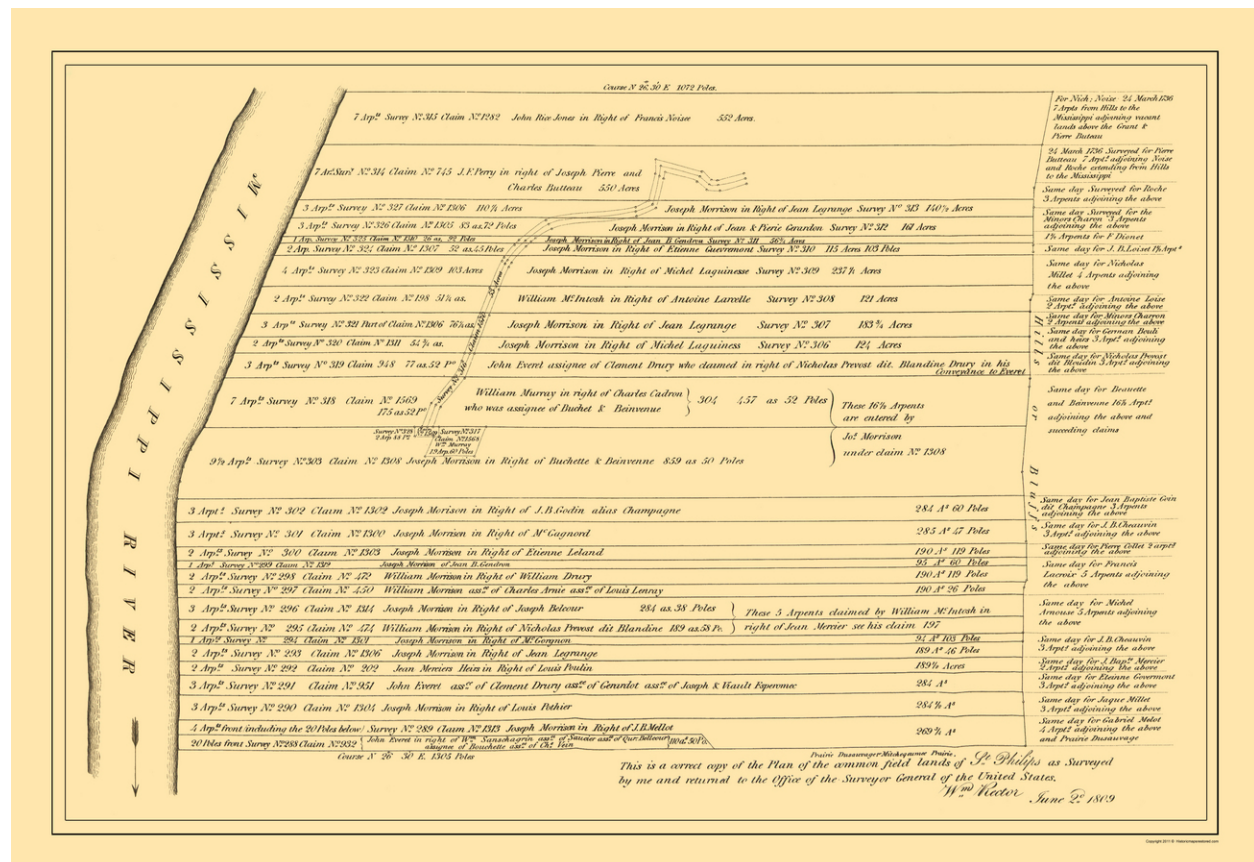
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Village of St. Philippe, Illinois

St. Philippe was a French village in Monroe County, Illinois. The community was located near bluffs that flank the east side of the Mississippi River along the floodplain often called the "American Bottom". The concession of St. Philippe du Grand Marais was located three leagues (approximately eight miles) north-north-west of Fort de Chartres (Fort de Chartres was a French military fort constructed in the 18th century. It later was designated a National Register of Historic Places and recognized as a National Historic Landmark on October 15, 1966. It is currently open to the public).



In the spring of 1719, Philip Francois de Renault (var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renault) had been appointed director of Mines of the Company of the Indies in the French colonies.



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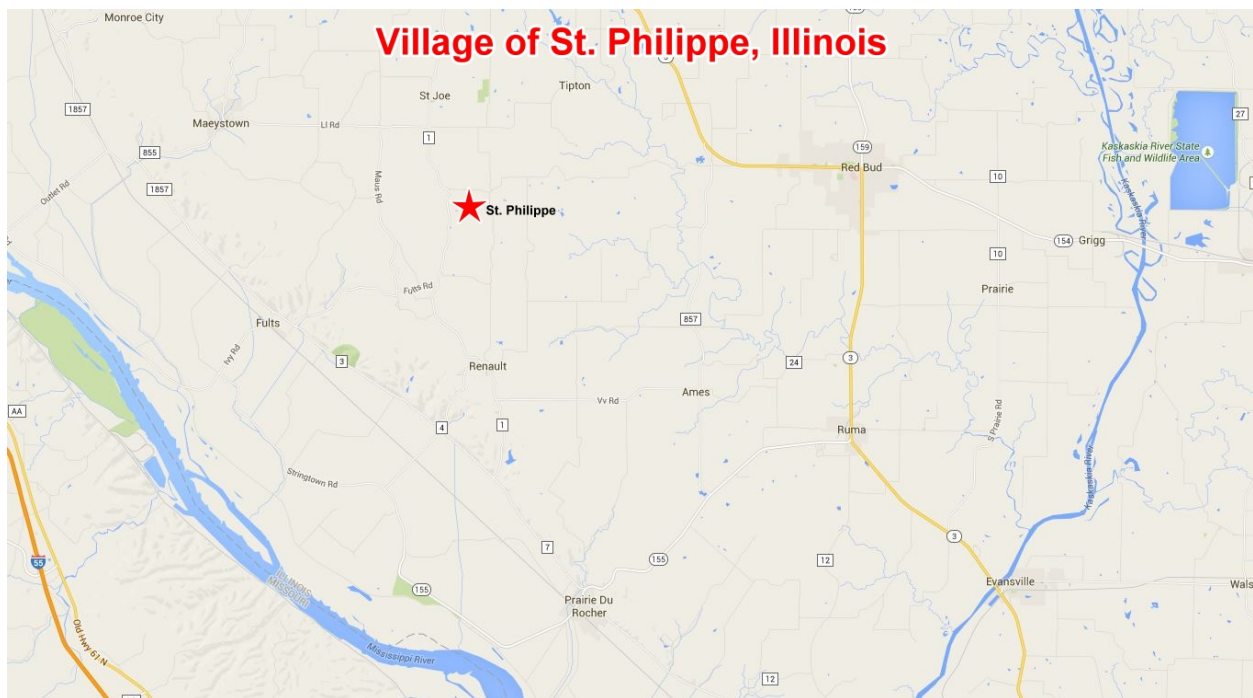
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In that year, he set out from Picardy, France for the Illinois country. Renault, a metallurgist, had come to believe that there were precious metals to be found in the Illinois country. A friend of the French King Louis XV, Renault was granted several large tracts of land, some of which were on the west side of the Mississippi River in what are now Ste. Genevieve County, and Washington County, Missouri. Renault sailed aboard a ship called the Maria with a company of some 200 miners, technicians, and laborers. At Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, Renault bought 500 Guinea slaves to work the mines.



Renaut had begun in 1723 to establish a smaller fort than Fort de Chartres; Fort Saint Philippe, which he had just erected as a defense for the Maramec mine. This was abandoned as a result of attacks by the Fox Indians, however, and the habitation resumed its activity only after that tribe had been destroyed. Later that year Renault began building a village which he named St. Philippe (named after Renaut's patron saint).

By 1752 St. Phillippe had a population of 122 souls, free and slave, white and Negro. Renault prospected for silver and gold on the banks of the Mississippi until 1744. What



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he found was trace amounts of silver and gold and some copper. He also found some lead in a commercially viable amount, and which continued to be mined into the late 20th century day. But his failure to find silver and gold in sufficient quantities discouraged Renault.

According to the 1752 census, the population was 187 Negro men, 113 women, 83 boys and 62 girls. The white population was estimated at 134 men and 112 women. Buchet reported he had twenty-eight slaves as well as a number of hired hands working the plantation.

After the collapse of Renault's mining and business ventures, the remains of his estate holdings at St. Phillippe were sold to Joseph Buchet and Antioine Bienvenu, who during the 1740s operated a large, slave-worked agricultural enterprise on the land. Bienvenu eventually sold his share to Buchet, who in turn sold the entire concession to Jean-Baptiste Lagrange and Francois Valle in early 1758. Two years later Lagrange and Valle sold the property.

In addition to the property, the concession included: "A stone house with four fireplaces, roofed with wooden shingles; barn, stables, and horse gristmill; a second gristmill on the creek close to the house, where there is also a sawmill; eight milk cows, seven oxen, seven workhorses, fourteen pigs; a negro named Louis; five arpents (French unit of land measurement equal to about 0.85 acre) of plowland; the land on which the house was situated, and all the furniture and furnishings of the house.

The village of St. Philippe was producing a surplus of crops, which was sold to the towns and villages in the southern part of French Louisiana Territory. The town was strategically located along fertile Mississippi River bottomland. Surpluses from the plantations cultivation by habitants (Habitants were French settlers) later helped supply critical wheat and corn to New Orleans and other lower Louisiana Territory communities.

Finances in France were in turmoil and he could no longer count on support from France. So in the early 1740s, Renault decided to return to France. He sold the slaves to the other French settlers in the area. It is said that the black people who lived in



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Randolph County, Illinois, and Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, over the next 150 years were descendants of these slaves.

Because habitants did not practice fertilization, the soil became exhausted. In addition, an increase in population meant there was not sufficient land for everyone. Some villagers moved to the west side of the Mississippi and founded Ste. Genevieve about 1750, in present-day Missouri. They quickly created an agricultural community with characteristics similar to St. Philippe.

The Negro community thrived in Prairie du Rocher for a number of years. The Negroes were overwhelmingly Catholic. In Prairie du Rocher they had always attended Mass and received the sacraments along with the white people on an amicable basis. They also received an exceptional education for the times thanks to the religious teachers and, later, lay teachers in Prairie du Rocher. But there were few prospects in southern Illinois for even well-educated black youth.

Following their victory in the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years' War), the British gained possession of French lands east of the Mississippi, excluding New Orleans. The Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763; however, the British did not arrive in force until 1765. To avoid British rule, many of the town's French residents moved across the Mississippi River to towns such as Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis in what was now, via the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau, Spanish Louisiana. Additionally, King George III's Royal Proclamation of 1763 designated all the land west of the Appalachians and east of the Mississippi an Indian Reserve. He tried to prevent settlers entering from the then-British Colonies.

The cutting of the forest trees on each side of the Mississippi caused the river to flood many tracts of land including the village of St. Philippe which washed away after repeated flooding's.

During the American Revolutionary War, George Rogers Clark captured Prairie du Rocher for the colonies in his campaign that resulted in the capture of Vincennes, Indiana. Reportedly, his campaign caused some of the remaining French settlers to immigrate to the Spanish-controlled territories west of the Mississippi, leaving relatively few in Prairie du Rocher. Many of the subsequent settlers of the area had been



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members of Clark's campaign, or were related to someone who was. They were convinced of the promise of the area by tales of the fertility of the soil in the area now called American Bottom.

The "French Negro" families of Prairie du Rocher gradually headed off across the Mississippi River to the city of St. Louis. By the 1960s, in Prairie du Rocher, only one black man remained; Felix Marshall Pascal. He was born in September of 1877 in Prairie du Rocher and died there in April of 1963.