

## *The “French” Church of St. Genevieve of Paris And Centreville-Hugo*

### **Legacies of North America’s Early Explorers and Pioneers**

The early history of our nation is a colorful tapestry, with the threads of early explorers, missionaries and pioneer families interwoven to form strong and thriving communities. Centreville, or Centerville as we know it today, and the Church of St. Genevieve are no exception. It’s impossible to talk about the development of one of the oldest churches in the Minnesota Territory without talking about the community, and vice-versa.

Long before the first English settlers in the thirteen colonies nestled along the Atlantic seaboard crossed the Appalachian Mountains to the west, the French-Canadian fur hunters in New France (Quebec) were drawn westward by the lure of “les castors,” the furs of the beaver. Beaver pelts fueled the passion Europeans and the emerging genteel class in America had for beaver top hats, beaver coats and other warm and beautiful outerwear. A few of the French-Canadians were also searching for an all-water passage to the Pacific and the legendary spice lands of the Far East. Both groups were accompanied by “Blackrobes,” dedicated priests whose mission was to convert the peoples of the new lands to Christianity. The journals kept by these educated men, chronicling their journeys with early exploration parties, are among the most reliable sources of Minnesota’s early history.

The first French-Canadians arrived in Minnesota well over 300 years ago, at least 100 years before the United States became a nation. Among the early explorers to scout this region are such familiar names as Groseillers (1658), Radisson (1659), Marquette (1673), Father Hennepin (1679), and duLuth (1679). French-Canadian fur traders rapidly scattered along the chains of lakes and the Mississippi, Minnesota, Red, Snake, St. Croix, St. Louis and other rivers.

### **Father Louis Hennepin: The First White Man Visits, 1693**

The first white man to visit the area of what is now Centreville-Hugo is believed to have been Father Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan missionary and historian who played a major role in the development of this state. Sent to explore a portion of the Mississippi, Father Hennepin was captured by a band of Sioux and taken to Mille Lacs, a territory that the Sioux then controlled before being pushed out by the Ojibway (Chippewa). He was rescued by duLuth, who heard stories of a white captive among the Indians and rushed to his aid.

The route to Mille Lacs from Kaposia (South St. Paul) where Father Hennepin was probably taken prisoner was one that the Indians in those days generally made by way of lakes and streams converging at Centreville-Hugo. In a 1693 account printed in Paris about his explorations in what was then the Louisiana Territory, Father Hennepin describes visiting a hunting area that matches perfectly with later written descriptions of Centreville-Hugo when the region was a longtime seasonal camping grounds for the Indians on their migrations north and south. "The lakes and woods were rich with fish, wild rice and game. Burial grounds that have been uncovered in the area indicate that Native Americans began camping here almost as soon as the glacial age in Minnesota ended."

### **1803 Louisiana Purchase: Spurs Settlement**

After Father Hennepin, other French-Canadians visited the region and maintained a trading post at the mouth of the Rum River. After 1803 and the purchase of the Louisiana Territory by the fledgling United States, the French-Canadians were engulfed by the hoards of settlers arriving from the eastern seaboard and the countries of northern Europe in search of a new life and prosperity.

In 1850, the Minnesota Territory was a huge area, divided into nine counties. The total percentage of French-Canadians among the first Minnesota settlers is very high. But often, the names were Anglicized, so the only clue to the original name is if the family originated in Canada.

So the Belairs became the Blairs, Benneit became Benoit. Bosil Galenah became Bazile Galarneau. Narses Demarrah became Narcisse Desmarets. Peter Bebo ti Pierre Bibault became Bibeau. Francis La Ma became Francois LaMothe (LaMotte); Agustis Pereson became Augustus Pariseau, Lewis Couter became Louis Couture, Lewis Pane changed to Louis Paul. Merance Vadna became Marie Ann Vadnais and Priest Dufraim became Presque Dufresne and Parinton became Parenteau. Ozier is Auger, Tiron is Theroux.

Many of these French-Canadians are among the direct ancestors of those who settled in Centreville-Hugo. Family names in the 1850 territorial census that later appeared in the parish register of St. Genevieve of Paris at Centreville and St. John the Baptist in Hugo include: Arcand, Asseline, Bernier, Bellanger, Bourdon, Bonin, Campbell, Carpentier, Cournoyer, Crevier, DeMars, Derosier, Dubois, Dupre, Durand, Faucher, Gadbois, Gagnon, Garneau, Gauthier, Goulet, Godin, Granger, Gregorie, Guertin, Houle, Jerome, LaBelle (Labelle), LeBlanc, Lambert, Lacroix, Labore, Levasseur, LaPointe, Laderoute, Lavallee, LeRoux, Maheu, Martelle, Martin, Morrissette, Moran, Morin, Mercier, Nadeau, Parent, Peltier, Pelkey, Pelletier, Perreault, Plant, Roy (King), Rondeau, St. Marin, Martin and Thibault.

## **1850: The First Permanent Home And A New Community Emerges**

In 1840, Alphonse Jarvis first came to what we now know as Centerville. The first permanent dwelling constructed by a white man was built in Centerville Township in 1850 by a German, Frederick W. Travers. In 1852, Francis LaMotte arrived, the first of a large number of French-Canadians who formed the “French Settlement” on the east side of the community.

LaMotte (Lamotte on old records) arrived in the spring of 1852.

The census of 1850 located him at Mendota Heights, where he worked as a blacksmith. In the fall of 1852, Charles Peltier, Peter Cardinal and F.X. Lavalley arrived in the area. Oliver Dupre, born in Sorel, Canada, was one of the first settlers in St. Paul, and came to Centerville in the winter of 1852. He moved two miles from the village in 1870. In 1853, Paul and Oliver Peltier arrived, and in 1854, Charles Peltier built a saw mill. He joined Lavalley and LaMotte in planning Centerville, which was formally organized as a township August 11, 1857. The first officers were: Oliver Peltier, Chairman; Francis LaMotte, Clerk; Charles Peltier, Treasurer; and Stephen Ward, Justice of the Peace.

The western part of town was the first part settled and continued to draw more settlers of German heritage. By 1855, it was known as the “German Settlement.”

Throughout the 1850’s, many French-Canadian pioneers whose surnames can still be found in area directories settled in the area. Joseph Houle was reported in Centerville as early as 1852. Francis LaMotte’s first wife was Leocadie Houle, the daughter of Michel Houle and Genevieve Cartier. The Cartiers, Rivard-Dufresne, Courteaus, Letourneaus, Labelles, Tetraults, Valois, Lamberts, Ducharmes, and Tourvilles were among these families.

They had many different reasons for traveling to Centerville. Some were here because of the early fur trade. Some followed the seasonal logging industry, returning to Canada for part of the year. Others moved in response to population pressure in Quebec and a dearth of land, coupled with the demand for cheap labor in the U.S. Family folklore relates that the LaMottes may have left Quebec after a short-lived rebellion by some French-Canadians against the British. One of the Catholic churches desecrated by the British in the aftermath of the rebellion had an Abbe Dufresne as pastor. According to family stories, this may be the reason the LaMottes left Quebec.

For the Letourneaus, family stories tell the decision to move to Minnesota was triggered by tragedy. For the Houles, it seemed to be a fathering of the clan. At least one branch of the Rivard-Dufresne family left Quebec because they had been

flooded out of their farmland and homes by the rising St. Lawrence River near Sorel in Quebec.

Joseph Peloquin's grandfather also came from Sorel in about 1850, along with many other French-Canadians. He claimed 40 acres of land, cleared it and built a house, married and raised seven children. His eldest son enlarged the farm to 91 acres and served as the assessor for Anoka County in the early 1900's.

### **The Church And The Community: Growing Together**

St. Paul's first Bishop was the Right Reverend Joseph Cretin. Born in France, he came to the U.S. in 1838 as a young missionary priest, working among the Indians in Iowa. When the new Bishop arrived in St. Paul in 1851, he reported to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith in his native France that there were six thousand Catholics scattered through the diocese – 25,000 Indians, four church buildings and three priests. The church buildings were the log "cathedral" Church on the banks of the Mississippi in St. Paul, the Church of St. Peter in Mendota, the Church of St. Anthony, near St. Anthony Falls and a church at Pembina, North Dakota. There was one priest at Mendota and two at Pembina.

Bishop Cretin's first concern was to foster religious vocations. He founded a school along with a new cathedral and the first two students, John Ireland and Thomas O'Gorman were then sent to finish their studies for the priesthood in France. Monsignor Augustine Ravoux, the Vicar General, went with them to France. While there, he recruited two other seminarians for missionary work in the new diocese. The first two priests to visit Centreville were in that group, Father George Keller and Father J. Claude Robert.

### **1855: The First Church is Built**

The first mass was offered in the village by Father Keller in 1854. He visited with some regularity and the first parish church was built under his supervision in 1855. Father Claude Robert began visiting Centreville in 1855 and supervised the building of the second church in 1859. That church was dedicated to St. Genevieve of Paris, the French capital's patron saint. The third church, a brick edifice, was built in 1870 during the pastorate of the Reverend Joseph Goiffon, who was pastor of St. Genevieve's from 1861 to 1891, and for whom Goiffon Avenue was named. The fourth and present church was built in 1904 during the pastorate of Father Marcele Masl.

The parish served both Centreville and Oneka until 1902, when the Church of St. John the Baptist was constructed in Hugo. People came from as far away as what is now known as the town of Withrow to attend services. Members of the

Letorneau family tell the story of their family traveling from five miles east of Hugo to attend mass and then dining with the LaMottes, who lived across the street from the church, before undertaking the long drive home. In winter, hot stones tucked under fur wraps kept the family warm during the long journey by horse and sleigh.

### **Father Goiffon: A Missionary And A Legend**

Of the 23 pastors that have served St. Genevieve's Parish since 1855, Father Goiffon is probably the most famous. He was born in France in 1824 and ordained to the priesthood in 1852. He accepted the invitation of Bishop Cretin to work in the Diocese of St. Paul, arriving in 1857. After serving nine months in the City of St. Paul, he was sent to Pembina, North Dakota. In late August of 1860, he received a letter from the Vicar General requesting him to travel to St. Paul and to meet with him. Father Goiffon was disturbed by the summons because he feared that he would not find it possible to return to Pembina before winter.

He left Pembina quickly by ox-cart train and arrived in St. Paul in September. The train was to return to Pembina during the first week of October. Father Goiffon thought he would be ready to return with his friends, but was delayed. He left St. Paul a few days later, hoping to join the ox-cart train. On November 1, he reached the Great Salt River beyond the present City of Grand Forks and spent the night with other travelers encamped there. They urged him to wait until the rain stopped to continue his journey. The winter cold was also beginning to set in. But Father Goiffon was anxious to reach his parish and continued the journey alone on horseback. The rain turned to snow and quickly, both horse and priest became hopelessly lost. The horse died in the snowstorm, and to save his own life, Father Goiffon cut open the carcass and crawled inside. When found, Father Goiffon was still alive but one leg was badly frozen.

Within a few days of reaching Pembina, it was decided to transfer the dying priest to St. Boniface in Canada, where there was a hospital next to the cathedral. Father Goiffon's leg was amputated, but the stump would not heal. The doctor, the sisters and priests began to prepare for his funeral. A pot of grease was placed on the stove to make candles, but it boiled over and started the wood frame hospital afire. Father Goiffon was moved outside and placed in a snow bank. The hospital burned to the ground, along with the cathedral and the Bishop's house. But Father Goiffon's leg was cauterized by the snow and he recovered. The Vicar General called him back to St. Paul and appointed him the Pastor of the Church of St. John in Little Canada in 1861. From 1861 to 1891, he also served as the Pastor of the Church of St. Genevieve.

## **The Mantle Of Leadership: Pastors Of St. Genevieve**

1854 – 1855	Reverend George A. Keller Supervised the building of the first parish church in 1855.
1855 – 1859	Reverend J. Claude Robert Supervised the building of the second parish church in 1859, officially named the Church of St. Genevieve of Paris.
1861 – 1891	Reverend Joseph Goiffon Supervised the building of the third parish church in 1870. Goiffon Avenue in Centerville is named after Fr. Goiffon.
1891 – 1898	Reverend Francis X. Combettes
1898 – 1901	Reverend Paul J. H. Bannefous
1901 – 1903	Reverend Alphonse Van denBosch
1903 – 1904	Reverend Peter A. Quesnell
1904 – 1918	Reverend Marcele Masl Supervised the building of the fourth and present Parish in 1904.
1919 – 1921	Reverend George Van derVelden
1921 – 1939	Reverend Achille P. Schafer
1939 – 1940	Reverend Francis M. Fairley
1940 – 1949	Reverend Joseph C. O'Donnell
1949 – 1952	Reverend Vincent P. Dudley
1953 – 1959	Reverend Francis A. Welch
1959 – 1961	Reverend Edmund M. Barry
1961 – 1966	Reverend Frederick A. Mertz Father Mertz supervised the building of St. Genevieve's Catechetical Center in 1964, as well as the purchase of additional property for parish expansion.

1966 – 1967	Reverend Vincent A. Colon
1967 – 1975	Reverend Francis E. Shea
1975 – 1980	Reverend Monsignor Dennis M. Lally
1980 – 1987	Reverend Clement J. Zweber
1987 – 1991	Reverend Gerald J. Kenney
1991 – 1999	Reverend Richard J. Wolter
1999 – Present	Reverend Thomas P. Fitzgerald

**An Excerpt From “Early Dakota Trails And Settlements At Centreville”  
By Albert Moses Goodrich**

*Note: The original publishing date is unknown. This version of the story was published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1915, Volume 15, and was taken from “The Michel Houle Family of Centreville” by W. Bruce Houle.*

“Centreville...is situated in the southeast corner of the county and is generally covered with timber, except the marshes, of which there are quite a number capable of being converted into good hay land. The soil is black loam, quite productive, and gives evidence of great strength, especially in the eastern part of the town. The western portion is more sandy, but yet sustains the character of good farming land.

A chain of lakes extends nearly across the town, the largest of which are Clearwater, or Centreville, and Rice Lakes; they are connected by Rice Creek, which crosses the township in a southwesterly direction. These lakes abound in ducks and fish, are a favorite resort for sportsmen, and offered strong inducement to the first settlers, who lived chiefly by hunting and fishing for a number of years, but have since turned their attention to farming.

In Centreville, and in southeastern Columbus, there are many mounds and sundry evidences that this region had been a place of numerous contests by warring tribes, and might properly be called an “Indian Battle Ground.” Just back of the house of Michel Dupre, about two miles northwest of Centreville village, there is a high and conical shaped mound which has been used by Mr. Dupre as a cellar, one side being excavated for that purpose. In making the excavation, a number of human bones, a copper gun barrel, and other curiosities were found. On the top and sides, large trees were growing at the time. A number of large mounds in the vicinity have the appearance of breastworks, as though erected for defense. Near the lakes, human bones have been found and Indian arrowheads in considerable numbers. Another mound, near Mr. Barrett’s house, was opened and found to contain human bones in great quantities.

The permanent early settlers in this town were preceded by a number of half-breeds and trappers, who soon disappeared before the tide of a higher civilization.

In the eastern part of the town, the Canadian French have principally taken up their residence, having formed a settlement here as early at 1852. The first settler was Francis LaMotte, in the spring of the latter year. He was followed, in the fall by F. X. Lavallee, Peter Cardinal and Charles Peltier, all settling the section 23. Joseph Houle resided here during the summer of that year, but was in the employ of LaMotte, and did not make a claim. From this date the population increased

quite rapidly. Prominent among the next arrivals were A. Gervais, Oliver Dupre, Joseph Forcier, Paul and Oliver Peltier, Stephen Ward and L. Burkard.

The German settlement in the western part of the town is older, however, than the French settlement just mentioned. The first to settle there was F.W. Travers, a German, who settled in section 19 in 1850 and still resides on the old claim. He was joined five years later by Henry Wenzel, also a native of Germany. This settlement was begun by Germans and they still predominate, giving it the name of the "German Settlement," while that in the eastern part of the town is known as the "French Settlement."

Centreville was organized on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, 1857. The early records are incomplete, but so far as we have been able to ascertain, the first town officers were: Supervisors, Oliver Peltier, Chairman, and F. LaMotte, the latter was also Justice of the Peace; Treasurer, Stephen Ward; and Clerk, Charles Peltier.

In 1854, Charles Peltier built a saw mill on Clearwater Creek, near the village of Centreville. After operating it five years with varied success, he abandoned the enterprise.

Large quantities of charcoal were manufactured in different portions of the town each year, which were marketed in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The village was laid out and platted by Charles Peltier, F. X. Lavallee, and F. LaMotte in the spring of 1854. It is situated on the bank of Clearwater Lake, and was named Centreville because of its being located about equidistant from Stillwater, St. Paul and Anoka.

The first religious service was held by Father Keller, who conducted mass at the house of F. LaMotte in 1854. He visited the place occasionally for a few years, and was succeeded by Father Robert. Since 1861, Father Goiffon was in charge, dividing his time between the place and Little Canada, Ramsey County. Soon after the first services were held, a small frame church 16 by 25 feet was built, which was superseded by a brick church erected in 1859. The primitive wooden structure was brought into service as a parsonage. The congregation now numbers about 400 and is named "The Church of St. Genevieve of Paris."

Centreville is divided into three school districts. The first school was held in the kitchen of F. X. Lavallee in the winter of 1854-55 and was a six month term. It was then held in the church until the building of the schoolhouse in the village in 1865 just north of the church on the shore of Centreville Lake. District 46 was organized in 1880 and school was kept in a log building on section Eleven.

District 20 was organized in 1868 and a schoolhouse was built the same year on section Seventeen.

In 1915, Centerville covered an area of 23,040 acres of which 1677 were under cultivation.

*Note: In 1882, the school board authorized spending \$300 for a new school building and \$200 for a site across the street from the Present Centerville School. In 1888, the members voted to add a 16 foot addition to the building at a cost of \$50. Included in the cost was a suitable foundation for the existing building. At that time, the cost for 500 feet of lumber was \$3.00 and labor was \$1.50 a day. Teacher's salaries ranged from \$35 to \$60 a month.*

## **A Short History of The Pioneer Settlers Of Centreville Township**

**Leopold Burkard**, one of the first settlers of the village of Centreville, is a native of Ketsch, Germany, and was born in 1813. His father was a blacksmith, as was Leopold. He remained home until age 21 and worked his trade in Germany for 10 years. He came to America in 1850, first to Freeport, Illinois. In 1853, he came to Stillwater and in March of 1854, came to Centreville to open a blacksmith shop.

**Flavius Benson** was born 27 miles southwest of Montreal in 1831. At age 14, he left the home of his parents to work in the pineries and on the river. He then went to Toledo, Ohio, and Grand Rapids on the Wisconsin River and to Burlington, Iowa, where he worked in the wood trade. He came to Minnesota in 1871, stayed a few months in Stillwater, and finally located in Centreville. He built a saw mill and operated it a while. He then opened a mercantile business. In 1860, he married Elen Carter, they had seven children.

**Clement Cardinal** was one of the most prosperous farmers in Centreville. A native of the village of St. Our, Canada, he was born in 1837. He left home for Minnesota at age 13, joining his brother at Lake Como, Ramsey County. He then went to Henderson, and assisted in the first clearing at that place for three years. His next employment was in the fur trade with the Indians at Traverse des Sioux, where he stayed for five years, the last three of which he was in business for himself. He then joined a fur company in Renville County and traded furs for two years in Renville County, where he also engaged in farming. In 1862, he was surprised in his new home by Indians who killed his father-in-law and brother-in-law and carried his wife into captivity. She was released after eight weeks and four days. Mr. Cardinal escaped and enlisted in the Fifth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, and served a year in the Indian Wars. He purchased a farm in Centreville and later married Margaret Perro of Canada in 1858, they had eight children.

**Alexander Cardinal** was born in Montreal in 1833. He left home to work in the copper mines of Michigan for about a year. Then, he came to St. Paul. Two years later, he moved to Little Canada. He came to Centreville to farm in 1870. He married S. Beban in 1862 and had 11 children.

**J. B. Derosier** was born in Quebec in 1844. At age 17, he apprenticed in a blacksmith at Yamaska, working three years for 36 dollars. He came to Northampton, Massachusetts, and remained a year before returning to Canada. He moved to Centreville in 1868 and opened a blacksmith shop. He married Mary Peltier in 1864 and had 10 children.

**Michel Dupre** was born in Quebec in 1837. He lived with his parents until his marriage in 1855 to Eliza Corbet. Then, he helped his father-in-law manage his farm until the spring of 1865, when he moved to Centreville to farm. He and his wife had 11 children.

**Peter Dupre** is also a native of Canada, born in 1834. He lived with his parents until age 18, when he came to Little Canada. He bought a farm in Centreville Township on which he lived for three years. He sold that property and bought another farm. In 1858, he married Julia Bergner and they had nine children. Mr. Dupre always took a lively interest in the development of the township and held a number of local offices.

**Oliver Dupre** was born in Sorel, Canada in 1830. He is one of the first settlers of St. Paul, arriving there in 1847, when the town had just 10 homes. After two years, he moved to a farm in Little Canada, coming to Centreville in the winter of 1852. He farmed near the village. He married Mary Garso in 1849. The couple had six children.

**Augustin Rivard Dufresne** was born near Sorel, Canada in 1825. His father operated two farms, one of which Augustin managed until his father's death. He came to Minnesota to farm in Centreville in 1869. He married Miss L. Bennoet in 1845 and they had 15 children.

**Frank Dupre** was born in Quebec in 1829. He left home at 17 to come the New Northwest, passing through the present site of St. Paul when only two houses were there. He farmed in Little Canada for 14 years, during which time he was also employed by the government as a supply transporter from St. Paul to Crow Wing. In the fall of 1860, he began farming in Centreville. He married Sophia Dufux in 1846 and had 12 children.

**Joseph N. Forcier** was born near Sorel, Canada, in 1850. At age 4, he came with his parents to Centreville Village, where he lived with his parents, occasionally working in the lumber woods. In 1872, he bought a farm. He married Margaret Peltier of Centreville in 1870; they had four children. Forcier lived in Centreville until his death.

**The Reverend Joseph Goiffon** was a pioneer missionary priest in Minnesota. He was born in France in 1824. After preparing for college, he entered the Seminary at Meximieux, graduated and studied theology at Bron, where he was ordained in 1852. He then served as Vicar of Meximieux for five years and came to St. Paul in 1857. After nine months, he was sent as a missionary to Pembina, North Dakota, on the Red River. After a nearly-fatal accident during a November

blizzard in 1860, he was appointed to serve the congregations of Little Canada, and Centreville.

**Michael Golden, Sr.** was one of the pioneers of the German settlement in Centreville Township and a native of Ireland. He first settled in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1849. In Ireland, he lived on a small farm and was a stone dealer. After three years of working as a stevedore in Providence, he went to Blackstone, Massachusetts, and worked on a farm until 1854, when he came to Minnesota. In addition to farming in Centreville, he served as the Village Constable for 17 years and held other town offices.

**Michel Golden, Jr.**, son of Michael Sr., was also born in Ireland, in 1850. He came with his parents to America as an infant. He occupied his father's original homestead and followed his father's footsteps into civic leadership, serving as Justice of the Peace for 12 years and holding a number of other town offices. In 1874, he married Ida Scott of Mound View and had three children.

**Louie Halley** was born in Quebec, Canada, in 1835. He left home for Minnesota in 1852, living in White Bear Lake. He then went to Michigan and lived there for 24 years, working in the copper mines near Calumet for 11 of those years. He came to Centreville to farm in 1878. He married to A. Haully in 1864 and had eight children.

**Joseph Houle** was born near Sorel, Canada in 1836. His mother died when he was eleven years old. He came to Minnesota in 1851 to visit the township of Centreville. The following spring, he went to work for F. LaMotte. He returned to Centreville in 1871 and became a lifelong resident.

**Frank Kraus** was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1844. His father died in 1864, and he operated the family farm for 10 years. He came to America in 1874, staying for a short time in Illinois and then St. Paul. He came to Centreville Township the same winter and engaged in farming, renting land until 1876, when he bought his farm. In 1866, he married B. Suss and had six children.

**Francis X. Lavallee** was the second man to make a permanent settlement in the town of Centreville. A native of Quebec, he was born in 1825. He came to the U.S. at age 17 and was employed in woolen mills of Rhode Island for about seven years. In 1849, he came to St. Paul and then to Lake Como, where he remained until coming to Centreville in the fall of 1852. Then, most settlers will supported themselves chiefly by hunting. Mr. Lavallee built the first frame house in Centreville. He married Mary Shepard in 1848 and had 13 children.

**Oliver Leroux** was born near Sorel, Canada, in 1850. At age 8, his mother died. He came to Minnesota in 1870 to work in the pineries in the winter, and worked in a St. Paul brickyard during summer. In 1873, he bought a farm in Centreville. In July of that year, he married Catherine Bebeau. The couple had five children.

**Telesphore Lacasse** was born in Canada in 1839. At age 18, he went to Massachusetts and then next year to Georgia, where he lived at the outbreak of the Civil War. He was drafted into the Confederate Army, serving in the Seventh Georgia Infantry for eight months. Believing he accidentally ended up on the “wrong side” as a northerner from Canada, he deserted to the Union line while on picket duty in front of Richmond and made his way north to New Haven, Connecticut. There he enlisted in the Sixth Connecticut Volunteer Infantry and came to Minnesota. He lived in Stillwater until moving to a Centreville farm in 1872. That same year, he married Alphonsine Parenteau of Centreville. The couple had five children.

**Charles H. Moore** was born in England in 1837. He came to Ontario Canada, at age four with his parents. At age 13, he began working on a farm, and later became a merchant. He came to the U.S. in 1857. He farmed for seven years in Jefferson County, New York, and then spent seven years in purchasing farm produce through the country. He worked on the railroad for three years, and ended up in Centreville Township on a farm in 1878. In 1857, he married Ann Purcell; they had 10 children.

**Peter Parenteau** was a native of Quebec born in 1819. He came to New York State and lived near Albany until 1842. Then, he returned to Canada, purchased a farm and cultivated it until he came to settle in Centreville in 1856. He married Margaret Vadnais in 1852.

**Prisque Peloquin** came to Centreville from Sorel, Canada, in about 1850. Like many other French Canadians, he claimed land, about 40 acres, and started clearing the land to build a house. He married and raised seven children; then, in later years, returned to Canada to live. His oldest son, Joseph H. came into the farm and buildings, and expanded it to 91 acres. Joseph H. Peloquin also served as Anoka County Assessor during World War I, serving a territory of about 20 square miles.

**Oliver Peltier** was born in Quebec near the south shore of Lake St. Peter in 1825. He apprenticed to a carriage maker in Sorel at the age of 15. He visited Fort Ticonderoga and other portions of New York State, British America, in the vicinity of Hudson’s Bay. In Worcester, Massachusetts, he learned the trade of molder and lived eight years. He also visited the Republic of Mexico, Cleveland, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois, before coming to Centreville in 1853. He settled on a

farm and worked it until 1871, when he sold out and moved to St. Paul. He remained there for eight years, serving three as a member of the city's police force. He returned then to Centreville and took up farming again. In 1848, he married Elizabeth Podvin of Massachusetts. They had 12 children.

**Frank Pera** was a native of Glengarry, Canada West, and was born in 1846. At age 18, he came to Michigan to work in the copper mines for five years. He came to Minnesota in 1869 and lived on a farm in Centreville, where he lived until the death of his wife in 1880. He married Elizabeth Burkard in 1876 and the couple had two children.

**J. Peltier** was born in Quebec in 1822. He lived with his parents until age 21, and then settled on a nearby farm for the next 12 years. He came to Minnesota in 1855 and settled in Centreville. He married E. Neveux in 1843 and the couple had 13 children.

**William Ramsden** was a native of Yorkshire, England, born in 1813. His father was a miner and William worked about the mines until he reached age 21. Then he worked as a coachman in Manchester, England, for eight years. He came to America in 1845 and stayed in New York State. In 1854, he came to Scott County, Minnesota. Then, he worked as a merchant in St. Paul and later, Columbus in Anoka County, where he operated a saw mill for several years. Then, he kept a dairy near St. Paul. He came to Centreville Township to farm in 1865.

**Johann Redman** was a native of Prussia, born in 1822. His father died when he was two years old, and he lived with his mother until age 17, when he began to work neighboring farms for the next 25 years. He came to America in 1866, first to Michigan for three and a half years, and then to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He came to Centreville to farm in 1876. He married R. Huneka in 1844.

**W. Speiser** was born in Württemberg, Germany, in 1839. He lived with his parents until coming to America in 1866. After a year in Indiana and Michigan, he came to Wisconsin, where he worked on a farm for six months. He came to Centreville in the fall of 1868, and after working for A. Wenzel for four and a half years, purchased his own farm. He married R. Messerschmidt in 1871 and the couple had six children.

**J. H. Sherman** was born in Green County, New York in 1823. At age 21, he apprenticed to a carpenter for two years, and then served seven years as an employee of B. G. Morse of Red Falls, New York. He then lived in Binghamton a few years before coming to St. Paul in 1856. He worked at his trade there for seven years, and then went to the Pacific Coast. But, he soon returned to New

York State, and remained in Brooklyn a few years. In 1866, he came to Minnesota again and settled on a farm in Centreville. He married Ann E. Hard in 1849. The couple had three children.

**A. Trudeau** was a native of Quebec born in 1841. He was reared on his father's farm until age 17, when he became a clerk in a mercantile store. At age 23, he opened his one mercantile business at West Farnham, Canada, and stayed there for 13 years. He came to Minnesota with a Mr. Larose and together they opened a firm named Larose & Trudeau, a general store that also sold agricultural implements. In 1866, Mr. Trudeau married Isabella DalGLISH. They had seven children.

**Octavis Tourville** was born in Quebec in 1857. He moved to the Lake Superior copper mines with his parents at age seven. He came to Centreville nine years later and became a farmer. His parents lived with him. He married D. Dupre of Centreville in 1880 and had one child.

**Joseph Tauer** was a native of Bohemia, born in 1850. He lived with his parents until coming to America in 1867. After a stay of a year and a half in St. Paul, he came to Centreville to live with his brother. In 1872, he bought a farm. He married C. Moroltor in 1872, and the couple had five children.

**Frederick W. Travers** was the first man to make a permanent settlement in Centreville Township. A native of Oldenburg, Germany, he was born in 1814. He came to America in 1841, and enlisted in the First United States Infantry, Company D. After being stationed for a time in New York City and afterwards in Florida, he was ordered to Ft. Snelling, where he remained until his discharge in 1846. After his discharge, he occupied an abandoned claim on the present site of the St. Anthony or East Minneapolis, but the threatening attitude of the Indians in the vicinity caused him to leave. He moved to a spot between that and St. Paul for one year. He then lived in St. Paul until 1850, when he came to what is now Centreville Township. He lived on section 19 on the shore of Rice Lake, where he hunted, fished and farmed.

**Oliver Valois** was born in Quebec in 1851. He lived with his parents until 1868, when he began an apprenticeship as a carpenter. He worked a number of years in Sorel, Canada, and the State of Vermont. He came to his present home in Centreville in 1865 and actively pursued his trade as a carpenter. He married Mary Dupre of Centreville in 1880 and the couple had one child.

**Stephen Ward** was born in Staffordshire, England, in 1824. As a young man, he learned the trade of brick mason, a trade he practiced until settling on a farm in Anoka County. He came to America in the summer of 1848, living two years in

Philadelphia and the same length of time in New Orleans and St. Louis. He came to St. Paul in 1851 and stayed there until 1854, when he settled on a farm in Centreville Township. He lived there until his death in 1880. He married Sarah Howard of Worcestershire, England.

**Anton Wenzel** was born in Saxon, Germany in 1839. His father was a blacksmith and during his boyhood, Anton was employed in his father's shop. Anton came to America with his parents in 1853. He lived in St. Louis, Missouri, but in 1855, came to Centreville Township as the second family in the German Settlement. His father settled on section 19, where Anton Wenzel lived until he commenced farming for himself. His farm was located on the south shore of Rice Lake, and he was one of the most prosperous farmers in the township. He married Henrietta Neukirch in 1863. The couple had nine children.

### **Epilogue**

It would have been impossible to compile this historic information without the help of Melvin Dupre, Centreville's "historian-in-Residence," Joseph Peloquin, and without the generous permission of the Houle family. Much of our historical information is taken directly from *The Michele Houle Family of Centreville, Our French-Canadian Heritage*, and a marvelous compendium of family history written by W. Bruce Houle in 1978 with the help of Sr. Mary Gabriel Walls, Elmer Joseph Corteau and Sr. Odile Bonin. We are grateful to these dedicated and wonderful people for preserving the history of St. Genevieve's and Centerville for generations to come.