

100 Associates Endowment Fund of the French-American Heritage Foundation (FAHF)

A Perpetual Endowment Fund founded in 2019 that will be used to fund programs and grants for educational events, projects and classes about French Heritage in Minnesota and the Midwest

Introduction

In the spring of 1660, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law, Medard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers, explored the area around the Great Lakes region which included Minnesota. Thus the French presence in Minnesota began. Most of the early fur traders and lumbermen in Minnesota were French. Most early settlements, such as St. Paul, Mendota, and Stillwater were also largely French. French was the primary European language in Minnesota for almost 200 years before Minnesota became a state in 1858.

After the English conquest of 1760 in Canada, a distinct French-Canadian culture developed whose members comprised the bulk of French migration to Minnesota and neighboring states. In the 1800s, Métis opened travel and commerce between Northwestern Minnesota and St. Paul. Eventually, large numbers of French-Canadians settled on farms and towns in Minnesota. Many Minnesota towns and lakes have French names. Minnesota's state motto, L'etoile du Nord, (North Star) and the Minneapolis' motto, En Avant, (forward) are French. It was only in the mid 1800s, as Minnesota was opening for settlement and became a state, that the French language began to give way to English, and awareness of the French contribution diminished.

Other French-speaking ethnic groups have migrated to Minnesota as well, from places such as France, Belgium, Switzerland, Lebanon, French-speaking countries in Africa, New Caledonia, Haiti and some other Caribbean islands. Many also have Huguenot ancestors, who were early immigrants to the United States and who include many of the founding fathers of the United States. According to the 1980 census, almost 8% of Minnesotans claim French as part of their ethnic heritage.

With the renewed interest in our heritage and family stories today, and in recognition of the rich and long history of French presence in the state, a group of people interested in history, heritage and culture formed the French-American Heritage Foundation (FAHF) in 2013 with the purpose of promoting and sponsoring research programs and educational events, seminars and classes on French heritage in Minnesota.

In the years FAHF has been in existence, it has become clear that the people of Minnesota appreciate the efforts and contributions that this Foundation has made to provide historical information and educational materials to the public. There will always be a need and desire to learn about our State's history. The French heritage in this state is an important part of our history, and should be remembered and be available to everyone. The French-American Heritage Foundation endeavors to fulfill that need.

These efforts take time and money, and to ensure that this Foundation survives, it must have funds to ensure that its mission will be able to continue long into the future. For this reason, the FAHF has embarked on this fundraising campaign to raise no less than \$100,000 to place in a perpetual endowment fund managed by the St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation. As of August 1, 2021, the endowment assets are \$25,000.00. The income from this endowment will then be used to help fund future educational events and services that meet the mission statement of the French-American Heritage Foundation which is to preserve and promote the French-American Heritage in Minnesota through education and community events.

What We Do

From our beginning in 2013 our aspiration has been to keep alive and in the public eye the rich French heritage and legacy in Minnesota and the Midwest. We have done this in numerous ways. All details can easily be reviewed at our website <http://fahfminn.org>.

Website: www.fahfminn.org

The FAHF website is fahfminn.org and French-American Heritage Foundation also maintains an email list of members of those who have expressed interest in our Heritage events and programming. This website includes information on our events, an on-line library with articles and publications, music by Les Canadiens Errants, genealogy and family history.

Educational Events:

The French-American Heritage Foundation has sponsored many education and public programming classes and events. Below is a list of some of the events we have sponsored. As for everyone, the pandemic slowed our progress in 2020-21.

- Dr. Greg Brick, Pierre-Charles Le Sueur discovery of saltpeter caves.
- John Schade, "Beginning Canadian-French Genealogical Research."
- Professor Mary Lethert Wingerd, at the Minnesota History Center commemorating the 175th anniversary of the building of the Chapel of St. Paul by French Canadians.
- Professor Joe Amato, "Paths and Road to Becoming French, and a Book-Loving Métis."
- Dr. Eileen Angelini, "Historical outline of the French connection between Canada and New England."
- Charles Coulombe, "Catholic Influence on French Immigration into North America"
- Professor Thomas Cauvin, "Theo's Choice," the battle to keep the French language alive in Louisiana.
- Dr. Marty Guidry, "Scattered to the Winds," The Acadian Deportation. National Acadian Day.
- Mattie Harper, Ph.D., "The Bonga family's multigenerational story of living within structures of empire, slavery and colonialism, and the ways in which their identities lay at the heart of their survival."

Regional Events:

- Pierre Girard, The Voyageurs, (Multicultural Festival at St. Francis High School).
- Heritage Storytelling Event, short stories of French and French-Canadian heritage in Minnesota.
- Jane Peck and Mary Antoine, "French-Indian Roots in Southeast MN, Our Mixed-blood beginnings."
- Mark Labine, "The early French Speaking settlement in Mendota." (Sibley House).
- Mark Labine, "French heritage in Minnesota" (Macalester).
- Virgil Benoit, "Finding the Real Bottineau"- The Life and Legacy of Pierre Bottineau."
- Greg Cash, "The Fur Trade."
- Dick Bernard "The history of Chez Nous" newsletter of La Societe Canadienne Française.
- Author Steve Werle, "The Life & Legacy of William Gates LeDuc."
- Mark Labine, "Little Rapids Fur Trade Post" at White Bear Center for the Arts.
- Jane Hayden-Hart- "Exploring Joseph Coursolle's French-Dakota connections."
- Jim Morin- "The Travels and Adventures of Charles Napoleon Morin."

Information, Membership, Book Sales Tables:

- St. Jean Baptiste Festivals, Sibley House.
- Bastille Day Celebrations.
- Little Canada Days.
- Minnesota Genealogical Society Annual Conferences.
- Family History Fairs, Minneapolis Public Library.
- Urban Expeditions, showcasing France, French History, Culture and People.
- Heritage Alive Events, Shoreview Library.
- Louisville Foundation series in Little Canada.
- Mendota Dakota Pow Wows, Mendota.
- French-American Heritage Foundation presentations and events and events shared with the Alliance Française.

French Heritage Tours

- Henderson, Minnesota museum and regional French-Canadian history sites.
- Minneapolis Basilica of St. Mary designed by architect Emmanuel Masqueray.
- Prairie du Chien tour of French-Canadian historical sites.

Scholarships

FAHF has awarded scholarships to the Voyageur Program of the Lac Du Bois camp of the Concordia Language Villages.

Future Plans in addition to Current Programs

The French-American Heritage Foundation is based in part on the unifying factor of the French language in many different American Cultural heritages, whether Cajun, Haitian, West-African, North-African, French-Canadian or francophone European. Its primary goal is to celebrate the ways in which these many French-American cultures have contributed to and continue to enrich the culture of the United States.

FAHF hopes to sponsor at some time in the future a festival of French-language cultures.

100 Associates

The name of this fundraising campaign is “100 Associates.” We borrow this name from the Company of One Hundred Associates (French: formally the Compagnie de la Nouvelle France, or colloquially the Compagnie des Cent-Associés or Compagnie du Canada or Company of New France) which was a French trading and colonization company chartered in 1627 to control the North American fur trade and to expand French colonies there. The company was granted a monopoly to manage the fur trade in the colonies of New France, which were at that time centered in the Saint Lawrence River valley and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

The original Company of 100 Associates was capitalized with investments of 3,000 French livres from one hundred investors, thus its name. Using this example, the FAHF has a goal to recruit one hundred donors