



the

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Illinois' First Lt. Governor: A Man of Many Talents

Reading about Pierre Menard, Illinois' first Lt. Governor, you get the feeling in today's world he would have been voted "Big Man on Campus," then gone on to become the head of a Fortune 500 Corporation (faster than any of his college buddies) and possibly Secretary of State of the U.S., all the while funding charities that help the poor. Given his history, he might have had some successful business ventures on the side, too.

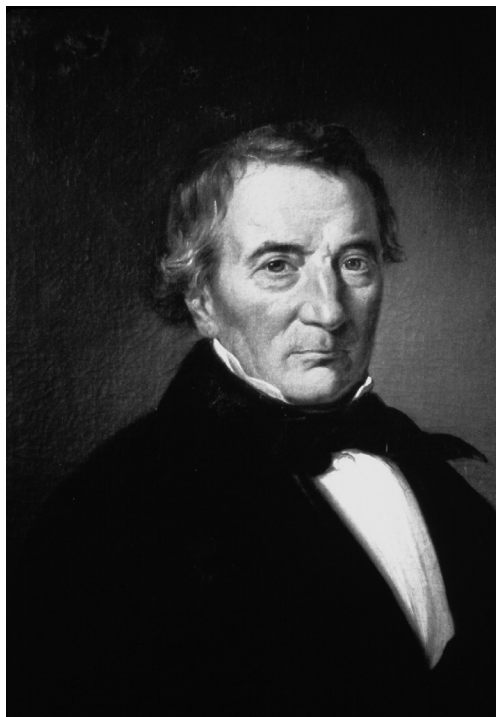
A few things seem certain: Menard was connected, savvy, successful, and busy. Of course everyone has their faults and from today's perspective the fact that Menard owned many slaves and advocated slavery is a big one, although it's only fair to see him in the context of his times -- his attitude was common for that period (1766 to 1844). And, although he held many political offices in what became the state of Illinois, Menard originally swore allegiance to Spain and didn't become a U.S. citizen until seven years after Illinois became its own territory, long after he'd been holding political offices in what became the state of Illinois.

But we're getting ahead of the story.

An Entrepreneur

Menard, a French Canadian, left his Montreal home at 15, according to the 2004 "Pierre Menard Home State Historic Site Interpretive Guide," a docu-

ment from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. (That guide is the source of all information about Menard in this article.) By 1781 he was involved in fur trading, a venture that would prove very fruitful commercially and politically.



According to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, "Pierre Menard was one of the few residents of French descent who exercised political clout during the entire territorial era in Illinois." Photo courtesy of Pierre Menard Home State Historic Site, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

After working in the Indiana Territory, Menard came to Kaskaskia, Illinois in 1790. He tried several business ventures, some of which failed badly, but in the end he partnered with a powerful Frenchman from nearby Ste. Genevieve named Jean-Baptiste Valle'. (Throughout his life Menard had a knack for becoming part of the powerful or elite cliques in his area, which only helped his ventures.)

The men began two successful stores: one in Kaskaskia and one in Ste. Genevieve; both traded in furs and sold items from Europe and the east coast. Customers included locals as well as traders and numerous Native Americans who were on a forced migration from their homelands in the east to new lands in the west. Menard received a federal appointment as an Indian subagent, whose job was to help the tribes, sell them provisions and report their activities to Washington, which

didn't hurt the stores' business. According to the Interpretive Guide, Menard and Valle' may have used Menard's subagent position and their stores to try to monopolize trade in the area.

Menard's other businesses included operating a Mississippi River ferry and production interests in area salt mines.

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The Menard family probably used the grande salle or parlor of the Menard Home to entertain. Its elegant décor conveys an impression of wealth and power that reflects Menard's standing as a member of the political and social elite. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

An Indian Subagent

Through his work as an Indian subagent, Menard got to know many Native Americans and their leaders. Some visited or stayed at his farm and home in Kaskaskia. One of Menard's favorites was likely William Anderson, head of the Delaware Indians who were traveling from Indiana to southeastern Missouri in the fall of 1820. Menard got them supplies and transportation across the Mississippi and accompanied them for a while. He must have become fond of Anderson because he bought him a gift and called him his "old friend." Four years later, Menard traveled to Anderson's Ozark camp and stayed for five months helping the tribe.

Some Native Americans stayed at Menard's home. Takatoka, an older Cherokee chief, did so while traveling west on a mission to unite different tribes and negotiate a land agreement with Washington. He died at Menard's home on New Year's Eve, 1824. A couple of weeks later, Menard left to accompany Takatoka's tribe members on their trip.

In another case, 271 Shawnee who were traveling east in 1826 got stuck in Kaskaskia in the win-

ter due to bad weather. The tribe was in bad shape -- they had little food, weapons or clothing. Menard provisioned them and suggested they camp out 20 miles from his home. They didn't continue their journey until late that summer.

A Politician

While Menard was helping his business partner run their successful stores and assisting Native Americans through his federal appointment, he was also climbing the political ladder (while fathering a growing family and operating a large farm). He originally came to Kaskaskia with two powerful men: Barthélemi Tardiveau, a federal agent for the French in Illinois, and Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the land, which was part of the Northwest Territory at the time (1790). Five years later, St. Clair appointed Menard captain of the county militia, a highly regarded, mostly ceremonial position, and a

member of the County's Court of Common Pleas.

When what is now Illinois became part of the Indiana Territory in 1800, Menard benefited from his friendship with the new territorial governor, Henry Harrison, who named him a justice of the peace and reappointed him to the Court of Common Pleas. At that time, appointment to the Court was similar to an appointment to local government today. Four years later, upon Harrison's recommendation, Menard received an appointment from President Thomas Jefferson to the territory's legislative council. Menard continued receiving appointments like this from new governors that ruled the land as it changed from Indiana to Illinois territory.

Looking at his various achievements, it's obvious that Menard was a savvy man who knew how to make and keep important connections, even while this land was transitioning from French to American. As the Menard Home Guide says, "Menard was flexible and adapted to ever-changing circumstances by developing political and trade alliances among the incoming Americans while simultaneously maintaining his important connections with the French-speaking ruling class across the Mississippi in St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve."

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This statue of Pierre Menard talking with a Native American was the first statue to be located on the Statehouse lawn in Springfield. It was placed there on May 28, 1886.

In 1818, when Illinois became a state and Kaskaskia was its capital, Menard was elected lieutenant governor, his highest political post yet. He only served one term and didn't run for re-election, but he was still busy. His was an Indian subagent until 1833 and helped negotiate numerous treaties with Native American tribes. And during the 1824 and 1836 presidential elections, he lobbied for candidates John Quincy Adams and William Henry Harrison, respectively.



Pierre Menard's Home is located at the bottom of riverside bluffs in Ellis Grove, near Kaskaskia, beneath Fort Kaskaskia. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

The Pierre Menard Home State Historic Site

Around 1815, Menard built a two-story home in Kaskaskia at the bottom of a bluff on the Mississippi River. The French Creole-style building sits in the middle of landscaped grounds and features a porch that extends around the home, except for its backside, and a steep, double-hipped roof, according to the site's web site (www.state.il.us/hpa/hs/pierre_menard.htm). The Home is a National Historic Landmark.

Viewers can take a staff-led tour of the first floor and hear about artifacts related to Menard and his family, watch an orientation video, and visit the outbuildings and herb gardens.

Tours are available during operating hours: Wednesday through Sunday from 9am to 5pm. According to the Friends of the Menard Home web site (<http://friendsofthemenardhome.blogspot.com>) "a walking tour is also available at the slideshow door for guests who come after hours or on Monday or Tuesday." The Home is located at 4230 Kaskaskia Road, Ellis Grove, IL 62241, just off of Illinois State Route 3.

For more information, call the home at 618/859-3031.

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A Philanthropist

Menard, who was Catholic, was a supporter of education, even for girls. So when an order of nuns from the east sought his support in establishing an academy for girls in Kaskaskia in 1833, Menard readily agreed. He and his second wife, Angelique Saucier, not only gave a great deal of financial support to the academy, they also befriended the Sisters of the Visitation and their students. Menard paid for building repairs and furniture and gave some students scholarships.

According to oral history, one of Menard's last instructions was to help the sisters. While he was dying in June 1844, he supposedly told his son to help them if that spring's flooding threatened the school. It did and the son, Amedee, evacuated nuns and students by boat and took them to his father's home. When that became too crowded, more evacuees were put up in the family's stable and chicken house.



The Menard family would have considered their home's extensive porch as an outside room, eating and even sleeping here during nice weather. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Legislative Schedule

To keep up on the Illinois General Assembly's current schedule, visit its web site at: www.ilga.gov.

Transitions

On May 17 **Governor Pat Quinn** appointed **John Schomberg** to his office's top legal spot. Schomberg's predecessor, **Theodore T. Chung**, is returning to private practice, according to the Governor's office. Schomberg will assume his position as Acting General Counsel for the Office of the Governor on May 21. He has been a Deputy General Counsel with Quinn's office since last year.

Joseph Klinger, former Assistant Director at the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), was appointed by the governor as Interim Director of the Agency effective May 6. Klinger replaces outgoing Director **Andrew Velasquez III**, who was named as regional administrator for FEMA Region V by President Barack Obama. Klinger has worked for the IEMA for more than 20 years.



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