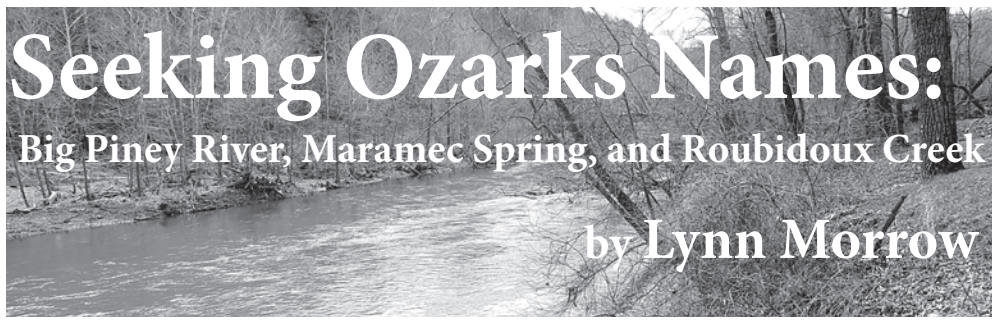


Seeking Ozarks Names:

Big Piney River, Maramec Spring, and Roubidoux Creek

by Lynn Morrow

The following rumination concerns the place names of two streams and a spring that have had the same name for close to two centuries, but that was not always so. This digression into regional history is offered to those who will continue quests in one of the most elusive historical subjects in the Ozarks—that of place name origin. This current musing over old maps and even older government records does not end any name-origin search, but it explores a venerable past for naming Big Piney River and Roubidoux Creek, two beloved streams in the Northern Ozarks. Famous Maramec Spring played a unique role in a failed land speculation. Together they offer perspective for Northern Ozarks history not heretofore well known.

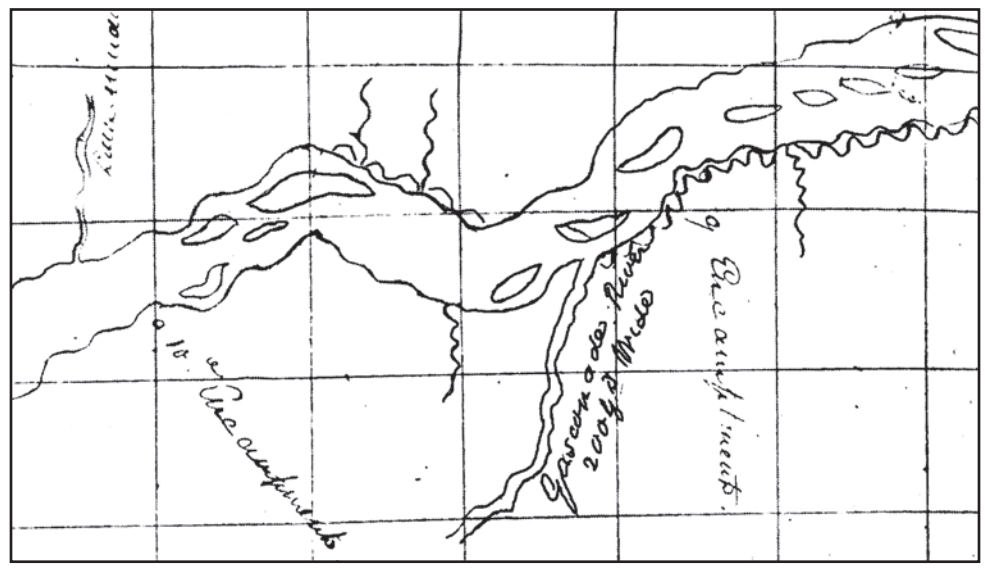
We love to talk about our place names, especially the folksy ones. When we examine a USGS topographic map for our neighborhoods, we see a maze of natural and cultural features across the quadrangle—caves, cemeteries, creeks, hollows, mines, prairies, rivers, roads, schools, springs, summits, towns, boundaries, villages, and more. With so many names evident, it is surprising to learn that most geographic features on the land remain unnamed. To standardize place names and the process for naming, states have a Geographic Names Board that accepts nominations for new names as population increases and the need for precise legal name conventions become more important for missions of land managers. Missouri has such a board, housed in the Secretary of State's Office, Missouri State Archives. This modern bureaucracy relies upon and seeks vernacular naming histories spawned in long forgotten generations.

Naming rights belonged to those who came first, those who discovered resources, and others who remained to build homes. In that process, names often evolved multiple variations on an unsettled frontier. Big Piney and Roubidoux terms derive from activities associated with long-distance Ozarks trade resources pursued by those who lived in St. Louis and St. Charles. The merits of speculative best-guesses are debatable, but however they are answered, researchers should continue to ask questions about obscure origins as "new" records about our past are revealed in repositories with each passing generation.

French-Canadians, living in the mid-Mississippi River Valley and later in the lower Missouri River bottoms, were the first Europeans to understand the upland geography of the Ozarks. They had known about its mineral and ecological resources since the early eighteenth century. Adventurers searching for gold encountered Old Lead Belt pineries in Washington County. After 1720, lead mining in southeast Missouri occupied their attention. Commercial fur trading was always seasonal work, even before miners began digging lead.

French voyagers inspected all the tributaries to the Gasconade River seeking fur-bearing residents for profits to be had in St. Louis or far-away Canada. Perhaps some dug, washed, and boiled saltpeter for primitive gunpowder, but the French who traveled the eighteenth-century Gasconade interior did not settle on the streams, or establish permanent clearings in the forest. Instead, they lived in brief sojourns in the Ozarks upland prairies on the Osage River near the Indians with whom they traded. There were no Indians living in year-round sites in the Gasconade basin when the French began exploration.

The French legacy of place names became their permanent contribution to Ozarks culture. The French did not "develop" the interior Ozarks, they only passed through it. In navigating the Gasconade basin, traders named tributaries to communicate with their fellow hunters and trappers. But, it is somewhat curious that when we look at a modern map showing Big Piney and Little Piney that these fitting labels are in the midst of French-Canadian names, but it was not always that way. The Big Piney had its years of French nomenclature, too.



Lt. Zebulon Pike's 1806 map. Pike's map is the first drawing to show an actual mouth of the Gasconade River (center) at 200 yards wide; note the treacherous Missouri River travel through several islands on the way to the Gasconade.

The French Connection: Vallet's Fork, Great Source of the Maramee, and Roberdeau

We can take a short excursion into scraps and remnants of records. French traders who came up the Gasconade hailed primarily from St. Charles, and, before that, Canada. St. Charles and its nearby northern neighbor, Portage des Sioux (at the junction of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers) became a concentration of seasonal labor for hire for wealthy fur traders, often those residing in St. Louis.

We don't know much about the French who seasonally traveled into the Gasconade watershed, nor do we know when residents of St. Charles first came upriver. But it is clear that by the late eighteenth century, they knew the Gasconade waters well. The big money for fur traders was up the Missouri River to western Indian settlements. As the large St. Louis fur trade interests moved farther West, the Ozarks became a minor region for resource exploitation and one that was only conducive for short-term trading contracts.

Various accounts suggest that after weeks in the field, French trapper-traders left the Osage Indian towns and occasionally traveled southeast and east across the watershed divide into the Gasconade basin, where they hunted, camped, and traveled back to St. Charles or St. Louis. After establishing familiarity with Gasconade geography, some may have reversed that trek on their way to the Osage towns. Others, however, wanted to avoid the Osage so they could poach their game—as the famous Boone family and other Americans did—and roamed the Gasconade tributaries on their way to southwest Missouri in their seasonal trek of commercial hunting.

The St. Charles French who headed for the Gasconade Valley boated up the treacherous Missou-

ri River "littered with islands of various sizes, sandbars, and fallen trees and stumps" nearly a hundred miles to the mouth of the Gasconade, long a frontier natural and cultural landmark. Perhaps the vicissitudes in these river travels spawned one of the river's original meanings—that *Gasconades* were tall stories, a result of actual and romanticized encounters with events in the Ozarks. French engineer and Spanish bureaucrat, Nicholas de Finiels, reflected on the affluent fur industry's view, when he declared in 1798 that since no Indian tribe inhabited the Gasconade that "it is useless for trading purposes." There was, however, one potential exception to de Finiels conclusion. If the rot-resistant, durable cedar tree could be found, as it was on Missouri River islands, a wood worth three times over oak species in the French villages, traders would cut the cedar and raft it downriver. The French did not have the same affection for yellow pine.

French movement into the interior watersheds, especially exploration toward the upper White River drainage, left names in its wake. Included were the Bourbeuse, Courtois, Huzzah, Gasconade, Little and Big Maries, Auglaize, Wet Glaize, Roubidoux, Osage Fork, Niangua, Pomme de Terre, Sac, and the familiar Meramec. The French nomenclature for Ozarks streams is indicative of a backwoods social

Williams Clark's 1810 map. Note Vallet's Fork at the mouth of the modern Big Piney in the center left portion of the map. Clark also labels the "Gaconade" River and the Shawnee and Delaware Indians south of the Lead Mines.

space, a semi-frontier, created by and for French traders and hunters. The lesser presence of the French in the pineries, and their greater profile in the deciduous woods to the west, is one result of a larger skin/fur trading resource base in the latter. The Osage towns to the west, of course, were the great economic magnet. Narrow, flat bottom boats and canoes plied the interior waters. Explorer Andre Michaux published in 1802 that "lone boatmen in a canoe from 18' to 20' long and 12" to 15" wide" commonly patrolled the borders of the Missouri River; many accounts refer to boats ascending the Gasconade. What we see in these regional waterway names, in general, is that they surround the modern Little Piney Creek and Big Piney River—these two familiar Anglo names that are not French. Everyone in the fur trade knew by commercial experience that the north-flowing water carried traffic back to the Missouri River, then to St. Charles and St. Louis.

Vallet's Fork

But wait, the Big Piney did have an antecedent French name—Vallet's Fork. It just didn't remain attached to the stream. As soon as Americans flooded the Missouri River Valley following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, William Clark and others in St. Louis compiled native intelligence onto maps and in government reports. The former colonials told the Americans about great pineries that lay up the Gasconade River ready for exploitation, testimony that the French clearly knew about the Americans' widespread saw milling technology. Soon, a clear rendering of the "Vallet's Fork" name appeared on William Clark's famous 1810 Map of the American West first published in 1814.

The War of 1812, however, interrupted immigration to and exploration of the Northern Ozarks. Following peace treaties with the English crown and American Indians, a commercial pine lumber era began in 1816 that demanded new "Piney names." They replaced Vallet's Fork on the larger stream and introduced Little Piney on the smaller one to reflect the emerging extractive industry of the watershed. Americans involved in late territorial county government used the piney names at county formation. Cartographers accepted usage already present in vernacular speech and used "Piney Fork of Gasconade," before adopting Big Piney and Little Piney to differentiate those streams on new maps.

Vernacular place names on the frontier were fluid, often reflecting a particular generation, as we think Vallet's Fork does. For example, river man John Stuart, in 1806, provided an early naming example in his diary written on a Mississippi flatboat—he referred to the "Ozark River" when he passed the mouth of the modern Arkansas River. Another traveler, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, recorded his experience when he offered what turned out to be several

temporary creek names during his journey across the Ozarks in 1818-1819. Whether Vallet's Fork that sent water to the Missouri River, or the Ozark River that flowed to the Mississippi, both stream names reflect the ambiguous dimensions of the frontier, a time before inhabitants shared established institutions, such as a developed civil authority, reliable transportation, and communication with a major marketing and government center. Travel and especially commerce demanded names that all agreed upon.

Who was Vallet? We can only guess. Missourians think first of Valle, a prominent family name in Ste. Genevieve, but it is also a common French name. Late eighteenth-century St. Charles residents included at least two Vallet men in different households. Charles Vallet owned a town lot and contributed payment for the survey of St. Charles in October 1804, a plat required by the new American government. Charles Vallet still lived in St. Charles when the 1819 census was taken, evidence that he was invested in the settlement. A John Vallet also lived there, as did a Valle, or two. The Vallet residents offer a tenuous connection to the earliest white tributary place name of the Gasconade River. Charles was a long-time resident in St. Charles; perhaps he had Vallet antecedents, too. Charles Vallet was old enough to have traveled in the Northern Ozarks during the 1790s and may have given or was contemporary with the vernacular naming of Vallet's Fork.

St. Charles men, and nearby Portage des Sioux denizens, were primarily boatmen and trappers who hired out to fur trading companies, just as their countrymen in the mid-Mississippi Valley did. St. Charles, in fact, was more of an outpost than an organized town with institutions; it had only a couple of long streets. A resident built an occasional vertical log house with a gallery, but most habitations were mere cabins, even huts, an impermanent architecture, ill-constructed with poles, timber, stones, and occupied with impoverished inhabitants on long, narrow lots with gardens, as described by travel account authors. Reports noted dozens of these frontier shelters that housed a racially-mixed labor force that wealthy fur-traders turned to when they needed to hire boatmen, laborers, or trappers for expeditions to the Great Plains or the interior Ozarks.

Urban traders extended small contracts to individuals that included a credit line for supplies, goods, whiskey, and payment of their existing debts. In turn, the mobile Frenchmen spent several months in the woods and along the waterways earning their living season by season. By the 1790s, game depletion in the Missouri River Valley was already evident. Consequently, large, organized enterprises headed farther up the Missouri River. The secondary trade in the Northern Ozarks offered modest returns for minor expeditions and attracted those who were willing to settle for less or could not join the larger expeditions. (Large and small traders at Kaskaskia-Ste. Genevieve supplied migrating Indians across southern Missouri from Apple Creek to James River).

A St. Louis Connection?

Who would have contracted with Charles Vallet? We don't know except to suggest the *kind of trader* who would execute such a contract. There was such a French merchant who had some knowledge of the Northern Ozarks. Gabriel Cerré

(1734-1805) was the wealthiest St. Louisan prior to the emergence of the Chouteaus. Merchant/trader Cerré made a fortune at Kaskaskia, acquired considerable property near Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis, and moved to St. Louis around 1780. His daughter married Auguste Chouteau in 1786. In 1791 Cerré owned 43 slaves, far more than anyone else in St. Louis. Cerré is the kind of investor who hired laborers and boatmen like Vallet for contracts in the Ozarks. Moreover, Charles Vallet had a St. Charles neighbor who was also a Cerré—was there a connection to Gabriel?

We will likely never know whether Vallet and Cerré did business together or not, but circumstances are suggestive and the potential of this relationship is worth pondering. One looks in vain to find colonial private land claims up the Gasconade River. The prosperous Cerré family had several on the Meramec River and litigation over one concession reveals that the Cerrés could place the "forks of the Gasconade at the upper part of the headwaters," a phrase integral to this inquiry. A dispute about this Cerré land claim gives us a fleeting look into late eighteenth-century geography that "almost became" a French land legacy in the Ozarks. It remains, however, as a curious archival reference in murky land and court records.

In April 1798, the Spanish governor, Gayoso de Lemos, offered to reward Gabriel Cerré for his many services to the crown. By then, advanced in age, Gabriel replied that he already had all the land he desired, but recommended that a concession could be given to his son, Pascal (1771-1849), recently married in 1797, a man who had not yet acquired property. Pascal was father of a new family, owner of several slaves, and 1st Lieutenant in the militia. A new governor, Zenon Trudeau, did grant the maximum allowed by the government to Pascal, who had petitioned for a league square of real estate (7,056 arpens or 6,002 acres). However, Pascal divided his request into two different parcels—this was a very unusual request.

The colonial government had been anxious to recognize "one of the most ancient inhabitants [Gabriel Cerré] of this country" and quickly awarded his son's petition for two different properties as "it is situated in a desert where there is no settlement, and at a considerable distance from this town [St. Louis]." Young Pascal must have felt relieved in 1802 upon news that the colonial New Orleans administration approved the dual character of his petition. Pascal's concession said that "he shall not be obliged to cause it to be surveyed immediately, but so soon as any inhabitants shall settle near or about the place aforesaid, he shall without delay cause the survey to be made." He never did completely survey his claim.

In a few years, Pascal Cerré encountered a very different government bureaucracy in St. Louis, the new American administrative center for Upper Louisiana land claims. After the Louisiana Purchase, the U.S. Congress authorized a Board of Land Commissioners to review private land claims. Pascal Cerré, in 1806, presented testimony for his inherited Meramec River real estate, but had difficulty in describing his atypical claim to the Americans. In 1810, the St. Louis Board rejected his colonial concession.

Meanwhile, Pascal had inherited resources from his father's estate and begun a life-long fur trading career himself. The Americans em-

ployed the talented Pascal as a secretary and interpreter to Indian treaty commissions, so he kept apprised of actions by the federal government. Cerré also had the money to pursue a legal battle for what he thought had been given to him by the previous government. As so often happened on an emerging frontier, at issue was the conflicting colonial evidence and American definitions for verification that concerned the same real estate. The land dispute eventually questioned who owned the "Great Source of the Maramee," by 1826 called Big Spring, the seat of Maramec Iron Works, an industry that attracted many settlers to the Northern Ozarks. Pascal and his heirs fought for the claim, an argument that lasted for 40 years before the U.S. Supreme Court settled it.

Cerré's 1806 presentment to the land commissioners included his petition that "… he would wish to establish a considerable grazing farm and sufficiently remote from our settlements not to give umbrage to any body … a league square of land, 7,056 arpens, to be taken in two different places situated as follows." Pascal proceeded to say that "the half of said quantity or 3,528 arpens to be taken at the place commonly known by the name of the Great Source of the river Maramee at about 300 miles from its mouth so as to include said source." It is difficult to fathom, even in 1806, why Cerré wildly inflated mileage from the mouth of the Meramec River to the Great Spring, a distance of about 163 river miles. Perhaps he thought any proposed revision to his petition would weaken his position. Cerré already had two other Meramec Valley land claims with surveys near the river's mouth; did he simply wish to imply to the government that the spring was so far away from St. Louis that the distance would lessen the Board's concern with it? His petition, dating from 1799, indicated that many travelers to the interior Ozarks "commonly knew" exactly where the "Great Source of the Maramee" was. More later about his reference "to establish a considerable grazing farm."

Pascal Cerré continued with his petition. He stated that "the other half or 3,528 arpens at some distance from the first at the upper part of the headwaters of the forks of the Gasconade and of those of the forks of the Meramec known by the name of the Muddy (de la Bourbeuse) … the said parts of land being only fit for the establishments [grazing farm] projected by your supplicant." The clumsy language indicated that Pascal knew the geographical proximity westward of the "upper part of the headwaters of the forks of the Gasconade" from the Great Source of the river Maramee. This imprecise reference to the "forks of the Gasconade," i.e., some 25 miles west to the mouth of Little Piney Creek is directional, but it is an example of an elastic geographical reference for "the forks of the Gasconade" [Big and Little Piney] that are a half dozen miles apart by land. Moreover, it implies that Cerré and others knew that interior Ozarks travel commonly included movement between the two landmarks—the forks of the Gasconade and the Great Source or Maramec Spring. Most of that distance in eighteenth-century overland travel may have been within the Dry Fork Valley west from Maramec Spring, across the (Highway 63) ridge, and down the Little Piney drainage to the Gasconade River. If so, this pathway of French traders' traffic in the late eighteenth century helped establish a connection to the mouth of Little Piney as a principal Ozark crossing that continued until after the Civil War.

Why would Cerré propose to establish a "considerable grazing farm remote from our settlements" on the Bourbeuse, nearly 60 miles from the Mississippi River in order to receive a concession? (I assume he did not plan a grazing farm at the Great Source.) Investments in cattle, of course, were commonly highly profitable, and especially so as population increased in Upper Louisiana each year. Perhaps there is a connection to the Shawnees, too, as they had been traveling the interior Ozarks since the late eighteenth century, and are often given credit for providing some kind of intelligence to potential Eastern investors about Maramec Spring.

Historian Rodney Staab, in a 1999 essay, summarized references to the mobility of Jimmy Rogers' Shawnee band during the years of Cerré's battle for the "Great Source of river Maramee" concession. John Mason Peck wrote that shortly before the Louisiana Purchase, "Rogers' Shawnee moved to the Big Spring at the head of the Merrimac." By 1807, the territorial governor, Frederick Bates, wrote about "Rogers a Shawnee chief whose town is at the head of the Meramec," as did Governor Meriwether Lewis two years later. While at the Big Spring, the Shawnees suffered sickness and moved north to the Bourbeuse River near modern Union. Then, in 1811, traveler Henry Marie Brackenridge described Rogerstown, a Shawnee village "on the Maramek, 60 miles from the mouth" under Chief Rogers. It is unclear when Rogerstown on the Bourbeuse began, some propose the late 1790s, others around the Louisiana Purchase announcement. Rogerstown derived notoriety, in part, for its marketing of cattle to St. Louis; when did that begin, before or after Cerré's concession? One wonders, was Cerré encouraged by, or trying to profit from, a backcountry cattle trade already established by the Shawnees? Or, did Cerré encourage the Shawnees to settle on the Bourbeuse, so he could trade with them?

Geographic uncertainty—a principal problem for the land commissioners and for us—was a

constant feature in the documents that reference Cerré's claims, but ironically, it is also at the center of this decades-long dispute. "At the upper part of the headwaters of the Gasconade" was vague, but the "Great Source" that flowed into the Meramec River was a famous karst feature readily acknowledged.

Cerré, in the American view, wanted to benefit from a "floating claim," i.e., to be allowed to place his league square of arpens, or in his case, the two halves, on his land far into the future from the time of his colonial award. The Great Source or the Big Spring was the centerpiece of one-half of his intended "establishments," but which direction from Big Spring did he want his 3,001 acres to extend—westward toward the "fall of the forks of the Gasconade," down the Meramec Valley toward St. Louis, or in another direction? His choice is not recorded. This essay assumes his "fall of the forks of the Gasconade" meant at the mouth of Little Piney, as the clumsy description in the court documents does not mention Vallet's Fork or Big Piney. It may also be that Vallet's Fork nomenclature was recognized by those around St. Charles, where Vallet households were in residence, but not used by many St. Louisans.

Whatever the case, as other land speculators, Cerré wanted mineral sites, springs, and mill seats, and Pascal chose the Big Spring on Meramec River as no one else had claimed it, but the outer boundaries of the spring did not have specific definition. Cerré and his colleagues considered any concession to be a direct grant, so no actual survey or settlement on either half of his concession was made at the time of the award [1799]. Colonials refused to bear the high cost of surveying and filing a plat to such a large parcel so remote from St. Louis; moreover, "the principal standard of value was skins … specie [gold or silver] was hardly known there, and the land was of no material value to such a [frontier] population." Thus, at the Louisiana Purchase, the colonial French considered the upper Meramec, let alone the upper Gasconade River, as no more than a desert, that is, devoid of producing bounteous agricultural products as witnessed in the major river valleys. Nevertheless, the half of the Cerré concession situated on the upper Meramec River became the focal point of Cerré's legal quarrel, although it remained a half concession that Cerré never enclosed with a complete survey of its outer boundaries.

New Legal Avenues

Pascal continued his business career until he heard that Congress had passed an Act in 1824 that allowed previously rejected land claimants to file for another hearing. By then, everyone had observed the dramatic population expansion in Missouri and the concomitant opportunities for profits in land speculation. Cerré's claim languished in the federal bureaucracy several years before it received a public hearing. In 1832, the second Board of Land Commissioners opened up for business in St. Louis and Pascal Cerré engaged representation to begin anew. Earlier, in 1826, Ohio capitalists Thomas James and Samuel Massey came to Missouri to inspect the land around Big Spring for mineral deposits to potentially launch an iron works. The Government Land Office (GLO) in St. Louis

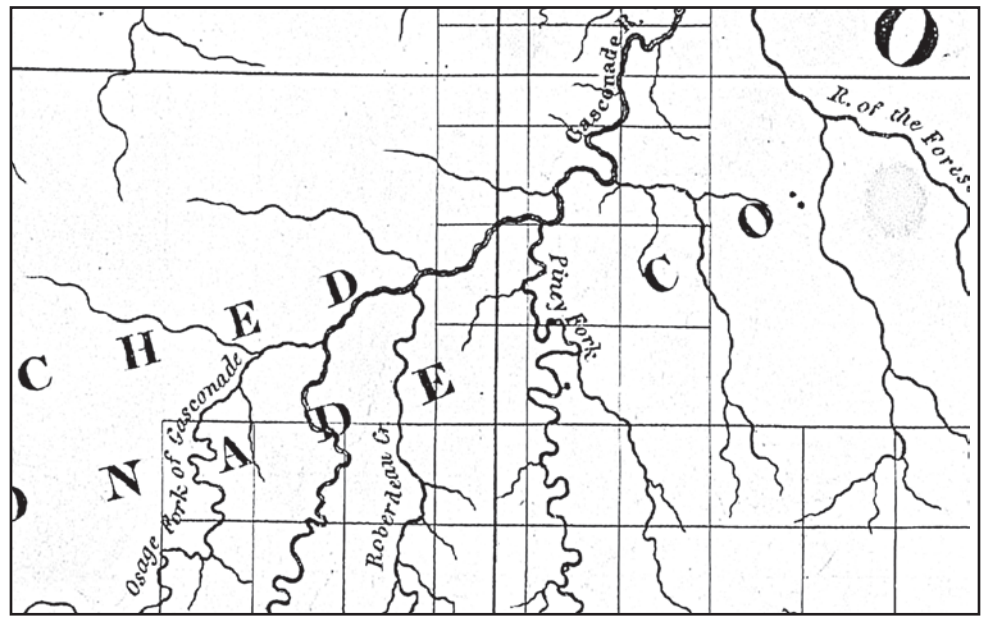
had already surveyed the congressional township that included the Great Source or Big Spring and in November 1823 offered those federal lands for public sale. The Ohio industrialists decided to take a risk, and purchased seven land patents in 1826, most in tracts of 80 acres, for some 564 acres within the Big Spring area.

The Board of Land Commissioners entertained Cerré's new application and considered his expanded file of evidence gathered since 1810. The Board reversed its earlier rejection and recommended confirmation to Cerré's concession; in July 1836, Congress confirmed the decision. In June 1838, Cerré hired Joseph C. Brown, Missouri's most well known surveyor and clerk of the Missouri Supreme Court, a man who had witnessed much land litigation. Pascal traveled with the experienced Brown to the Big Spring to survey "the source of his claim" in Crawford County, where James and Massey's iron works continued production unabated. Court depositions state that "Cerré made no particular reconnaissance of the ground" while Brown made his notes and drew a plat, but they did not survey the outer boundaries of Cerré's 3,001-acre claim. Cerré returned to St. Louis and filed the plat of the spring and notes at the GLO, which approved it in June 1840.

Later, in 1844, Cerré conveyed his ownership to the claim to his relative, Amedee Menard (1820-1844) in Kaskaskia, scion of the influential Pierre Menard merchant family. Menard believed that he was positioned to file a federal district court lawsuit to eject James and Massey from the spring, but died shortly thereafter. Menard's heirs continued the litigation throughout the 1840s.

Toward the U.S. Supreme Court

Samuel Massey admitted in court that he had heard of an old claim on the Big Spring, that it had been disallowed, and that from 1826 to 1828 he tried unsuccessfully to



This detail is from Henry S. Tanner's 1823 map of Missouri and Illinois. Roberdeau Creek is a fixture by this date. The Big Piney River is denoted as the Piney Fork (of the Gasconade). The area that became Old Pulaski was then attached to Gasconade County.

locate the owners to purchase their rights. Strangely, as the federal court struggle unfolded, Cerré's 1838 plat of the Big Spring by Joseph Brown could not be found among the GLO records. However, Cerré's evidence included a "certificate made out by Frederick Bates, former recorder of land titles at St. Louis," dated July 1818 that designated the Big Spring land, then in St. Louis County, as "reserved from public sale" (just as salt and lead mineral lands were reserved), a directive that the GLO obviously had not followed. A legal statement in federal court also concluded that it was "difficult to conceive" why the Board of Land Commissioners rejected Cerré's concession in 1810, given that it was submitted in September 1806 according to proper guidelines. Also in Cerré's favor at the hearing, the 1824 Congressional Act that authorized the Board to rehear old claims was a direct result of widespread public bitterness over the previous two decades concerning private claims in Missouri.

In July 1836 Congress ruled for Cerré on his "special location," that is, the Big Spring, but allowed other non-spring lands to James and Massey (Missouri and out-of-state correspondents addressed mail to Massey and James at Big Spring and cartographers used Big Spring on maps into the 1840s. The Maramec post office began in 1827, but correspondents in the company papers addressed mail to the Maramec Iron Works instead, pushing the use of Maramec Spring far into the future). It is unclear how many acres adjacent to the spring that the Board recommended and Congress allowed to Cerré's concession, but a federal district court agreed with Menard's petition to eject James and Massey from the Big Spring. Angry with this legal compromise, the chagrined James and Massey appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In short, the Supreme Court ruled that Cerré's survey at the spring was too little, too late—Brown's survey notes did not indicate that Cerré had any settlement or improvement at the Big Spring, regardless of Cerré's contention that anyone in Missouri would know about that "special place" on the land. What really mattered in the long run would be the seven overlapping patents of Thomas James and Samuel Massey within Cerré's vague 3,001-acre-half of the 1799 concession. The judges ruled that the seven 1826 land patents were superior evidence over the colonial concession (this is a simplified conclusion of a complicated land law case involving international treaties and federal statutes). In February 1850 the court upheld plaintiffs Massey and James claim to the Big Spring. The Maramec Iron Works Company continued to manage the properties that they had improved since 1826. The chance that a "Cerré Spring" might become an Ozarks place name disappeared in lieu of the now familiar Maramec Spring. The court, in 1856, did allow Pascal's heirs to patent a share of the old concession, some 570 acres in four other Missouri counties. Both sides received some satisfaction for their efforts.

Gabriel and Pascal Cerré and Charles Vallet surely knew about each other in the fur trading networks of St. Charles and St. Louis —Vallet may or may not have been a contractor to either of the Cerré men and it would be a stretch to argue so. But, was there a business relationship of a Mr. Cerré, a neighbor to Charles Vallet in St. Charles, who informed St. Louisans Gabriel or Pascal about the "forks of the Gasconade"? It's another of history's "what ifs."

A Vallet boatman, however, traveled up the Gasconade River Valley and worked his trade along Vallet's Fork that led into the pineries. A comprehensive examination of the voluminous fur trading records in St. Louis may reveal more about Vallet expeditions into the Ozarks. All we can say now is that it was the Americans who brought a permanent commercial and agricultural economy to the Big Piney backcountry. Those developments brought about changes in names from Vallet's Fork to the Piney Fork of Gasconade, then to Big Piney River.

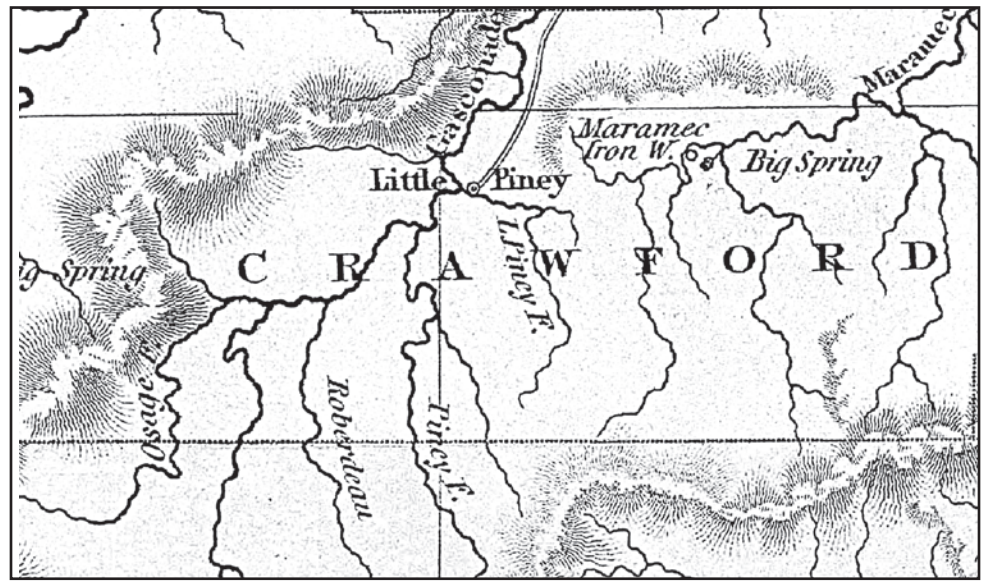
Roberdeau Creek

The Roubidoux Creek name presents similar observations that emanate from an era of Ozarks exploration when French hunters moved into the Gasconade basin and named Roubidoux Creek. Pre-

sumed to have been named after the famed Roubidoux brothers, their trading histories do not reveal any suggestion that one or more of them ever traveled to the Ozarks interior. Rather, the St. Louis-based Roubidoux men spent their energies in the Great Lakes, on the Missouri River, the Rocky Mountains and Santa Fe. They owned property in St. Louis, St. Charles, several places up the Missouri River, and westward. The patriarch of the seven brothers in Missouri, Joseph Roubidoux II (c. 1749-1809), like Gabriel Cerré, contracted with boatmen and hunters for field work.

Given the Roubidoux family's concentration on the Missouri River in the early nineteenth century, it is likely that one of their hired agents named Roubidoux Creek during a seasonal contract. The elder Joseph, an associate of Auguste Chouteau (who also administered his probate estate), died in 1809, and his son Joseph Roubidoux III (1784-1868) became the most famous member of the family, founding St. Joseph, Missouri, a generation later. During the period under consideration, brothers Joseph and Francois Roubidoux (1788-1856), managed a St. Louis City mercantile, 1816-1821, as all the brothers pushed their trading interests farther and farther up the Missouri River and across the Great Plains.

This archival survey suggests that Vallet's Fork came into the Missouri vernacular perhaps by the 1790s—and it is also unclear when the phonetically-spelled "Roberdeau" became current. We can say that Roberdeau does appear cartographically later than the designation of Vallet's Fork on Clark's 1810 map. Perhaps Roubidoux Creek is a remembrance of the elder Roubidoux after his death in 1809. And, it's certainly possible that one of the Roubidoux brothers contracted with river men after their father died and one of them named the stream, Roberdeau. Cartographers used information that was several years



This 1833 map by H. S. Tanner features the Roberdeau, Piney Fork, and the Little Piney Fork. It shows their proximity to James and Massey's Maramec Iron Works at the Big Spring (Maramec Spring). Pulaski County was organized in 1833 from Crawford County and comprised most of the area shown on this map. The current spelling of Roubidoux became the standard in 1844.

old in vernacular speech. Semi– and illiterate river men spawned such phonetic spellings as they were a facet of normal frontier life—frontiersmen were interested in locations and locales, not spelling.

At statehood in 1821, Roberdeau Creek does not appear on principal Missouri maps. Mathew Carey's 1814 map, *Missouri Territory, Formerly Louisiana*, and Stephen Long's famous *Map of the Country drained by the Mississippi* (1820) do not indicate any of the three names in the current inquiry —Roberdeau, Roubidoux, or Vallet's Fork—nor does Anthony Finley on his *Missouri* map of 1824.

But, map revision was underway. In 1823, Henry S. Tanner, a career map publisher in Philadelphia, placed the phonetic "Roberdeau" and [Big] "Piney Fork" (but not Little Piney) on his *Missouri and Illinois* map. Anthony Finley took a lesson from Tanner and included Roberdeau Creek on his 1826 *Missouri and Territory of Arkansas* map that also included "Lit Piney" with "Big Piney F."; cartographers copied the Roberdeau name for years to come.

In 1836, H. S. Tanner, the "most active and influential map publisher in the United States," rendered all three—L. Piney F., Piney F., and Roberdeau—on his map printings. Ultimately, federal bureaucrats fixed the spelling of the name, with the establishment of the Roubidoux post office, south of Plato, in 1844. The French-Canadian spelling of the place name has ever since been the proper form.

There's an Indian trading context that may have accounted for the placement of Roberdeau on 1820s Missouri maps. From 1818 until about 1830, Kaskaskia-Ste. Genevieve based fur traders supplied the Delaware and Shawnee villages on the upper James River in southwest Missouri. Joseph Philibert, clerk and teamster in the employ of trader William Gilliss, made trips from Ste. Genevieve to southwest Missouri many times, as did several other licensed traders who worked with Eastern Indians that had migrated to southwest Missouri. The entrepreneurs brought goods from Ste. Genevieve to the former Big Spring at Massey's Iron Works, thence southwest across Little Piney and Big Piney. All of them knew the "Roberdeau Creek" name, camped there, directed others there, and were acquainted with another Big Spring in modern Waynesville. (This Big Spring seems to have evolved to its current Roubidoux Spring name in the early twentieth century.) The licensed traders reported regularly to federal officials in St. Louis, an intelligence center where map makers acquired their information about Missouri. It's an easy supposition that regular 1820s trade along the great interior road of the Ozarks to the southwest, helped affix the old French-Canadian name on Missouri maps.

The French, after the Louisiana Purchase, appeared less and less in the Ozarks. Americans from the Southern Uplands pushed into the Gasconade, Piney, and Roubidoux watersheds to exploit their bounty prior to founding a permanent stockman's and agricultural lifestyle. They, too, named the land and water, e.g., Big and Little Piney, as they developed an Ozarks waterfront world in which forest products dominated export commerce. The more numerous Americans commercially extracted saltpeter for gunpowder, harvested skins and pelts, sawed lumber and logs, removed tar and pitch, dug ginseng roots, and distilled whiskey for downstream markets in the "settlements" in the Missouri River Valley and St. Louis. Ozarkers transported the non-agricultural goods in canoes, flatboats, on top of lumber rafts, and overland in wagons. For a time, Old Pulaski's resources increased in value the farther downstream that the pioneers floated them for sale. Eventually, steamboats captured most of this export trade years after the settlers had improvements well underway, but by then everyone read Big Piney River and Roubidoux Creek on their Missouri maps.

See the U.S. Supreme Court case, Menard's Heirs v. Massey, 49 US 293 (1850) *for the Maramec Spring case.*

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