

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5558

To establish the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial National Historical Park
in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

Mr. BOST introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on Natural Resources

A BILL

To establish the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial National
Historical Park in the State of Illinois, and for other
purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS; PURPOSES.**

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Prairie du Rocher and the French Colonial
6 Historic District are the finest historical and archi-
7 tectural examples of French Colonial Heritage in the
8 United States.

1 (2) Kaskaskia, Fort de Chartres, and Prairie
2 du Rocher once served as the western boundary of
3 the United States.

4 (3) The 1752 French census documents that
5 Kaskaskia had a population of 275 White people,
6 246 Blacks, 75 Indians, and 77 mixed blood (Indian
7 and white ancestry) making it a multi-ethnic com-
8 munity. Enslaved people from Africa began arriving
9 in Kaskaskia by 1720 with skills as blacksmiths,
10 joiners, masons, etc., precisely the skills needed to
11 build the 1759 Fort of Kaskaskia.

12 (4) Fort de Chartres was erected in 1720 by
13 France and is one of France's most imposing for-
14 tifications in North America. It was the administra-
15 tive center in the era of French Colonial control over
16 Louisiana and the Illinois Country. On October 9,
17 1960, the Fort was declared a National Historic
18 Landmark.

19 (5) The Powder Magazine at Fort de Chartres
20 is the oldest stone building in the State of Illinois.

21 (6) The Guard House at Fort de Chartres con-
22 tains a Catholic chapel furnished in the style of the
23 1750s, along with a priest's room, a gunner's room,
24 an officer-of-the-day room, and a guard's room. Mis-

1 sionary Father Pierre Gibault taught and ministered
2 to the settlers and Native Americans.

3 (7) The King of France made land concessions
4 to certain entrepreneurs that evolved into villages.
5 The Village of Chartres was proximate to Fort de
6 Chartres.

7 (8) The Mitchigamea or Michigamea were a
8 tribe in the Illinois Confederation who established a
9 village north of Fort de Chartres. One of their vil-
10 lages in the American Bottom, inhabited from 1730
11 until 1752, is one of the region's premier archae-
12 ological sites; it is known as the "Kolmer Site".

13 (9) In 1763, Pierre Laclede Liguist quartered
14 in the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial District
15 where he planned the new village of St. Louis which
16 he established in February of 1764.

17 (10) On July 4, 1778, General George Rogers
18 Clark, with the assistance of Father Pierre Gibault,
19 captured Prairie du Rocher and the Village of
20 Kaskaskia.

21 (11) On November 28, 1803, Meriwether Lewis
22 and William Clark visited the Village of Kaskaskia,
23 seeking Engages and troops to accompany them on
24 the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

1 (12) Recently an American Fort was discovered
2 that dates to 1803–1806. The site is next to the
3 Garrison Hill Cemetery.

4 (13) In 1818, Kaskaskia served as the first
5 State Capital of Illinois.

6 (14) In 1825, General Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-
7 Roch-Gilbert du Montier de Lafayette visited the
8 Village of Kaskaskia.

9 (15) In 1876, the religious order, the Adorers
10 of the Blood of Christ (ASC), established a convent
11 near Prairie du Rocher in rural Ruma to minister to
12 the region through education and religious instruc-
13 tion in southwestern Illinois. The health care needs
14 of the people led the Sisters to also create and oper-
15 ate hospitals. Since 1877 the Sisters staffed schools
16 at the request of Pastors. By 1938 their staffing
17 helped to open schools in 103 towns. They also
18 served in other outreach ministries throughout the
19 region. The ASC Convent was built in 1876. It was
20 expanded in 1890 and enlarged again in 1925. The
21 entire complex was updated in 1980. It served as an
22 educational institution and later a high school that
23 even offered 30 hours of college credit from St.
24 Louis University.

1 (16) The ASC convent site contains a memorial
2 to and the remains of five martyred nuns who min-
3 istered in Liberia, West Africa in 1992. ASC Sisters
4 had served there since 1971.

5 (17) On January 20, 1961, the Modoc Rock
6 Shelter was declared a National Historic Landmark.

7 (18) In 1973, the Creole House in Prairie du
8 Rocher was added to the National Registry of His-
9 toric Places.

10 (19) In 1974, Prairie du Rocher and the
11 French Colonial Historic District, an area of 22
12 square miles, was created and added to the National
13 Registry of Historic Places, along with the ancient
14 Kolmer Indian site.

15 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to—

16 (1) recognize the importance of Prairie du
17 Rocher and the French Colonial Historic District as
18 a nationally significant architectural village of the
19 cultural heritage of the United States;

20 (2) establish a Prairie du Rocher French Colo-
21 nial National Historical Park to serve as the focus
22 of interpretive and educational programs on the his-
23 tory of the French Colonial Historic District, and to
24 assist in the preservation of historic sites within the
25 Prairie du Rocher French Colonial Historic District;

1 (3) recognize the contribution of religious
2 women in the development of the country through
3 their missions and their intrinsic desire to better the
4 lives of people through education, health, and social
5 services, and other ministries and in particular
6 southwestern Illinois; and

7 (4) recognize the existence and contribution of
8 the early enslaved African Americans, Indians and
9 mixed bloods at Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher
10 for their skills as blacksmiths, joiners, and masons,
11 etc.

12 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRAIRIE DU ROCHER**
13 **FRENCH COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL**
14 **PARK.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—In order to assist in the preserva-
16 tion and interpretation of, and education concerning, of
17 Prairie du Rocher, the French Colonial Historic District,
18 the contribution of religious women to the development of
19 our country and the existence of a multi-ethnic community
20 that was Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher and to provide
21 technical assistance to a broad range of public and private
22 landowners and preservation organizations, there is hereby
23 established the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial Na-
24 tional Historical Park in the State of Illinois.

1 (b) AREA INCLUDED.—The historical park shall con-
2 sist of lands and interests therein as follows:

3 (1) Lands and structures associated with—

4 (A) Fort de Chartres, France’s most im-
5 posing fortifications in North America, and sur-
6 rounding adjacent land including the Kolmer
7 Site, the Village of Chartres and Pierre Laclede
8 Home site;

9 (B) the Creole House (1800), a French
10 creole vernacular post in ground (poteaux-sur-
11 sol) construction—one of only five remaining in
12 the United States;

13 (C) the Pierre Menard Home (1803), Men-
14 ard was the first Lieutenant Governor of Illi-
15 nois;

16 (D) the Doiron Bienvenue House, post in
17 ground (poteaux-sur-sol) construction (1860);

18 (E) the ASC Convent, built in 1876 and
19 updated in 1980, including an education wing,
20 and surrounding structures and adjacent par-
21 cels; and

22 (F) a portion of the Fort Kaskaskia State
23 Historic Site, a 200-acre park, which celebrates
24 the vanished frontier Village of Kaskaskia, is
25 home to the earthen remains of Fort

1 Kaskaskia, and preserves Garrison Hill Ceme-
2 tery, where Pierre Menard and dozens of vet-
3 erans are interred.

4 **SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATION; MANAGEMENT.**

5 (a) ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary shall admin-
6 ister the historical park in accordance with this title and
7 with provisions of law generally applicable to units of the
8 National Park System, including—

9 (1) section 100502 of title 54, United States
10 Code; and

11 (2) chapter 3201 of title 54, United States
12 Code.

13 (b) MANAGEMENT.—The Secretary shall manage the
14 historical park in such a manner as will preserve resources
15 and cultural landscapes relating to the history of the his-
16 toric district and to enhance public understanding of the
17 important cultural heritage of the historic district.

18 **SEC. 4. INTERPRETIVE VISITOR CENTER COMPLEX.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—

20 (1) CONSTRUCTION; LEASE.—The Secretary is
21 authorized to acquire the ASC convent and sur-
22 rounding structures to operate and to maintain an
23 interpretive visitor center complex, conference cen-
24 ter, and lodging facilities in the convent, to provide
25 for the general information and orientation needs of

1 the historical park and the historic district and serve
2 the needs of the historical park. The ASC facility
3 also includes a house to serve as the residence for
4 the Park Superintendent.

5 (2) CONSULTATION.—When the planning and
6 development of the ASC Convent as the interpretive
7 visitor center complex, the Secretary shall consult
8 with—

9 (A) the State of Illinois;

10 (B) Randolph County;

11 (C) the Village of Prairie du Rocher; and

12 (D) the Illinois Department of Natural Re-
13 sources.

14 (b) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary is
15 authorized to enter into cooperative agreements for the de-
16 velopment of the interpretive visitor center complex, edu-
17 cational programs, and other materials to facilitate public
18 use of the historical park and historic district with—

19 (1) the State of Illinois;

20 (2) Randolph County;

21 (3) the Village of Prairie du Rocher; and

22 (4) the Illinois Department of Natural Re-
23 sources.

1 **SEC. 5. ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY.**

2 (a) GENERAL AUTHORITY.—Except as otherwise pro-
3 vided in this section, the Secretary is authorized to acquire
4 lands and interests therein within the boundaries of the
5 historical park by donation, purchase with donated or ap-
6 propriated funds, and exchange.

7 (b) STATE AND LOCAL PROPERTIES.—Lands and in-
8 terests therein that are owned by the State of Illinois, or
9 any political subdivision thereof, may be acquired only by
10 donation or exchange.

11 **SEC. 6. DONATIONS.**

12 The Secretary may accept and retain donations of
13 funds, property, or services from individuals, foundations,
14 or other public or private entities for the purposes of pro-
15 viding programs, services, facilities, or technical assistance
16 that further the purposes of this Act. Any funds donated
17 to the Secretary pursuant to this section may be expended
18 without further appropriation.

19 **SEC. 7. GRANT ASSISTANCE.**

20 The Secretary is authorized to make grants to park
21 partners for projects not requiring Federal involvement
22 other than providing financial assistance, subject to the
23 availability of appropriations in advance identifying the
24 specific grantee and the specific project. Projects funded
25 through grants under this section shall—

1 (1) be used only for construction and develop-
2 ment on non-Federal property within the boundaries
3 of the historic district;

4 (2) support the purposes of the historical park;
5 and

6 (3) enhance public use and enjoyment of the
7 historical park.

8 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

9 In this Act:

10 (1) **HISTORIC DISTRICT.**—The term “historic
11 district” means the Prairie du Rocher French Colo-
12 nial Historic District listed on the National Registry
13 of Historic Places.

14 (2) **HISTORICAL PARK.**—The term “historical
15 park” means the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial
16 National Historical Park established by section 2(a).

17 (3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means
18 the Secretary of the Interior.

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