

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2865

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

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself and Mr. DURBIN) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Nat-
ural 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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Prairie du Rocher
5 French Colonial National Historical Park Establishment
6 Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

1 (1) Prairie du Rocher and the French Colonial
2 Historic District are the finest historical and archi-
3 tectural examples of French colonial heritage in the
4 United States;

5 (2) Kaskaskia, Fort de Chartres, and Prairie
6 du Rocher once served as the western boundary of
7 the United States;

8 (3) the 1752 French census documents that
9 Kaskaskia was a multi-ethnic community, with a
10 population of—

11 (A) 275 White people;

12 (B) 246 Black people;

13 (C) 75 Indian people; and

14 (D) 77 people of mixed blood (White and
15 Indian ancestry);

16 (4) enslaved people from Africa began arriving
17 in Kaskaskia by 1720 with the skills needed to build
18 the Fort of Kaskaskia in 1759, such as blacksmiths,
19 joiners, and masons;

20 (5) Fort de Chartres was—

21 (A) erected in 1720 by France;

22 (B) one of the most imposing French for-
23 tifications in North America;

1 (C) the administrative center in the era of
2 French colonial control over Louisiana and the
3 Illinois country; and

4 (D) designated as a National Historic
5 Landmark on October 9, 1960;

6 (6) the powder magazine at Fort de Chartres is
7 the oldest stone building in the State;

8 (7) the guard house at Fort de Chartres con-
9 tains—

10 (A) a Catholic chapel furnished in the style
11 of the 1750s;

12 (B) a priest's room;

13 (C) a gunner's room;

14 (D) an officer-of-the-day room; and

15 (E) a guard's room;

16 (8) missionary Father Pierre Gibault taught
17 and ministered to the settlers and Native Americans
18 at the guard house at Fort de Chartres;

19 (9) the King of France made land concessions
20 to certain entrepreneurs that evolved into villages,
21 including the village of Chartres, which was located
22 close to Fort de Chartres;

23 (10) the Mitchigamea, or Michigamea, was an
24 Indian Tribe in the Illinois Confederation that estab-
25 lished a village north of Fort de Chartres, including

1 a village in the American Bottom, inhabited from
2 1730 to 1752, which is one of the premier archaeo-
3 logical sites in the region, known as the “Kolmer
4 Site”;

5 (11) in 1763, Pierre Laclede Liguist quartered
6 in the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial District,
7 planning the new village of St. Louis, which Liguist
8 established in February 1764;

9 (12) on July 4, 1778, General George Rogers
10 Clark, with the assistance of Father Pierre Gibault,
11 captured Prairie du Rocher and the village of
12 Kaskaskia;

13 (13) on November 28, 1803, Meriwether Lewis
14 and William Clark visited the village of Kaskaskia
15 seeking boatmen and troops to accompany the Lewis
16 and Clark expedition;

17 (14) a United States fort located next to the
18 Garrison Hill Cemetery was recently discovered that
19 dates from 1803 to 1806;

20 (15) in 1818, the village of Kaskaskia served as
21 the first State capital of Illinois;

22 (16) in 1825, General Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-
23 Roch-Gilbert du Montier de Lafayette visited the vil-
24 lage of Kaskaskia;

1 (17) in 1876, a religious order, known as the
2 “Adorers of the Blood of Christ”, established a con-
3 vent near Prairie du Rocher in rural Ruma to min-
4 ister to the people of southwestern Illinois through
5 education and religious instruction;

6 (18) in addition, the health care needs of the
7 people led the Sisters of the Adorers of the Blood of
8 Christ to create and operate hospitals;

9 (19) since 1877, the Sisters of the Adorers of
10 the Blood of Christ have staffed schools at the re-
11 quest of pastors;

12 (20) by 1938, the staffing of the Sisters of the
13 Adorers of the Blood of Christ at schools helped to
14 open schools in 103 towns;

15 (21) the Sisters of the Adorers of the Blood of
16 Christ also served in other outreach ministries
17 throughout the region;

18 (22) the convent of the Adorers of the Blood of
19 Christ—

20 (A) was built in 1876;

21 (B) was expanded in 1890 and 1925;

22 (C) was updated in 1980;

23 (D) served as—

24 (i) an educational institution; and

1 (ii) a high school that offered 30
2 hours of college credit from St. Louis Uni-
3 versity; and

4 (E) contains a memorial to, and the re-
5 mains of, 5 martyred nuns who ministered in
6 Liberia in 1992;

7 (23) Sisters of the Adorers of the Blood of
8 Christ convent had been serving in Liberia since
9 1971;

10 (24) on January 20, 1961, the Modoc Rock
11 Shelter was declared a National Historic Landmark;

12 (25) in 1973, the Creole House in Prairie du
13 Rocher was added to the National Register of His-
14 toric Places; and

15 (26) in 1974, Prairie du Rocher and the
16 French Colonial Historic District, which is an area
17 of 22 square miles, was added to the National Reg-
18 ister of Historic Places, along with the ancient
19 Kolmer Indian site.

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

21 (1) to recognize the importance of Prairie du
22 Rocher and the French Colonial Historic District as
23 a nationally significant architectural village that em-
24 bodies the cultural heritage of the United States;

1 (2) to establish the Prairie du Rocher French
2 Colonial National Historical Park—

3 (A) to serve as the focus of interpretive
4 and educational programs relating to the his-
5 tory of the French Colonial Historic District;
6 and

7 (B) to assist in the preservation of historic
8 sites within the French Colonial Historic Dis-
9 trict;

10 (3) to recognize the contribution of religious
11 women in the development of the United States
12 through the missions and intrinsic desire of the reli-
13 gious women to improve the lives of people through
14 education, health, social services, and other min-
15 istries, with an emphasis on the contributions of
16 such women in southwestern Illinois; and

17 (4) to recognize the existence and contribution
18 of the early enslaved African Americans, Native
19 Americans, and people of mixed ancestry at
20 Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher for their skills as
21 blacksmiths, joiners, and masons.

22 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

23 In this Act:

24 (1) HISTORIC DISTRICT.—The term “Historic
25 District” means the Prairie du Rocher and the

1 French Colonial Historic District, which is listed on
2 the National Register of Historic Places.

3 (2) HISTORICAL PARK.—The term “Historical
4 Park” means the Prairie du Rocher French Colonial
5 National Historical Park established by section 4(a).

6 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
7 the Secretary of the Interior.

8 (4) STATE.—The term “State” means the State
9 of Illinois.

10 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRAIRIE DU ROCHER**

11 **FRENCH COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL**

12 **PARK.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—To assist in the preservation and
14 interpretation of, and education relating to, the Historic
15 District, the contribution of religious women to the devel-
16 opment of the United States, and the multi-ethnic commu-
17 nity that was Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher, and to
18 provide technical assistance to a broad range of public and
19 private landowners and preservation organizations, there
20 is established in the State the Prairie du Rocher French
21 Colonial National Historical Park.

22 (b) AREA INCLUDED.—The Historical Park shall
23 consist of the following:

24 (1) Land and structures associated with Fort
25 de Chartres and surrounding adjacent land, includ-

1 ing the Kolmer Site, the village of Chartres, and the
2 site of the home of Pierre Laclede.

3 (2) The Creole House, which is a French creole
4 vernacular post-in-ground or “poteaux-sur-sol”
5 structure constructed in 1800, 1 of only 5 remaining
6 in the United States.

7 (3) The home of Pierre Menard, the first Lieu-
8 tenant Governor of the State, which was constructed
9 in 1803.

10 (4) Land and structures associated with the
11 Doiron Bienvenue House, which is a post-in-ground
12 structure constructed in 1860.

13 (5) The Adorers of the Blood of Christ convent,
14 which was originally built in 1876 and updated in
15 1980, including an education wing and surrounding
16 structures and adjacent parcels.

17 (6) A portion of the Fort Kaskaskia State His-
18 toric Site, which—

19 (A) is a 200-acre park that celebrates the
20 vanished frontier village of Kaskaskia;

21 (B) is home to the earthen remains of Fort
22 Kaskaskia; and

23 (C) preserves Garrison Hill Cemetery, at
24 which Pierre Menard and dozens of veterans
25 are interred.

1 (c) MAP.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after
3 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
4 shall prepare a map depicting the boundaries of the
5 Historical Park.

6 (2) AVAILABILITY.—The map prepared under
7 paragraph (1) shall be available for public inspection
8 in the appropriate offices of the National Park Serv-
9 ice.

10 **SEC. 5. ADMINISTRATION.**

11 The Secretary shall administer the Historical Park—

12 (1) in accordance with—

13 (A) this Act; and

14 (B) the provisions of law generally applica-
15 ble to units of the National Park System, in-
16 cluding section 100502 and chapter 3021 of
17 title 54, United States Code; and

18 (2) in a manner that—

19 (A) preserves resources and cultural land-
20 scapes relating to the history of the Historic
21 District; and

22 (B) enhances public understanding of the
23 important cultural heritage of the Historic Dis-
24 trict.

1 **SEC. 6. INTERPRETIVE VISITOR CENTER COMPLEX.**

2 (a) ACQUISITION.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may acquire
4 the Adorers of the Blood of Christ convent and sur-
5 rounding structures—

6 (A) to operate and maintain an interpre-
7 tive visitor center complex, conference center,
8 and lodging facilities;

9 (B) to provide for the general information
10 and orientation needs of the Historical Park
11 and the Historic District;

12 (C) to serve the needs of the Historical
13 Park; and

14 (D) to serve as a residence for the Super-
15 intendent of the Historical Park, as appro-
16 priate.

17 (2) CONSULTATION.—For purposes of the plan-
18 ning and development of the interpretive visitor cen-
19 ter complex authorized for acquisition under para-
20 graph (1), the Secretary shall consult with—

21 (A) the State;

22 (B) Randolph County, Illinois;

23 (C) the village of Prairie du Rocher; and

24 (D) the State Department of Natural Re-
25 sources.

1 (b) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary
2 may enter into cooperative agreements with the entities
3 described in paragraph (2) of subsection (a) for the devel-
4 opment of—

5 (1) the interpretive visitor center complex au-
6 thorized under paragraph (1) of that subsection; and

7 (2) educational programs and materials to fa-
8 cilitate the public use of the Historical Park and the
9 Historic District.

10 **SEC. 7. ACQUISITION OF LAND.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection
12 (b), the Secretary may acquire land and interests in land
13 within the boundaries of the Historical Park by—

14 (1) donation;

15 (2) purchase with donated or appropriated
16 funds; or

17 (3) exchange.

18 (b) EXCEPTION.—Notwithstanding subsection (a),
19 land and interests in land that are owned by the State
20 or any political subdivision of the State may be acquired
21 for the Historical Park under that subsection only by do-
22 nation or exchange.

23 **SEC. 8. DONATIONS.**

24 (a) ACCEPTANCE.—The Secretary may accept dona-
25 tions of funds, property, or services from individuals, foun-

1 dations, or other public or private entities for the purposes
 2 of providing programs, services, facilities, and technical
 3 assistance that further the purposes of this Act.

4 (b) EXPENDITURE.—Any funds donated to the Sec-
 5 retary under subsection (a) may be expended by the Sec-
 6 retary without further appropriation.

7 **SEC. 9. GRANT ASSISTANCE.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of ap-
 9 propriations, the Secretary may make grants to partners
 10 of the Historical Park for eligible projects described in
 11 subsection (b).

12 (b) DESCRIPTION OF ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.—An eli-
 13 gible project referred to in subsection (a) is a project—

14 (1) that does not require Federal involvement
 15 other than the provision of financial assistance;

16 (2) for the construction and development of
 17 non-Federal land and structures within the bound-
 18 aries of the Historic District;

19 (3) that support the purposes of the Historical
 20 Park; and

21 (4) that enhances public use and enjoyment of
 22 the Historical Park.

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