

<http://callaway.county.missouri.org/1884history/townships/cote.html#cote>

COTE SANS DESSEIN

The above words signify “a hill without design,” and were the name of an ancient French village. This place has its name from an isolated hill that is standing, as if by accident, on the river bank, in an extensive bottom. It appears that some convulsion of nature may have cut it off from the hills at the mouth of the Osage, on the opposite bank of the Missouri, and given passage to this last mentioned river, between it and the base of its kindred hills. The village of Cote Sans Dessein was settled probably about the year 1800, and was once a populous place. The old inhabitants have generally removed across the Missouri, and settled there. This ancient village had its share in the Indian wars, incident to the settlement of the country, and furnishes an instance of gallantry in the defense of the place, equal to any recorded in the history of manly firmness.

The principal actor in this achievement was a Frenchman, whose name was Baptiste Louis Roi. He chanced to be in the block-house, with only two men and as many women, when the attack commenced. With this small command, he made a successful defense against a numerous and very determined band of Indians. One of the men, observing the great disparity of force, was panic stricken, and rendered no assistance in the conflict. He devoted himself to prayer and

very humble penitence throughout the siege. The women, the wife and sister-in-law of the gallant Roi, lent efficient and indispensable aid to the two soldiers, their husbands. The defenders of the block-house had not been sufficiently provident in their supply of ammunition, so as to have a sufficient quantity of balls on hand at the beginning of the attack.

While the men were firing, the women made it their business to cast balls and cut patches, so as to keep up the defence in a steady and uninterrupted manner. The consequence was that these two riflemen numbered fourteen Indians in their report of killed, without being able to form any correct account of the wounded. But they had the satisfaction to continue the fight until the balance of their foes were among the missing. After the extreme suffering which the assailants endured, they became desperate in their determination to take or destroy the block-house. They made several bold attempts to storm, but were always driven back with reduced numbers. This taught them circumspection, and to effect this in security, they fastened combustible matter to their arrows, and having lighted this their missives were shot into the roof of the block-house. As often as this occurred, the women made it a business to extinguish the blaze by the application of the little water they had within the building. The place of defense was near the river bank, but the garrison was too weak to justify a sally for additional supplies. It was with appalling interest that the little band observed the rapid expenditure of their small stock as the incendiaries repeated their experiments. Their torches were sent up with fearful

accuracy from the shelter of a ravine, and each new blaze was accompanied with the demoniac yells of the assailants. The women continued to apply the water, with parsimonious regard to economy—not a drop was wasted. The fiery arrows were still showered upon the devoted house, and at each discharge the warwhoop was redoubled. At last the water was exhausted; the last bucket was drained of the last drop! Another discharge succeeded. The roof was blazing over their heads; and when despair was settling on the hitherto buoyant spirits of the little band, one of the females produced a gallon of milk. This was sufficient to protract destruction, but no security against a recurrence of imminent peril. There was a pause after the last blaze had been extinguished. The defenders were watching with acute sensibility every movement of the enemy, hoping that their fruitless efforts had discouraged them, and that in this, they would find immunity. But when they began to respire freely, with hope of safety, another discharge broke on their view; the fiery arrows hurled in the air, and the roof blazed again fearful clearness! A mighty shout arose from a hundred wild and startling voices. Even Baptiste Roi himself, whose visage was the mirror of a hero's soul, looked aghast on the companions of his peril. His wife, with an angel's smile on her face, produced, from the urinal just then replenished, the fluid that proved the salvation of the garrison. The fire was again extinguished. Then it was that the elastic spirits of the little party sent forth an answering shout of joy, and another of defiance, hurled with spirit in the face of savage exultation. Thrice did these women supply from the same fountain a fluid for the extinguishment of wicked hope when at last the baffled

bloodhounds ran off, screaming a bitter howl of mingled resentment and despair. When the achievement above described was talked over, long after the war, some of the young gentlemen in St. Louis united in the expense of a rifle, of fine finish, to present to Monsieur Baptiste Louis Roi, for his Spartan gallantry in the defense of Cote Sans Dessien [sic]. He was flattered with the compliments intended, when it had been intimated that he was to receive this as soon as the gun was completed. No expense was spared to render the transaction agreeable to the soldier, and the present suitable to the character and liberal sentiments of the donors. During the time employed in manufacturing the rifle, and in some of the conversations that the interesting subject produced, it was playfully suggested that the ladies deserved a present for the spirited share they had taken in the conflict, and some thoughtless young man remarked, that a silver urinal should be presented to Madame Roi. This unfortunate remark was reported to her husband. When, therefore, the committee waited on him with a complimentary communication, and requested that he would accept an expensive rifle, one of Cramer's best, he explained his views something to the following effect: --

“GENTLEMAN—It is a fuzee of beautiful proportions—containing very much gold in de pan, and silver on his breeches; he is a very gentleman gun for kill de game. I tank you. I shall not take him. Some gentleman have consider to give ma chere ami one urinal silvare! I tell you, sare, I take care of dem tings myself—go to h—ll avec votre dam long gun! I shall not take him!! Go to h—ll, any body, by d—n sight!!!”

And with this expression of resentment for the freedom the young man had unwittingly taken in the discussion of the affair, he departed with manly indignation, in perfect keeping with his admirable character.

The first settlers in the county pitched their tents in Cote Sans Dessein township, and were it possible to penetrate the gloom that has enveloped the facts and incidents which were doubtless familiar to the pioneers of Cote Sans Dessein at the beginning of the present century, we might be able to present to our readers much that would be of far more interest concerning the early settlement of the township.