



11-2020

Pierroz, Philippe, *Quand des Valaisan colonisaient le Wisconsin*

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Recommended Citation

Sherwood, Robert (2020) "Pierroz, Philippe, *Quand des Valaisan colonisaient le Wisconsin*," *Swiss American Historical Society Review*. Vol. 56 : No. 3 , Article 7.

Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sahs_review/vol56/iss3/7

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Pierroz, Philippe, *Quand des Valaisan colonisaient le Wisconsin* (Martigny-Combe, Switzerland), March 2020.

For much of the history of the United States, the role of the Swiss immigrants has been reduced to that of a bit player. The traditional history books usually follow immigration patterns along linguistic lines, and the Swiss immigrants did not follow these linguistic lines. Therefore, the Swiss Romand, the Swiss Germans, and Swiss Italians often get labeled as either French, Germans, or Italians when they arrived in the United States.

Over the past twenty years, there has been a concerted effort to separate the Swiss from the traditional linguistic groupings, and see them for who they are. The majority of the published works focused on the early Swiss-Germans in South Carolina or North Carolina, the mid-west settlements around St. Louis or even the Swiss Italians in California. Wisconsin, with New Glarus as the core, has been the obvious focus of excellent historical scholarship. But in that same region, the French-speaking Swiss immigrants in Wisconsin have largely been forgotten. *Quand des Valaisans colonisaient le Wisconsin* by Philippe Peroz succeeds in bringing these French-speaking Swiss to the forefront.

This work sprung out of genealogical research, but it is not a typical family history book. Pierroz managed to avoid the trappings of that genre, and skillfully located the immigration of Swiss from Canton Valais into the larger historical perspective. Not only is the book exceptionally researched, but it is very readable with pictures, graphs, maps, and charts on almost every page. The amount of work needed to create all of this additional information greatly enhanced the work.

The book starts with its' first part where Peroz traces the Valasians from their former homes to Wisconsin. Using personal letters, maps, deeds, passenger manifests, emigration announcements, and political cartoons, just to name a few, this portion of the work moved along quickly and set the stage for the rest of the book.

Part two, focused on the life of these immigrants and their

descendants in Wisconsin. Page 36 shows a map where the majority of the Valasians settled, mostly in the eastern part of the state along Lake Michigan and along both shores of Green Bay. This map, which labels the locations of where each family settled in which Wisconsin county is a major asset to the book. One interesting thing to note, according to the map, there were Valasians who settled in Green County, home of the Glarner who settled New Glarus and the surrounding towns. This further shows the disparate nature of Swiss immigration. When a nation, held together by a single language, had settlers immigrate to the United States, they would often group together. These groups of Swiss immigrants, appear to have had limited contact. For someone who researches Swiss History, this is understandable. In Switzerland, the Cantons were more important to the individuals than the Confederation as a whole. Further study about the interactions between the Swiss of different languages in Wisconsin would prove useful.

The next portion of the book covered occupations of the settlers, the role of the Valasians in the Civil War especially their participation in the famous Iron Brigade from Wisconsin. Peroz touched on the interactions with the Valasians and the various Native American groups in Wisconsin and how those relationships developed.

Part three, contained a selection of important people in the Valasians immigrant community. Most prominent among those selected was François Augustin Deléglise, a town founder, Civil War soldier and POW, eventual State Legislator. His role in the success and integration of the colonists into Wisconsin is very important.

Part four is a lengthy and incredibly documented family history. Although the internet has enabled this type of research to become easier, these records, exceptionally organized, make the book worth its price. Despite the intensive documentation, charts and primary sources used, Peroz managed to keep this section readable. Many life sketches are included, for example on page 182. August Jerome is no longer just a name, the image of him with a baseball team that he played on with him identified, brought him alive. Multiple

appendices, dealing with locations, names, births and emigration dates round out the work.

Quand des Valaisans colonisaient le Wisconsin is a solid addition to any person interested in Swiss-American History, the history of early Wisconsin, or the history of Fifth Switzerland. The drawback is that it is only available in the French language for the time being. As a result of that, the scope might be limited in the United States, but a future translation into English could correct that.

~ *Robert Sherwood, Georgia Military College*