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Book Review: Maurice-Ernest Gillioz (1877-1962): Great Builder in America

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BOOK REVIEW

Philippe Pierroz, *Maurice-Ernest Gillioz (1877-1962): Great Builder in America* (Martigny, Switzerland: Philippe Pierroz, 2022).

Maurice-Ernest Gillioz is a good example of the American dream. The son of a Swiss emigrant from the Canton of Valais who arrived in New York in the middle of the American Civil War, Gillioz started from nothing and built one of the largest public works companies in the Midwest in the first half of the twentieth century. Philippe Pierroz' book is 164 pages, written in French, of richly illustrated and strongly documented material. The numerous illustrations and appendices can be easily understood by English-speaking readers.

“The American history of the Gilloz family begins on November 10, 1864. On that day, the brothers Alfred Eugène and Eugène François Maurice, ages 18 and 20, arrived in New York. Born in Granges, children of Maurice Gilloz, a notary, and Antoinette Roten, they travelled on the ship *Stella* which left from Antwerp carrying 189 passengers. They are the uncle and father of Maurice Ernest Gilloz. “Alfred Eugène is the father of Maurice Ernest, to whom this book is dedicated.

The two brothers joined the American army in the middle of the Civil War. Alfred became an American citizen on September 26, 1866, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he resided.

Maurice Ernest was born in the hamlet of Dillon, near Rolla, Missouri. He only went to school until the age of 10. At 15, he went to St. Louis and then to Texas where he worked for a while. He returned to St. Louis and married Marie Ismérie Isoria Moret, born in Charrat (Valais, Switzerland). He was soon appointed foreman of the railroad company where he was employed. The book follows Gillioz as he climbed the ladder of success and even ended up rubbing shoulders with U.S. presidents.

In 1913, he started his own company where he built a Catholic church, then several bridges. His adventure had begun.

Gillioz's work ranged across the nation from Nebraska to Florida, from Oklahoma to Virginia. In each of these construction projects he left his mark on a multitude of roads, bridges, railroads and dams. He touched on the entire spectrum of civil engineering: churches, military airfields, auditoriums, high schools, hospitals as well as the aforementioned projects.

The famous Gillioz Theater in Springfield, Missouri, is intimately linked to the christening of the famous Route 66. Do those who have traveled this mythical road, which has inspired singers and writers, know that in crossing Missouri and Oklahoma, they have driven more than a hundred kilometers of roads and crossed several bridges built by Maurice-Ernest Gillioz? Philippe Pierroz's book permits the reader to discover this colorful, energetic character.

Included in the book are numerous illustrations and fascinating appendices: Appendices 1 to 4 provide maps, genealogies of the Gillioz and related families, but above all numerous construction projects in which Gillioz participated.

Appendix 5 on pages 150 to 153: list of 74 bridges with the following information:

- Year of construction, Cost in dollars, Name of the structure, Location by state, Type of structure, Length in meters if applicable, and Condition of the structure and any subsequent modifications made to the original projects.

Appendix 6 on page 154: list of 15 dams with the following information:

- Year of construction, Name of structure, Location by State, Purpose, Specific contribution of Maurice E. Gillioz and the overall cost in dollars.

Appendix 7 on page 155: Various other works carried out by Mr. E. Gillioz:

- Year of construction, value in dollars, Location by County, Work (factory, store, reservoir, school, etc.).

~ Yves Bordet, *Independent Scholar*