

## **Joseph Marie LaBarge (1787 - 1860)**

The father of famed riverboat captain, Joseph LaBarge, Joseph Marie LaBarge Sr. was born at l'Assomption, Quebec, on July 4, 1787. In about 1808, he emmigrated to St. Louis in a birch-bark canoe, travelling through various waterways to reach the Mississippi River. LaBarge served in the War of 1812 and was wounded in the battle of the River Raisin. In this battle, LaBarge lost two fingers from a gunshot and was scarred for life from a tomahawk wound to the head. He became anaturalized citizen following his service in the Army. For serveral years he was involved in the manufacture of charcoal and later owned a hotel and livery in St. Louis. He is probably best known for his exploits as a fur trapper in the far west. Several geographical landmarks such as LaBarge (or Battle) Creek and the city of LaBarge, both in Wyoming, were named in his honor. These took their name from a battle with indians in which LaBarge took part. Details of this event have been lost, however. LaBarge was also present in General Ashley's disastrous fight with the Aricara Indians on the Missouri River in 1823, and was the man who cut the cable of one of the keeboats so that it might drift out of range of the fire of the Indians. In January of 1860, while on his way to visit an ill relative, LaBarge slipped on an icy St. Louis sidewalk and struck the curb. He died from his injuries two days later on January 22, 1860. (Further details of Joseph Marie LaBarge's life are contained in Hiram Martin Chittenden's book, *History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River: Life and Adventures of Joseph LaBarge*, published by Ross & Haines, 1962.)