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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2015 Volume III: History in Our Everyday Lives

French History in Your City: San Jose, California - the Pellier Brothers

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"French History in Your City" is a unit on local, public history, which explores how the French arrived, specifically, in San Jose and what they did to contribute to society. It includes struggles and victories for the new immigrants. With a bit of research on immigrants in your area, it can easily be applied to other neighborhoods, cities, counties, etc., in which the French, or other ethnic groups, settled.

The unit is student-centered, focusing on their research using the internet, learning first about the migration of the French language from a small area in Western Europe, to all corners of the globe, including North America, California, and finally, San Jose. Their research includes visiting local history libraries, where they can find primary source materials, museums, and places of interest where the immigrant is memorialized, such as a small park and a cemetery.

The unit will empower students to be historical researchers, thinkers and writers. From a few words on a tombstone, students will dig deep in their research, taking them back to France, where they will make discoveries about the origins of the immigrant. It will open up the area of genealogy, as they research the family.

(Developed for French III, grades 11-12, and AP French Language and Culture, grade 10; recommended for French III-AP/World Languages, Spanish III-AP/World Language, Vietnamese II-III/World Languages, and German II-III/World Language, grades 10-12)