

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society members and friends,

Breaking news about log schoolhouse to be announced at September 17 dinner



This sketch is from page 22 of *The Wonderful Land: A History and Geography of Kankakee* by Florence Williams and several other authors, published in 1965 by Thomas Edison School in Kankakee, Illinois. The caption for the sketch is “The first schoolhouses in Illinois were simple one-room log cabins, often with only oiled paper for windows. But the pupils liked to play outdoors, and even played some of the games children play today.”

The first log cabin school was built in today’s Aroma Park area in 1836. Bourbonnais Grove’s first log school was built in 1837 halfway between Thomas Durham’s home (today’s Perry Farm House) and Noel LeVasseur’s trading post (today’s ONU Larson Fine Arts Center) along South Main Street. In 2011, the schoolhouse was dismantled and the logs put into storage. The annual focus for BGHS fundraising for restoration of this log schoolhouse is the ***Fleur-de-Lis Celebration Dinner on September 17th at the Kankakee Country Club (invitation is attached)***. The annual *Fleur-de-Lis* Award of Excellence will be presented before the French-Canadian dinner of chicken brie with champagne cream sauce, *haricots verts*, *Lyonnaise* potatoes, and chocolate mousse with wine and non-alcoholic drink. After the dinner, I will portray Noel LeVasseur who will defend his legacy and explain his connection to the log schoolhouse. Then, breaking news will be announced about impending plans for reconstruction of the log schoolhouse. To date, 53 individuals have made dinner reservations. **Current CDC guidelines will be adhered to, including wearing masks indoors.**

September 2 membership meeting will be Zoom only

The Thursday September membership meeting at 7:00 pm will be **Zoom only**. Please click this link to join the meeting:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83461153599?pwd=YzljZUNRbktibW9XS2lrZWJYaVZUdz09>. If you do not use the link, the meeting ID is 303 138 5986 and passcode is 754Grg. As I will serve as host of the meeting as well as preside over the meeting, please be patient with me. I will try to let you in at 6:50 pm before the meeting starts. If you have a problem getting into the meeting please email me at jpaul764@hotmail.com. I will check my emails periodically during the meeting.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- Pledge of allegiance;
- Presentation based on August/September news eletter item “Who am I?”
- Approval of August 5, 2021 membership minutes (*attached*);
- Treasurer’s Report;
- Membership Report;
- Collection Committee Report;
 - ID two portraits in this news eletter; and
 - Approve the following (to be added to BGHS Acquisition Policy: CRITERIA FOR ACCESSIONING FOR LOG SCHOOLHOUSE
 - School furnishings from the period 1838-48
 - Books printed up to 1848
 - Artifacts and information pertaining to residents of the home from 1848-2011 in the form of signage and photographs.
- Ways and Means:
 - Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley “pass through” fund; and
 - *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner.
- Building and Grounds
 - Roof treatment and chimney update;
 - Tiger eye sumac planting update; and
 - Next work session: Saturday October 9 at 9:00 am—plant Tiger Eyes Staghorn Sumas, Master Gardeners groom herb garden, and general clean up.



These Tiger Eyes sumacs will be planted in the West Boundary Garden.

- Old Business
- New Business
 - Participation in MBVM 175th anniversary celebration in 2022—next meeting September 21; and
 - Continued reopening of Letourneau Home/Museum.

Award nomination deadline is September 2

I remind all BGHS officers to remain on the Zoom connection after adjournment of the September 2 membership meeting so that we can select who will receive the 2021 *Fleur-de-Lis* Award of Excellence. September 2 is the new deadline to nominate an individual for her/his contribution to local French-Canadian history. The nomination form can be found at <https://bourbonnaishistory.org/fleur-de-lis-celebration> at the bottom of that web page.

Kudos to our volunteers



The BGHS extends its heartfelt gratitude this month to:

- Laurel Soper and Marcia Rabideau—in photograph above—for visiting with Bourbonnais Code Enforcement Officer Eric Cyr and resolving the sump pump issue on the west boundary of the Adrien M. Richard Heritage Preserve; and for their dedicated work along with the rest of the Collection Committee (Roberta Renville, Mary Ann Lambert, and Ken Ponton) every Wednesday in organizing the artifacts in our collection;
- Ken Ponton for assisting me and Veronica Featherston (executive director of the Kankakee County Historical Society and Museum) at the August 21st 5K Voyageur Run at the Kankakee County Museum—a fundraiser for repairing the cupola of the French Heritage Museum—(see above photographs of Ken at the BGHS table and to the left of me and Veronica), and for chaperoning the Letourneau Home/Museum open house on August 15;
- Bonnie Bergeron for chaperoning the Letourneau Home/Museum open house on Sunday September 5;
- Charles Balesi for organizing the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner’s French-Canadian cuisine (see above), and recruiting more guests to the dinner while donating printing cost of promotion items used in that recruitment;
- Wal Schuller for organizing and overseeing the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner program, auction, and seating;

- Gary Seiner for his continuous grooming of the shrubs and gardens around our historic landmark; and
- Daron Kinzinger for seeking estimates to trim the trees in the gardens.

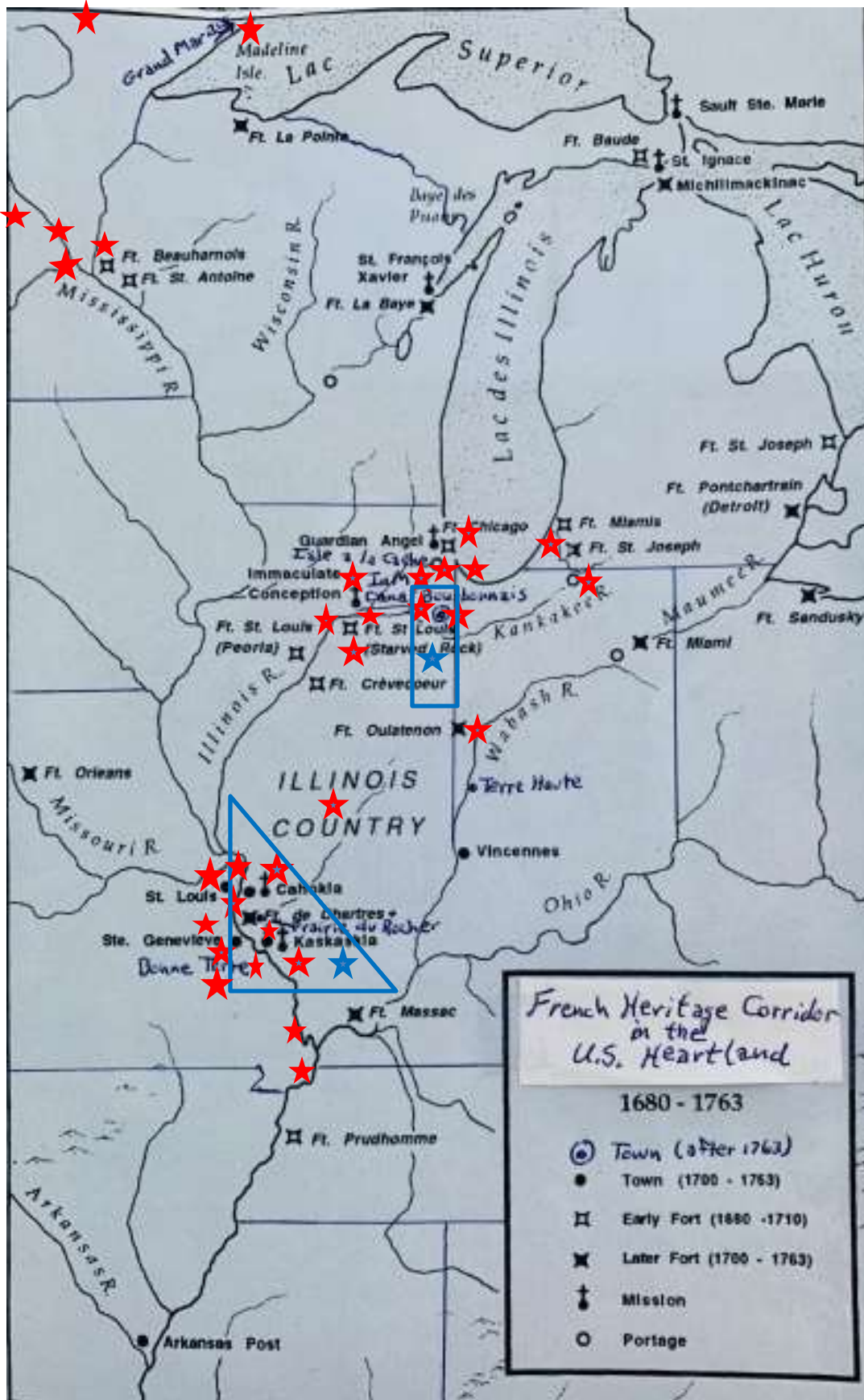
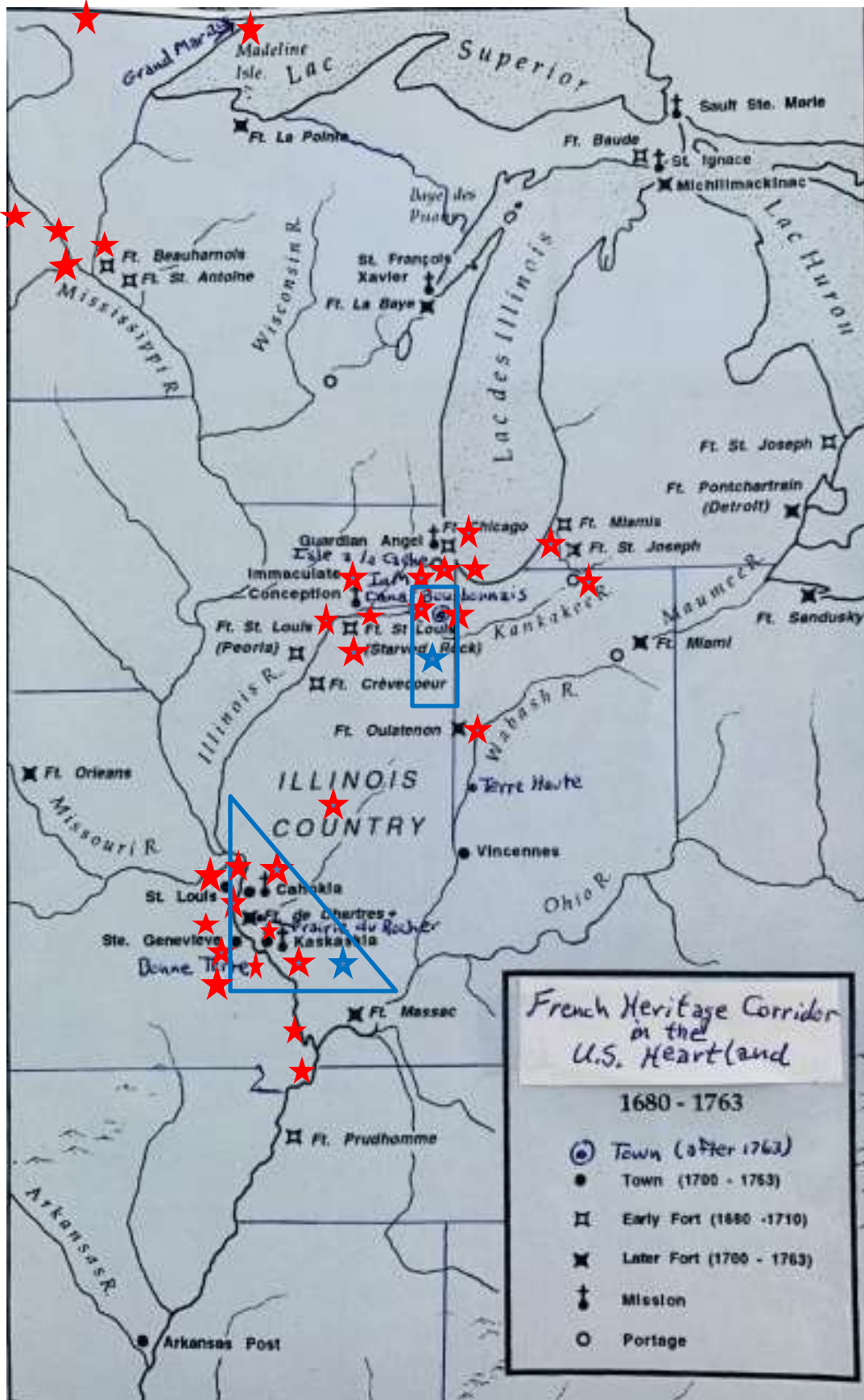
Mark your calendars for these BGHS-related 2021 events

- September 2—deadline for nomination for 2021 *Fleur-de-Lis* Award of Excellence (nomination form is at bottom of BGHS webpage [Fleur-de-Lis Celebration | Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society \(bourbonnaishistory.org\)](https://bourbonnaishistory.org));
- **Friday September 17, 2021—the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner at the Kankakee Country Club** (the invitation is attached—reservations due September 10);
- September 25 at 1:00 pm—BGHS member and genealogist Norma Meier lectures on “French-Canadian and Belgian Emigration” at the French Heritage Museum;
- November 5—Local History 101 “Antebellum Abolitionists (1838-60)” webinar (hybrid in-person and Zoom) Lifelong Learning course at KCC from 10:00-11:30 am; and
- December 4 Les Artisans Arts and Crafts Fair.

French Heritage Corridor (FHC) held leadership meeting on August 2

Lisa Kahn, co-chair of the Chicago Chapter of the French Heritage Society (FHS), presided over the first leadership Zoom meeting of the French Heritage Corridor on August 2. The French Heritage Corridor is dedicated to raising collective awareness of French history and heritage which since the 17th century has melded the multicultural landscape in what is today the Midwestern United States. The network of stakeholders in the corridor are historical societies, preservationist groups, reenactment groups, political and economic entities, and Native Americans dedicated to preserving the rich French heritage. As Colby Bartlett, the Indiana ambassador, stated: “While the French history and heritage of eastern Canada and that of Louisiana is typically well known and understood by the general public, the region between them, that comprises the French Heritage Corridor, is not as universally appreciated.”

Ambassadors have been assigned for five of the seven states in the corridor (see map below). Wisconsin and Iowa ambassadors are still being sought. I will serve as the Illinois ambassador. With a newly written mission statement, the ambassadors are communicating with all stakeholders identified in her/his state. Kahn stated that the French Heritage Society, (headquartered in New York and Paris) supports our efforts, and has purchased the web domain for the French Heritage Corridor. The draft interactive map below which I created—try it out by clicking the stars—is one medium that may be used to attract the public to the FHC.



Who am I?



My twin brother George and I were born in 1846. When I married George Letourneau Jr. in 1873, I was six years older than him. Our baby boy Albert was born in 1874, but sadly, he never knew me since I died on June 25, 1875 of consumption or tuberculosis. As a single father, overwhelmed with grief and the need to continue his work as a bookkeeper, my husband then asked his parents, George and Elodie Letourneau, to raise his son. Do you know my name?

Can you identify these two individuals?

The Collections Committee would like your help. Can you identify the two individuals in the portraits below? These portraits hang in the Letourneau Home/Museum but over the years, their identity has been lost.



In the Bourbonnais Grove of 1850, would you commit a felony by hiding runaway slaves?

Author Ann Babe recently wrote “In most everyone’s existence, there comes an experience so profound that it fractures life into two—the time before and the time after—and at the fault line in between is the moment of deciding to do something (*The Week*, August 20, 2021, p. 36). Such is what happened in our own local history after September 18, 1850. That was the date when Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. The act stated that runaway slaves had to be returned to their slave owners. All officials and citizens of Free States (including Illinois) had to cooperate or suffer the consequences: \$1000 fine (\$18,000 today) and six months or more imprisonment. Before the Fugitive Slave Act, many northerners did not have or express their opinions about slavery. The passage of the act forced a decision to be made.

On Friday November 5, 2021 at 10:00 am in a Kankakee Community College Lifelong Learning Institute webinar class (you can attend in-person or as a webinar at home), I will bring this life-changing decision to life as I portray Bourbonnais Grove Quaker abolitionist Thomas Durham. In his virtual 1850 farmhouse—the Perry Farm House today—he will ask a question for the participants in the class (who will be role-playing as 1850 Bourbonnais Grove residents). **The question is: will you (as French-Canadians, Methodists, Reformed Presbyterians, and other pioneer settlers) help him and his Quaker family hide runaway slaves who are passing through Bourbonnais Grove via the Underground Railroad on their way to Canada?** I have *attached* the Lifelong Learning Institute flyer which publicizes this class, many other history classes, and instructions on how to register. Out of state participants are welcome.

Have a wonderful Labor Day weekend!

Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society