

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society members and friends,

It's Showtime for the *Fleur-de-Lis*



The *fleur-de-lis* (aka irises) bloom outside the Letourneau Home/Museum.
The bulbs were gifts from BGHS friend Bruce Clark.

The *fleur-de-lis* symbol on Village of Bourbonnais welcome signs, street signs, and logos is an integral part of this community's French-Canadian heritage. Historically, before entering Gaul (later France) in the 4th century, the Franks (later French) lived along the river Leie in Flanders (Belgium today). The river banks were filled with unique flowers—what we refer to as irises. The Franks called the flowers *fleur-de-lis* instead of flowers of the river Leie or *Lis*. As the *fleur-de-lis* filled their homes, surroundings, and imaginations, the Franks inserted this special flower into their heraldry, family crests, and flags.

Community Foundation and Village Provide \$8500 to Schoolhouse Architectural Plan

On May 20, the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley awarded a \$6000 grant to the BGHS to hire Bright Designs to develop the design and construction plans for the restoration of the log schoolhouse. Past President Ken Ponton and Treasurer Steve Monts accepted the grant at the May 20 Zoom meeting. Trustees of the Village of Bourbonnais on May 17 adopted an ordinance to fund \$2500 for the remainder of the architectural plan's total cost of \$8500. The BGHS is grateful to the Community Foundation and village trustees for their contributions toward the schoolhouse restoration. **Total donations to date including pledges for the log schoolhouse restoration are \$78,547.48.**

Newspapers Draw Attention to BGHS

Several issues of Kankakee's *Daily Journal* in May have drawn attention to the BGHS. The BGHS is very grateful to the newspaper's editors and writers—especially Jeff Bonty, Taylor Leddin, and Mike Frey—for their continuing support. If you missed the articles, you can read each one after clicking the respective link.

The newspaper articles included:

- May 4—Commentary and photograph of Village of Bourbonnais mayor and trustees swearing in ceremony using the 1872 bible from the Letourneau Home/Museum [Bourbonnais trustees approve general fund budget | Local News | daily-journal.com](#);
- May 6—Front page coverage of *Recreating history: Bourbonnais takes next step toward rebuilding 1837 schoolhouse* [Recreating history: Bourbonnais takes next step toward rebuilding 1837 schoolhouse | Local News | daily-journal.com](#);
- May 13—*Historical Society website now interactive* [Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society website now interactive | Life | daily-journal.com](#); and
- May 20—*French Heritage Corridor to become reality* [French Heritage Corridor to become reality | Life | daily-journal.com](#).

On May 26, the *Ste. Genevieve* (Missouri) *Herald* published an article *Balesi Helps Fight for Prairie du Rocher NPS Status* (see attached PDF “PrairieDuRocherNPS”).

Why is Designation of a French Heritage Corridor Important?

The May 20 and 26 newspaper articles above explain current pioneer efforts to change cultural perceptions—that it was the French, not British, who formed the roots of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. Dr. Charles Balesi and I recently attended a conference hosted by the French Heritage Society Chicago Chapter on May 13-14 in two colonial French towns straddling the Mississippi River: Prairie du Rocher, Illinois, and Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. The purpose of the conference was to begin networking all Midwest stakeholders in the formation of the French Heritage Corridor. The corridor would extend through all the states mentioned above. Lisa Kahn, co-chair of the French Heritage Society Chicago Chapter, presided over the conference activities which concluded with the unanimous support of the French Heritage Society acting as an umbrella organization for all stakeholders, and to register as a trademark the “French Heritage Corridor.” Dr. Balesi, who has long campaigned for the formation of this corridor, led the “charge” in his keynote address, and I (on May 26) agreed to serve as Illinois ambassador to the corridor.

Can You Identify this French-Canadian Immigrant?

On June 28, 1977, our first BGHS President Adrien Richard recommended a list of candidates for Bourbonnais park names. He described one of the candidates as “. . . Member of the first village board in 1875. Captain of the Union Army of the Republic, head of Company D, of the 76th Infantry, a contingent of the ‘Boys in Blue’ who originated almost completely from Bourbonnais. He accompanied General Sherman’s army to Jackson, Mississippi. Later joined

the Viatorian order as a Brother, where he died shortly after 1922.” Who is this person? See next month’s issue for the answer.

Volunteers Mulch the Letourneau Home/Museum Gardens



Spreading newspapers and mulch in our historic landmark’s gardens are (from left to right): Steve Liehr, Ellen Liehr, Judy Smead, Steve Monts, Mary Ann Lambert, Marcia Rabideau, and Gary Seiner.

Wheel barrows, newspapers, and pitch fork are on the back porch of the Letourneau Home/Museum for anyone to use anytime to mulch her/his adopted garden. The mulch pile is behind the rear smoke tree. The BGHS is also grateful to Ken Ponton for removing the damaged two evergreen shrubs by the front porch. The next garden work sessions will be on Saturdays June 5 and 12 from 9-11 am. Grooming and mulching will be the main activities.

Save the Dates for 2021 BGHS Events

Please mark your calendars for these important BGHS sponsored upcoming events, assuming pandemic recovery continues to progress:

- June 2—Collections Committee meeting beginning at 10 am (Letourneau Home/Museum);
- June 5 and 12—garden work sessions from 9-11 am;
- June 25—Children’s Story Walk (sponsored by Clove Alliance) through Letouneau gardens from 5-7 pm—volunteers needed to answer questions;
- July 1—first post pandemic in-person (and Zoom) membership meeting at 7 pm;
- July 4th Les Artisans Arts and Crafts Fair from 9 am to 3 pm;
- Camp MOSH work days for Letourneau Home/Museum and gardens—July 18 to July 24;
- August 5th—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://www.bourbonnaishistory.org));

- **Friday September 17, 2021—the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner at the Kankakee Country Club;** and
- December 4 Les Artisans Arts and Crafts Fair.

Volunteer Needed to Retype Bylaws and Acquisition Policy

The society needs a volunteer to retype the recently approved changes to the bylaws and accession policy. If you are interested, please contact me.

Letourneau Gardens Beautify Bourbonnais



From left to right: heirloom pink petticoat columbines (c. 1530) with new boardwalk in background; tartarian honeysuckle at southwest corner of our historic landmark; and lilac at front porch.

Next Zoom Membership Meeting on Thursday June 3

I invite you to please join our Zoom membership meeting at **7:00 pm on Thursday June 3** by emailing me at jpaul764@hotmail.com. I will then email you a link to the meeting on June 3. The agenda for the meeting includes:

- Approval of May 6, 2021 membership meeting minutes (attached);
- Community Foundation of the Kankakee River Valley “Pass through Fund”;
- Building and grounds improvements update; and
- Confirmation of July 1 meeting as in-person and Zoom at Letourneau Home/Museum.

Have a great Memorial Day weekend! Best wishes,

Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society