

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society members and friends,

This first spring 2022 news eletter issue includes:

- Public history's value explained at conference;
- Registration information for Second Annual French Heritage Corridor (FHC) Conference
- FHC 2022 calendar of events;
- Ten-year anniversaries loom on the horizon;
- Log Schoolhouse planning continues;
- Who are we?
- Agenda for next Zoom membership meeting on April 7;
- BGHS 2022 calendar of events;
- Restructuring plan for BGHS moves forward; and
- Kudos to our volunteers and donors.
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Public history featured in keynote address at March 25-26 *Phi Alpha Theta* Conference



After his keynote address at the conference, Dr. Theodore Karamanski of Loyola University (on left) posed with Dr. Kyle Robinson of Olivet Nazarene University. Dr. Robinson moderated the conference as his history students and students from other colleges/universities presented 20 papers in four workshop sessions. The conference was sponsored by ONU and the Kankakee County Museum.

The historical society news eletter that you are reading, historical society work in general, museums, and our national parks are all aspects of “public history”—defined as the non-academic use of historical skills and methods outside the traditional academic realm of history. Although the term “public history” did not begin until 1976 at the University of California (Santa Barbara), the work of public historians was evident in the 19th century or earlier. Dr. Theodore Karamanski, Professor of History and Director of the Public History Program at Loyola, participated in the panel discussion on March 25 at the Kankakee County Museum and presented the keynote address at the *Phi Alpha Theta* ONU conference. Among his many activities, Dr. Karamanski has assisted in the creation of the historical content and displays in the Chicago Maritime Museum.

In his keynote address, Dr. Karamanski stated several characteristics of public history:

- It deals with three dimensional tangible items like buildings and artifacts;
- It differs from academic history because public historians share authority with the public and are flexible in the “reflective practice” (give and take of ideas) during the **process** of striving for a goal; and
- It emphasizes team work in bringing history to where people are (i.e., phone apps, YouTube videos).

I, personally, was not aware of the insights and perspectives of public history that Dr. Karamanski explained. I now know that years ago I made the transition from my own academic history career to the realm of public history, and I entered into one of the most enriching and rewarding periods of my life.

French Heritage Corridor to hold its second conference on May 12-13

Please click this link for the Second Annual French Heritage Corridor Conference in Lafayette, IN [20220315_FHCConference_Press_Release.docx - Google Drive](#). Registration for in-person or virtual attendance is free, but must be completed by opening the following link and submitting the digital registration information [Please Join Us for the French Heritage Corridor 2nd Annual Conference - May 12-13, 2022 \(mailchi.mp\)](#). Lodging information is also included in the second link. In addition to the many presentations and visit to Fort Ouiatenon during this conference, the French Heritage Corridor website will be launched. I have attached the most recent draft of the French Heritage Corridor interactive map for you to review. If you want to open the map on your smart phone, please send it to your Dropbox so that the star links work properly. This map will be modified by the French Heritage Society tech team as the FHC website is created. A calendar of events for the corridor follows.

French Heritage Corridor Calendar of Events

- April 1— Vacation: Voyageur, *Isle a la Cache*, IL [Vocation: Voyageur - Forest Preserve District of Will County \(reconnectwithnature.org\)](#);
- April 14—Illinois Creoles, French Canadians, and Louisiana Cajuns: A Continental History (Frankfort Illinois Library) <https://frankfortlibrary.evanced.info/signup/EventDetails?EventId=15824&nomobile=1>;
- April 22—25th Canal Boat Captain’s Luncheon, 11:30 am (www.iandmcanal.org);
- April 23-24—Bridgeton (Indiana) Rendezvous [Bridgeton Rendezvous – Reenacting Schedule](#);
- May 6-9—Education Day 2022, Old Fort Wayne, Detroit, MI [Education Day – 2022 – Reenacting Schedule](#);
- May 7-8—Muster on the St. Mary’s, Old Fort Wayne, Detroit, MI [Muster on the St. Mary’s – Reenacting Schedule](#);
- May 12-13—2nd Annual FHC Conference, Tippecanoe County Historical Society, Lafayette, Indiana (FHC sponsored link TBD);
- June 4-5—52nd Annual Fort de Chartres Rendezvous [52nd Annual FORT DE CHARTRES RENDEZVOUS, June 4 & 5, 2022 – Fort de Chartres](#);
- June 12--Fort de Chartres Heritage Garden Special Event: The French Colonial Gardens Driving Tour (FHC sponsored link TBD);

- Tentative date, Saturday June 25, 2022—Inauguration of Bourbonnais Grove’s first log schoolhouse at the Bourbonnais Friendship Festival www.bourbonnaishistory.org ;
- July 9 and 10—300th Anniversary Celebration of Prairie du Rocher (FHC sponsored link TBD);
- July 16, Bastille Day Festival at French Heritage Museum (Kankakee) [About Us | Kankakee County Historical Society \(kankakeecountymuseum.com\)](#);
- September 16—Fifth Annual *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner (log schoolhouse fundraiser) www.bourbonnaishistory.org;
- October 1-2—55th Feast of the Hunters Moon [Feast of the Hunters’ Moon – Tippecanoe County Historical Association \(feastofthehuntersmoon.org\)](http://feastofthehuntersmoon.org);
- **November 5-6, 2022--Fort de Chartres Winter Rendezvous & Woodswalk** <http://www.fortdechartres.us/events/> and
- **December 31, 2022--La Guianne** at Fort de Chartres <http://www.fortdechartres.us/events/>

Three 10-year anniversaries loom on the horizon—let’s commemorate them

- On July 10, 2012, the Kankakee County Board approved the Letourneau Home as a county historic landmark—already in 2000, it was proclaimed a Village of Bourbonnais historic landmark;
- On July 28, 2012, the French Heritage Museum (Stone Barn in Kankakee) held its grand opening; and
- On August 30, 2012, the 15’ x 4’ French-Canadian Heritage Wall on KCC’s third floor, east end, held its grand opening (it commemorates French-Canadians’ contributions to our area and the KCC students’ work in creating the *French-Canadian Interview Project*—click [French Canadian Interview Project \(kcc.edu\)](http://www.kcc.edu/french-canadian-interview-project)).

Log schoolhouse planning continues

Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee member Laurie Cyr reported at the March 10 committee meeting that the new logs (the 40% needed to complete the restoration) were being kiln dried for 60 days. They will then be assembled onto the 1837 logs at the construction facility of Piggush-Simeneau Inc. After the logs are assembled in the proper manner, a construction schedule will be provided. The onsite (next to the Letourneau Home/Museum) schoolhouse construction is still estimated to be completed in May or June 2022.

Regarding the artifacts for the log schoolhouse, several individuals (Roy and Jean Legris-Pekoc, Brian and Peggy Rogers, Mary Ann Lambert, and Norma Meier) have already donated several items in addition to the ones that Ken Ponton has collected and made. The BGHS is so grateful to these individuals for their donations. The committee also agreed that horse hitching posts can be put in front of the log schoolhouse, similar to those in front of the Letourneau Home/Museum.

At the advisory committee meeting, I presented a 2-page historical overview pamphlet and 10-page booklet for the log schoolhouse at the meeting. Committee member Mayor Paul Schore suggested that we wait to print the documents until construction is further along so that more new photographs might be put in the booklet. The pamphlet would be low cost and therefore free to the public, whereas a nominal fee may be charged for the booklet. Regarding

signage, the mayor emphasized that this is a work in progress in which we may have to wait until the restoration is complete to see how much wall space is available. There was agreement that QR codes be used whenever possible and that the wall behind the students be dedicated to the French-Canadian families who lived in the schoolhouse after 1848.

On April 4, 2022, I will present the log schoolhouse Historic Landmark Prequalification Form application to the Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission. If approved, the mayor remarked that we could follow the same process with the Village of Bourbonnais as used for the Letourneau Home becoming a Kankakee County Historic Landmark.

Who are we?

We are Noel and Ruth LeVasseur's two children who attended classes in the log schoolhouse in the 1840s. Who are we?

Next membership meeting on April 7 will be Zoom only

The next membership meeting will be on April 7 at 7:00 pm (CST) will be **Zoom only**. Please click this link to join the meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85650165502?pwd=UzZlaHhJbTdEK3dmcklxNDNiM2NtUT09>

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- Pledge of allegiance;
- Presentation based on March/April 2022 news eletter item "Who am I?"
- Approval of March 10, 2022 membership minutes (*attached*);
- Treasurer's report;
- Corresponding Secretary report;
 - Log schoolhouse artifact donors
- Executive Vice-President Collection Committee report
- Membership Report;
- Ways and Means:
 - Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley "pass through" fund investment option; and
 - July 4 *Les Artisans* Arts and Craft Show.
- Building and Grounds
- Old Business
 - Chaperones are needed for May 1 and May 15 open houses of the Letourneau Home/Museum;
 - Interview participation in MBVM 175th anniversary celebration in 2022—connect to Kankakee County Historical Society's request for personal memories; and
 - Bylaw, loan, and acquisition policy set for board approval.
- New Business
 - **Next meeting on May 5, 2022.**

Mark your calendars for these BGHS 2022 events

- Next BGHS membership Zoom meeting—7:00 pm April 7;
- Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee Zoom meeting—3:30 pm on April 14;

- Open house at Letourneau Home/Museum—Sunday April 3;
- April 29-30—MBVM 175th anniversary celebration (April 29, 6:30 pm concert at church; and April 30, Dueling and Dancing at Quality Inn, 6 pm) [175th Anniversary Celebration | Maternity BVM \(mbvmchurch.org\)](#);
- May 6, 10-11:30 am, KCC Room D123 in-person or virtual attendance in webinar, Lifelong Learning Institute course: *Community Transformations Overseen by George R. Letourneau (1860-1906)*, Dr. Jim Paul presenter-- [Community Transformations Overseen by George R. Letourneau - KCC Enrole](#);
- Tentative date, Saturday June 25, 2022—Inauguration of Bourbonnais Grove’s first log schoolhouse at the Bourbonnais Friendship Festival;
- July 4—*Les Artisans* Arts and Crafts Fair;
- August 20-21—MBVM 175th anniversary celebration (August 20, 10:30 am – 3:00 pm Taste of MBVM, family, food, and fun on parish grounds; and August 21, History and Worship with 10 am mass celebrated by Bishop Hicks followed by tours of church grounds and St. Viator/ONU campus and reception with a French-Canadian flare—same link as April 29-30;
- Friday September 16—Fifth Annual *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner; and
- Saturday December 3—*Les Artisans* Arts and Crafts Fair.

Restructuring plan for BGHS is moving forward

In support of Daron Kinzinger’s and others’ suggestion that there be a restructuring of the BGHS, I have drafted bylaw language in which all current officers join the current board members on one Board of Directors. The monthly meetings would combine board and membership issues. A more defined committee structure will be included. Daron is editing the bylaw language draft. After he is done, we will submit it to the membership for approval. The transition would be with ease and a benefit to the society as we more efficiently pursue our mission and goals.

Kudos to our volunteers and donors

The BGHS expresses special gratitude to our volunteers: Laurel Soper for her updating of the BGHS website and Face Book postings; Ken Ponton for creating log schoolhouse teacher and student table desks and benches; Gary Seiner for chaperoning the March 20 open house at the Letourneau Home/Museum; Daron Kinzinger for picking up our mail; Christine Michels and Steve Monts for their ongoing corresponding secretary and treasurer work respectively; Christine Michels for chaperoning the Letourneau Home/Museum open house on March 6; and to Roy and Jean Legris-Pekoc for their generous check donation to the BGHS.

I wish you all a wonderful spring and Happy Easter.

Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society