

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society members and friends,

French Heritage Corridor website goes live



Discover French Heritage Sites in the Midwest



The French Heritage Corridor is an initiative of the French Heritage Society and generously supported by the William T. Kemper Foundation. The website was launched on May 12 when Jean-Charles Foyer cut the ceremonial ribbon held by his mother Julie Kemper Foyer (at right), both representing the Kemper Foundation, and Lisa Kahn (Co-Chair of the French Heritage Society Chicago Chapter—at left). The website includes a trade mark logo (above), interactive map (above right), and calendar of events.

Please click this link for the new French Heritage Corridor (FHC) website [French Heritage Corridor - French Heritage Society](#). The second annual conference of the FHC was held in Lafayette, Indiana, on May 12-13. The theme was “Making Our Dreams a Reality”. In addition to the many conference presentations and tours of Fort Ouiatenon Preserve and Zacharia Cicott Trading Post Historical Park (Independence, IN), the French Heritage Corridor website was launched. All who participated in the conference learned how our Midwest heritage formed, grew, and became inter-connected. I will no longer include a list of French Heritage Corridor calendar of events in this e newsletter because all of those events can now be found on the FHC website. Enjoy the new website, and plan your next historical road trips! For more photographs of the May 12-13 conference, go to our Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society Face Book pages. In addition to myself, the BGHS was well represented at the conference as Judy and Ken Ponton, Wal Schuller, Charles Balesi, and Josue Savoie also attended in person.

Delay of logs from Indiana mill slows reconstruction of log schoolhouse

Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee members Bourbonnais Village Assistant Administrator Laurie Cyr and Mayor Paul Schore reported at the May 19 committee meeting that the 16 new logs ordered from an Indiana mill have been delayed. The original logs from the schoolhouse represent 60% of the total, so the new aged logs are needed. Once those new logs arrive, the reconstruction will resume with the decking and then log wall and roof construction. The estimated completion date and inauguration celebration of the log schoolhouse has now been pushed back to a date in August—TBD.

The log schoolhouse Historic Landmark Prequalification Form application has been approved by the Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission. I will now work on

nomination of the log schoolhouse as a Kankakee County historic landmark and submit nomination for log schoolhouse historic landmark designation to the Village of Bourbonnais.

Charles Balesi addresses gala about his interview with Josephine Baker (1906-75)



At the recent French Heritage Society gala “Celebrating Josephine Baker”, Co-Chairs of the Chicago Chapter Lisa Kahn (center) and Pascale Kichler (right) introduced Dr. Charles Balesi who spoke about his memories of Josephine Baker.

On the evening of May 20, Dr. Charles Balesi addressed the audience at the French Heritage Society’s gala in Chicago honoring Josephine Baker. He put his words in writing in an email to me the following day. Here are his memories of his encounter with Josephine Baker, who was an American-born French dancer, singer, and actress. Charles wrote:

“Long ago, to be exact in 1955, I was working for a French news conglomerate located in Paris, (Boulevard Caulaincourt, directly behind Montmartre) combining *Auto-Journal*, all about cars and tourism, and the weekly magazine *Point De Vue- Images Du Monde*, both still in existence. Among some of my most interesting assignments (covering Bastille Day best public dancing locations on Bastille Day's eve; Jean Cocteau decorating the city of Menton city-hall wedding room, France top vacation destinations, etc.) on a Spring Day of that year, I was told by the chief-editor to fetch one of our photographers and go interview Josephine Baker then performing at the Olympia, the French capital’s most famous entertainment venue.

While now *Today Point de Vue - Images du Monde* is a bit like the French version of *People* magazine, it was then more of a classical information magazine, not giving into sensationalism. I was instructed to focus on what made life in France different from the United States for Josephine Baker.

Of the stories she told, I remember particularly how in 1926, when, along with the Black entertainers troupe from New York hired by the organizers of the *Exposition Des Arts Decoratifs*, she landed in Cherbourg, and about to board the special train to Paris. First-class tickets in hand, they hesitated before boarding, to the incomprehension and total exasperation of the French agent: they thought that, as in much of the United States, "Us, Negroes, were assigned a segregated section." She also related that - I believe in 1947 - when she went to New York with her French husband, band-leader Jo Bouillon - one of the many hotels they tried to book, asked: "Would your wife mind to come in through the kitchen door?"

Her French although accented, was excellent. Like many other Black Americans - a great

number of World War One veterans, see the book "Harlem in Paris" - She was totally home in France. I remember her as friendly, open. She invited us to go visit her home in southwest France, in Perigord, the castle she bought and restored, *Les Milandes*, home to her adopted twelve children, which we did. While the few locals we talked to found her ways a bit extravagant, they thought as rather typical of show-business people, "*C'est une artiste, n'est-ce pas?*" They were all - without exception - color-blind."

BGHS You Tube Channel Now Includes Episode 3

The KCC Lifelong Learning program and the BGHS have once again collaborated in the new BGHS You Tube program: Episode 3: *Community Transformations Overseen by George R. Letourneau (1860-1906)*, now available for viewing at [Bourbonnais Grove - YouTube](#). Episode 1 is Potawatomi Peril (to 1838) and Episode 2 is Antebellum Abolitionists (1838-60). The companion written document with slides for Episode 3 is titled "Transformations Overseen by George Letourneau Narrative" can be found and downloaded from our website at [Resources \(bourbonnaishistory.org\)](#).

Who am I?

I had a large following because I wanted democratization of the Roman Catholic Church, lay person access to the Bible, and French language allowed in the Church liturgy. I got into trouble for challenging authority, but by 1855, I recruited between 900-1000 French-Canadian families to a 40 square mile area around my home. Who am I?

BGHS extends gratitude to volunteers who groomed and mulched the gardens



Fleur-de-Lis (Irises) and heirloom pink petticoat columbine offer a welcome hello to our historic landmark visitors. On May 14, the front Boardwalk Garden was mulched and weeded by volunteers (from left to right Deb Kyrouac, her mother Judy Smead, and Ellen Liehr.



Sandi Sandeno (above) works in her River Birch Garden, and Master Gardeners (above from left to right) Debra Coch, Holly Froning, and Nancy Cifaldi groom and then mulch the Herb Garden.

Even though our volunteers beautified the gardens around the Letourneau Home/Museum, the gardens can still use a little TLC. So, we will have two grooming and mulching Saturday work sessions on June 11 and June 18 from 9-11 am. If you can't wait until then, there are two wheel barrows and a pitch fork on the home/museum's back porch—that can be used in your independent mulching, and there is plenty of mulch!

Next membership meeting on June 9 will be Zoom only

The next membership meeting will be on June 9 at 7:00 pm (CST) will be **Zoom only**. Please click this link to join the meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88939806989?pwd=N3RycnVyR0d4VCtxbE8vNmJQaGFhUT09>

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- Pledge of allegiance;
- Presentation based on May/June 2022 news eletter item “Who am I?”
- Approval of May 5, 2022 membership minutes (*attached*);
- Treasurer's report;
- Corresponding Secretary report;
- Executive Vice-President Collection Committee report
- Membership Report;
- Ways and Means:
 - Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley “pass through” fund investment option update; and
 - July 4 *Les Artisans* Arts and Craft Show.
- Building and Grounds
 - Garden work session on Saturday May 14 from 9-11 am.
- Old Business
 - Chaperones are needed for July 3 and July 17 open houses of the Letourneau Home/Museum;
 - MBVM 175th anniversary celebration in 2022; and
 - Restructuring of BGHS update.
- New Business

- Next meeting on July 7, 2022.

Mark your calendars for these BGHS 2022 events

- June 9—Next BGHS membership Zoom meeting—7:00 pm;
- June 28—Next Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee meeting at 3:30 pm in Village of Bourbonnais Administration Building Conference Room;
- July 3 and July 17—Letourneau Home/Museum open houses from 1-4 pm;
- July 4—*Les Artisans* Arts and Crafts Fair;
- July 16, Bastille Day Festival at French Heritage Museum (Kankakee) [About Us | Kankakee County Historical Society \(kankakeecountymuseum.com\)](#);
- 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;
- August 2022—Inauguration of Bourbonnais Grove’s first log schoolhouse at the Bourbonnais Friendship Festival—date TBD;
- Friday September 16—Fifth Annual *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner; and
- Saturday December 3—*Les Artisans* Arts and Crafts Fair.

Chris Vaughn donates 100th anniversary MBVM history



Chris Vaughn, daughter of Mary and Duane Bertrand, donated her family copy of the *1847-1947 Centennial Anniversary of the Maternity of the B.V.M.* to the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society. This is a welcome gift as we plan the 175th anniversary celebration of the parish this August 20-21.

Additional kudos to our volunteers and donors

In addition to expressing gratitude to those in photographs above, the BGHS thanks all our other volunteers: Laurel Soper for her updating of the BGHS website and Face Book postings; Gary Seiner for more drawings of the log schoolhouse; Daron Kinzinger for picking up our mail; Christine Michels and Steve Monts for their ongoing corresponding secretary and treasurer work respectively; Ken Ponton for his preparing the artifacts for the log schoolhouse;

and to Max Michels, Pam and Russ Perkins, and Mary Ann Lambert for cleaning the gardens around the Letourneau Home/Museum.

I wish you all a delightful Memorial Day weekend.

Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society