

BGHS News—October/November/December 2023

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society members and friends,

This issue will be a combined October/November/December 2023 newsletter. The next newsletter will be the December 2023/January 2024 issue, and emailed at the end of December.

Next BGHS membership meeting is Thursday November 9 at 8 pm

Our next membership meeting will be on Thursday November 9 at 8 pm—**please note the later start time**—via zoom only (no in-person gathering). Here is the zoom link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84886800368?pwd=M0tZai9aSE1HK3pLT05wVzJ2M2hNdz09> with zoom meeting ID 848 8680 0368 and Passcode 892574. The agenda is below.

Holiday shoppers' alert: Saturday December 2 is the BGHS *Les Artisans* Arts and Craft Fair



Above is Ellen Stringer's creative work at the Perry Farm which advertises this year's December 2 *Les Artisans* Arts and Craft Fair.

BGHS craft fair organizer Ellen Stringer has assembled a full venue of holiday crafters at the Saturday December 2 craft fair at the Kankakee County Fair Grounds. The event begins at 9:00 am and ends at 3:00 pm. This craft fair and the one on July 4th are the two main fund raisers for the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society. Thank you, Ellen, for organizing another memorable fund raiser for the BGHS!

Culver's in Bourbonnais fundraiser set for Wednesday November 15 from 5-8 pm

BGHS Board of Trustees Chairperson Daron Kinzinger has organized a historical society fundraiser at Culvers in Bourbonnais for Wednesday November 15 from 5-8 pm. Daron requests that you send the attached flyer through social media to family and friends. If you can volunteer to serve and bus tables during the event, please email Daron at dkinzinger@yahoo.com.

The October 17th Sixth Annual *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner was a smashing success



Ninety-four persons attended this year's *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner at the Kankakee County Club on October 17—this was our largest group of revelers since the beginning in 2017. In

addition to our local guests, participants came from Arizona, Michigan, and Chicago. The celebration dinner is the catalyst for log schoolhouse preservation fundraiser, and to date, the funds raised in 2023 are \$2593.44. The payment for the French cuisine dinner does not provide sufficient income funds in itself—it is a break even situation—but the additional monetary donations from those who attended and from those who could not attend, items for silent auction, and “in kind” donations resulted in a positive income of the \$2543.44. In addition to the log schoolhouse monetary donors, the BGHS thanks the following “in kind” donors: Laurie Cyr for the cupcakes; Charles Balesi for the wine; Wal Schuller for the flower centerpieces; Jim Paul for the invitations, dinner programs, award plaque, and historic landmark plaque; and Ken Ponton, Jeanne Lamy-Belzil, Charles Balesi, and Jim Paul for the silent auction items.



Viewing clockwise from top left, Gary Seiner receives the 2023 *Fleur-de-Lis* Award of Excellence for his outstanding contribution to the preservation of French, French-Canadian, and Belgian history in the Kankakee and Iroquois River Valleys; Josue Savoie asks Noel LeVasseur how the immigration of 77 French-Canadian families to Bourbonnais Grove

in 1847 impacted the log school; Christine and Max Michels; Theresa and Vic Johnson; and (left to right) Charles Balesi, Lisa Kahn, Sylvette Nicolini, Jeanne Lamy-Belzil, and me.

The above are just a few of the photographs from the October 17 *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner taken by Mary Ann Lambert. Laurel Soper has put thirty more photographs on the BGHS Facebook page ([9\) bourbonnais grove historical society - Search Results | Facebook](#)). Please check them out. Thank you, Mary Ann and Laurel.

**Log schoolhouse historic landmark plaque presented to BGHS by
Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commissioners**



On October 17, Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commissioners Jane Johnston and Catherine Langlois presented the BGHS with the log schoolhouse historic landmark plaque. From left to right, Jeff Jarvis, Catherine Langlois, Norm Strasma, Gary Seiner, Lynn Ahlden, Steve Liehr, Daron Kinzinger, Judy Smead, Penelope Stickney, Phil Stickney, Ellen Liehr, Steve Monts, Mayor Paul Schore, and Ken Ponton. On bench are Jane Johnson, me, and Laurie Cyr.

As you see above, we celebrated the Kankakee County historic landmark designation on October 17 before the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner. August 8, the Kankakee County Board approved the historic landmark nomination for the Bourbonnais Grove log schoolhouse. The Village of Bourbonnais had already approved the log schoolhouse as a village historic landmark on June 17. Bourbonnais Grove's first school (1837-48) later became the home of French-Canadian families from 1848-2010. In order to really engage the community with the log schoolhouse, volunteers are needed to serve as docents or interpreters during school visits and other occasions. Several individuals have already expressed interest: Doris O'Connor, Betty Leininger, Wayne Rybak, Jeanne Benson, Maureen Antignoli, Karen Duchene-Korup, Kristen Singer, and Joyce Harris. The goal of the docent or interpreter will be to educate and engage elementary-aged students in a sample

curriculum of the early nineteenth-century. Thank you to all who have and will volunteer as docents and interpreters in the log schoolhouse.

Link now available for “French-Canadian Heritage Corridor” presentation



I now have the link to three presentations in the October 19-20, 2023 online conference hosted by the University of Southern Maine entitled “Revisiting the History of Little Canadas in the US: Spatial Organization in the 19th and 20th Centuries”. My presentation “The French-Canadian Heritage Corridor in Northeastern Illinois” and Mack Brza’s presentation “Cultural Fusion in Frontier Petit Canada: the Rise and Fall of Potawatomi and French-Canadian Relationships in Bourbonnais, Illinois” were on Day One. On Day Two, Robert Forrant spoke on the topic “The Rise and Fall of Lowell’s [Massachusetts] Little Canada Neighborhood”. Here's the link to Day One: https://video.maine.edu/media/REVISITING+THE+HISTORY+OF+LITTLE+CANADAS+IN+THE+USA+IDENTITY+AND+SPATIAL+ORGANIZATION+IN+THE+19th+and+20th+CENTURIES/1_ccfyua8c, and Day Two: https://video.maine.edu/media/REVISITING+THE+HISTORY+OF+LITTLE+CANADAS+IN+THE+USA+IDENTITY+AND+SPATIAL+ORGANIZATION+IN+THE+19th+and+20th+CENTURIES/1_5reob7n1.

New privet hedge defines west boundary of museum campus



The museum campus now has a defined west boundary with the privet hedge. Daron Kinzinger and Laurie Cyr organized the plantings by Art’s Landscaping, and it was completed last

week. Just east of the hedge are Staghorn sumac trees and native grasses/plants to help define the boarder.

Who am I?

My family lived at 143 North Bernard Street (Bourbonnais) in a one and one-half story National Gable-Front-and-Wing style frame house that was built by contractor Napoleon Houde for Antoine Lagesse in the late 1800s. I purchased the house in 1927 and later it was acquired by my son Willard whose family occupied the home until 1981. Our former home can still be viewed today. My family (both generations) was well known for our nearby bakery at 261-269 East Marsile Street. Who am I?

Mark your calendars for these BGHS 2023 events—*please note there will be no museum campus open house on Sunday November 5 due to Stratford Drive East road closure*

- Thursday November 2 at 3:30 pm—Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee meeting in the Village of Bourbonnais Administration Building;
- Wednesday November 15 from 5-8 pm—BGHS fundraiser at Culver’s in Bourbonnais;
- Sunday November 19 from 1-4 pm—open houses at Letourneau Home/Museum and log schoolhouse;
- Saturday December 2—*Les Artisans* Arts and Crafts Fair;
- Sunday December 3 from 1-4 pm—open house at Letourneau Home/Museum and log schoolhouse;
- Sunday December 17—Christmas Open House at the Letourneau Home/Museum and Log Schoolhouse from 1-4 pm.

Kudos to our volunteers

The BGHS thanks all our volunteers for their continuous service to the society: Laurel Soper for her updating of the BGHS website and Facebook postings; Daron Kinzinger for picking up our mail, chairing our Board of Directors, and organizing the Culver’s November 15 fundraiser; Christine Michels for her ongoing Corresponding Secretary work; Steve Monts for his ongoing treasurer work, and monitoring the soaker hose around the log schoolhouse new plantings; Gary Seiner and Mary Ann Lambert for their work as curator and assistant curator respectively; Mary Ann Lambert for taking photographs at the October 17th *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner; Ken Ponton for his oversight as executive vice-president and providing log school pieces for silent donation purchase at celebration dinner; Gary Seiner for chaperoning the log schoolhouse and Letourneau Home/Museum open houses in September and October; Judy Smead, Ellen and Steve Liehr for chaperoning the log school open house on October 17; and all those who donated to the log schoolhouse preservation fund through “in kind” and monetary donations.

Alert: volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed for log schoolhouse and Letourneau Home/Museum open houses on November 19, December 3, December 10, and sitting at the BGHS table during the *Les Artisans* Arts and Craft Fair on Saturday December 2 (two hour time slots from 9-11 am, 11am-1pm, and 1-3 pm). The volunteer sign up is easy. For the Letourneau Home/Museum, just go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAE2BABFCC43-chaperoning> or for the log schoolhouse, go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAE2BABFCC43-chaperoning2>.

Then go to the date you prefer and type in your name. For the BGHS table at the December 2 Les Artisans Arts and Craft Fair, go to [Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society: At BGHS Table, Meet and Greet Visitors to Les Artisans Arts and Craft Fair \(signupgenius.com\)](#).

French-Canadian Interview Project to be featured in podcasts

After my presentation (referred to above) in the October 19 online conference “Revisiting the History of Little Canadas in the US: Spatial Organization in the 19th and 20th Centuries” hosted by the University of Southern Maine, the university Archivist Anna Faherty informed me that “Here at the Franco-American Collection, we have a podcast called ‘Franco-American Pathways,’ for which we produce between 6-8 episodes per year. One of my board members was in attendance at your talk, and thought it would be a good idea to ask if you'd like to have the oral histories you discussed featured on the podcast! Here's our website so you can take a look around and see if that is something that would work for you: <https://francopathwayspod.wordpress.com/>.” Anna was referring to the *French-Canadian Interview Project* website hosted by Kankakee Community College. I replied in the affirmative and when I informed Kari Nugent at KCC, she responded, “the podcast invitation is so exciting.” She has requested that the KCC Information and Technology personnel “tune up” the website to fix any broken audio and video links so that in a couple of weeks the website will be ready for the podcast.

Thursday November 9 zoom meeting at 8 pm agenda

- 8pm—Pledge of allegiance;
- Presentation based on October/November/December 2023 news eletter item “What am I today?”
- Approval of September 7, 2023 membership minutes (*attached*);
- Treasurer’s report;
- Corresponding Secretary report;
- Executive Vice-President report;
- Curator report;
- Membership report;
- Ways and Means:
 - Remnant log pieces;
 - Culver’s fundraiser; and
 - Sign up for volunteering—open houses and December 2 craft show
- Building and Grounds:
 - Log schoolhouse landscaping;
 - Trees/shrubs along NW corner of museum campus;
 - Small repairs—Angi?
 - Fall clean up; and
 - Levi Lawson’s Eagle Scout garden structure plan;
- Old Business
 - Restructuring of BGHS update; and
 - Evening Zoom meetings for the Perry Farm Living History Advisory Committee;
- New Business
 - Next meeting ?
 - Nomination of officers for 2024;
 - Special BGHS 2023 dates: 11/15, 11/19, 12/2, 12/3, and 12/17; and
 - Chaperons needed for open houses of the Letourneau Home/Museum and log schoolhouse and craft show.

There will be no November/December news eletter—the next issue will be December 2023/January 2024, emailed at the end of December.

Have a wonderful holiday season. I invite you to join the BGHS Facebook public group page Bourbonnais History Dossier to learn more about our local and regional French history [Bourbonnais History Dossier | Facebook](#). Best wishes,
Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society