

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society Members and Friends,

2020 Annual Fund Drive for Restoration of First Log Schoolhouse Continues with Dinnerless Celebration!

**Help Rebuild Kankakee River Valley's First Log Schoolhouse (1837-48)
Bourbonnais, IL**

The Log Schoolhouse will be rebuilt on the Adrien M. Richard Heritage Preserve next to the Letourneau Home/Museum at 698 Stratford Drive East, Bourbonnais, IL.

Volunteers from Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society and the Steering Committee for the Restoration of the First Log Schoolhouse are raising the funds for this restoration.

History of Bourbonnais Grove's First Log Schoolhouse (1837—Present)

The Past

- Pioneer settler Thomas Durham (1784-1854) was elected Commissioner of Rock Village Precinct (WV County) in 1836 to a two year term.
- Durham, a Virginia Quaker had just purchased property at "Twin Oaks"—present-day Durham-Perry Farmstead on Perry Farm Park—in 1834.
- During Durham's tenure as Commissioner, the log school was built in 1837—a 1½ story 20' x 20' structure.
- Classes began after 1837—probably ten male students learning reading, writing, math, and geography.
- In 1848, the school closed when classes were moved closer to St. Leo's (later renamed Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) Parish, beginning an interesting relationship between the public school district and parish.
- After the first Methodist quarterly meeting held at the school house in January 1842 (John Sincier presiding), Bourbonnais Grove became part of the six-week Methodist circuit the following year.
- In 1848, French-Canadian village blacksmith Joseph Lesage purchased the school and lived in it, and a newly constructed home which was built next door to the north.
- Joseph's blacksmith shop was next to the former log school.
- Domihilde Lesage (1850-1926), Joseph's oldest daughter, married Canadian-born Charles Henry Byronston (1846-1912) on October 11, 1870.

Charles was a grocer and the family lived in the one room "log school" house—eventually, the family grew to ten children.

- By 1920, Alphonse "Mike" Marcotte purchased the home. For a couple of years, he lived there with his three brothers.
- Alphonse, a painter, married the widow Clara (Benoit) Cyler on September 21, 1922. They lived in the house with Clara's two daughters, Dorothy and Mesquaine. They soon had a daughter, Anna Maria (b. July 24, 1922).
- After 1959, new owner Richard Rivard (1926-69) who was a salesman, added a basement, kitchen, dining room, living room, and upstairs bedrooms.
- Rivard said, "the carpenters nearly gave up the ghost trying to saw through the logs. It took them one full day to cut through an archway to the kitchen".
- The home even served as a gas station for a while.
- From the 1970s to 1998, Ralph "Red" (1931-2011) and Mary Marcotte lived in the home.

The Present

- In 2010, the Village of Bourbonnais purchased the Marcotte Home (as it was known since the 1970s) at 493 South Main Street in Bourbonnais. Due to neglect, the home was demolished in December 2011.
- The log school was revealed during demolition (see below left and center).
- The logs are stored inside a Bourbonnais Township facility (see below right).
- On February 17, 2012, the Village of Bourbonnais began seeking money to pay for the reconstruction, restoration, landscaping, signage, and maintenance of the log schoolhouse.
- The schoolhouse will be rebuilt just west of the Letourneau Home/Museum.
- The first (November 3, 2017) and second annual (September 28, 2018) Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society Fleur-de-Lis Celebration Dinners raised over \$23,000 for the restoration.
- A community wide steering committee is overseeing the \$120,000 fund raising goal for restoration, landscaping, signage, and maintenance.

Due to the pandemic and restaurant restrictions, the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society (BGHS) decided July 2 to cancel the “dinner” part of the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner, Friday September 18 at the Kankakee Country Club. Even though the dinner celebration has been canceled, the BGHS will proceed with a “dinnerless” Log Schoolhouse restoration fundraising campaign, with suggested “dinnerless” donation of \$55/person (members) and \$65/per person (non-members).

French-Canadian cuisine highlights the annual *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner. The BGHS invites the local community to try one of the French-Canadian recipes at <https://frenchcanadians.kcc.edu/resources/recipes/recipes.html>) and/or submit a personal favorite French-Canadian recipe for a future BGHS French-Canadian recipe book. Over the past three years, \$48,000 has been raised in donations and pledges toward the restoration. The restoration fundraising goal is \$120,000. ***Our expanding list of donors is attached to this letter.*** Your donation for 2020 will be greatly appreciated and is fully tax deductible. Your gift will have community impact by restoring this historic structure—all gifts make a difference and are sincerely valued.

Your donation may be by check to “BGHS” with memo Log Schoolhouse, mailed to Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society, P.O. Box 311, Bourbonnais, IL 60914 or **pay online at <http://www.bourbonnaishistory.org/contribute.html>, scroll over to Log School Restoration Project, click Donate, and then follow the prompts.** Thank you so much for contributing to the preservation of our community’s historical heritage.

**Save the date: the next *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner is
Friday September 17, 2021!**

**Attachments to this e-mail:
Log Schoolhouse information brochure
Current Log Schoolhouse Donors List**

Pick Free Organic Herbs in Letourneau Back Yard



Which herb do you need for your dinner table: sage, oregano, cilantro, thyme, tarragon, chives, lemon balm, lavender, rosemary, basil, mint, fennel, or parsley? There is a whole crop of them in George and Elodie Letourneau's back yard (698 Stratford Drive East, Bourbonnais), just waiting for you to pick and enjoy. If you are unsure which herb is which, just look at the garden layout map on the information sign (on the right of the photograph below). No herbicides or pesticides have been used in growing the herbs. They are a free gift to the community from the BGHS members, volunteers, and master gardeners. Enjoy!

Come Join the Zoom Membership Meeting this Thursday July 2

The next Zoom BGHS membership meeting will be on Thursday July 2 at 7 pm. Please contact Laurel Soper at laurel.soper@gmail.com to inform her that you plan to attend. She will send you an e-mail link to join the meeting. The agenda highlights for the July 2 meeting are: approve June 4, 2020 minutes (attached), decide status of September 18 *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner, decide status of future open houses at the Letourneau Home/Museum, and decide about removal of dead linden tree. Please enjoy our nation's birthday this week, and stay safe. Best wishes,

Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society