

Dear Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society members and friends,

Messier Home Demolition Prompts Steps to Better Facilitate Historic Preservation



The New Year opened with a challenge to our mission of preserving French-Canadian heritage. I learned at our membership meeting on January 7 that the Herbert Messier House at 208 W. River Street in Bourbonnais was being demolished. The house (listed as number 10 on page 22 of the *Four Walking Tours of Historic Bourbonnais, Illinois* link [68cfaa40fd131fc5237b93f37260ff90 \(wsimg.com\)](https://www.wsimg.com/68cfaa40fd131fc5237b93f37260ff90) was built by Messier in the 1870s or 1880s and remodeled in the 1950s. Mr. Messier and his son Henry raised potatoes on the farm adjacent to the house. In an email to me, BGHS member Rich Piggush wrote, “I was surprised and, saddened, by the news. We grew up next to it at 194 W. River St. We always heard that part of it was a log cabin. And, that part of its extension was the relocated ‘summer kitchen’ from the Leon Rivard farm house.” Rich found many pieces of French-Canadian clay pipes in his family’s garden.

On January 8, I contacted BGHS member and Village of Bourbonnais Assistant Administrator Laurie Cyr. She was surprised about the demolition and said the order must have come from the code or building department. She said that she would immediately look into the situation and see if any of the original logs could be salvaged. Laurie later wrote to me in an email:

The new property owner and demolition company were aware of the potential presence of logs within the structure. The only logs were within the floor of the structure and unfortunately were infested with termites. The logs were falling apart in the attempts at removal. Except for one log. The one log has been saved and is stored with the others within the Village’s water tower [with the logs to be used in the log schoolhouse restoration]. I have forwarded the walking tour to the Building Commission (Paul Hafner). And the Administration Assistant for the building department is adding a ‘flag’ onto each of the properties within our new building department software indicating historic significance.

In my correspondence with Laurie, I volunteered to conduct a seminar with village officials about how to best understand and convey to homeowners the importance of preserving their historic structures. She will speak with the mayor about this opportunity of stressing the importance of historic preservation and let me know in the next few months when this opportunity is available.

Mon Porc Roti sur Farine de Mais—Bonne et Heureuse Annee



In a solo fashion, I celebrated the 2020 *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner on January 1 as the French-Canadians did, by greeting family and friends—albeit virtually—with “*Bonne et Heureuse Annee!*” (Good and Happy Year) and enjoying a culinary delight. Above is a photograph of my *porc rote sur farine de mais* (roast pork on polenta, aka corn meal mush. It was delicious!

Although we did not have an in-person 2020 *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner fundraiser to restore Bourbonnais Grove’s first log schoolhouse, the campaign continued and is currently at \$68,012.76 including pledges. Since we have not yet reached the fundraising goal of \$120,000, the BGHS welcomes more donations. 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 to Log School Restoration Project, click Donate, and then follow the prompts. You will be contributing to the preservation of our community’s historical heritage. **Save the date: the next *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner is scheduled for Friday September 17, 2021!**

Next Zoom Membership Meeting on February 4 to Have Extended Time

In order to extend our monthly Zoom membership meeting time, the BGHS now has a one year Zoom membership. I invite you to please join the Zoom membership meeting at **7:00 pm on Thursday February 4** by emailing Laurel Soper at laurel.soper@gmail.com. She will then email you a link to the meeting at 6:50 pm on February 4. You may socialize if you enter the meeting before 7 pm. The agenda for the meeting will include;

- Approval of the minutes of the January 7, 2021 meeting (attached);
- Treasurer’s Report;
- Approval of upgrading the BGHS website;
- Acknowledge payment of rent to village for 100 year lease;

- Approval of 2021 dues waiver;
- Approval of putting 3% processing fee check box on donation page;
- Approval of bylaw proposals made in the January 7 meeting (see in minutes attached);
and
- Other pertinent items.

Kudos for the Little Things that Keep Us Going

Big thank you's go to:

- Gary Seiner for putting away all the Christmas decorations at the Letourneau Home/Museum;
- Jeff Stevenson for refinishing the two hat racks for the home/museum;
- Laurel Soper for determining the BGHS needs for an upgraded website;
- Marcia Rabideau for drafting the proposed amendments to the bylaws; and
- Steve Monts for auditing the books after becoming treasurer.

I hope to see you at the February 4 meeting. Best wishes,

Jim Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society