

Going West with Paul and Ida Fortin: Part 2

by BGHS Laurel Soper

That first spring in Turton continued to test the Fortins. Paul was very ill with erysipelas and had been taken to Aberdeen by his brother Peter for treatment. Ida was left to deal with the farm and the feeding and care of their children. How would they manage to plant their first year's crop? Ida is sustained during those difficult first months on the plains of South Dakota by her sister- and brother-in-law's letters from Kankakee. In Ida's letter below, we see how much they mean to her.

April 1, 1911

"My dear Sister Maria, I received with joy your most welcome letter yesterday and your kind words of encouragement were greatly appreciated.

No doubt you were astonished at the tone of my former letters, for I did not exercise much thought or discretion in writing them but really, I feel so lonely, so completely alone here in this vast territory where for miles, as far as the eye can reach, there is not even a shrub to break the monotony. The strain seemed to be more than I could bear so I naturally turned toward my dearest friends for sympathy.

We all must have our reverses in life I suppose, and I think we have been getting our share full measure for some time past, but I shall not despair with Paul's recovery assured. I trust God will take pity on us and help me through this trying ordeal. If I could but see you a couple of hours alone I could unburden my heart and reveal to you much that would astonish you but there are pages in one's life which probably had better be left hermetically sealed so we shall let it rest. All I ask of you is do not speak of this to anyone.

The children all have been sick with sore throat and what I feared would be scarlet fever as they were covered with a rash a good deal like the fever but they are doing nicely now and I imagine they'll be all right in a few days.

Pete (Ida and Paul's 3-year-old son) was the first one to find fault with the place. After taking an inspection of the surroundings the day after our arrival, he came in the house and said "Moi je veu va à Manteno demain. C'est pas beau ici." (I want to go back to Manteno tomorrow. It's not nice here.) All day today he's been teasing me to go away. He wants to go and see Mary Louise and Vicky and wants to know why they don't come and play with him. (Mary Louise and Vicky were daughters of Louis and Maria Fortin. They were Pete's first cousins left behind in Illinois).

I'm going to send Alma and Eli to school Monday. The school being about three and a half acres from the house makes it very nice for them. You ask me Maria if I have had anyone to help me. No. I am still alone. I have managed to get along so far so will continue as long as I can possibly stand it. You see we are still in a very small house consisting of but three rooms, one large room upstairs 16x24 and two rooms downstairs. There is a summer kitchen but it can't be used at this time of year. So you can imagine how crowded we already are. That's one reason I didn't care to have help if I could possibly get along without. Of course, it is not our intention to stay here. We are to move to the other place as soon as Mr. Hansen vacates which will be sometime in June.

Peter (Paul's brother, who took him to Aberdeen for treatment) wrote me a long encouraging letter yesterday and he tells me he will fix up the house over there and make it as comfortable as any in Turton. Pete has been very good and kind to us and I must say that we have some very kind neighbors. They did all in their power to help us in every way. We certainly couldn't have located in a better neighborhood. They've all been trying their very best to keep me from getting lonesome but it's very hard for me to overcome that feeling somehow. It's all so vastly different. Could you see it, you would not wonder.

I'm anxious for real spring weather to set in. It's been so blustery and cold all this week and tonight it's snowing heavily. The boys (Tom and Orville, Ida's sons from her first marriage were 15 and 16 years old) have worked all week preparing the ground ready for seeding. They have 230 acres pulverized and dragged and still have 70 acres to plow for flax and what remains is for corn planting. They could have prepared more ground but they had to haul all their wheat for seeding and fan it besides hauling hay for feed. So it's kept them pretty busy.

How is Mrs. Philip Fortin? Getting better? Maria, you don't say a word about yourself. How are you? Not any worse I hope.

Please write often and let me know everything. Nothing pleases me more than a letter from you, so with kind regards to all the family and hoping to hear from you soon I remain,

Affectionately, your sister Ida

A note for Ida's brother-in-law Louis, sent in the same envelope as the longer letter to Maria.

Dear Brother Louis, I have just written to Maria but thought I would write you a few words also to thank you for your kind sympathy and words of encouragement which I have greatly appreciated and which have done me a world of good.

The future seems to look brighter for me now. Your words have certainly brought some very deep thought and I can't thank you enough.

I got news from Peter tonight that Paul is coming home Monday or Tuesday. Isn't that good? Paul's been improving fast since Thursday and although his mind is not completely recovered Peter thinks he'll be alright by Monday or Tuesday so I shall wait till he comes home to endorse that note and will send it back immediately. Am feeling much better now. I had tonsillitis so bad last week that both my tonsils broke. I felt very weak for a few days. That combined with other things made me feel very despondent but rest assured I'm not ready to give up the ghost yet. I shall now look forward to better days and hope they may not be too long coming. Write again, Louis. It gives me pleasure to read your letters.

Your loving sister, Ida

By the way, Louis, when you get tired of my writing do say so. I've been writing pretty regular since my arrival. I hope however, I've not been intruding. Writing seems to be my only diversion so kindly just cope with it if you possibly can.

Next: Paul's best laid plans

Sources: Turton, South Dakota Centennial History; 1886-1986, Richard Barrie, 1986. Descendants of Simon Fortin, genealogy narrative. Norma Meier, Aug. 24, 2015. Ida's letters are from the collection of Elizabeth Mimi Raiche, granddaughter of Louis Xavier Fortin.



Paul Fortin, (left), as a young man before he went to Turton, SD

Hang up on phony IRS scams

In response to a recent increase in consumer complaints, Attorney General Lisa Madigan alerted Illinois residents to a renewed phone scam in which callers pose as Internal Revenue Service (IRS) officials in an attempt to scare people into sending money to pay for allegedly unpaid taxes.

Madigan's office is seeing an increase in these complaints to her office from residents throughout the state, in particular from older people. Consumers report being contacted by scammers pretending to be IRS officials who leave threatening messages that include a number for consumers to call in order to avoid lawsuits or prosecution.

Scammers also "spoof" phone numbers, causing caller ID devices to display what appears to be a legitimate call from the IRS, with identifiers such as "IRS" or the 202 area code for Washington, D.C.

The scam artists claim they are representatives of the federal government collecting unpaid taxes and leave threatening messages or instruct their targets to make a payment to them through a prepaid debit card.

"It is critical to know that the IRS does not call and tell people they are under investigation or that they owe money," Madigan said. "If you receive a call like this, even if your caller ID shows what appears to be a legitimate name or number, hang up immediately."

Madigan encouraged consumers to report the call by contacting the IRS or the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) website (www.irs.gov/uac/Taxpayer-Guide-to-Identity-Theft) or by calling 1-800-366-4484. She also urged Illinois residents to report the scam to her consumer fraud bureau at 1-800-386-5438 or 1-866-310-8398 (Spanish) or by visiting her website. The Attorney General also provides a senior citizens consumer fraud hotline at 1-800-243-5377.

With tax season underway, Madigan said consumers should also be aware of an increasing number of reports of tax-related identity theft. Since 2013, tax

identity theft complaints to Madigan's office have risen dramatically by over 320 percent, from 138 complaints in 2013 to 582 complaints in 2015. Consumers reported that when they attempted to file their tax return, a return was already filed in their names using their social security number and a tax refund was issued. Other consumers reported that their dependents had already been claimed on another return.

Madigan said the number one step consumers can take to combat tax related identity theft is to file their returns as soon as possible. Madigan offered additional tips for consumers to avoid becoming the victim of tax-related identity theft:

The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers to request personal or financial information through any form of electronic communication, including email, text messages and social media channels; do not open or reply to any emails claiming to be from the IRS that contain a request for personal information; request a call back number and employee badge number from anyone claiming to be an IRS agent so that you may independently confirm the phone number and agent; report any suspicious IRS electronic correspondence to phishing@irs.gov; report any IRS telephone impersonation scams or suspicious IRS paper mail or fax correspondence to the TIGTA Hotline at 1-800-366-4484; and contact the IRS identity protection specialized unit at 1-800-908-4490 or visit www.irs.gov/uac/Taxpayer-Guide-to-Identity-Theft.

Consumers can also contact Madigan's identity theft hotline at 1-866-999-5630 for tax-related identity theft assistance. The hotline is staffed with identity theft experts who can assist with all forms of identity theft by helping victims report the crime to local law enforcement and financial institutions, work to repair their credit and prevent future theft. Hotline operators can also assist callers who want to take proactive steps to prevent their personal information from being stolen.

Volunteer of the Year

Photo courtesy of RVSRA Carol Golden (left) of Bourbonnais was presented the 2015 Volunteer of the Year award during River Valley Special Recreation Association's Valentine's dinner dance on Sunday, Feb. 14, 2016 at the Moose Lodge in Bradley. Golden has donated her



time over the years helping with Special Olympic events and River Valley's annual garage sale fundraiser. Golden was presented the award by Dorene Mohler RVSRA program coordinator.

The Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting local history.

Monthly meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month March to December. Museum hours are 1 to 4 p.m., first and third Sundays of each month, March to December or by appointment. Visit bourbonnaishistory.org, on Facebook at [facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory) or call 1-815-933-6452.