

Going West with Paul and Ida Fortin—Part 3

by BGHS member Laurel Soper

A letter from Paul Fortin's oldest brother, Celestin, to younger brother, Louis, reveals Paul's original intention to travel to Alberta, Canada, where Celestin had settled.

Langdon Alberta April 2nd 1911

My dear Brother and Sister

I have been thinking about writing to you for a long time but through neglect and occupation I have put off until today It is certainly a shame not to write to each other more often than we do as long as we have no other way to express ourselves I was certain to see Paul some times in Dec. or January for his wife wrote to us about the 15th of Dec. and said Paul was to have his sale the 27th day of Dec. and he was to come at once to see us and at the same time see the country But it was the last we ever heard of them

...last Thursday we got a letter from mother and she said that Paul was moved to Dakota and that he was very sick with an Erysipelas and that Peter was taking him at the Hospital at Aberdeen. it is in the bad time of the year to be sick Did Paul buy an improved farm how much did he pay and who bought the homestead and how much did he sell it for?

Whether Paul changed his mind or something prevented him from continuing on to Alberta, we may never know. Ida's letter to her sister-in-law Maria, Louis' wife, describes his return from the hospital after being treated for erysipelas, a bacterial infection.

May 7, 1911

My dear Sister Maria,

You have undoubtedly wondered at my long delay in answering your most welcome letter but since Paul's arrival from the Hospital I have been kept more than busy, as he required a great deal of care the first three weeks and with the Spring rush of farm work, I have had all I could do.

...Paul is improving slowly. There is still much inflammation in his head and the Hypodermic treatment given him at Aberdeen seems to have greatly weakened him. The physician says it would take a long time before he would regain his strength. He must not work and finds it pretty lonesome.

The country is beginning to look different now that the fields are all green, wheat and oats being about four inches long. It looks like a great big sea. We still have 30 acres of wheat to plant and 30 acres of flax seed to put in....Paul is anxious to hear from Louis about how he is getting along with his Spring work.

As it is nearing mid-night I shall have to close. I have had 34 visitors today and part of them left late but I thought I would write a few lines anyway. So with best wishes and much love to you all I remain,

Your loving sister, Ida

Tell Louis the next time he goes to Mr. Burton's to take a good drink of water for me. The water here is brackish and warm. I wish I could be a little bird for a few hours.

Time passes and the Fortins continue to struggle. Nearly three years later, in a letter to Louis, Paul laments his financial situation.

Feb. 21 1914

Dear Brother Louis

Its been so long since we heard from you folks and the same time a little interest the time here so long we dont know what to do this winter being that we had no crop here not a bushel of anything not even food for our stock we feed on 2 year old wheat straw and poor at that there is nothing to do every thing is dead I have been running a thrashing outfit last fall here at 7 dollars a day and I lost every thing that is my wages the company seized every thing he had so it left me without a cent to winter I never seen times as hard no one here ever seen it as hard either I sent a team and Tommy to North Dakota for Thrashing at 5 dollars a day it took him 2 weeks to make the trip very high he didnt make much Orville worked 4 months for Peter Thibeault and Peter died and he owed every Body and that money is in the hands of the Law and we are not paid yet so you see all of that helps us now. Orville worked at Tracy Minnesota he dont get much for the winter-feed is high here corn 64 oat 45 Hay \$10

I really don't know what to do for spring to put in my crop unless you would be Kind enough to lend 100. dollars until next October that would be 8 months I would pay you 8 per cent interest Louis and that would be a great help to me I heard you had sold your Farm for the sum of 16000 you certainly got the price I am glad of it have you sold in Canada I have not heard so Louis if you can help me on this please do so now to buy my feed a man cant get a cent here no where it dont matter what security hes got they have no money at present. its promising here for a better year for we are having lots of snow at present and it snows mostly every day-

I suppose you shall take a trip to Canada this summer same times if you do you want to stop here and see us so you can tell us which country is best. Peter Folks are all well but nothing to do so this is all the news I know of & wishing you all a fortune of Health and success were all well here.

from your Lonesome Brother write soon Paul

This is the first time we hear Paul's voice. It's hard not to compare his letter to those of his wife and brother. Perhaps he just was not a good writer, but the contrast is so obvious—could Paul's illness have affected his mental capacity? Before antibiotics, erysipelas was treated with hypodermic injections of mercury chloride and carbolic acid.

Here we must leave the Fortins, at least for a while, as other Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society member contributors will share other stories in the coming months.

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

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, [facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory) or call

1-815-933-6452.

Spikeball CEO will headline ACCELERATE



Photo courtesy of Kankakee County Economic Alliance
Kankakee native and Spikeball Inc. CEO Chris Ruder will be the keynote speaker during the ACCELERATE Small Business Conference and Expo to be held Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016 at Kankakee Community College's Riverfront Campus in Kankakee.

Spikeball, Inc. CEO and Kankakee native Chris Ruder will keynote the second annual ACCELERATE Small Business Conference and Expo, to be held Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016 at Kankakee Community College's Riverfront Campus in Kankakee.

A 2015 winner on ABC's Shark Tank, Ruder will speak at noon on corporate positioning with "Focused Growth: Thrive by Working Your Unique Market Niche".

A Bishop McNamara Catholic High School and Marquette University graduate, Ruder spent 12 years in the corporate world working for companies like Microsoft and Live Nation before launching the game Spikeball. The company has averaged more than 100 percent growth each year since 2008, landing at #139 on the Inc. 500 with more than one million players worldwide.

Based in Chicago, Spikeball has packaging and shipping operations in Bradley.

"I am flattered to be invited to speak at an event like this," said Ruder. "I have very fond memories of growing up in the Riverview neighborhood of Kankakee. It's an honor to be able to meet with like-minded individuals who have a strong interest in growing businesses. Add to the fact that it's a conference where I grew up, it just makes it that much more special."

Breakfast keynote speaker for the full-day ACCELERATE event, which attracted more than 100 small business owners and managers in its inaugural year in 2015, will be Summer Alexander addressing, "Developing Your Marketing Plan of Action". Alexander, a frequent speaker and best-selling author of "The Little Book of Big Marketing Ideas," has been featured on WGN-TV, WCIU-TV, Black Enterprise, Jet Magazine and Rolling Out.

Hosted by the Illinois Small Business Development Center at KCC, the Kankakee County Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County and Olivet Nazarene University's Catalyst Innovation Center, ACCELERATE 2016 will feature breakout sessions presented in development, management and sales and marketing.

Topics will include strategic planning, branding, business benchmarking, profit/loss and cash flow management, digital marketing and local small business programs and financial incentives. Vendor exhibits will feature local and regional products and services useful to small business owners. A chamber business after hours, open to all registered attendees, will conclude the day's events.

Complete program, exhibitor and registration details will be available in the coming weeks at kcc.edu/accelerate2016.

The Illinois Small Business Development Center at KCC provides technical and management assistance through one-on-one counseling and group training to potential business owners; provides comprehensive information services and access to experts in many fields; and develops and maintains partnerships among community organizations and local, state and federal agencies. For more information, visit kcc.edu/sbdc.

The Kankakee County Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit corporation comprised of local businesses and individuals. Its mission is to provide businesses with essential resources, training and networking opportunities to retain customers, increase revenue and strengthen their position within the community. For more information, visit kankakeecountychamber.com or call 1-815-351-9068.

The Economic Alliance of Kankakee County is a public-private partnership that works to create jobs and expand the economic base by improving the local business climate. For more information, visit kankakeecountyed.org or call 1-815-935-1177.

Catalyst Innovation Center is an initiative of ONU's Walker School of Engineering. Catalyst is a community-driven project that is working to develop incubation and business development services to start-up and growing companies locally.

The center will house client companies, engineering labs and other business and research entities and projects. For more information, contact Jesse Erickson, jaerickson@olivet.edu or call 1-815-936-3903.