

# A Story of French-Canadian Resilience

by BGHS member Laurel Soper

This month's Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society column is part of an April 21, 2002 interview with Ambrose Dyon, a participant in the French Canadian Interview Project at Kankakee Community College. From 2000 to 2006, students in Dr. James Paul's Western Civilization classes at KCC recorded oral histories of third and fourth generation French Canadians in Kankakee County.

Ambrose Dyon was born in St. Anne on March 11, 1910, the son of Clarence William and Edna Allain Dyon. Ambrose's mother died of pneumonia in 1918 during the Spanish influenza epidemic, leaving behind her husband, Clarence, and five children: Flora Belle, 12; Mabaleen, 10; Ambrose, almost 8; Lavern, 6; and Russell, 2.

In his interview, Ambrose speaks matter-of-factly about his early life.

"My mother died when I was seven years old and there was just five of us kids. I had two sisters and two brothers and my brother [Lavern] and I went to live out with my grandmother. My youngest brother [Russell]—my aunt adopted him in Indianapolis.

He [Russell] lived with them and we [Ambrose and Lavern] picked a lot of blackberries and raspberries and ran around in the woods here. We'd find berries and pick all day long for 20 cents a quart. I tell you it was rough picking but we made it. My grandparents had an income of about three hundred dollars a year. That ain't very much money. They had chickens and stuff; we lived off the land, really. They raised pickles [cucumbers] and sold them in Wichert. They had a pickle factory there. We lived with my grandparents for three or four years and then my dad moved to town. He stayed in town with my grandparents, because he traded the farm for his place in town.

"My brother and I lived alone out there on the farm when I was about twelve or something like that. He was about two years younger than I was. We got along real good. We roughed it, went to school, had to do our own cooking and my dad would come out about once or twice a week and bring us a couple of loaves of bread. We didn't have no refrigerator, so the bread would be moldy and everything else but we made it good.

"I remember one time we had a flood and we went to this ditch and my brother dove off into the water — two great big culverts was emptying into this crick and he dove in and he hit his stomach on the bottom. You could see his entrails. So we went home; it was about a two mile walk back to home. We pushed it together and put iodine on it and taped it up. Today they'd take you to the hospital but that was the good old days then. And that's it."

That wasn't exactly it. Ambrose lived to be 101 years old, was married to Cleva Hubert Dyon for 65 years and raised two children, William and Elizabeth. Learn more about the resilience of Ambrose Dyon and other French Canadian Interview Project participants at <http://frenchcanadians.kcc.edu>.

*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 through December.*

*Museum hours are 1 to 4 p.m. on the first and third Sundays of each month, March through December or by appointment.*

*Visit <http://bourbonnaishistory.org>, on Facebook at*

*[facebook.com/bourbonnaisgrove](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaisgrove) or call 1-815-933-6452*



Photos courtesy of BGHS

Ambrose Dyon, at age 19, stands by his new 1929 Ford Roadster. Newlyweds Ambrose and Cleva Hubert Dyon, are pictured shortly after their March 18, 1936 marriage. They were married for more than 65 years.

## Circus coming to St. Anne

The Culpepper and Merriweather Circus will come to St. Anne on Saturday, June 4, 2016 at the grade school playground, 100 S. Dixie Hwy. with performances at 2 and 4:30 p.m. Now in its 31st edition, C&M Circus has become internationally known for quality family entertainment.

Between 9 and 9:30 a.m. Saturday come watch the raising of the Big Top, then stay for a free tour.

Purchase tickets in advance at Barb Deneau's office, Joey's Restaurant, Dixie Delite, Antler Ridge and the Record Press, all in St. Anne. Prices for advance

tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors age 65 and older and children ages 2 to 12, children under 2 can enter for free. On show day, tickets will be \$13 for adults and \$8 for seniors/children.

For more information or to reserve discount tickets call 1-866-BIG-TOP6. Reservations will be available on show day but only by calling before 4 p.m.

For more information find them on FaceBook page or visit [www.cmcircus.com](http://www.cmcircus.com) and click on the FaceBook link. This circus is sponsored by the St. Anne Business Association Pumpkin Festival.

Photo courtesy of Kankakee County clerk's office

Miss Kankakee County Annika Strolle visited the Kankakee County clerk's office on Thursday, May 26, 2016 to encourage everyone to make sure they are registered to vote at their current address and to serve as election judges prior to the Nov. 8 general election. Kankakee County clerk Bruce Clark stated, "I wish Annika the very best in her quest to become Miss Illinois and thank her for her assistance in promoting participation in the electoral process. Democracy works best when everyone participates. Please make sure your voter registration is current prior to the general election. Please contact my office if you are interested in serving as an election judge. Training sessions will be held later this summer." Information regarding voter registration or serving as an election judge is available on the clerk's website, [www.kankakeecountyclerk.com](http://www.kankakeecountyclerk.com) or by calling 1-815-937-2990. The Kankakee County Clerk's office is located at 189 E. Court St. in Kankakee.

## Benson receives ISBA Pro Bono Service award

Prairie State Legal Services announced that two of its pro bono partners, attorney Roger Benson and the Drendel and Jansons Law Group, were the 2015-16 recipients of the Illinois State Bar Association's John C. McAndrews Pro Bono Service Award.

Kankakee attorney Roger Benson was this year's winner of the ISBA's McAndrews Pro Bono Service Award in the outstanding individual attorney category. Benson has been the backbone of Prairie State Legal Services' Kankakee County pro bono divorce clinic for more than 15 years. Through the clinic, Benson provides free representation to clients who need a divorce and cannot afford an attorney. He has handled more than 165 pro bono cases through the clinic, including 20 cases in 2015. He provides an invaluable service to clinic clients, who are often on a waiting list for months for Benson's help.

Benson was admitted to the State Bar of Illinois in 1958 and was a Kankakee County associate circuit court Judge from 1968-92. Benson was nominated for the award by Prairie State's Kankakee area pro bono coordinator Nancy Hinton.

The Batavia law firm of Drendel and Jansons was this year's winner of the ISBA's McAndrews Pro Bono Service Award in the outstanding small firm category. Drendel and Jansons handled 27 cases through Prairie State Legal Services' pro bono program in 2015. Its attorneys provided free

representation to low-income clients in cases ranging from contested divorces involving domestic violence, to Chapter 7 bankruptcies, to termination of a minor guardianship.

Benson and Drendel and Jansons will be recognized during the ISBA's assembly meeting on June 18 at the Westin O'Hare in Rosemont. The Illinois Bar Foundation will make a \$1,000 grant to Prairie State Legal Services in honor of Benson and of Drendel and Jansons.

The ISBA has established the John C. McAndrews Award to honor the extraordinary commitment of individuals, bar associations or law firm/corporate legal departments to providing free legal services to the income eligible in Illinois or expanding the availability of legal services to the income eligible in Illinois. The award is named in memory of Rock Island attorney John McAndrews, who chaired the ISBA committee on delivery of legal services and is awarded to individual lawyers, law firms and corporate law departments and bar associations.

Prairie State Legal Services provides free civil legal aid to people who cannot afford an attorney and who have a legal problem that affects their basic human needs. Prairie State serves 36 counties in northern and central Illinois outside of Cook County. Prairie State provides free legal help to clients through paid staff and more than 450 pro bono volunteers. For more information about Prairie State, visit [www.pslegal.org](http://www.pslegal.org).

Is your voter registration current?

