

Hidden History— The Placide Richard House

by Norma Meier

French Heritage Museum volunteer

The most historically significant structure in Bourbonnais Township is likely a house on Armour Rd., a house hundreds and hundreds of people pass by daily with no thought of its importance.

Not a large house, it is a house of French-Canadian architecture built before 1855 and as such it may be the oldest surviving structure in Kankakee County. It sits within sound of Interstate 57, just east of the overpass on Armour Rd.

As a house of typical French-Canadian architecture it may be the last house of this type in this area of Illinois or perhaps in the state.

The house displays a bellcast roof constructed with gently sloping or flared lines shaped like the flare of a bell. This roof line was generally used on the gable at the front of a house. Two other houses with this distinct feature existed in the area until the 1980s when they were razed—one built by Peter Spink near L'Erable and one was the house of Daniel Sheehan east of Irwin.

Don and Lesa Warthern purchased the house in 2001. It is located in the southwest corner of the east half of southeast quarter in Section 16, Bourbonnais Township. Various maps from 1800s through 1900s show the house almost on the line between west half and east half of the southeast quarter.

It is known that Noel LeVasseur sold the west half of this quarter for \$800 to Francois Marcotte on Sept. 27, 1855. Perhaps Francois Marcotte and Placide Richard were neighboring farmers in the southeast corner of Section 16. Did they both live in houses of French-Canadian architecture, and just one house survived, that of Placide Richard?

Kankakee County land records show LeVasseur bought up parcels of land in 18 different sections of Bourbonnais Township in the late 1840s and early 1850s, then resold the land to French-Canadian farmers who had just emigrated from Quebec Province.

Placide Richard, born 1809 in Cap St. Ignace, Province Quebec, arrived in Bourbonnais before 1851. He purchased land near the village of Bourbonnais. His will, dated Aug. 14, 1886, tells, "I give and devise to my son Noel Richard, his heirs and assigns forever the East half of the South East Quarter of Section 16, in Township 31...80 acres more or less in county of Kankakee."

Richard's grandson Frederic was born 1876 in the house located in the east half of southeast quarter. As the years went by his grandson, Zephirn Richard, and his wife, Laura Rivard, lived in the house until their deaths about 1970. Later the house was struck by fire, then restored. The basement timbers show signs of that fire. The house sits on timber of unpeeled logs.

The Wartherns loved the house from the beginning of their ownership. Unaware of its historical importance, they treasured the property and cared for it. They sense friendly spirits in the house and at times, in the middle of the night, they hear footsteps across the floor, or feel the weight of someone coming to sit on the side of the bed, friendly spirits who still love this house and are grateful it is cared for.



A historically significant structure in Bourbonnais Township is a house on Armour Rd., a house of French-Canadian architecture built before 1855.

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 1-4 p.m. first and third Sundays of each month, March to December or by appointment. Visit bourbonnaishistory.org, [facebook.com/bourbonnaisgrove](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaisgrove) or phone 1-815-933-6452.

Olivet public relations program earns national recognition

Five students and one faculty member from Olivet Nazarene University (ONU) attended the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) International Conference and concurrent student conference Oct. 6-10, 2017 in Boston, MA.

During the gathering of more than 2,000 professionals and students, the Olivet delegation represented Kankakee County through a conference presentation, leadership training and voting on behalf of the Chicago Suburban PRSA chapter. Olivet public relations students were also awarded first-place and an honorable mention in an international competition.

Olivet's public relations and strategic communication program was established in August of 2015. As of October, 2017, the program has more than 35 declared majors, a chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and a student-run strategic communication agency, Inspired Strategies Agency (ISA).

NODAC award

Although the public relations and strategic communication program at Olivet is only two years old, it is making its presence known among schools from across the country by being awarded first place and honorable mention in PRSSA's National Organ Donor Awareness Competition (NODAC) hosted by Rowan University. Each year, public relations students from across the country are invited to form teams and compete in the NODAC competition to raise awareness for organ donation in a 24-hour awareness campaign.

"It was an honor to accept the first-place and honorable mention awards on behalf of Olivet," said Baylee Harrison, junior PRSC major. "The campaign took a lot of planning and diligent work, but paid off when

we made a measurable impact on educating Olivet students and Kankakee County residents about organ donation. We were excited when PRSSA National and Rowan University recognized our campaigns on the national stage."

The NODAC completion finalists were announced at the PRSSA national conference. The campaigns were implemented during a public relations capstone class during April, 2017. The two teams from Olivet that received national recognition were NODAC first place national winner for their campaign Recycle Life with members Helen Berdebes, junior, Bourbonnais; Sarai Guerrero, junior, Rockford; Baylee Harrison, junior, Momence; Julie Hogan, senior, Pontiac; and Danielle Snuckel, junior, Monee. NODAC national honorable mention for their campaign Share Life K3 was presented to Ailis Bull, junior, Watseka; Steven Case, senior, Marysville, OH; Hayden Keifer, senior, Grand Rapids, MI; Lindsay Hentschel, senior, Plainfield; and Brooke Fraley, graduated 2017, Redkey, IN.

Olivet faculty professional representation and national speaker:

Elizabeth Kerns, assistant professor of communication and public relations at Olivet, served as the Suburban Chicago PRSA chapter representative at the 2017 PRSA Leadership Rally and as the Suburban Chicago and Central Illinois chapter delegate at the 2017 PRSA Assembly.

The Leadership Rally is an important orientation, leadership and networking event designed to help prepare PRSA leaders for 2017 and beyond. The PRSA Leadership Assembly is responsible for identifying, discussing and addressing issues of concern to the public relations profession and for serving as a liaison between the PRSA board and its chapters, districts, sections and membership. It is comprised of

delegates elected by their peers.

In addition to serving as a delegate and representative of the region, Kerns presented a breakout session titled "Slaying the Measurement Monster: Eliminating I-Hate-Numbers From PR" at the PRSA International Conference. Co-presenters during this session included Debra Bethard-Caplick, APR, principal of Quicksilver Edge Strategic Communications and Chris Orris, account executive at Oxygen PR.

Jessie Kilbride, Olivet's PRSSA chapter president and Kate Cox, ISA student agency director presented miniature case studies of how they use measurement with Kankakee County community clients at Olivet.

Additional Olivet student speaker at national conference:

Student leaders from the PRSC not only attended and spoke at the PRSA International Conference, but also at the Pleiades National Planetarium Conference in St. Louis, MO. Katy Maurer, ISA's account executive for the Strickler Planetarium, had the opportunity to use her PR passion as she attended and presented at the Pleiades conference. Maurer and Emily Rull, seniors at Olivet, were panel leaders and discussed the challenges and opportunities of planetariums on college campuses.

"This conference was a great opportunity to meet people in the planetarium field. I was able to learn how to bring my passion for English and public relations together professionally," Maurer said. "The panel was a perfect opportunity to brag a little about the Strickler Planetarium and Kankakee County. We provided a student's perspective about the unique partnership between the Planetarium and Inspired Strategies Agency."

Learn more about Inspired Strategies Agency at Olivet at <https://www.inspiredstrategiesagency.com>.

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