

The Village of Bourbonnais, French Heritage Corridor, and
the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society
Present

Hooray Bourbonnais II / *Deux*

An Interactive Engagement with Bourbonnais History from the 1600s to the Present
Commemorating the Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary)
of the Village of Bourbonnais

Saturday September 27, 2025
6-9 pm on the Lawn of the Main Stage at The Grove,
Bourbonnais, IL—Free Admission, Bring Your Lawn Chair



OUR HISTORY STARTS HERE!

This production is dedicated to Mary Ann Kirsch (1936-2025), who produced and chaired the original “Hooray Bourbonnais” history pageant (during the 1975 Centennial of the Village of Bourbonnais), and to the performers in that pageant.



Mary Ann Kirsch (at right) with her sister Celeste Regnier, greeted visitors to the June 17, 2011, Kankakee Cultivator's Garden Walk at the Letourneau Home/Museum.

“Hooray Bourbonnais II/Deux” will be performed by members of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society, Village of Bourbonnais, and Guests. Dr. James F. Paul is the writer, director, and narrator of this production.

Introduction and Intermission Music: *French Toast* by Beat Mekanik

Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society Officers:

Gary Seiner, Vice-President and Curator
Treasurer: Dr. Steve Monts
Corresponding Secretary: Doris O'Connor

Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society

Board of Directors:

Daron Kinzinger (Chair)
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Mary Ann Lambert
Ken Lewellen
Ken Ponton
Josué Savoie
Gary Seiner
Malette Trudeau-Stevenson

<https://bourbonnaishistory.org/>

Bourbonnais Village Board:

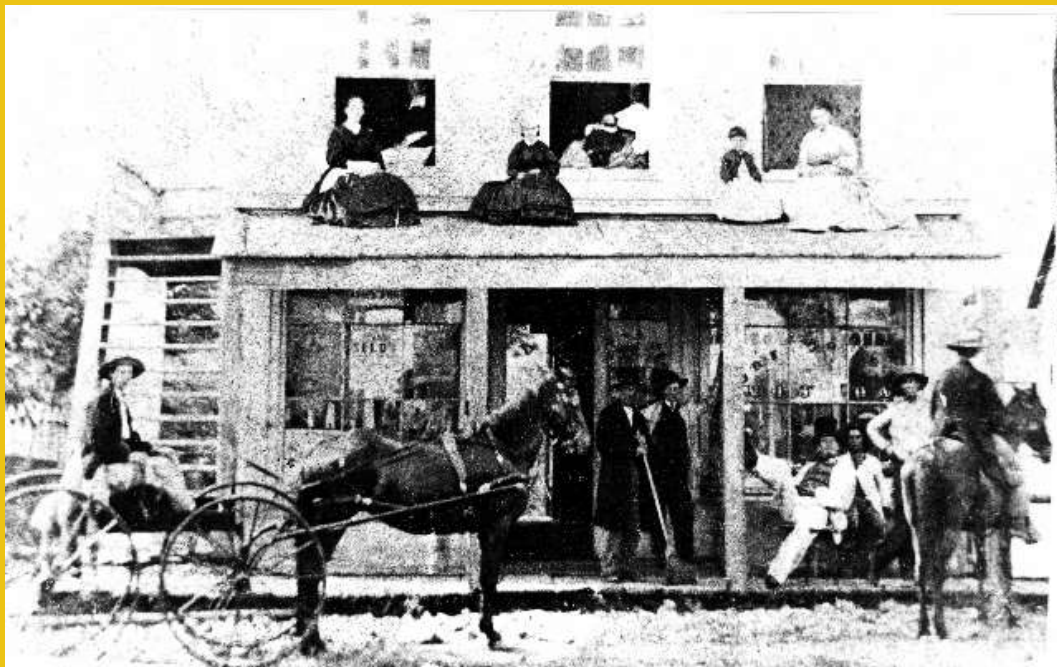
Mayor Jeff Keast
Village Clerk Chad Meents
Trustee Bruce Greenlee
Trustee Rick Fischer
Trustee Randy King
Trustee Jack Littrell, Jr.
Trustee Angie Serafini
Trustee Craig Toepfer
Administrator Mike Van Mill
Marketing and Community Relations
Director Lindy Casey

<https://www.villageofbourbonnais.com/>

A Note from the Director and Narrator

Welcome to the Village of Bourbonnais and Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society production of “Hooray Bourbonnais II/*Deux*”. The history of Bourbonnais began 40 years before it was incorporated in 1875. In 1835, the pioneer settlement was called Bourbonnais Grove. As we celebrate the Village of Bourbonnais’s Sesquicentennial, this history pageant will not only review the facts of our local history from the 1600s to the present, but also take you beyond those facts to the intense life-changing decisions made by individuals who lived in Bourbonnais Grove, and later, Bourbonnais. Can all this be done in a fun and meaningful way? Well, I hope this production will do just that with the presentation of slides, videos, audience participation with singing, questions & answers (by using the village website on smart phones), historical portrayals, debates with rebuttals, and our past and present mayors’ participation. So, as you accompany me through our history during this program, singing and laughing--but also pondering the emotional, gut wrenching, and life-changing decisions made by individuals who lived in the Kankakee River Valley--my hope is that you remember, and help us teach, the rich French, Native American, and French-Canadian presence that reveals the truth of *Our History Starts Here*.

Dr. James Paul, Director and Narrator



According to Vic Johnson in *Images of America: Bourbonnais*, this is one “. . . of the earliest known photographs (around the 1860s or early 1870s) taken in Bourbonnais Grove. The Perrault family owned the store [on East Marsile Street]. . . The proprietor’s name was Louis Perrault. His wife was Nathalie Lecuyer. Perrault died in February 1872. By the late 1890s, Harvey J. Legris owned the store building. It housed a bakery and candy store operated by Alfred H. Senesac. George Arseneau took over the bakery in 1905 [until the 1920s]. Senesac continued as proprietor of the candy store for a while. He later became the village funeral director.” (41) Malette Trudeau-Stevenson’s research indicated that Alfred Senesac’s father, Preston, was the original owner of the bakery.

ACT I

Prologue: The Grove and the *Fleur-de-Lis*--Narrator, Audience

Land Acknowledgment: (a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of the land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their territories)--former Bourbonnais Mayor Paul Schore

1600s--*Les Français Arrivent, s'allient aux Indiens*--Narrator, Audience

Flags over the Kankakee River Valley from 1600s to 1836--Narrator, Audience

Potawatomi Reaction to Indian Removal Acts of 1830s--Dr. George Godfrey, Audience

Voyageur Songs--Noel LeVasseur, Dr. Charles Balesi, Julia Mullikin, Audience

Legacy of Noel LeVasseur--James Paul, Rodney Miller, Audience

Arrival of Quaker Abolitionists Thomas and Margaret Durham--Thomas Durham, Audience

Reasons for Durham Family Moving West--Thomas Durham, Audience

The Republican Party's Appeal to Bourbonnais Grove Pioneer Settlers--Narrator, Audience

Bourbonnais Grove: A Station on the Underground Railroad?--Narrator, Audience

George Letourneau and the Flavian Nadeau Incident--George Letourneau

The Impact of Fr. Charles Chiniquy--Narrator, Audience

Intermission (15 minutes)

ACT II

Debate: Was Fr. Chiniquy's Excommunication Justified?--Josué Savoie and Ken Lewellen

Incorporate or Not To Incorporate--That is the Question--Narrator, Audience

Three Cornerstones of the New Village--Narrator, Audience

Twentieth Century Transitions--Narrator, Audience

A Student's Experience at Notre Dame Convent/Academy (1953-56)--Mike Monahan,
Audience

Growing Up in Bourbonnais--Marcia Rabideau, Audience

1980s Controversy about Perry Farm--Ellen Stringer, Audience

Bourbonnais's Historical Landmarks--Narrator, Audience

Today's Preservation of the Village's French-Canadian Heritage--Mayor Jeff Keast

Merci beaucoup--Frank Koehler

Finalé--Starlight Dance Academy performs its award winning "Fun in the Sun"
and Bishop MacNamara Schools perform

Stage Sound--Natalie Norman

Production Staff--Village of Bourbonnais and Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society

Special thanks to Frank Koehler for organizing the French Heritage Celebration Day

Support from **French Heritage Corridor** <https://frenchheritagecorridor.org/>



Kankakee County Historical Society/French Heritage Museum

<https://www.kankakeecountymuseum.com/french-heritage-museum>

Perry Farm Living History Advisory Committee Members:

Jorie Walters (Chair)

Mack Brza

Daron Kinzinger

Ken Lewellen

Max Michels

Rod Miller

Doris O'Connor

James Paul

Perry Farm Park History <https://www.btpd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/park-history.pdf>

French-Canadian Interview Project <https://frenchcanadians.kcc.edu/>

A Weekend Tour in Illinois's French-Canadian Heritage Corridor

<https://www.visitkankakeecounty.com/blog/weekend-tour-of-french-canadian-heritage-corridor>

The videographer of “Hooray Bourbonnais II/Deux” is Arseneau Media Productions, Inc. The video program link will be added to the Village of Bourbonnais and Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society websites.