

DONATE

to the
1837 Log School
Restoration Project in
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Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society
with memo "Log School House
Restoration"

Mail to:

Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society
P.O. Box 311
Bourbonnais, IL 60914

Thank You!

**Log School Restoration
Donation Levels:**

Platinum Star
(\$5000 or over)

Gold Star
(\$1000-\$4999)

Silver Star
(\$300-\$999)

Bronze Star
(to \$299)

All donors' names will be
publicized during restoration
and following project
completion.

**1837 Log School
Restoration
Project**

*Educating the
Future,
by Restoring the
Past*



History of Bourbonnais Grove's First Log Schoolhouse (1837—Present)

The Past

- Pioneer settler Thomas Durham (1784-1854) was elected Commissioner of Rock Village Precinct (Will County) in 1836 to a two year term.
- Durham, a Virginia Quaker, had just purchased property at "Twin Oaks"—present-day Durham-Perry Farmstead on Perry Farm Park—in 1834.
- During Durham's tenure as Commissioner, the log school was built in 1837—a 1½ story 20' x 20' structure.
- Classes began after 1837—probably ten male students learning reading, writing, math, and geography.
- In 1848, the school closed when classes were moved closer to St. Leo's (later renamed Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) Parish, beginning an interesting relationship between the public school district and parish.
- After the first Methodist quarterly meeting held at the school house in January 1842 (John Sinclair presiding), Bourbonnais Grove became part of the six-week Methodist circuit the following year.
- In 1848, French-Canadian village blacksmith Joseph Lesage purchased the school and lived in it, and a newly constructed home which was built next door to the north.
- Joseph's blacksmith shop was next to the former log school.
- Domithilde Lesage (1850-1928), Joseph's oldest daughter, married Canadian-born Charles Henry Byron/Biron (1846-1912) on October 11, 1870.

- Charles was a grocer and the family lived in the one room "log school" house—eventually, the family grew to ten children.
- By 1920, Alphone "Mike" Marcotte purchased the home. For a couple of years, he lived there with his three brothers.
- Alphonse, a painter, married the widow Clara (Benoit) Cyrier on September 21, 1922. They lived in the house with Clara's two daughters, Dorothy and Marguerite. They soon had a daughter Anna Maria (b. July 24, 1922).
- After 1959, new owner Richard Rivard (1926-69) who was a salesman, added a basement, kitchen, dining room, living room, and upstairs bedrooms.
- Rivard said, "the carpenters nearly gave up the ghost trying to saw through the logs. It took them one full day to cut through an archway to the kitchen".
- The home even served as a gas station for a while.
- From the 1970s to 1998, Ralph "Red" (1931-2011) and Mary Marcotte lived in the home.



The Present

- In 2010, the Village of Bourbonnais purchased the Marcotte Home (as it was known since the 1970s) at 493 South Main Street in Bourbonnais.
- Due to disrepair, the home was demolished in December 2011.
- The log school—was revealed during demolition.
- The logs are stored inside a Bourbonnais Township facility.
- On February 17, 2012, the Village of Bourbonnais began seeking money to pay for the reconstruction, restoration, landscaping, signage, and maintenance of the log schoolhouse.
- The schoolhouse will be rebuilt just west of the Letourneau Home/Museum.
- The first (November 3, 2017) and second annual (September 28, 2018) Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society Fleur-de-Lis Celebration Dinners raised over \$23,000 for the restoration.
- A community wide steering committee is overseeing the \$120,000 fund raising goal for restoration, landscaping, signage, and maintenance.

Help Rebuild Kankakee River Valley's First Log Schoolhouse (1837-48)

To Be Located West of Letourneau Home/Museum in Bourbonnais

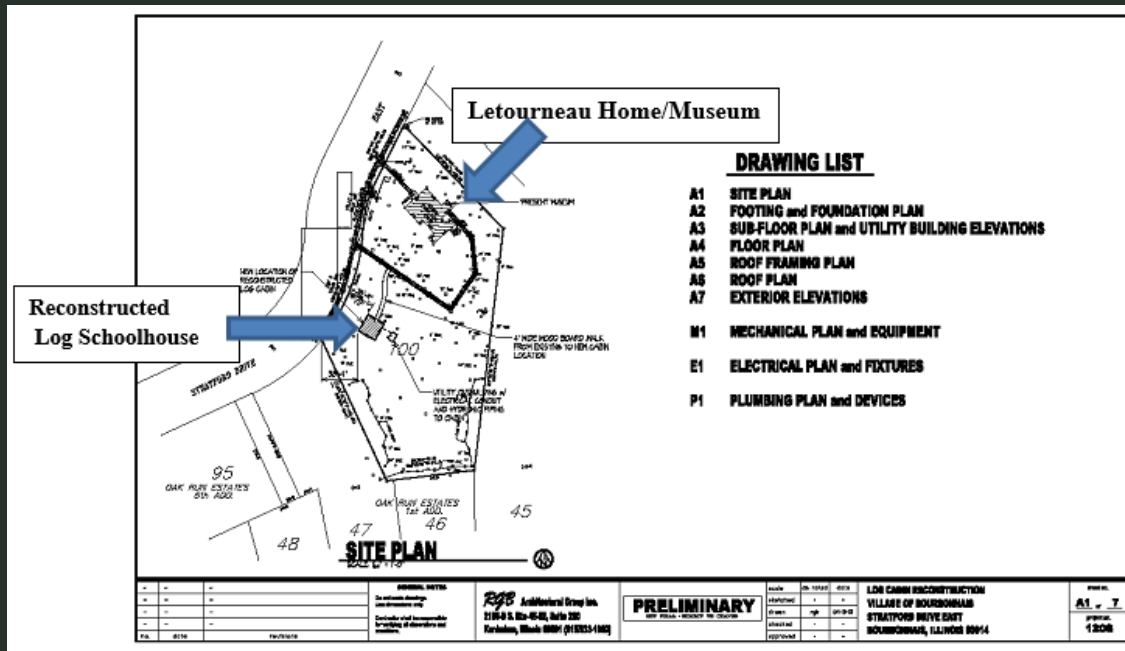
Objective: Contributions of any amount can help to rebuild Kankakee River Valley's first log schoolhouse which dates back to 1837. This area's first one-room log schoolhouse was located at 493 S. Main Street, Bourbonnais (known until 1875 as Bourbonnais Grove), just north of the Durham-Perry Farmstead at Perry Farm Park. The schoolhouse may have looked like the one to the right—which is the William H. McGuffey 1830s log schoolhouse located in Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan. The original log schoolhouse and part of the house built around it, recently known as the Marcotte House. It was demolished in 2011 but the original logs were removed and stored.



The Future: The log schoolhouse will be rebuilt on the Adrien M. Richard Heritage Preserve just west of the Letourneau Home/Museum at 698 Stratford Drive East, Bourbonnais which is seen at right. The site for the rebuilt log schoolhouse is below. There are many connections between the Letourneau family and the French-Canadian residents who lived in the schoolhouse after it became a home. Once rebuilt, the schoolhouse, along with signs, furniture, displays, and artifacts, will become an historic landmark in which community residents can learn what a school day was like in the 1830s and 40s, as well as, the history of the home up to 2011.



Location: On Stratford Drive East, West of Main Street NW in Bourbonnais



The Present: Volunteers from Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society and the Steering Committee for the Restoration of the First Log Schoolhouse (representing the Village of Bourbonnais and multiple organizations in the Kankakee River Valley) have already raised over \$44,000 of the \$120,000 fund raising goal.

Why will it cost \$120,000 to rebuild the log schoolhouse?

The contractor's estimate to rebuild the log schoolhouse is \$86,350. This price includes:

- Using the original logs (about 60% recovered)
- New logs
- Climate control
- The boardwalk extension from the Letourneau Home/Museum to the rebuilt log schoolhouse
- Landscaping around the schoolhouse
- The remaining miscellaneous signage, furniture, and maintenance fund

Can volunteer labor be used to rebuild the schoolhouse?

Volunteer labor may be possible in the non-technical aspects of the reconstruction of the log schoolhouse. However, the log work involves highly specialized material and construction. The work will involve historical and new timbers in varying size and shape. Volunteers will be needed in landscape maintenance and other areas.

Why does our community need to restore another one-room schoolhouse?

The log schoolhouse was built in 1837, the same year as the George Letourneau Home, Noel LeVasseur's Early Classical Revival brick home (demolished in 1885), and three years before Thomas Durham's farmhouse (1840).

It is one of the oldest structures in northeastern Illinois and predates other locally restored frame one-room schools—e.g., the Little Red Schoolhouse (1853) in Momence and the Taylor School (1904) in Kankakee.



What is the primary fund raising event for the log schoolhouse?

Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society's Fleur-de-Lis Celebration Dinner with French-Canadian cuisine at the Kankakee Country Club. The dinner honors someone who has contributed to French-Canadian heritage with an award of excellence. In the three years of fund raising with the celebration dinner as a focal point, over \$44,000 has been raised in donations and pledges to-date.

How is the fund raising money controlled?

The Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society holds all schoolhouse restoration funds raised in a separate account. All donors—unless anonymity preferred—will be on a list with platinum, gold, silver, and bronze star status.

Can the restored log schoolhouse become an historical landmark?

Yes, as long as the log schoolhouse appears as it did in 1837. The schoolhouse could become a Village of Bourbonnais and Kankakee County historic landmark. On November 4, 1985, the Village of Bourbonnais Board of Trustees enacted the Bourbonnais Village Historic Preservation Ordinance. After construction is completed, the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society will request the Village of Bourbonnais to consider the log schoolhouse as an historic landmark. Next, Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society will then ask Kankakee County seek an intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Bourbonnais to approve the log schoolhouse as a county wide historic landmark.