

Adventure while working for LeVasseur

As part of an interview about her French Canadian roots, Mimi Elizabeth Raiche relates an adventure that her great-grandfather, Alexis Bergeron, Sr., had while working for Bourbonnais founder Noel LeVasseur.

"My French Canadian ancestors came to this area from 1840-51. So we might as well start with the first to arrive, which would be Alexis Bergeron, Sr. who was born in 1827 in Missisquoi County of Quebec, Canada and came here with his uncle as a very young boy. By 1840, he was already employed by LeVasseur, who was the founder of Bourbonnais. Bergeron, Sr. would be my great-grandfather and he was employed as a courier and also a groomsman for LeVasseur's horses.



Monsieur Alexis Bergeron, Sr.

There was a very interesting story about my great-grandfather that came down by word of mouth through the family. At one point I'm sure that my great-grandfather was interviewed by the local historian Burt Burroughs, who actually reported it and entered it into written history. And basically this story tells about one of the trips that my great-grandfather made for LeVasseur when he was working as a courier.

Grandfather would take wagon loads of oats along the Old Hubbard Trail to Chicago to sell at the market and would come back with loads of lumber and supplies for LeVasseur's general store. On one of these trips, Grandpa was coming back with a load of lumber and night time was drawing near. It took several days to make these trips two ways and so a person really had to sleep over for several nights along the trail. But that wasn't really a very safe or easy thing to do.

This particular night, grandfather tethered the oxen close to the wagon, and as it got darker and darker, he heard this most ominous horrible sound of the wolves howling. They had noticed that there were oxen around so they were very interested. And the circle of wolves kept getting narrower and narrower, closer to the wagon, the howling louder and louder.

Little grandfather, very much concerned, a boy about 13 years old at that time, did what he knew best to do. He took some of the lumber off the wagon and started a fire to scare the wolves away. That worked, so grandfather was able to get a little bit of sleep, but careful sleep, with just one eye open.

As daylight came, grandfather was aware of a very stinging feeling just over the instep of his left foot and he heard an ominous rattling sound. He knew he'd been bit by a prairie rattler. So he did again what he knew best to do, a very resourceful young man. He took off his belt, tied it tight around his ankle and squeezed the area where he'd been bitten very, very tightly.

He was very lucky to see a group of Potawatomi Indian braves off at a distance on the trail and he called over to them and made them realize he'd been bitten by a rattlesnake and that he definitely needed their help. Well, once again — luck. One of the Indian braves had just shot a prairie chicken so he cut that chicken open with his knife, vertically down the belly, and put the chicken on grandfather's foot. The hot blood was like a poultice that drew out the poison and grandfather went hobbling into Bourbonnais with his foot in a chicken.

And when LeVasseur saw him, he poured a lot of whiskey down his young throat and put him to bed for two weeks. But grandfather in his old age said that his left leg was always swollen bigger than his right and there were times when his foot would get very, very itchy and the place where the fang marks were would turn very dark purple.

Our early settlers were very, very rugged, doing things we would never think about doing today."

Miss Raiche was interviewed in 2002 as part of Kankakee Community College's French Canadian Interview Project, by Dr. James Paul's history students. Anyone wanting to listen to her account or explore more local oral histories from the descendants of the area's French Canadian settlers, can visit the project's website, 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 bourbonnaishistory.org, on Facebook at [facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory) or call 1-815-933-6452.

CAC offers April events

The Community Arts Council's Arts Center, located in Northfield Square Mall, has become a gathering place where local artists can exhibit and sell their work. Art classes of all types are offered for those in the community who want to enrich their lives through creating art. Classes in piano and guitar also are available. The Arts Center is open Tuesday and Thursday through Sunday.

Coming events include:

Piano with Patrick Noland, who plays the piano and/or the guitar at the Arts Center, is held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Fridays. The musician recently released a new CD with original compositions made especially for CAC. Each Friday in April, Noland will give a free CD to anyone who makes a purchase at the Arts Center while he performs. Noland offers piano and guitar group or individual lessons. Call 1-815-422-5091.

Art Therapy Workshops for People with Autism will be held Saturdays, April 11, 18 and May 2 at the Arts Center. Classes will be for ages 7 to 13 years, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.; ages 13 years and older, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.; and ages 8 to 12 with sensory needs, 2 to 3 p.m. Participants will paint one masterpiece during the three weeks. Art Buddies will be available. Register by April 7. Fee is \$15. Go to "classes offered" after clicking Arts Center on CAC's website, <http://www.communityartscouncil.org>, or call 1-815-933-2787.

Like Manga and Anime? Join the American Mangaka group, which includes people of all ages and skill levels, from 5 to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, April 4 and 18 at the CAC Arts Center. Call Amber Robinson at 1-815-549-0973 for more information. Fee is \$4 per month, per person.

Coffee and card-making is

held from 10 a.m. to noon on the third Tuesday of the month. Call Pam at 1-815-933-1802.

Greta Taylor will teach a watercolor class from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, April 25 at the Arts Center. She will pre-draw a summer scene. Bring materials and she will help participants create a work of art to take home and hang. Call 1-219-863-7033 to make reservations.

Artist Jessica Kronika will teach art classes on Tuesdays through April 21. Pastel landscape for adults will be from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. The children's drop-in classes for ages 5 to 9 will be from 4:15 to 5:15 p.m. and children age 10 and older will be from 5:30 to 7 p.m. A variety of materials for drawing, painting and sculpture will be used. Supplies will be provided.

Call 1-847-722-7032 or email artist@flyngypsyarts.com to sign up.

What's happening at FEED?

Feed Arts Center, 259 S. Schuyler Ave., Kankakee, will host several events this April, 2015.

The Homeschool Art Show exhibit will run Monday through Saturday, April 6-11. A special reception will be held April 11 at 6 p.m.

On Thursday, April 9 at 7 p.m., League of American Bicyclists instructor Deb Renville will help the community get ready for National Bike Month in May. Renville will discuss how to choose a bike, options for bike apparel and equipment and basic rules of the road.

An Open Book evening of stories and poetry will be held

Tuesday, April 14 at 7 p.m. Come and listen or try out a new poem or short story in front of an audience. Open Book is a great way to meet other writers and find out about the local writing community.

On Friday, April 10 at 7 p.m., enjoy a film screening of Slam, a 1998 independent film starring Saul Williams and Sonja Sohn that tells the story of a young African-American man whose talent for poetry is held back by his past mistakes and the Washington, D.C. criminal justice system.

The One To Grow On exhibition will open with a reception on Friday, April 17 at 7 p.m.

Celebrate the one-year anniversary of Feed with art, music, food and a silent art auction. The exhibit will run through Saturday, May 2.

Those who have any photos taken at Feed this year can send them to feedartscenter@gmail.com to be included in an anniversary photo booklet.

For more information, visit feedarts.org. Feed Arts Center's mission is to encourage and nurture emerging and established artists and to increase the appreciation and understanding of the arts through classes, workshops, exhibitions, performances, film screenings and other cultural events.

— Cloonen tours Crown Cork and Seal —

Continuing her efforts to meet and collaborate with the local business community, State Representative Kate Cloonen recently visited Crown Cork and Seal Company in Bradley to tour the facility and discuss the business climate in Illinois. "Meeting with employers like Crown Cork and Seal helps me better understand how we can help businesses in all industries," Cloonen said. "I am focused



on supporting policies that lead to good jobs and a strong economy here in our communities." State Rep. Cloonen spoke with Crown Cork and Seal manager Darin Clark (above) during the tour. The 79th District includes all or portions of Aroma Park, Beecher, Bonfield, Bourbonnais, Braceville, Bradley, Buckingham, Cabery, Chebanse, Coal City, Diamond, East Brooklyn, Essex, Gardner, Herscher, Hopkins Park, Irwin, Kankakee, Limestone, Momence, Peotone, Reddick, South Wilmington, St. Anne, Sun River Terrace and Union Hill.

Photo courtesy of State Rep. Cloonen's office

Get your **DINING** and **ENTERTAINMENT** story in
The Herald/Country Market. E-mail news@bbherald.com