

Those Old-Time Winters

Excerpt from "Tales of Another Day" by Adrien Richard

Adrien Richard, 1908-96, was a lifelong resident of Bourbonnais and member of Maternity BVM Church. He was a charter member and first president of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society and served as village historian for many years. Richard's book, "The Village", is the seminal history of the village of Bourbonnais. "Tales of Another Day" is his personal account of life in Bourbonnais in the early and mid 20th century.

"Give me those old-time winters...". You've heard that expression many times from many old-timers, but who could overlook the winter of 1976-77, when all cold weather records were broken. But those old-time winters were more fun, I think, than those of today. True, winters of 60 years ago did not include a thrilling ride on a snowmobile, but what about the ever popular bob sleigh ride, with the wagon-box floor covered with clean straw, the better to keep the little pinkies warm. Bobsleighs were usually drawn by a prancing team of horses who worked up a sweat during the outing that resembled shaving lather.

The sleigh was usually filled with merry-making young folks out for a good time, singing songs and sometimes, if the weather was too cold, running behind the sleigh to keep warm. The evening usually climaxed at someone's home, where hot chocolate and hot toddies warmed the innards, and cold cream covered those rosy red cheeks to prevent chapping.

The single horse-drawn cutter too, was a great attraction and a common means of transportation before the arrival of the automobile. Bells adorned the proud steed, while the driver and the passengers were warmly bundled with fur caps, muffs for milady and the ever present buffalo robe snugly covering all aboard this exciting means of transportation.

My father delighted in snowy winters as it gave him the opportunity of driving his beautiful mare "Lady" hitched to his cutter to his job in Kankakee. During the day, Lady would spend a restful wait chewing a generous helping of oats at Lambert's Hitchbarn on N. East Ave. This building, some 30 years ago housed Dandelles Bowling Alley, after the need for horse "garages" faded out. As an afterthought, on the subject of bobsleds, Isadore Ruder was the driver on most of such excursions and after the ride, when the merriment continued at someone's home, Iz spent a good part of the night rubbing down his perspiring team, to prevent "la gourme" or pneumonia. In later years, the Ruder family declined to provide this time-honored winter luxury, due the excessive amount of work and risk the outing provided.

There were other winter sports that provided much amusement, some are still enjoyed today, but certainly under far better conditions. One of these pastimes was ice skating. Some 50 years ago, a good spot for skating was a slough located on Frank Mailloux's farm, a stone's throw west of the Bourbonnais Municipal Center. It was a marshy depression in the land where water collected each fall, especially if the weather had been wet.

All that was needed was freezing temperatures and, lo and behold, an ideal spot for ice skating with all the fresh air that one could hope for. Only one hazard existed, and that was a barbed wire fence that bordered the pond, and many times some unfortunate skater, skating too rapidly, would lose his balance and slide under the bottom line of barbed wire, only to find that his stocking cap had failed to duck and had remained behind, lodged in the pointed barbs of the fence. Many hockey games were played here, and many a shin bone showed the effects of a hard-fought game. Even net-

ted goals had been constructed and the game was played under the existing rules of the day.

A group of local boys back in the mid-'20s organized a team and called themselves the Flying Frenchmen. Some well-known Kankakee and Bourbonnais residents of today still recall those exciting games that were played sans inside arena and for the most part without any padded equipment that is standard today in local hockey league circles. But the fun was there and everybody had a ball. Then too the moonlight skating parties were as amusing as the bob sleigh rides, but probably more exhausting.

As a parting note, it might be said that one of the horrors of old-time winters, that no one enjoyed, was the well-known privy. Imagine that long walk on a cold windy winter night when the thermometer hovered around the zero mark; just the thought of it all could well make one change his mind about the whole thing...brrrrr!

The Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting local history.

Join them for refreshments and old-fashioned Christmas cheer at their annual Christmas open house, Sunday, Dec. 16 from 1 to 4 p.m.

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

Do you have a topic or story related to local or French Canadian history?

Contact the BGHS at bourbonnaishistory.org, on Facebook at [facebook.com/bourbonnais-grove](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnais-grove) or phone 1-815-933-6452.

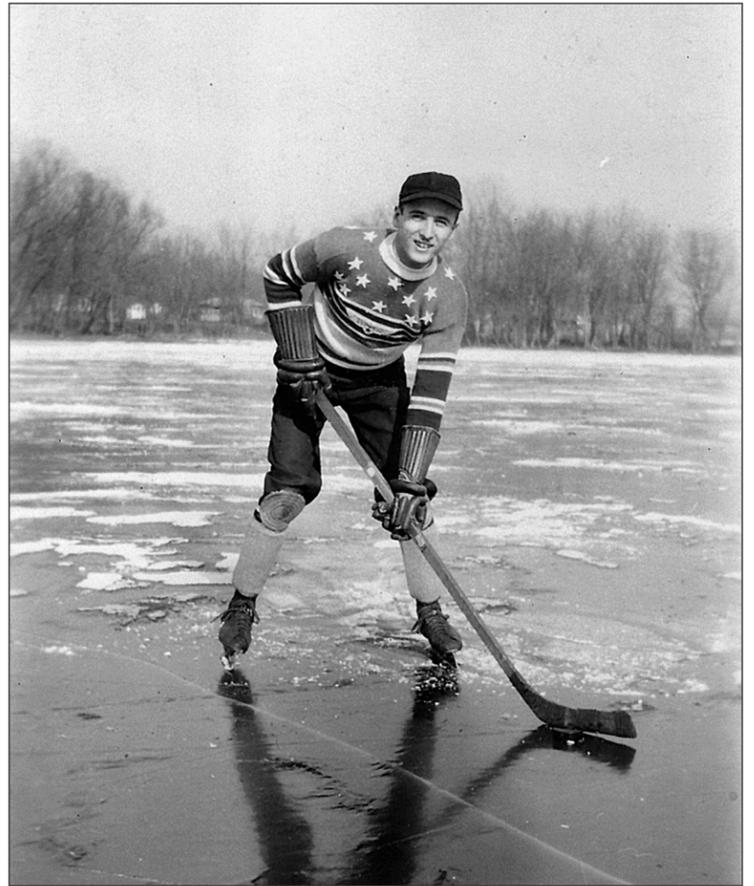


Photo courtesy of BGHS

Adrien Richard was a member of the Flying Frenchmen hockey team and is shown in uniform on the team's home ice, a frozen slough on the Frank Mailloux farm. Many hockey games were played at this location, behind the current day's Bourbonnais Municipal Center.

ARC helps fire victims

Disaster responders with the American Red Cross of Chicago and Northern Illinois responded to 23 fires from Nov. 19-26, 2018 across the 21 county region including fires in Yorkville, Granville, Oak Forest, Manteno and 15 in Chicago.

As the first severe winter storm barreled down on the region, the Red Cross was put on standby to provide two facilities to operate as shelters in the event of severe power outages. Supplies have been prepositioned at the locations, both in Rockford, as the Red Cross works with partners to make sure local needs are met. Local volunteers and staff members from the Chicago and Northern Illinois Red Cross are also supporting responses for the California wildfires, Super Typhoon Yutu in Saipan and the ongoing response to Hurricanes Michael and Florence. Over 100 local people were deployed recently to help with these disasters.

The Red Cross provided resources to help address the immediate basic needs of those affected with temporary housing, food, clothing, comfort kits with toiletry items, information about recovery services and health and mental health services. Responding volunteers are members of the Red Cross Disaster Action Team, a group of specially trained volunteers who respond to the scene of a disaster when called upon any time of the day or night.

Winter storm preparedness

Each year, hundreds of Americans are injured or killed by exposure to cold, vehicle accidents on wintry roads and fires caused by the improper use of heaters. Learn what to do to keep safe before, during and after blizzards and other winter storms with our Red Cross winter storm preparedness information here.

How people can help

After two major hurricanes in

less than a month and the devastating California wildfires, thousands of people are looking for help. The Red Cross depends on financial donations to fund our relief services. Help people affected by Hurricane Michael and the California wildfires by visiting redcross.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS or texting the word REDCROSS to 90999 to make a \$10 donation. Donations enable the Red Cross to prepare for, respond to and help people recover from these disasters.

Donate blood

The Red Cross also has a critical need for blood and platelet donations to help meet patient needs. This fall, Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Florence have forced the cancellation of about 200 blood drives, causing approximately 7,000 units of blood to go uncollected in the Southeast. The Red Cross asks eligible individuals to make an appointment today by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS.

The American Red Cross of Chicago and Northern Illinois serves 9.5 million people in 21 counties, including Boone, Bureau, Carroll, Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Jo Daviess, LaSalle, Lake, Lee, McHenry, Ogle, Putnam, Stephenson, Whiteside, Will and Winnebago. The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, visit redcross.org/il/chicago or visit them on Twitter @ChicagoRedCross.

Helping a veteran in need

Photo courtesy of Marine Corps League

Diane Richardson, a Marine veteran, was recently transferred from Johnston City, TN to the Illinois Veterans Home in Manteno. At the time of her transfer, they were unable to bring her electric wheelchair. The Marine Corps League Auxiliary from the department of Illinois and the Kankakee Unit 1253 put the word out on social media and other sources that her wheelchair needed to be transported to Manteno. Randy Rogers from Rossville, GA contacted Marine Corp League Auxiliary president Margaret Myers and arrangements were made to bring the wheelchair. Rogers took time off work from his trucking business, picked up the wheelchair in Johnson City and delivered it to the Illinois Veterans Home in Manteno. He refused any help with his fuel costs stating that it made him feel good to help someone else. Richardson thanked Sharon Beegle, Rogers and Myers (right).

