

THE BONINE HOUSE – A SHORT HISTORY AND UPDATE (2014)

James E. Bonine arrived in Cass County in 1843, married Sarah Ann Bogue in 1844 and started building the house around 1845. The original house was a classic Greek Revival consisting of the living room and parlor downstairs and the two front bedrooms upstairs. There was most probably a separate 'summer kitchen.'

The Second Empire style tower with the mansard roof was added in a major remodel around 1870, along with the north addition, adding 4 more bedrooms upstairs, the dining room, kitchen and small bedroom downstairs. Therefore the tower wasn't a lookout, it was built after the Civil War. Freedom Seekers were sheltered in the Carriage House across the street, not the Bonine House. To date no tunnels, but the investigation continues.

James and Sarah had four children-- Isaac, Evan, Mary and Elva.

Bonines lived in the house for over 100 years--the last was State Senator G. Elwood Bonine. His daughter, Mary Charlotte Bonine Roberts, lives in Florida and corresponds with us.

They sold the house to Gerald and Wanna Wright in the mid 1950's. The Wright family lived in the house until the early 70's when it was sold to Betty Harris and Frances Kennedy, who lived here until Tom Crosslin purchased it in 1999. Tom did extensive repairs, including new electric, plumbing, well, windows, and furnace.

Around 2002, the home and Carriage House were purchased by a couple from Chicago who left it untended. The roof and foundation were damaged, allowing water and animals to enter, bringing the house to near ruin. Engineers said we were about six months from catastrophe when we repaired the SW corner in Fall 2011.

URSCC purchased the Bonine House and Carriage House on December 29, 2010.

Thus far we have:

- taken down the old (c1940's) garage on the property 2011
- rebuilt the southwest corner of the house 2011
- excavated dead and dying trees in preparation for landscaping 2012
- repaired and restored the tower roof 2012
- replaced the roof on the entire house 2012
- repaired plaster throughout the house 2013
- tuckpointed inside and outside the foundation 2013
- repaired and replaced bricks and masonry on the front of the house 2014
- repaired and replaced soffit and fascia on three sides 2014
- replaced basement window wells and basement windows, hung eaves troughs and downspouts 2014
- restored and painted upstairs bedrooms in preparation for UGRR Library and Education rooms 2014
- stripped and primed the upstairs hallway 2014
- installed stone walkway and bushes in front of the house—2 lamp posts ready to be installed 2014
- installed new beams and prepped for foundation restoration on Carriage House 2014

Plans for 2015 (fundraising goal \$200,000)

- replace front porches (funds appropriated, materials and plans are ready as weather permits)
- make structural repairs to the North wall and NE corner of the house
- install bathroom and kitchen, and restore the downstairs for public use
- formalize landscape plans and begin the gardens
- continue repair and restoration of Carriage House foundation
- replace Carriage House roof
- implement plans for Bonine House upstairs as UGRR Education center with Library/Research Room, Cass Co UGRR room, Quakers and UGRR and African Americans and UGRR rooms, and the "Family Room" dedicated to the families who have lived in the Bonine House

****URSCC is a non-profit 501c3 and all donations are tax deductible. Thank You!**

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