

# BESANCON, INDIANA CHRONICLES

GENEALOGY DEPT.

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Allen County Public Library

**Issue No. 3**

**December 1996**

*This is a publication of the Besancon Historical Society, 15533 Lincoln Highway East, New Haven IN 46774*

Gene Yoquelet, President; Jim Lomont, Treasurer; Mike Bowers, Secretary

## NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

At the 23 November meeting the following were elected officers of the Society:

**Gene Yoquelet, President**  
**Jim Lomont, Treasurer**  
**Mike Bowers, Secretary**

Al Bowser was elected to fill the Board position being vacated by Gladys Lomont.

The Society has undertaken a project to create a map of the old cemetery--the **OLD CEMETERY MAPPING PROJECT**. The cemetery will be sectioned off with numbers given to each plot. Names and dates will be assigned to the numbers (if known). A map with a name index will then be created. Society members Sue Kratzman and Judy Schroff have volunteered to work with Jim Lomont on the project. Anyone desiring to provide additional assistance should contact either Sue (219) 281-2103 or Judy (219) 637-6503.

The **ALBUM IN THE ATTIC PROJECT** has thusfar collected over six hundred photographs, and new photographs continue to be added. Many have been catalogued, and the first public exhibition of the photographs was held earlier this Fall. Another exhibition will be held in the parish hall in February, and in May an exhibit of the most interesting

photographs will be held in the Allen County Public Library on Webster Street in Fort Wayne.

Fr. Thom Lombardi, project director, is looking for volunteers to help with the February exhibit. Volunteers should contact him at (219) 749-4525.

At the 23 November meeting of the Besancon Historical Society a new membership category was established. "Family" memberships are now available. See page 13 for details. Members of the Society are reminded that their annual dues must be received by 1 January 1997. To continue receiving the **Besancon Chronicles** your dues must be paid in full. *Continued--See "NEWS" page 2.*

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**“NEWS” continued**

The Society has also undertaken another new project--the creation of a database of French-born immigrants to Indiana in the nineteenth century. We'll refer to it as the **FRENCH DATABASE PROJECT**. The Society has in its library and archives much genealogical information, and the frequency of genealogical queries suggests that there is a lot of interest in the information possessed by the Society.

The purpose of the Database Project is to make this information available online so that anyone with a computer, modem, and Internet access (Compuserve, America On Line, or CIOE, for example) will be able to access this information--no matter where they live and no matter the time of day.

Before this can happen, however, the information must be compiled in a uniform format and converted into electronic files. To accomplish this we need volunteers to copy the information from printed sources into a standardized format so that it can be entered later into an electronic database. You do not have to live in the Besancon/Fort Wayne area to do this. You do not even have to have an interest in genealogy, although, if you do, you might want to begin by

contributing information from your own genealogical records.

In Phase I of the project we will record only immigrants who were born in France. That is the only requirement for inclusion in the database. As much of the following information as possible will be provided: name, place of birth, date of birth, date of death, date and place of entry into the United States, county in Indiana with which the immigrant is associated, township, occupation, marriage(s), source of the information, and compiler identifier.

If you do not have genealogical records that you want to work on, then some will be assigned to you.

The project is being coordinated by Ralph Violette. If you wish to volunteer your time, please contact Ralph Violette at:

5523 Trishlyn Cove  
Fort Wayne IN 46835-8895  
(219) 486-0088  
email: [violette@fwa.cioe.com](mailto:violette@fwa.cioe.com)

You will receive forms and detailed instructions for compiling the information. All you need is an interest in furthering the work of the Society and a pen!

## **Eight Families Emigrate from Rougemont, France to America by Joan Jacquay Monnier**

French emigration records dated 24 February 1840 list the members of eight families who applied for passports to emigrate from France to America. All eight families were from the town of Rougemont, Department of Haut Rhin, France.

The men whose names were given in the records were all born in Rougemont and were farmers. (Register #7, lines 1351-1358).

The following filed for passports:

- Line #1351 Jean Pierre MOULIN, age 52, with wife and six children
- Line #1352 Jean Pierre PETITJEAN, age 30, with wife and three children
- Line #1353 Pierre LAMBELIN, age 42, with wife and six children
- Line #1354 Jean Claude DUPONT, age 61, with two children
- Line #1355 Jean Pierre GEANT, age 35, with wife and three children
- Line #1356 Pierre MOULIN, age 24, with wife and (one or two) children
- Line #1357 George BLANC, age 47, with wife and four children
- Line #1358 Jean Claude DUPONT, age 29, with wife and one child

Their stated destination was Philadelphia. However three of the eight families--the two Dupont families and the Geant family--arrived at the Port of New York on 9 June 1840 on the ship *Robert Parker*. The Ship Master was William L. Dwight who signed his name to the ship's manifest which included 195 passengers from Bavaria, Hesse, Wurtemberg, Suisse (Switzerland) and France.

The Dupont and Geant families are listed together on the manifest as follows: Laio (or Saio) Dupont 28, Jean 30, Marg 30, Jean 60, Marie 25, Jean Geant 30, Jean 11, Marie 9, Marg 25, Louise 2, Marg 2.

NOTE: Presently Rougemont is known as Rougemont Le Château and is located in the Department of the Territoire de Belfort.

*The following is a lecture delivered at the May 25 meeting of the Besancon Historical Society. The material for this lecture is derived from census records and the essay "French" in Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Connie A McBirney (ed.), Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience (Indiana Historical Society, 1996).*

## From France to Indiana by Ralph Violette

When the word "French" is used in connection with the history of Indiana it is usually used to refer to those explorers, missionaries and settlers from French Canada who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries created for France a vast empire that stretched at one time from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The "other" French--those who had no ties to French Canada but who ultimately perhaps had a greater impact on the development of Indiana--rarely get any mention in the history books--an occasional reference here, a footnote there. That's all.

These "other" French appeared on the scene in the early nineteenth century after the French empire in North America had collapsed. They began arriving in the first three decades of the nineteenth century as isolated individuals--refugee priests from the French Revolution, individual settlers carving out new lives for themselves in the Indiana wilderness, utopians sailing down the Ohio River on Robert Owen's "boatload of knowledge" bound for New Harmony. It wasn't until the 1830s and 1840s that the French began arriving in large numbers and that the first communities founded by the French were established. The 1850 census, the first which specified a place of birth, reported 2337 French-born residents of the State of

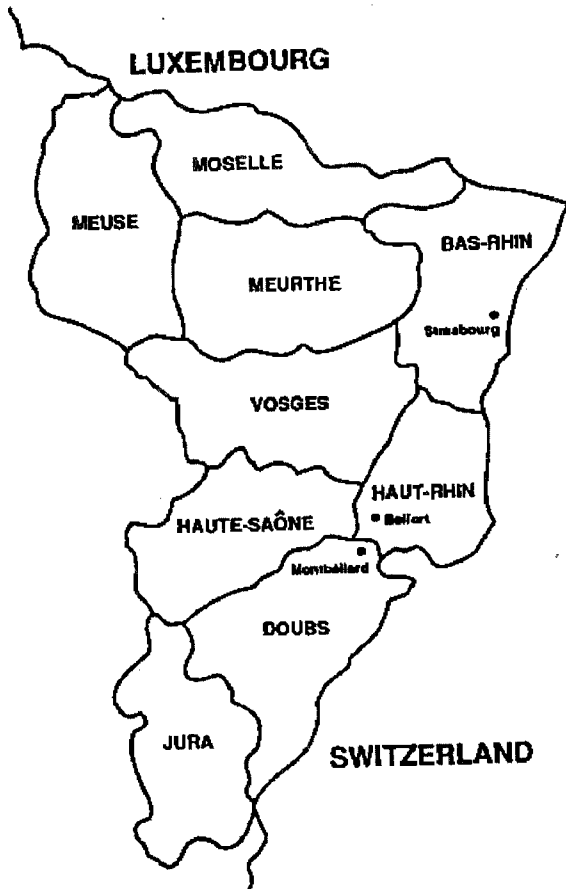
Indiana. This figure included both German and French-speakers.

In 1850, the French represented 4.1% of the foreign born population of the State of Indiana. (Total population: 988,000) Their number grew to 6251 in the 1860 census and reached a peak at 6363 in the 1870 census, which represented the largest number of French-born enumerated at any decennial census. Thereafter the number of French-born declined steadily until by 1980 there were only 1065 French-born residents of the state, out of a total population of 5.4 million.

### CENSUS COUNT OF IMMIGRANTS TO INDIANA BORN IN FRANCE

|      |      |
|------|------|
| 1850 | 2337 |
| 1860 | 6251 |
| 1870 | 6363 |
| 1880 | 4251 |
| 1890 | 3297 |
| 1900 | 2984 |
| 1910 | 2388 |
| 1920 | 3254 |
| 1930 | 2160 |
| 1940 | 1459 |
| 1950 | 1400 |

The overwhelming majority of immigrants to Indiana from France in the nineteenth century came from the frontier regions of eastern France along France's borders with Luxembourg, the German states and Switzerland.



These regions corresponded to the old French provinces of Alsace, Lorraine, and the Franche-Comté which by the nineteenth century had been reorganized into a number of administrative units known as *departements* (departments). Alsace had been broken up into the

departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, Lorraine into Meuse, Moselle, Meurthe and Vosges. And the Franche-Comté had been split into the departments of Doubs, Haute-Saône, and Jura. In this general area people spoke both French and dialects of German. Most immigrants to Indiana from the eastern districts of what had once been Lorraine and from Alsace spoke German. Those who immigrated from what had once been the Franche-Comté spoke French. That would include, of course, those who settled the Besancon area.

Most of these immigrants to Indiana were influenced in their decisions to emigrate primarily by the desire to improve their economic status. Most writers on the subject of French immigration to the United States in the nineteenth century are pretty well agreed that most French immigrants to the United States were attracted by the prospects of prosperity, a conclusion supported by immigration statistics which reveal that the years of economic depression in the United States were also the years of the weakest emigration from France and that periods of prosperity attracted the strongest emigration from France. One expert on this subject has noted that it was the "mirage des Eldorados"—visions of cities of gold—on the horizon that served as the magnet for most French immigrants.

But then, the question has to be asked "why did emigrants from France decide to settle in Indiana?" Over and over again, commentators on the French emigration have pointed to the importance of letters written to family, friends and former

neighbors by those who had already preceded them to the United States as the single most important factor affecting the choice of a destination.

But that still doesn't explain why those first French emigrants decided on Indiana. Most of the earliest emigrants, as it turned out, probably had never heard of Indiana and probably didn't have Indiana as their destination when they set out on their journey. It was only after they had settled elsewhere initially that they were attracted to Indiana by the prospect of jobs or by the prospect of owning land.

There were several points in neighboring states which channeled many immigrants from France to Indiana. Immigrants from the German-speaking regions of eastern France tended to follow the established paths of German migration, and in the early decades of the nineteenth century gravitated especially to Cincinnati from which they moved on to the southern Indiana counties along the Ohio River.

French-speaking immigrants tended to come from more widely-scattered points. Many of the earliest French immigrants in northern Indiana, for example, came from France by way of Stark County, Ohio which was settled by French from eastern France in the 1820s.

Allen County in Indiana was from the beginning the Indiana county which attracted the most French immigrants from Stark County. By 1870 Allen County outdistanced, by far, any other Indiana county in terms of the number of French-born. Most of these were French-

speakers. The major concentrations were located in close proximity to Catholic churches: Wayne Township served by the Cathedral, the Perry-Washington-Cedar Creek and St. Joseph Townships area served at one time by three Catholic churches (St. Vincent, St. Michael and St. Leo) and the Jefferson Township concentration around St. Louis. The other townships of Allen County never attracted many French settlers.

Southern Indiana was also a region of the state where there was another concentration of French settlers. Many French settlers in southern Indiana had settled initially in Louisiana, and from Louisiana some made their way up the Mississippi and Ohio to Louisville in Kentucky, and from there to southern Indiana. Louisville which was named for the French king Louis XVI and which had a distinct French character in the early nineteenth century served as the source of many French immigrants to southern Indiana.

So, many French-speaking immigrants to Indiana took an indirect route. They had started out for some other destination but eventually ended up in Indiana. Stark County, Ohio served as a source of settlers for the Allen County area, and Louisville channeled many French settlers into the southern counties.

However, there were also attempts to encourage direct migration into the state. And probably the best example I can give you of this is a publication put together by a group of Louisville businessmen in 1835 for distribution in the French-speaking

regions of Franche-Comté and Lorraine.

It was entitled "Guide for French Emigrants to the States of Kentucky and Indiana." This guide was patterned on many other similar guides which were distributed throughout many areas of Europe in the nineteenth century to attract immigrants. This guide--and it was fairly lengthy--cited the reasons why these businessmen felt French emigrants should consider settling in Indiana and Kentucky. Everything about the guide fed those "mirages des Eldorados" to which I referred earlier. The United States was bustling with commercial activity. The climate was temperate, the soil was fertile and there was plenty of it available cheaply, the educational system was well developed, freedom of religion prevailed, and, for women, the United States was described as a "paradise." Frenchmen and women immigrating to the United States could also expect a warm welcome from Americans because of the assistance provided by France to the United States during its Revolution. More than anything else, however, the guide emphasized the prosperity of the place, and for these potential French immigrants, the existence in Kentucky and Indiana of people who spoke their language. The guide noted that an industrious immigrant could make a fortune within twelve years--by which time he would be living like one of the "great lords of Europe."

The final possible factor that I want to cite to explain the selection of Indiana as the destination of many emigrants from France is the influence of the Catholic Church. The earliest of the new French

immigrants to Indiana in the nineteenth century were Catholic clergy, many of whom were religious refugees of the French Revolution or who were attracted to the frontier by the desire to proselytize among the Indians. The first four bishops to head the first Catholic diocese in Indiana--the Diocese of Vincennes established in 1834--were all French-born, and throughout the nineteenth century France remained one of the main sources of clergy for the Church in Indiana. Indiana clerics frequently returned to France in search of financial support and recruits. Several orders of French priests and nuns also came to Indiana in the 1840s and began establishing a system of Catholic orphanages, hospitals and schools, including several which evolved into well-known institutions of higher learning. Frequently accompanying these early clergy and religious were teachers, servants, gardeners, carpenters, iron workers, stone masons as well as friends, family and acquaintances who would then engage in the exercise of writing to friends and family back home about Indiana.

There was also a conscious attempt on the part of many churchmen to attract Catholic settlers to the Indiana frontier to escape the anti-Catholicism that was beginning to manifest itself in parts of the United States by creating Catholic settlements where Catholics could practice their religion without having to worry about persecution. In one instance--in Ferdinand, Indiana--it was a Catholic priest who purchased the land for the town, laid it out, and then proceeded to advertise for colonists to settle it. In most cases, the attempt on the

part of the clergy to attract Catholic settlers to Indiana was much less formal than that. Father Julian Benoit, whose career is primarily associated with Fort Wayne, while a young priest in the early 1840s in Perry County developed the practice of writing to friends in France and Belgium, urging them to direct emigrants to Indiana where, he noted, they could expect to find cheap land, co-religionists, and a clergy who could speak their language.

Most of the French communities that were established in southern Indiana grew up around Catholic churches. These settlements, while in the beginning containing a French majority, usually also attracted settlers of other nationalities and, more commonly, French-speaking immigrants from Belgium and the French cantons of Switzerland, with which many Indiana French had family connections. The first immigrants to respond to Father Benoit's appeal, for example, came from Belgium and France. By the time they began arriving in Perry County in 1841 and 1842 Father Benoit's place had been taken by another priest (Bessonies) who had recently arrived from France. He purchased forty acres north of what was then simply called "The Chapel" for the establishment of a town. In recording the deeds to the property he noted that it was his intention "to promote both the temporal and spiritual welfare of the French people coming from Europe." The town that developed became known as Leopold, and it retained a French identity for several decades thereafter.

In neighboring Harrison County the largest

French settlement was in Spencer Township where a number of French families settled in 1840 with the object of establishing a Catholic colony in America where they could also grow grapes for wine. Eventually about fifty French families settled in the area, and when a post office was established the settlement was officially designated Frenchtown, and it retains that name today.

The largest and oldest French settlement in southern Indiana developed in Floyd County directly across the Ohio from Louisville. By 1850 Floyd County ranked second in the state behind Allen County in the number of French-born residents. Most of those who settled in Floyd County had their origins in the Franche-Comté and the French-speaking districts of Lorraine. The largest concentration of French was in the city of New Albany where many worked in the shipyards, foundries and other establishments which made New Albany the manufacturing center of the state for a while. A smaller community was established southwest of the city in a settlement was known by various names over the years—Porrentruy after the canton in Switzerland from which some settlers emigrated, also Frenchtown, the French Settlement, and the French Creek Settlement. Another Floyd County community where there was a large French element was that which developed in the vicinity of Floyd Knobs in Lafayette Township where the Church of St. Mary's-of-the-Knobs served as the focal point of community life.

None of these southern Indiana French communities retained their French identity



and composition beyond the first generation of settlers. The number of French immigrants relative to the larger population made the retention of French customs and language very difficult, especially since all indicators--and this would be equally true of the Allen County French--point to the fact that most French immigrants to Indiana in the nineteenth century came with the intention of assimilating into the general fabric of American life as quickly as possible. A high percentage of French immigrants purchased property within a short time of their arrival, and few immigrants to Indiana ever returned to France permanently. French immigrants also tended to apply for naturalization soon after their entry into the United States. Many in the first generation intermarried with members of other nationalities and faiths. Some were attracted early to politics and ran for elective office within a few years of their arrival. First-generation immigrants served as township assessors, trustees, constables, county commissioners, city council members, and representatives in the Indiana legislature.

It is quite possible that one of these nineteenth century immigrants may yet attain a distinction which no other immigrant to Indiana or for that matter which only a handful of Americans have achieved. In the summer of 1992 Pope John Paul II conferred the title of "Venerable" on Mother Theodore Guerin, the French-born nun who founded the community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. This is a step in the canonization process. While it is probably safe to assume that there were more sinners than saints

among the French immigrants to Indiana, at least one may someday officially bear the title "saint."

French-born in Indiana as a Percentage of the Total Population and as a Percentage of the Foreign-born Population

| Year | Total Indiana Population | Total Foreign Born | Total French Born | % Total Population | % Foreign Born |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1850 | 988,416                  | 55,537             | 2337              | 0.2                | 4.2            |
| 1860 | 1,350,428                | 118,284            | 6251              | 0.5                | 5.2            |
| 1870 | 1,680,637                | 141,474            | 6363              | 0.4                | 4.5            |
| 1880 | 1,978,301                | 144,178            | 5010              | 0.3                | 3.5            |
|      |                          |                    | * * * * *         | * * * * *          | * * * * *      |
| 1920 | 2,930,390                | 150,868            | 3254              | 0.1                | 2.2            |
| 1930 | 3,238,503                | 135,134            | 2160              | 0.1                | 1.6            |
| 1940 | 3,427,796                | 110,992            | 1459              | 0.04               | 1.3            |
| 1950 | 3,934,224                | 100,630            | 1400              | 0.03               | 1.4            |
|      |                          |                    | * * * * *         | * * * * *          | * * * * *      |
| 1980 | 5,490,260                | 101,802            | 1065              | 0.02               | 1.0            |

Source: James H. Madison, The Indiana Way: A State History (Indianapolis & Bloomington: Indiana University Press & Indiana Historical Society, 1986), Appendix A.

The Besancon Historical Society maintains a web page at

<http://cvax.ipfw.indiana.edu/www/depts/history/historgs/besanco.html>

Back issues of the Chronicles can be obtained by written request to the Society. They can also be accessed from the Society's web page.

## Besancon Nicknames

*Richard Voirol, retiring Jefferson Township Trustee, has compiled a list of nicknames of people in the Besancon area. We would appreciate any information about the origins of these nicknames. You can also send us additions or corrections to the list.*

| <b>Birth Name</b>       | <b>Nickname</b>    | <b>Origin of Nickname</b>   |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Brian Castleman         | Fuzz               |   |
| Ervin Castleman         | Boom               |   |
| Gerald Dodane           | Jiggs              |   |
| Clarence Simon Frane    | Jack               |   |
| Elmer Frane             | Boom               |   |
| Francis Frane           | Fanny              |   |
| Adrian Gerardot         | Ade                |   |
| Henry Gerardot          | Kiffey             |   |
| Leo Gerardot            | Gout               |   |
| Lawrence Gerardot       | Chicken Bones      |   |
| Randolph Giant          | Boob               |   |
| Allen Girardot          | Fud                |   |
| Henry Girardot          | H.J.               |   |
| Clifford Gromeaux       | King Fish or P-Fex |   |
| Joe Gromeaux            | Smokey Joe         |   |
| Kenneth Gromeaux        | Nipps              |   |
| Louis Gromeaux          | Fritz or Peto      |   |
| Ralph Jacquay           | Sus                |   |
| August A. Lamblin       | Jim Popcorn        | He grew popcorn.  |
| Delores Gerardot Lomont | Dude               |   |
| Manford Lomont          | Manny              |   |
| Julian Lothamer         | Tony               |   |
| Woodrow Martin          | Woody              |   |
| Ursula Gerardot Martin  | Squeeky            |   |
| Bernard Monnier         | Barney             |   |
| Geraldine Monnier       | Jeri               |   |
| Arnold Oberley          | Izzey              | He was in a grade school play and his line was "Is he?"                     |
| Arthur Oberley          | Jake               |   |
| Elmer Oberley, Jr.      | Bugs               |   |
| Elton Oberley           | Dutch              |   |
| Russell Oberley         | Jap                |   |
| Wilbur Oberley          | Pete               | He was small and the nickname started as "peanut," later shortened to Pete. |
| Clifford Reuille        | Shorty or Stubs    |   |
| Francis Reuille         | Fanny              |   |
| Frank Reuille           | Butch              |   |
| Henry Reuille           | Hank               |   |

John Reuille  
Lawrence Reuille  
Joseph Rorick  
Justin Rorick  
Wilbur Roussell/Russell  
Adrian Roussey

? Roussey  
Frank Roussey  
Herman Ternet  
Louis Ternet  
Louis Venderly  
Manford Venderley  
Clarence Voirol  
Clarence Voirol  
Edmund Voirol  
Elmer Voirol  
Eugene Voirol  
Frank Voirol  
Kenneth Voirol  
Lawrence Voirol  
Leonard Voirol  
Louis Voirol  
Norbert Voirol  
Richard Voirol  
Clarence Yoquelet

Stoker  
Weeny  
Scoots  
Jay  
Felix  
Twit

Fox  
Texas  
Fiff  
Chups  
Bum  
Jupp  
Blink  
Cocky  
Monk  
Corb  
Mall  
Dude  
Whitey  
Lot  
Cocky  
Jumbo  
Corb  
Monk  
Dutch

As a lad he would say "twit" for  
"quit it."

**The May 1997 issue of the Besancon Chronicles will contain a list of genealogical researchers and the area families on which they are doing research. If you would like your name placed on the list please send it along with the families you are researching to the Society.**

**The Society is seeking information on the French-American Society of Allen County, an organization which was very active in this community in the decades before the First World War. Its annual picnic in Centlivre Park was a major social event, as was the annual French Ball. After the First World War, the society was renamed the Lafayette Legion. It was dissolved in 1947. Photographs, memorabilia, personal recollections, and newspaper articles would be most appreciated.**

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BESANCON CHRONICLES NEEDED

**The Society needs contributors to the Besancon Chronicles. The continued publication of the Chronicles can be assured only if more members of the organization become involved in providing items. The Chronicles considers any item dealing with the history of eastern Allen County. The piece can range from half a page in length to an article of several pages. We are interested in biographical sketches of family members and prominent personalities, articles on major events in the history of the community, personal recollections, pieces on buildings and other structures in the area, genealogical charts and essays, etc., etc. There probably isn't any submission that we won't consider for inclusion in the Chronicles. You need not be an accomplished writer. If your piece needs polishing, we will provide all necessary assistance.**

**We cannot, however, publish copyrighted materials. This means that we cannot publish articles that have been xeroxed from other publications. You can, of course, extract information from other publications and use it in your own writing. As long as you rework the information in your own words and provide the source of the information, then everything should be o.k. If you would like additional information, contact Ralph Violette (219) 486-0088.**

## 1997 MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY

**The Besanson Historical Society holds bimonthly meetings, beginning in January, throughout the year. The meetings are usually held on the fourth Saturday of the month at St. Louis Academy in Besancon. A number of interesting programs have been planned for 1997. At the January 1997 meeting Gene Yoquelet will discuss his research on the first French families.**

**The Secretary of the Society would like to reduce postage expenses associated with the distribution of notices for each meeting. Please indicate on your renewal form whether you wish to obtain a notification of each bimonthly meeting or whether you are only interested in receiving the Besancon Chronicles. In the future only those who have indicated that they wish to receive a separate notification of each meeting will be notified in that manner.**

**BESANCON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**Application for/Renewal of Membership**

*(Please print)*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to become a member of the Besancon Historical Society. Please enroll me as a**

\_\_\_\_\_ **member for the current year (individual membership--dues \$10.00)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **member for the current year (family membership--dues \$15.00)**

**This is a** \_\_\_\_\_ **new membership** \_\_\_\_\_ **renewal (check one)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **life-time member (dues \$100.00)**

**I would like to receive** \_\_\_\_\_ **notification of the meetings** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chronicles only**

**Please mail this form, along with your remittance, to:**

**Besancon Historical Society**  
**15533 Lincoln Highway East**  
**New Haven, Indiana 46774**

**We would appreciate your taking the time to answer the following:**

1. How did you first become acquainted with the Besancon Historical Society?
  
2. What are the special historical/genealogical interest(s) which prompted you to join the society?
  
3. I would be interested in participating in the following activities of the society:

