

Besançon Historical Society, the Chronicles

Issue 38

Summer 2008

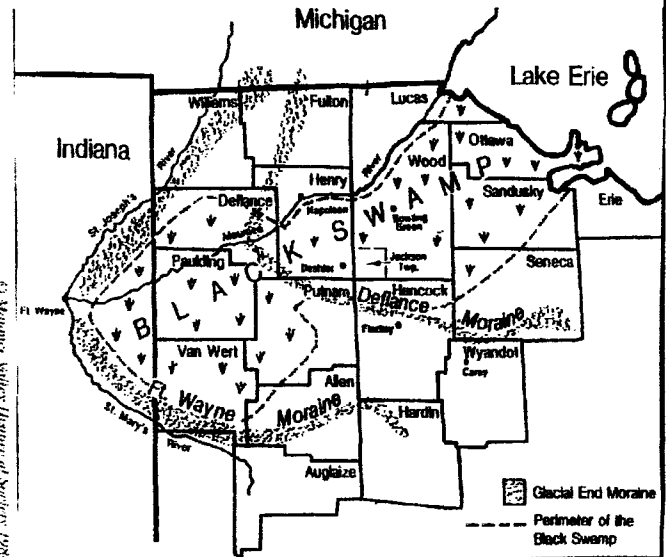
The Great Black Swamp

Most of the time these pages are filled with information contributed by the likes of you, dear reader, and I agonize over the front page story. This month the coincidence of Barb's message (p.2) and the interview of Carl Yearling (p.4) prompted Barb to mention to me the writings of **Jim Mollenkopf**. She sent a few pages of Vol. I, Great Black Swamp and I was hooked! I have since purchased both volumes.

Oozing mass of black, inky water, mud, forests dark and maze like, "no blade of grass, no song of bird", clouds of mosquitoes, swarming, so thick you could not see through, a sub species of animals and fish never before seen, huge snakes, wolves, bears, biting flies, and gnats and a malarial illness called ague that produces soaring fever, deep chills and violent shaking which went on for days, even weeks. A passer-by could tell by the sound of a rattling bed when the cabin's occupant had the dreaded disease. Newcomers arriving in the Swamp were greeted with the saying: "there's someone we can divide the shakes with."

This was the Great Black Swamp. A huge area almost equal to our state of Connecticut OR picture the Everglades of Florida, a 120 mile by 40 mile swath along Lake Erie west ward into Indiana following the Maumee River.

But. Unlike the Everglades the Great Black Swamp was covered with broad leaf trees of great oaks, elms, and ashes to form a thick canopy that keep the forest floor in dark most of the year. The land lay in water, or ice and, for sure, **black muck**. Travel was almost impossible. "A bank of muck and mud twenty feet wide and about three feet high was build mostly with Ox Power," wrote a dweller, C. H. Opperman, of the Maumee and Western Reserve Road, (now US 20) "nearly all who took the swamp route regretted it, for many of them had ox teams to pull their high-wheeled covered wagons. Often the Oxen would sink to their bellies and the wheels to the hubs and most of the time progress was only a mile a day". Thirty one inns were built to stand along 31 miles of road to help the pioneers, unfortunately, some men would claim a mud hole and charge money to pull wagons out of it. One pioneer spent his life savings of \$100 getting out of a mud hole, so he stopped and staked out his own mud hole, and made his money back before moving on.



The Great Black Swamp
120 miles west-east by 40 miles north-south

Continued on page 11

The President's Message ...

Genealogy has been a passion that I have enjoyed by researching my family. Not only names and dates are important but what about their personalities. Why did they come to this region and how? One settler who bought land unseen in Paulding County, Ohio almost turned around to head back to his starting point. The reason was the Black Swamp which at one time completely covered Paulding County. Just think of the back breaking work of clearing trees and digging ditches to drain the water so farms could be started. Now we see a need for preserving this pristine land instead of clearing it.

There is still land that has never been cleared completely and conservancies are being established to help maintain this wilderness. 193 acres between Antwerp and Cecil Ohio are now owned by the northwest Ohio land trust and called Forrest Woods Nature Preserve. Forrest Woods is a remnant of the Black Swamp and considered one of the finest remaining floodplains in northwest Ohio. This property will be dedicated as a state nature preserve. The conservancy preserves land mainly through agreements with landowners. This protects the values of the property as a scenic view, as productive farmland or as natural habitat for plants and animals.

In Indiana there is the Little River wetlands project in southwest Fort Wayne which was part of the Black Swamp. This area is off of Jefferson and Engle Roads and is known as Eagle Marsh.

Other groups are Acres Land Trust, Nature Conservancy, Indiana Heritage Trust Fund, and many more that are helping to preserve the land.

These areas are open for hikers and nature enthusiasts. I visited Dygert Woods recently. This is near Columbia City, IN and the owners who live on the property donated it to Acres Land Trust. The spring flowers were beautiful. There is Pokagon State Park, Wing Haven east of Pokagon, Robb Preserve by Hamilton, IN, and Bicentennial Woods north of Fort Wayne. I never realized how many acres have been put aside for preservation. By being interested in nature, enjoying walking, and joining groups, I can begin to understand the obstacles that our ancestors were subjected to in settling this area.

Barbara

MISSION of The Besançon Historical Society

ARTICLE II - SECTION 2:

The mission of the Besançon Historical Society of East Allen County is to preserve, interpret, and foster a deeper understanding of the history, heritage, and of the rural *community* know as Besançon, Indiana, generally located in Jefferson Township, Allen County, Indiana, and which has as its central focus,

Saint Louis Catholic Church

Established: 1994

Friends of Besançon ...



Many Thanks: Marianne Doyle, Joan Johnson, Rita Scheel for your donations to the library fund and to Judith Schroff, Margaret Venderley, and Eleanor Van Horn for your donations to the Society.

Welcome New Members: John K. and Roseann (Gerardot) Schreiber, 8629 Flatrock Road, Hoagland, IN. 46745 J.K.Schreiber@worldnet.net. **And :**

Carl J. Kieber 5735 Kinlock Place, Fort Wayne, IN. 46835

VOIROL FAMILY REUNION

Second Annual Reunion Held at Zulu, Ind.

Weekly Sentinel ... August 30, 1917

The second annual reunion of the Voirol family was held at the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Voirol, Jr. on Sunday, August 26, in honor of the descendants of Louis Voirol (deceased). The day was spent in a most enjoyable manner in games and music, a most sumptuous dinner was served, after which a business meeting was held electing the following officers for the coming year: Pres. Louis Voirol, V. Pres., Herman Voirol, Sec/Treas. Jule Gremaux. The next meeting will be held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Lomont, who reside east of town. Those present were: Mr. and Mrs. Louis Voirol and family, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Voirol Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Jule Gremaux and family, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Oberley and family, Mr. and Mrs. Art Oberley and family, Mr. and Mrs. Ed-ward Oberley and family,

, Mr. and Mrs. Frank F. Voirol, Sr., John Bernadette, Norbert Bernadette, Elmer Bernadette. Mr. and Mrs. Albert Voirol and family, Mrs. Jacob Lamblin and son, James, Mr. and Mrs. Christ Speith and family, Edward Russell and daughter, Erma, Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Grabner and family of Edgerton, Ind.; Mrs. Floren Voirol and sons, Joseph and Herman, Emil Voril and daughters, Ethel and Florent, Mr. and Mrs. Justin Voirol and family, Mr. and Mrs. Jule Voirol and family, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Voirol and family of Ft. Wayne, Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Lomont and family, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gremaux, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Druhard of Massillon, O., Julian and Justin Stalter, William Gremaux, Frank Voirol, Charles Fernet, Raymond Martha, Ralph Peckham, Rose Margquart, Clarence Eansch, Frank J. Walker, Co. E., Fort Wayne, Miss Cecelia Moury and Mrs. Mary Ehinger.



CARL YEARLING RECALLS THE BYGONE DAYS ... By Maria Miller Gordon

Editor's note: This story has no connection that we know of to Besancon, but it is of great interest to hear of the times and experiences of the period. Of particular interest is the description of the Black Swamp. Thanks, Barb Gorney for sharing this.

Thomas Payne once said: "It is not helps, but obstacles, not facilities but difficulties, that make men".

That quotation could well be referring to those who ventured from their homelands to the heart of America ... looking for a better life. One of those men was Reinhart Yearling, and as his grandson, Carl Yearling will attest to it, it was not an easy life.

Carl Yearling is now a retired farmer himself. Since he was a young lad, he had heard his father, Conrad, reminiscing of the days of hardship. Like a piece of living history, Carl can retell those stories of the years gone by. Stories of his grandfather, his father and of the pioneers who helped build northwest Ohio into what it is today.

Carl glances admirably at the old trunks that sit in his attic, the trunks that carried the few possessions of those gutsy enough to start a new life in America. Carl's grandfather, Reinhart Yearling, had packed one of those trunks and hauled it thousands of miles in hopes of finding a new and better livelihood.

Carl said, "I owe a lot to those God fearing people, for they endured many hardships leaving their family and friends in German and coming to this new country."

Reinhart Yearling, born 1824, was raised in a German village. He worked on a farm for an annual income of \$13.00 plus lodging — with stringent rules, intense labor and scarce food. Reinhart would be certain that his brother, a tailor apprentice, would have food — leaving him extra crusts of bread. "When my grandfather told his brother he was going to America, his brother begged and prayed for him not to go — he said he would starve to death."

Carl continues, "But Grandfather promised he would send his brother the first money he made in America so that he too could come here. And he never forgot his promise."

Reinhart's first effort to come to America was unsuccessful. When he attempted to purchase a passport, he found he did not have enough money. He returned to the farm and worked another year — until his funds were sufficient. Then, in 1854, he packed his trunk and began his voyage. When his employer learned of his venture, he hastened to the port to convince him to stay — but Reinhart's ship was already at sea.

Even the ocean passage was complicated. "Sometimes they moved in the wrong direction," Carl said. It was more than 30 days before the boat landed in New York.

"Freedom. It cannot be measured in dollars and cents. They paid the price with a good mind, a strong healthy body, and the Spirit of God directing them," Carl notes.

Reinhart made his way to Mansfield, Ohio, where he found a German settlement. There, he met his German born wife, Margaret. They saw a local newspaper advertising Paulding county, Ohio farm land for sale, with an asking price of \$1.06 an acre. They brought a hundred acres sight unseen — then boarded a train to the closest depot: Monroeville, Indiana. After departing the train, they walked to their farm — and ventured into the legendary Great Black Swamp of northwest Ohio.

Continued on page 5 ...

Continued from page 4 ...

“They said the area was all trees and swamp — no open ditches to drain the water. The trees were abundant and beautiful, but there was no market for them at the time. Only the high ground was not covered in muck. Standing water was every direction, and vicious mosquitoes ruled the region”.

“Grandfather and Margaret decided to make the best of their Benton Township homestead. Mr. and Mrs. **John Lehman** gave shelter to the Yearlings in their log cabin, built on the “high ground”, which is now State Route 500 near the Lehman Cemetery. Yearlings were some of the first families in their area, along with the **Shugars and Kilpatrick's**.

Around 1880, the massive trees had drawn the attention of the French Canadian ship timber company. “They sawed some of the longest trees and squared them with axes.” Factories were also arriving that used the wood to manufacture wooden barrels.

Carl relates that when the first corn was planted, Grandfather had to chop the ground with an ax. He knew that farming was going to be an immense challenge.

With the passage of the “ditch laws” in 1859, the government required that every landowner have ditches approximately every half of a mile. If the landowner could not dig the ditches himself, he would have to hire help. The intent was to provide a system of public ditches but often, the price rose in excess of the lands purchase price.

Even with open ditches, the drainage was not as successful as the farmers hoped. Underdrains would also be necessary to free the land from its water.

The first underdrains consisted of ‘slab wood’, slab cuttings starting at the bark of a tree. The farmer would lay the slabs into the two foot deep trench, one slab on each side and one on the top, forming a trough for the water to flow. Another technique was to fasten two boards into a triangular tunnel. Later, these wooden underdrains were replaced with horseshoe shaped clay tiles.

The livestock roamed unconfined, without the use of fences. They were identified by a mark recorded in the county courthouse. The Yearlings mark was a small hole in the right ear and a slit in the left. If livestock were lost, a “lost and found” ad was placed. Carl explains, “Grandfather had a big team of black horses wander off. He found them listed in an Indiana newspaper ad.”

“One evening when Flat Rock Creek was rapidly rising two of Reinhart’s daughters went in search of their cows. They found the cows, but the creek had swollen, as they wondered how they would cross, one of the cows went into the water. One girl hollered to grab the tail, so they crossed holding onto that tail, and letting the cows do the swimming.”

By now, Reinhart had ten children. He and five of his sons worked to clear the hundred acres with cross cut saws and axes. The remaining stumps would be aged for several years, rotting in the ground until the dynamiter deemed them fit to blow them out. They would be aged properly to avoid shattering the stump into large pieces which would result in difficult tillage of the soil.

Continued on page 12

OBITUARIES ... Copied by Jane Morow

HENRY DAGER*Ft. Wayne News, April 19, 1904*

Henry Dager, who resided near Monroeville, died Monday night at Hope hospital. He had been ill for some time of bladder trouble and he was removed to the hospital eleven days ago. An operation was performed upon him and he improved for a time, but later uremia poisoning set in and he rapidly grew worse until death resulted. Mr. Dager's age was 25 years, 5 months and 11 days. He was married and leaves a wife and a little child. He was a son-in-law of **John D. Carpenter**, of the Monroeville neighborhood. His occupation was that of a farmer. The remains were taken today to his home near Monroeville.

JOSEPH GIANT*Ft. Wayne Journal Gazette ... February 28, 1905*

Joseph Giant, fifty three years of age and a widower, who resided alone on a small farm near Zulu, in Jefferson township, was found dead in his bed Monday morning by his son, **John Giant**, who had spent the night with his father. The decedent had been ill for several days. Coroner Stults, who was called, found the death to be due to natural causes. Mr. Giant had been a resident of Jefferson for many years and was well known. He is survived by four sons — **John, Joseph, Peter and James** — all of whom reside near their father's home.

Coroner Stults returned Monday night from Zulu and announced that Mr. Giant's death was due to a recent exposure, as a result of which the man's feet were badly frozen. Blood poisoning followed and is given as the chief cause of the death.

OLLIE J. HAVERT*Ft. Wayne Sentinel & News ... April 4, 1918*

Ollie J. Havert, age 4 months, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dallas Havert, 1203 Barr street, died yesterday at the family home being due to pneumonia following an illness of one week. Funeral services will be conducted at 10 o'clock Saturday morning, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Interment will take place in the Catholic cemetery.

JOSEPH HENRY*Ft. Wayne News ... September 1, 1897*

Joseph Henry, aged 31, died yesterday afternoon after a long illness. The deceased was a well known and popular farmer of St. Joe township. He leaves to mourn his loss besides a widow and one child, his aged father the following brothers: **John G.** of St. Joe township; **Frank and Peter** of Jefferson township, and **Julius**, foreman in the Pennsylvania shops in this city.

*Ft. Wayne News ... May 27, 1916***Mrs. Nicholas Louraine**

Mrs. Nicholas Louraine, age 67 years, died at 7:45 o'clock this morning at the home of her daughter, **Mrs. Herman Pranger**, 1213 Anthony Blvd. She was born in Stark county, Ohio Oct 21, 1849. She was married to Mr. Louraine April 19, 1866, and the mother of 8 children, all of whom survive, as follows: **Frank X.**, of Monroeville, **John E.** of Ft Wayne, **Charles N.** of Zulu, **Louis J.** of Jefferson township, **Mrs. Herman Pranger**, **Mrs. Bernard Pranger**, and **Mrs. Frank Wagner** of this city, and **Mrs. Louis Girardot** of Jefferson township. She is also survived by two sisters, **Mrs. Nora Rose**, and **Mrs. L Reynolds** and one brother, **Eli Monier**, also nineteen grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements have not been completed.

Mary Begue

Fort Wayne Sentinel, Jan 27, 1902**Mrs. Mary Begue**, for many years a resident of Allen county and a member of one of its prominent early families died suddenly just before noon today at her home, 162 East Wayne street. Mrs. Begue was 73 years of age and was the widow of John C. Begue, former county commissioner, who died 21 years ago. For several weeks the aged lady had been suffering from stomach trouble, and while her condition, coupled with the advanced age of the patient, made the case a serious one, none of her friends anticipated a fatal termination at this time and the shock was a severe one. The patient slept quietly during the entire forenoon and was still sleeping as other members of the family sat down to dinner. During the progress of the meal a slight gasp was heard from the patient's room, and hurrying to the bedside the friends found the feeble spark of life had gone out and the long and helpful life of the pioneer woman was at an end.

Mrs. Begue was born at Hartsonne, France, March 24, 1830, and came with her parents to America at the age of 13 years. They located first in Stark county, Ohio, but in May, 1848, removed to Jefferson township, Allen county, Ind, November 23, 1851, she was united in marriage to **John C. Begue**, for many years a prominent citizen of Allen county. They lived for a time in this city, then removed to Jefferson township, and later to New Have, where they resided for 21 years. In the fall of 1875 the family removed to Ft. Wayne. Mrs. Begue was very widely known and universally esteemed.

There are two surviving children: **Mrs. John Baker** and **Mrs. Alice Schoenbein**. There are also 3 brothers: **Anthony Beugnot**, of Paulding, O; **John Beugnot** of New Haven and **Charles Beugnot** of Mt. Vernon, Ga.

Mrs. Begue was a devoted member of the Cathedral congregation. Announcements of the funeral will be made later.

Mrs. Celina Boitet

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette ... Jan 19, 1916 Mrs. **Celina Boitet**, a resident of Allen county for nearly seventy years, died at the home of a friend, **Mrs. August Martin**, 529 Fourth street, yesterday morning, at the age of 74 years. Death was due to infirmities of age and followed an illness of several weeks.

The deceased was born in France, coming to this country and immediately to Allen county with her parents when she was 6 years of age. The family settled on a farm in Jefferson township, near Besançon where she had resided ever since. She was a widow of Francis Boitet who passed away in 1897.

She is survived by three sons, **Frank M.** and **John B.** of Fort Wayne and **Joseph** of Besançon, one brother, **August Pepe**, of Besançon. The deceased was a member of the St. Louis Catholic church at Besançon and the church societies of the same congregation. The remains have been removed to the Getz & Cahill parlors where funeral services will be held at an hour to be announced later.

GREMAUX

FT Wayne Weekly Sentinel ... May 17, 1916 **Andrew C. Gremaux**, aged 9 months, infant son of **Mr. and Mrs. Louis Gremaux**, of 1816 Eliza street died at the family home Sunday afternoon. The parents and a sister survive.

Funeral services Monday afternoon at 8 o'clock at St. Andrew's Catholic church. Interment at the Catholic cemetery.

Yester Year"... copied and submitted by Jane Morow



Ft. Wayne Sentinel ... February 2, 1910

Mr. and Mrs. Jules Sordelet entertained a company of their friends at their home seven miles north of the city last Saturday evening. A delicious supper was a feature of the entertainment. The guests were Misses **Irene and Nellie McQuiston, Angla and Florence Roy, Agnes Gillie, Lena Waggoner, Irene Bourer, Clara Dondero, Loretta Shank, Messrs Homer and Ralph Bowser, Meri and Gerald Waggoner, John Lloyd, Joe and Maurice Sordelet.**

Ft. Wayne Sentinel ... January 1, 1896

Saturday was the thirtieth anniversary of the birth of **Mr. Henry Coonrod** and in the evening a number of his friends surprised him by invading his home, in Jefferson township. The guests of honor were **Mrs. A. Havert and Miss Minnie Murphy** of Ft. Wayne. A few solos by **Mr. Poura**, of New Haven, and music by the Webster orchestra, added greatly to the pleasures of the guests. A sumptuous supper of five courses was served at midnight.

Ft Wayne Sentinel ... November 08, 1894

The St. Louis Catholic church at Besançon was the scene of a very pretty wedding, when **Miss Lucy Dignan**, of Maples, was married to **Mr. Thos J. Murphy**, ticket agent and operator at Besançon. Misses **Maggie Dignan and Rose Murphy** assisted as bridesmaids and the groom was attended by Messrs. **John Dignan and Jacob Munch**. The ceremony was performed by **Rev. T. H. LaBonia**.

ROUSSEY REUNION

Ft. Wayne News & Sentinel ... September 21, 1919 The second annual Roussey family reunion was held at the home of Mr. August white, on the Lima road, with 80 relatives in attendance. Those present were: **Mr. and Mrs. Louis Roussey and family, Mr. and Mrs. Will Roussey and family, Mr. and Mrs. John Roussey and family, Mrs. Amos Roussey, Mr. Emile Roussey, Mr. Frank Roussey, Mr. and Mrs. August White and family, Mr. and Mrs. Albert White and family, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence White and family, Louis White, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bobay and family, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bobay and family, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Benton and family, Mrs. Louise Wolf and family, Mrs. Addie Sovine, Mrs. Felia Meyers, Mrs. Albert Van Horn and family, Mrs. Joe Litts, Mr. and Mrs. August Romary, Mr. and Mrs. Clement Didier and family, Mr. August Willig and family, Mr. and Mrs. Felix Ladig and family, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Miller, Mr. and Mrs. John Hilt and family.** The next reunion will be at the home of Mr. Will Roussey in 1920. The officers elected for the coming year are: President, **August White**; secretary and treasurer, **Will Roussey**.

ROUSSEY AUTO TIRE CO.

We are putting on sale our entire tire stock of High Grade Tires, in which we have many wonderful bargains.

We want to make room for our new Roussey and Centilvre Rubber Company Tires, the price of which we will announce about September 15th, (1919) that will be pleasing to all auto owners.

More from Jane Morow ...



Ft. Wayne Journal Gazette ... June 29, 1907

Communion Celebrated

A class of forty two pupils received Holy Communion at the St. Louis church at Besançon Sunday, Rev. Alho, pastor of the church had a dinner served to the little folks after the communion services were over. A large number of people from Ft Wayne and Monroeville were present and the large church was well filled with people. The following boys and girls composed the class: Pearl Jacquay, Sarah Gerardot, Ethel Gerardot, Julia Ryan, Ruth Gladieux, Marie Lortie, Edith Ryan, Bertha Kennerk, Ada Ferry, Maud Ferry, Amelia Mourey, Gertrude Girardot, Clara Monnier, Mary Girard, Mary Reiner, and Agnes Bolyard. Felican Henry, Julian Roy, Bernard Henry, Henry Monnier, Elmer Overly, Steven Voirol, Clarence Ternet, Justin Rose, Francis Lomont, Francis Roy, Bernard Snyder, Clarence Pope, Charley Hughnard, Walter Bolyard, Sherman Gerardot, Frank Walter, Leonard Banet, Jennings Comment, Chester Comment, Clement Gladieux, Clestine Vanderley, Clarence Gerardot, Harvey Gerardot, Henry Roy, Frank Kennerk and Voirol. *(this is printed exactly as the paper gives it.)*

Ft. Wayne Sentinel ... February 09, 1910

Mr. and Mrs. George Townsend, who live near the city, entertainer a company of friends on Sunday. The guests were Frank Ternet and sons, Eugene, John and Soliman, and daughters, Celia, Clara, Ida and Louise, and the Misses Ada and Grace Emensher, Minnie Comment and Clarence Townsend, Ona Brickhold, Jenning Comment, Leslie and Cletus Ternet, Eugene Comment and Augusta Kleeberg, of Fort Wayne; Charles Ternet, Jr., wife and daughter, and William Townsend and wife.

Ft. Wayne Weekly ... August 6, 1879

STRAYED - - ABOUT JULY 1ST, A black cow, with white spot on front part of head; had a small bell on, Any information concerning the above will be thankfully received by JOS. LANGARD, 70 East Columbia street, or at the residence of Julian Martin, two miles north of Monroeville.

"Gene Yoquelet also contributed to Winter issue of French surnames and their home villages".

Gene has spent over twenty years researching many families of Allen County, mostly of the St. Louis parish, and is a dedicated worker towards the success of Besançon Historical Society.

*Mark
the
Year
Calendar*

BESANÇON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CALENDAR FOR 2008

The BESANÇON archives will be open the
first, third and fourth Wednesday of each
month for the Summer

Please call

Barb Gorney (260-490-6725)

or Gene Yoquelet (260-622-4067) to make an
appointment.

The hours are 9:30 A. M. to 12:00 Noon.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

payable, first of January

Individual - \$15.00

Family - \$20.00 Lifetime - \$200.00

send a check attn.:

Treasurer, Besançon Historical Society

All officers are on the Internet:

Let us know how we are doing!

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Editor's note: Received this via E-mail from Rita Scheel (ritascheel@yahoo.com) and wanted to pass it on to you ... She said: "I keep hoping that someday I'll open the computer and someone will have solved some of my brick walls".

"I came across new (at least to me) information about the **Jean Claude Girard and Gabrielle Reuille Girard family**. I found the ship manifest showing they arrived in America on 3 Jun 1853. They arrived from the port of Havre and went through the Castle Garden Immigration center in New York. The name of the ship was *Franchise*. The manifest lists Jean Claude, Gabrielle, August, Jean Claude Jr., and Jules Girard. Right above their names on the manifest, there are 5 Reuille names. I assume they are relatives of Gabrielle's.

The Reuille names were: Adolph, Stephanie, Jean Claude, Jules, and Maguerite."

Editor's Note:

We will continue copying the obituaries that **Jane Morow** has so graciously researched and printed out for us. They provide a wealth of information regarding the families of BESANÇON, plus the writing styles and comments of the paper make for interesting reading. I have left the spelling exactly as it appeared, although it is hard to resist make changes!

The Great Black Swamp was probably named by the War of 1812 soldiers unlucky enough to have to have pushed through, around or over it. One soldier who was lost in it told his commander he had "*wandered into the house of Satan*". Father Alexis Campion wanted to build an orphanage in Toledo, Ohio and traveled to Montreal to try and persuade the Sisters of Charity to open a facility in the region. He painted the Grey Nuns a grim picture of the area, with the malarial disease, that came from the stagnant pools and swamps found everywhere in the then unhealthy City giving it the name of "*Grave of the United States*". Not even the Indian tribes that have lived in the area for hundreds of years tried to invade the darkness. Just northwest of the swamp ran the Mighty Maumee river where the Indian lived with good fishing, hunting, and fertile land that they turned into corn fields, but none cared to enter The Swamp.

The pioneers that were going Westward in the late 1700's and early 1800's usually went around NW Ohio and the Swamp, and it remained unsettled until about 1830 when most of the good land East of the Mississippi had been taken. Then the pioneers began to look back at the Great Black Swamp. As the years went on more and more hardy settlers began to stake their claim, but those early homesteaders paid a dear price.

Mosquitoes were so bad in the warm months that heavy clothing had to be worn for protection, making the clearing of trees and brush even more sweltering. At night, settlers had to keep smudge pots in their cabins, burning all night, "*sleeping like so many hams in a smoke-house*". At the end of summer was the malarial illness, called ague, which went on for weeks and weeks. The Swamp took a mental toll on the settlers also. One settler was murdered by his wife for refusing to take her out of the Swamp. The brutal winter of 1842-43 broke the spirit of many, and by Spring found dozens of cabins empty, dead livestock lying all around.

Cutting down and clearing of the stumps was a slow, back breaking work, but with time and sweat much could be done. The major challenge was what to do with all that water? For the settlers to really claim the land the water had to be removed. Draining was the answer, dry land could be created by drainage ditches. This was a new thought to most of the pioneers, who had come from the eastern United States or Europe and had no experience with draining the land.

Draining was easier said and done and early efforts proved disastrous, as one farmer's would do a good job of getting the excess water off his land only to have it end up on his neighbor's. As time went on it became obvious there had to be a organized and systematic way if ever the Great Black Swamp was to be settled. "Ditch laws" went into effect and this gave the county the right to enter and if necessary seize the land for the ditch projects. The Black Swamp farmer soon learned that getting rid of the surface water was not enough, there had to

Carl Yearling Recalls ...

Continued from page five.

Reinhart and one of his sons, Conrad (Carl's father) helped build the road between Antwerp and Payne. They would plow the dirt road with horses, piling the dirt in the center. Then they laid poles or logs crosswise. These were often referred to as a 'corduroy road'.

Conrad Yearling carried on the farming tradition of his father, Reinhart. His adversities were equally as challenging. Conrad's first wife and brother succumbed to typhoid fever while his second wife died in childbirth. As he struggled to raise his children and farm, his hogs died of cholera, army worms destroyed his oats and horses were lost. Yet as time went by, life took a turn for the better. Conrad married Wilhelmina Zielke, and together they raised Conrad's children and had four of their own: Clara, Ede, Marie and Carl Yearling.

Today, Carl resided on a Paulding county farm with his wife, Betty and son, Jack. They live in the house that Reinhart built in 1892, directly from where the original log cabin once stood. One has to wonder what thoughts Reinhart would have if he could see the modern farms of today with row after row of cultivated crops. Would he recognize this area? The Great Black Swamp?



Carl Yearling was a life long resident of Benton Township, just south of Payne, Ohio. He was born in 1917 and has since passed away in 2000, after this was written. His sons, Mike and Jack still farm the family ground. Carl was a wealth of information on the early settlement of Payne. MMG

THE GREAT BLACK SWAMP continued from page 11.

The first underdrains were crude, sometimes nothing but saplings or stones laid in a trench and covered over. A longer lasting one to be found was two planks nailed together in the shape of a "V", then laid in a trench and covered. But the best for the under drainage would be clay tile; there were no tile factories anywhere near the northwest and the cost of bringing by clay by rail was beyond the means of all.

Once again, the Great Black Swamp proved to be worth it's weight, as in the 1860's it was discovered underneath the rich topsoil was a great bed of clay and by 1880 many, many clay tile factories could be found.

By the end of the century, the Great Black Swamp had been tamed, and there was little evidence to show what once covered the land.

It is interesting to note that the traditions of the past have strongly influenced our 6th and 7th generation Besançon farmers! Dr. Susan Arpad explains in the PBS documentary of 1983, "The Story of the Great Black Swamp":

"Settlement of the Great Black Swamp was ordinary in that the pioneer cleared the land of trees, built log cabins, hunted wild animals and their first economy was farming. It was extra ordinary experience because of the area's geography". There is sense of ownership of the land that comes from the generations before that poured them selves into the settling of the Great Black Swamp.