



Besançon Historical Society
The Chronicles

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Summer 2019

History of Besancon France & Besancon, Indiana

Researched & Written by Michael R. Morow

Presented by Mary Jane Novosel to the Rosary Sodality Feb.23 2019

Introduction

Some of you may know some of the story of Besancon France and Besancon Indiana, but even if so, I hope to give you new detail and insight from members of the Besancon Historical Society who have been researching your community for years. The existence of our pioneer families at this settlement was hard. Few left any record in writing -- most passed on little even by word of mouth. They had their hands full clearing this land and raising large families. But as we have pieced their history together, it is genuinely unique and fascinating.

French Background

Our French ancestors began to arrive here 20 years before the Civil War. They mostly came from the Jura mountain valley of the Franche-Comte region of east central France, near the Swiss border. These mountains are the northern extension of the Alps, creating a natural fortification of the valley. The major city along the river Doubs is Besancon. It is ancient, and was once a free city of the Holy Roman Empire, and the site of a great medieval cathedral. The countryside is forest. Rugged geography kept the area independent of both France and Switzerland. *And the vicinity is central to why France is called "first daughter" of the Catholic Church. The first area outside of Palestine to have an organized diocese of the Catholic Church, established in the 4th century.*

In the great 19th century novel *The Red and the Black*, Stendhal called Besancon "one of the most beautiful cities in France." Approaching it, Stendhal's hero Julien "could discern black walls on a faraway mountain: it was the citadel of Besancon." Julien was coming to be a priest, a way for a man of humble birth to advance. Yet viewing "the height of the walls, the depth of the moats, and the awesome appearance of the cannons" of Besancon, Julien instead starts dreaming of a future in the military: "If only I were coming to that noble fortified city, to become a second lieutenant in one of the regiments assigned to its defense!" Thus the novel's title--"the black" for the priest and the Church, "the red" for the military man. This title also neatly sums up the history of Besancon, itself.

While the ramparts Julien viewed were recent, built after Louis 14's conquest, Besancon was always a classic "natural fortress," at a spectacular bend of the river Doubs. It doubles back upon itself in the shape of a horseshoe, much like the bend of the Tennessee River at Chattanooga, Tennessee. A 360 metre high "mountain" lies in the horseshoe's open end, making another sort of natural barrier and defense. before the Romans. When Julius Caesar saw it, he wrote in his *Commentaries* of its strength from a military standpoint.

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President's Message ... Barbara Gorney

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What's new at Besancon Historical Society?

For one thing our extensive photo collection is almost digitalized by the Allen County Public Library. Curt Witcher has the last of the 1200 photos which will be placed on line for all to view. The pictures will have as much information that is part of the **Album in the Attic Collection**. This will include names, dates, relationships and any other notes that were given with that picture. The collection included a variety of subjects as weddings, confirmations, farms, cars, bridges, towns, schools and. animals.

The Album in the Attic was started by Father Thomas Lombardi who was interested in the history of St. Louis Besancon church. Besides photos, the archives has histories and pedigree charts that were donated by various people who either were members of the church or had families who had been early members. This project will be available on line for anyone looking for pictures of their families.

I was contacted by a member of the Allen County Genealogical Society in July. They were contacted by Martine Copeland who lives in New York but is a native of France. She wants to visit Fort Wayne because of the French families of which she has done extensive research. Since St. Louis is on the National Historical Register and has an active historical society, Curt suggested a visit to the church and archives. The date is set for some time in September.

Anyone with information on Besancon families whether it is pictures, newspaper articles, pedigree charts, etc. please feel free to contact any of the officers. We appreciate any follow up on the families that you may have and is not in our files.

Barbara

President Besancon Historical Society

Next Meeting of BHS will be October 5, Saturday in St. Agnes Atrium at 9:30 AM.

By 1040, Besancon's archbishop held civil powers from the distant Holy Roman Emperor. Besancon prospered with new surrounding towns; by 1290 it was an independent city-state free from absolute religious authority. In the 1300s, it had about 9,000 inhabitants, including surrounding villages, a sizable center of population. In my researches I found, in Allen County Public Library, in the 1333 archdiocese annals, a chevalier (ie, knight) named Guyon de Reuilley, my own French family name. This document contains many other names found in this parish. To have knights in 1333 shows these families must have been Catholic a hundred years, and likely much longer. Crusader Knights were prominent, founding a hospice for purposes both of caring for the wounded returning from the crusades and for hospice pilgrims. Each year on the feast of Saint Stephen, every knight had to make a donation equal in value to 10 coin and 9 measures of fine wheat, under pain of penalty of 3 extra coin." Town and rivers carry names of many families who came here, such as Lomont and Roussey.

Besancon's fortune waxed and waned, growing into a center of commerce, then hit by the "Black Death." The source of wealth it could always depend on was its wine. Where farming is possible, crops included wheat, corn, and grapes. The high mountain air is dry and windy, resulting in Beaujolais as the best wine product. City authorities fixed the day of the wine harvest, a great event. Everyone came in from outlying villages. As rural capital, Besancon was often full of livestock and farm animals entirely blocking traffic. Grain was grown in the villages and cattle grazed in the highlands, the area economy governed by Besancon officials. Novelist Stendhal describes the "white houses, with their steep red tiled roofs" of Jura valley villages. This territory became known as the "hundred villages," a whole economy in itself.

Banker-merchants arrived from Italy in 1535, and Besancon was suddenly a financial and credit center of Europe. But fortunes fell again, plague and famine returned, and war in the 17th century in the person of Louis 14. It was annexed to France in 1678, becoming a distant territory. So many bureaucrats followed Louis 14, it was said only wine growers were more numerous. One chronicler described Besancon as "detestable and full of civil servants." The French novelist Balzac groused: "No other town offers such deaf and dumb resistance to progress." But bear in mind that Balzac is a modern, and called Catholicism "depraved". I hardly have time today to outline how our great ancestral homeland of France has all but lost the Faith. But the real point is that *our* ancestors were of a completely different stripe than the modern French. This is most important to understanding this community.

The late history of the French monarchy is critical to understanding why our settlers came. In the 1600s, Cardinal Richelieu made deals with neighboring Prussia and Switzerland to protect France's borders: certain towns would be Catholic, others Protestant. This did not outlaw worship in one's faith, but made it quite difficult. One might have to travel several miles to the next village to go to church. Richelieu's idea was to keep Catholicism alive in other countries such as Germany. Yet this was hard for our ancestors. This is when the 1631 to 1643 war broke out, resulting finally in the 1678 annexation to France when Besancon surrendered to Louis 14 and his army.

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Then came drafting young men to the army, often at gunpoint. Then came the monstrous French Revolution in 1789. Whatever you may have heard in school, its aim was to destroy the Church. Catholic priests and religious were routinely executed. Atrocities occurred in villages. In one, Swiss mercenaries forced all Catholics into church, then set it on fire. The Jura Mts. *somewhat guarded* against the worst of the French Revolution, but economically and religiously still suffered. So now we can see a key factor leading to the early waves of French immigration here, especially given their long and fervent Catholicism.

But keep this in mind: immigration to Besancon, Indiana was a *separate* and *later* development from earlier French immigration to Vincennes or Fort Wayne. Immigration to such larger places resulted in quicker assimilation. But the smaller wave of immigration here has retained a clearer French imprint, to the present. I know of no rural church, in Indiana or elsewhere, with such a distinctive French Catholic interior as yours. Ordinarily one would have to go to New Orleans to see something like it. A recent visitor to the Jura area found a village church almost identical to Saint Louis Besancon. So every day, you can see what your ancestors strove to recreate.

Political and economic factors also explain why people from the Besancon, France area left. As the 19th century progressed, France remained unstable. Napoleon was overthrown, but there was a royal restoration, then *another* revolution in 1830. Then between 1830 and 1840 there were *fifteen* French governments. Napoleon's nephew Louis attempted to restore order, but finally failed. Bad harvests between 1844 and 1847 caused inflation, food shortages, and starvation. Unemployment skyrocketed in France, credit crashed in 1847, followed by a nation-wide business slump. Then came an "intellectual's revolution" in 1848.

The earliest date of French immigration here, to what was then called "New France," is 1840. For 20 years they continued to arrive. Priests fleeing France followed early French settlers as missionaries. Some wrote people still in France about America, and extended families would come. Some researchers believe the Society of the Propagation of the Faith fostered this settlement, but I have not seen that confirmed. There is strong evidence to the contrary, showing that the French who came here stopped elsewhere in America first.

But why come exactly here? Two factors stand out: (1) the availability of land here, coupled with (2) the old family farm system in France--it was extremely unlikely that anyone but the first-born son would inherit land. Yet by the crises of the 1840s, even first born-sons left in droves. Families had many children, and there was simply nowhere to open a farm in eastern France, and foreigners were pressing at the border. That so many came from such a conservative area speaks of a major upheaval going to the very roots of society.

Eastern Allen County was for the taking. Even after Fort Wayne was settled, out here remained wilderness. The government owned it, and sold it at extremely low prices, such as twelve dollars an acre in the mid-1800s. Swampland went for even less—and here in northern Jackson and Jefferson Townships was the famous "Black Swamp," the remains of a vast ancient lake. So, this time of settlement coincided with upheavals in France, and fleeing priests and settlers passed the word--cheap land was out here.

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Our Historical Society scholars have established that most Besancon settlers came somewhere else in America first, many from Stark County in east central Ohio. So often, the news about cheap land here was heard after arrival. Many, according to Professor Ralph Violette, were told this was a place they could quickly get very rich. But one mystery remains: how was it that so many ended up here from the same area in France? This may never be known.

Some of you may have seen the musical or the movie *Les Miserables*. It depicts a world in which a famous son of Besancon, novelist Victor Hugo, created a hero hounded all his life for stealing one loaf of bread. *Les Mis* is told in the sentimental manner of most 19th century fiction, but the appalling truth at its center is hardly sentimental or heartwarming. The old world, simply, had less than nothing left to offer, and no room left for many -- even the most able-bodied and willing to work. A way of life which had gone on for over a thousand years was at an end.

Agricultural Censuses

While discussing land and our first settlers, I want to highlight a fascinating and important piece of evidence--the United States agricultural censuses--separate and additional to general household censuses. The government every ten years made a very exact accounting of every farm. These records give a birds' eye view of our ancestors turning swamp into rich and productive farms.

As an example, let's look at records relating to my ancestor Joseph Reuille. This will dramatically illustrate the history of this land on which we meet today.

The 1860 census, the first we have, shows Joseph, age 46, had 40 acres improved, 40 unimproved, 5 milk cows, 2 working oxen, 1 other cattle, 1 horse, and 15 pigs worth \$175. He removed 160 bushels of wheat--the big Jura valley crop, by the way--and 150 bushels Indian corn, 18 bushels Irish potatoes. He produced 30 pounds of butter and 5 tons of hay. \$50 dollars worth of animals were slaughtered. His farm implements were worth \$25. The entire cash value of the farm was \$1,500.

In 1880, the last census for Joseph demonstrates he had acquired 80 acres since 1860, bringing the parcel up to its ultimate size of 160 acres--100 acres of tilled, 55 acres woodland, plus 5 acres "permanent meadows, pastures, orchards and vineyards" showing cultivation immediately around the house. He now had 7 horses, and 3 milk cows, 14 pigs, and 7 "other cattle." Joseph had acquired a new interest -- 70 barn-yard poultry--producing 450 eggs. He produced 680 bushels of wheat--500 more than in 1860--320 bushels Indian corn, 35 bushels oats, and 100 bushels Irish potatoes--4 times the 1860 number. Butter production was up to 155 pounds, hay production to 8 tons. 85 bushels of apples were removed from 125 trees. Joseph spent the highest amount for wages in his locale--\$95 in 12 weeks. The total farm value was \$6,000, and the value of the land itself \$6,000--both 4 times the 1860 values.

What is the big picture in these numbers? In his lifetime, Joseph Roy improved 100 acres of swamp land, improved both his farm and land value 400%, and created overall a mature, diversified 160 acre tract with farmhouse, established to sustain itself far into the future. This is not even to speak of having 12 children by two wives, all raised Catholic, plus helping his neighbors found and build this church which still stands. And he is just one example of the unspoken history here. They did not write to us, across time, but we have records to see what they accomplished.

To be Continued in the next issue of The Chronicles.

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

Dawson's Daily Times and Union
March 3, 1862

We extract the following description of the charge made by the 2nd Iowa Regiment, upon the fortifications of the Rebels at Fort Donelson, from a letter written by I.B.E. Hassler, a member of the regiment to his father, I.B. Hassler, of this city.

"We reached Cairo on Wednesday morning at ten o'clock A.M., after having a terrible time to get through the ice. In two hours we started to Paducah, arrived there at one o'clock at night, obtained a pilot and proceeded up the Cumberland river to Fort Donelson. On the morning of the 13th of February our fleet of 15 steamers approached within 2 ½ miles of that place, when we disembarked, formed our brigade and marched four miles by a circuitous route, where we met Gen. Grant's forces, then we halted and ate dinner, which consisted of a hard cracker and a slice of fat bacon. In a few minutes we were ordered to fall in line, then we were marched within half a mile of the enemy's position and encamped for the night, except our company and company A, which were ordered forward as skirmishers. When within 300 yards of the enemy we deployed and approached the edge of the woods, crept behind logs, and opened fire upon the secesh; soon they responded and the canon balls and grape came whistling over us like hail, but being good marksmen, we shot them down as fast as they mounted their breastworks, and silenced their guns—Night coming on, we were ordered to rejoin our regiment.

Next morning the 7th Iowa, one Indiana and one Illinois regiment engaged them on the right, and the fight continued for two hours, when the rebels were driven back to their entrenchments; our troops then retired with a heavy loss. During all this time we were lying in mud and water without anything to eat—expecting every moment to be called to charge upon the foe, but we were allowed to remain idle until about 10 o'clock at night. My comrade and myself saw a log cabin within two hundred yards of the enemy's batteries and six of us approached it to rest and sleep. Upon opening it we found a good fire, and ascertained that it had been occupied by the enemy's pickets. We had scarcely settled down to rest before a cannon ball came through it only two feet above us. This startled us; two more came but they did not strike the cabin. We laid down and slept sound until morning, when again joining our regiment, we remained inactive until 3 o'clock P.M..

LOST

Dawson's Daily Times and Union
March 3, 1862

On the road between New Haven and Fort Wayne, or in the City, a Leather Pocket Book, containing a few cents in cash and two Promisory Notes, one of \$1 95 in favor of Wm. Armatage, the other of \$7 in favor of Nicholas Lauren, and some other papers. The finder will confer a favor by leaving the same at this Office or with **Socrates Bacon**, Esq., New Haven. The public are cautioned not to purchase said notes. S. BACON
Feb. 27, '62 d3tpd

Friends of Besancon.....

Rick Maldeney, 69 passed away with the sacraments of the Holy Mother Church on November 15, 2018 in Missouri. Rick and his wife, Louann had come to BHS Archives last summer to research his family. **See Issue 66 Vol. 1 Summer 2018.** Had just traveled to France the month before to Besancon and neighboring villages to do research. Donated to BHS and gave BHS a poster of Besancon, France. Survived by his wife, Louann, 4 children and 5 grandchildren.

Mary Lou Rebecca Renier, 78, passed away June 6, 2019. (**Jacquay, Martin**). Member of St. John the Baptist Catholic church in New Haven. She was a Eucharistic Minister and served on the parish council, was Pro-Life Director for the Diocese of Ft. Wayne-South Bend and its' first lay teacher. Also was a case worker for Catholic social Services. Submitted her genealogy of the Jacquay and Martin Families **Issue 64, Vol.1 Summer 2017.** Preceded in death by her parents and 8 siblings. Survived by husband, Ron, 4 sons, 6 grandchildren. Burial St. Louis Besancon Cemetery.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

David & Judy Didier 815 Daron Ct., Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Connie & John Meine 5640 Countess Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46817

Darrel F. & Gwen Dodane 14915 Lincoln Hwy East, New Haven, IN 46774

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR DONATIONS TO BHS:

Father James Lothamer, John & Roseann Schreiber,

Michael Biesiada, Joan Johnson

Next Meeting of BHS will be Saturday October 5th 9:30 AM in St. Agnes Atrium

MISSION OF THE BESANCON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ARTICLE 11 - SECTION 2

The mission of the Besancon Historical Society of East Allen County, IN is to preserve, interpret and foster a deeper understanding of the history, heritage, and other culture of the rural community known as Besancon, Indiana, generally located in Jefferson Township, Allen County, Indiana, and which has as its central focus Saint Louis Catholic Church.

Established 1994

All Officers are on the Internet

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LOOK FOR BHS ON INTERNET

www.Besanconhistory.org

Yester Year—Continued...Obituaries Submitted by A.J. Morow

DIDIER

Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel, Wednesday January 11, 1905

Seated in a chair where he had sat down to rest after having taken a walk about the house, the lifeless form of **August F. Didier** was found at 8:30 o'clock Tuesday evening at the residence of his sister, Mrs. Mary Wichman, 916 Liberty street, with whom the young man had made his home. Didier was 31 years of age, and his death was due to Brights' disease, from which he had been suffering for some months. Recently the patient appeared somewhat improved, and he arose last evening to walk about the house, became exhausted and sat down to rest. A few minutes later Mrs. Wichman found her brother dead.

Mr. Didier was born in this city September 10, 1873, and was a popular and well known young man with hosts of friends. He was a member of the Cathedral congregation, and the surviving relatives include his mother, Mrs. Emeline Didier, of East Wayne street, and brothers and sisters as follows: Frank X., Joseph and Stephen Didier, Mrs. L McDonald and Mrs. Wichman of this city; and Mrs. Daniel McKendry, jr., of Chicago. J.E. Duffy, a grocer on East Columbia street, is a half-brother.

SARRAZINE

Journal Gazette, November 22, 1912

August Sarrazine, aged thirty-six years, a life-long resident of Allen county, died at eleven o'clock yesterday morning at the family home, 823 Eliza street, where he moved a short time ago, after retiring from the farm. Death was due to complications.

Mr. Sarrazine was a member of St. Vincent's Catholic church at Academie but since coming to this city he became a member of St. Mary's church. Surviving besides the wife are the mother and three children and the following brothers and sisters: Julues, Fred and Sylvester Sarrazine, of Fort Wayne; John Sarrazine, of Jefferson township; Charles Sarrazine, of Milan township, and Mrs.. Mary Berning of St. Joe township.

Funeral services Saturday morning at 9:30 o'clock at St. Mary's Catholic church.

Mary Lomont Gladieux

AGED FRENCH WOMAN DIES AT BESANCON

Mrs. Mary Gladieux, Widow of Late Francis Gladieux, Succumbs

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, 16, May 1922, p. 13

Mrs. Mary Gladieux, 77 years old, widow of the late Francis Gladieux, died at 1:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon at her home at Besancon on the Lincoln highway, 10 miles east of this city. Mrs. Gladieux was born in Besancon, France, May 20, 1844. A complication of disease caused her death. She was ill two weeks.

Mrs. Gladieux came to Allen county with her parents when she was nine years old, and had lived in this county since. She married Francis Gladieux in August 6, 1862. Mr. Gladieux died October 17, 1916. She was a member of the St. Louis Catholic church at Besancon, the Rosary and Altar societies.

Surviving are six children, Louis S. Gladieux, of New Haven; A.C. Gladieux, of Fort Wayne, Edward Gladieux of New Haven, Mrs. Emmett Ternet, of Besancon; 31 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren, one brother, Alphoso Lomont, of Besancon, and one sister, Mars. August Lallow, of Fort Wayne.

Funeral services will be held at 8:30 o'clock Thursday morning at the residence, at 9 o'clock at the St. Louis Catholic church, Rev. Nicholas Allgier officiating. Burial will be made in the church cemetery.

JOSEPH CHARLES DODANE/FLORA A. PEPE GENEALOGY

Submitted by Gene Yoquelet

JOSEPH CHARLES DODANE, b. 1 Jan. 1860, pl Allen Co., IN d. 28 March 1933, pl Allen Co., Son of **Joseph Marcellin Dodane** and **Caroline Pequignot**, residents of Allen Co., Jefferson Twp.

FLORA ALICE PEPE, b. 25Sept. 1870, pl Allen Co., IN Washington Twp. d.2 Dec. 1937, pl Allen Co., daughter of **Louis Pepe** and **Marie Petigney**, residents of Washington Twp., Allen Co.

Marriage date: 7 January 1890. Pl Allen Co.

Burial: Saint Louis Cemetery, Besancon, IN, Allen Co.

CHILDREN:

BLANCHE ELISABETH b. 6 Oct. 1890, pl Jefferson Twp. d. (church rec. 30 July 1892) with burial in the church cemetery.

CLARA EVA b. 27 April 1893, pl Jefferson Twp. d. 12 Oct. 1970, pl Allen Co. Married **Leonard R. Mourey**, 5 Oct. 1915, Allen Co. Burial St. Louis Cemetery, Besancon.

FLORENCE MAE b. 19 July 1895, pl Jefferson Twp. d. 29 May 1979, pl Allen Co. Married **Albert E. Momper** 9 June 1919, Allen Co. Burial, St. John Cemetery, New Haven, IN

JOSEPH LOUIS b.15 Sept. 1897, pl Jefferson Twp. d. 11 June 1968, pl Allen Co. Married **Margaret T. Kaufmann**, 22 Feb. 1938, St. Peters Catholic Church, Ft Wayne, IN Burial Saint Louis Cemetery, Besancon.

JOHN WALTER b. 20 Oct. 1899, pl Jefferson Twp. d. 23 Aug. 1900, Burial St. Louis Cemetery.



Joseph Charles & Flora (Pepe) Dodane
Grandparents of Darrel F. Dodane



Joseph Louis & Margaret (Kaufmann) Dodane
Parents of Darrel F. Dodane

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET PAID

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MEMBERSHIP DUES—PLEASE PAY**Individual---\$15.00****Family-\$20.00 Lifetime-\$200.00****Send a check Attn: Eugene Yoquelet
Treasurer, Besancon Historical Society****616 Highland
Ossian, IN 46777**

*The archives will be open by appointment only
Please Call*

Barb Gorney (260)490-6725

Or

Gene Yoquelet (260)622-4067

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