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DUNELAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Bailly Town – Our Historic French Heritage  
By Olga Mae Schiemann

Do you like true stories of early American life? of traders bartering their wares with the Indians for precious furs? and particularly of the saintly Fathers and plumed sons of the grand families of France, extending their explorations into the great interior of our continent, with all the thrilling adventure you can imagine? Such is the picturesque historical heritage of Bailly Town, Indiana.

Bailly Town is inland just a bit from the southernmost part of Lake Michigan, on the old Chicago-Detroit Road, or the Little Sauk Trail of the Indians, and is the precise historical hallowed spot of this region. Here, the first white settler of northern Indiana chose to make his home among the Indians while it was still Indian territory. Here Christian religious services were held for the Indians for the first time in northwestern Indiana, and here, today, incredible as it may seem, for a distance of a mile and a half between the lake and Bailly Town, can be found acres and acres of the same untouched primitive forests once inhabited by those early people. Bailly Town is in its natural early setting.

If one can recognize them, there are the narrow and deep trails of red men of long ago. In the mid-day sun, we cut across a pretty woodland, with our minds intent on the present chore and memory of the city din still in our ears – we are conscious of living today. But if by chance we have the good fortune to be abroad, alone in the woods late on a full moonlight night, then it is, whether we will or no, [that] the early Indian and trapper days reclaim the forest. There is no sound but the buzz of insects, the occasional hoot of a distant bird, and the crackling of sticks and leaves underfoot. Today slips away. We are back in those early days, and in the soft blue-green moon-light, scan the dim distances for the familiar figures of our friends the Pokagons, Shawbenay\* and his boy Smoke, or listen for the laugh and chanson of the lusty coureur-des-bois\* in the employ of Trader Bailly nearby. We know they are there.

Or, should you prefer the Revolutionary period, these were the trails between the lush and isolated Illinois settlements of the early French and their British headquarters at Forts Mackinac and Detroit.

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The log cabins used by the Trader Bailly and the Indians are still standing in their original locations at the Homestead, reduced in size as the old timbers rotted with age, but still containing some of the original wood. There is also the three-story mansion, designed and built under Mr. Bailly's direction but not completely finished at the time of his death in 1835.

Amazing, it was, indeed, to find a home of such proportions in those early forests, far from a village of any description, and also to find there the four lovely and cultured Bailly daughters who spoke the Indian, English and French languages fluently; and the eldest daughter, easily and rapidly, translating the Latin mass of the early travelling priests such as Father Badin\* and Father Rezé\*, for the benefit of the rapturous and intent Indians sitting about on the floor. There was a piano and the daughters were trained in music, voice and instrument.

Joseph Bailly, head of the household, was born at Ste. Anne de Varennes in Canada in 1774 and was christened Honoré Gratien Joseph Bailly de Messein. At the age of nineteen years, he began his career in the fur trade at Mackinac and not long afterward, his assigned trading area covered all the southern Lake Michigan region from the Grand River to Chicago with four trading headquarters located at Grand River, St. Joseph, Kickabimazoo and Markegan\*. It is recorded that he had made at least a number of trading trips to Chicago before the Fort Dearborn massacre of 1812\*. He was familiar with every inch of the ground, stopping at the little Indian villages along the way to trade and was acquainted with all, white and red men alike, in the area.

With a history of seven generations of his ancestors fighting for the supremacy of the Quebec government in the Great Lakes area, he fought again for the rights of his people in the War of 1812 on the side of the British, "attached," as he said, "not only from principle but also by birth". He armed the Indian nations of Miami, Pottawatomis, Ottawas and Kickapous, among whom he had influence, and encouraged them to fight with the British. In December of 1813, however, he was captured by Jean Bte [Baptiste] Chandronnet\*, Isaac Burnett and B. Ducharme at his headquarters on the St. Joseph River and taken to Detroit, where he was imprisoned three months. When asked in what manner he was taken, he replied: "I was not well at the time and the Party came upon me by surprise. Chandronnet presented his Pistols at me and Burnett told me I was his prisoner in the name of the United States."

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At the conclusion of the war, Joseph Bailly resumed trading at his Parc aux Vaches\* headquarters, present day Niles, Michigan, and became an American citizen in 1818. Here on the St. Joseph river he had known intimately the Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy, the leading Pottawatomi chiefs, and travelling Catholic priests; but with the Treaty of 1821, when the Indians relinquished that territory, Joseph Bailly and the other members of his family, receiving money under the treaty in lieu of land which they preferred, but were denied, moved their household to the site on the Little Calumet River in Indiana shown on early maps as "Bailly." There was no other settlement in all the lake area, and as required in those early days, he had to secure permission of the Indians in order to settle there permanently.

Confident of the rich future of America, he became the owner of 2,220 acres of land in sections and part-sections along the Chicago-Detroit Road and on the Little Calumet River between present day Miller and Tremont. This was patently an investment in land which he intended to hold for later development. He established and recorded the town called Bailly Town, and advertised the sale of lots in the Chicago Democrat, December 17, 1833. He did not operate a tavern in his home, but occasionally would accommodate passing strangers. More often he would supply them with food and allow them to use one of the log houses or to camp nearby on his premises.

Joseph Bailly had great executive ability, was educated, successful, and had many influential friends; but his life, though interesting, was the story of daily trials and excitements of a fur trader and soldier among the Indians. He lived at a period when the least said about himself and his family seemed to be the better course. The brilliant and glorious deeds of his French ancestors in America were of little interest to the British lords of his day. His loyalty to his mother country brought enmity and worse from life-long friends who, though British officers, surprisingly to him, easily and quickly shifted their allegiance to the popular American side. His seemingly tardy pledge of citizenship to the United States, though sincere, carried a burden of suspicion among the traders as to his motives and was not eulogized.

However, from earliest times, the historic family remained loyal to the soil of its adoption and its sons were faithful and exemplary soldiers throughout the years, whatever the existing régime. This is the remarkable thing – the almost unparalleled family record of achievement, the personal importance, and benevolence of so many Bailly ancestors and relatives in French American history, both in Government and the fur trade down to

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the present day. Some of his ancestors, at different periods, had exclusive charge of all fur trading in Canada and our middle west. Radisson and Des Groseliers, in preparing to go to Hudson's Bay in 1682-83 to trade with the Indians and secure the area for France from the claims of the British, applied to M. Colbert for assistance, and were directed to see De La Chesnaye\*, who was the great-great grandfather of Joseph Bailly on both maternal and paternal sides of his family. De La Chesnaye outfitted both expeditions. This De La Chesnaye is not to be confused with Du Chesneau, Intendant of Canada. At Quebec in 1620, an earlier De La Chesnaye's boat drew up alongside the ship which brought Governor Champlain\* to Canada, as related by Champlain himself in his volume of 1632. In 1692, the fourteen-year-old sister of a Bailly ancestor held off an Indian attack for a week, which is even to this day one of the best known historical stories of Canada.

Joseph Bailly's French Canadian grandfather, Capt. Ignace Phillippe Aubert de Gaspé, and Louis Coulon de Villiers, brother-in-law of Aubert and Commander of the expedition, fought under the French flag, defeating the Virginians at Fort Necessity, thus avenging the death of Jumonville, brother of Coulon de Villiers and also grand-uncle of Joseph Bailly. In giving an account of the taking of the Fort, De Villiers said: "On the 4<sup>th</sup> (of July, 1754) at the dawn of day, I sent a detachment to take possession of the fort. The garrison defiled; and the number of their dead and wounded excited my pity, in spite of the resentment which I felt for the manner in which they had taken away the life of my brother."

Other family names were Robert Giffard, Physician Ordinary to the King, constantly referred to in early Canadian history and first person to receive a Canadian Seignory; Pierre Boucher, Governor of Three Rivers, who successfully pleaded for aid before the French King for the struggling Canadian settlements and at the King's suggestion wrote what is sometimes called the first book about Canada. (Its purpose was to encourage migration to America and, in addition, the King sent his famed Carignan Regiment to Quebec.) Jacques le Neuf de la Potherie was a Bailly ancestor; and Perrot, commanding for the King in 1689 at the Post of the Nadouëssious, commissioned by the Marquis Denonville "to manage the interests of commerce among all the Indian Tribes and people of Green Bay, the Dahkotahs, Mascoutins, and other western nations of the Upper Mississippi, and to take possession in the King's name of all the places where he has heretofore been, and whither he will go;" also the Denys, the Juchereaux and Verchères, all prominent names in early French Canadian and American history.

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When Joseph Bailly died in 1835, he was buried beside his son in the private burying ground of the family at the top of a low hill rising from the south side of Highway 12 in Baileytown, Indiana, easily seen from automobiles passing along the highway. For one hundred thirty years a huge cross has marked the spot. (Baileytown is a present-day corruption in spelling)

Joseph Bailly's metisse [métis]\* wife, Marie, who died in 1866, was the last of the early Indians in northwestern Indiana. Until her death, groups of friendly Indians visited at the Homestead, occupying the log cabins and putting up their wigwams on grounds used by their ancestors from time immemorial. Here the few remaining Indians could enjoy once again the old way of living amid the familiar scenes of their fathers. They harvested a supply of maple sugar in the maple grove and even tanned an occasional hide as described by Francis Howe in a letter when she was a little girl: "Golden Bag is having a deer skin dressed here and Grandma is showing them how. It don't smell a bit nice. Ma says it smells like the thing it is. I think it would not hurt him if they gave Grandma a pair of moccasins but I don't believe they will."

Joseph Bailly and his descendants had so little to say about the family that, for some years after his death, historically speaking, it was almost entirely forgotten in the community; but the truth is that each little item in this paper, among others, is a fully documented historical fact.

Bailly Homestead, alone, in all this southern Lake Michigan area, carries the natural original setting and atmosphere of the early French among the Indians and represents through its Bailly family the last vestige in this part of the country of the old French regime in America, brought down to our day. It is a monument to the earliest white men who trod our shores, Perrot, Marquette, Joliet, LaSalle and Tonti, – not for Bailly Town alone, not for Duneland and Indiana alone, but the heritage and souvenir of the past for all the middle west. It behooves us to cherish the memory of our earliest beginnings and to preserve, as far as possible, their visible mementos.

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(Based on an earlier paper “From a Bailly Point of View.” [1952, DHS paper August 1955])

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Page numbers referenced in these End Notes are the pagination of the updated edition, not the original. Although Miss Schiemann was not a native speaker of English, she had a good command of English and, quite likely, of French. At several points in the above text, however, she has omitted commas to set off lengthy parenthetical phrases, leading to a lack of clarity. I have therefore inserted several commas in these sentences; the wording, spellings of names and punctuation are otherwise her own.

– Jim Nelson, Historian, Duneland Historical Society, July 2019.  
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**Page 1:** Olga Mae Schiemann, 1896 – 1987, was born in Lanzen, East Prussia, Germany on 22 May 1896 and came to the US in June 1914, just 2 months before the outbreak of World War I. She was a member of the Duneland Historical Society and a longtime resident of Chicago. At the time this article was written, Ms. Schiemann lived on Blackhawk Street in Old Town, near the intersection of North Avenue and N. Sedgwick St. At one time she was personal secretary to the president of People's Gas, Light & Coke Co. in Chicago. Ms. Schiemann authored this article and “Roads Across Old Bailly Town.” She died in Aurora, Ill. on 21 Jan 1987.

coureur-des-bois: – an independent, entrepreneurial French-Canadian trapper, traveling the interior of N. America, usually to trade with First Nations peoples by exchanging European items for furs, ca. 1610-1715.

Shawbenay: [Shabbona / Shabonee, 1775-1859, born in Ottawa tribe, Potawatomi chief. His tribe were given 1,200 acres in present-day DeKalb County ca. 1815, and forced to leave Illinois in 1836, during Andrew Jackson's presidency.] – [On April 27<sup>th</sup>] Mr [James Hutchinson] Woodworth, of the federal House of Representatives, submitted a resolution in the House, signed by 35 citizens of Chicago & vicinity, “asking Congress to make restitution to the aged Indian Chief, Shawbenay, for lands sold by the U.S., which had been reserved for his use by treaty concluded by the united nations of Chippewa, Ottawa and Pottawatomie Indians July 29, 1820.” *The Alton Weekly Courier*, May 7, 1856.

Father Badin: Father Stephen Badin, frontier missionary, 1768 – 1853, the first Catholic priest ordained in the United States. Born and raised in France, he was ordained in Baltimore in 1793. Father Badin ministered for many years to scattered French settlers, and for 7 years the Potawatomi, in present-day Michigan and Indiana, 1830-37. He is buried in the replica of a log chapel he originally built in 1831, at the age of 63, on his own 530-acre tract of land on St. Mary's Lake, now on the grounds of the University of Notre Dame in South Bend. Father Badin sold the land when he left northern Indiana in 1835, with the stipulation that the land be used for a religious establishment. That establishment became Notre Dame University, where Badin Hall is named for him.

Father Rezé: Bishop Friedrich Johann Conrad Rese, 1791-1871, first Catholic Bishop of Detroit, 1833-1871, although he began to suffer dementia in 1840 and remained titular Bishop of Detroit until his death.

Kickabimazoo and Markegan: older Native American names for Kalamazoo and Muskegon, Michigan.

**Page 2:** Fort Dearborn Massacre, technically the Battle of Fort Dearborn, Aug. 15, 1812. Under threat of Native American attack, Fort Dearborn was evacuated on Aug. 14. The evacuees consisted of 66 soldiers and militiamen, 9 women and 18 children. They were escorted by Capt. William Wells and ca. 30 friendly Miami warriors. The attack came on August 15, when this group was 1 ½ miles south of the abandoned fort [the site of the present-day intersection of Michigan Avenue and Roosevelt Road]. In the brief battle, 52 were killed, including 38 military, two of the women, and 12 children. Since only 15 Potawatomi warriors were killed, the event was first referred to as a massacre. The fort was rebuilt in 1816. The last buildings were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1871.

Jean Bte [Baptiste] Chandonnet: Jean Baptiste Chandonnet / Chandonia, 1789-1837, son of a French fur trader and a Potawatomi Indian woman, was born in what became Allen County, Indiana. He was an army scout for the American army during the War of 1812, and reportedly for the British army later. Chandonnet was one of the survivors of the Fort Dearborn Massacre. In 1832 he was part of the work party that began construction on the Michigan Road, connecting Lake Michigan with the Ohio River.

**Page 3:** Parc aux Vaches, or “cow / buffalo pasture”, at the intersection of the Sauk Trail and the Miami Trail, approx. halfway between present-day Niles, Michigan, and South Bend, Indiana. In the early 1800s it was the site of a trading post populated by French-Canadians, Potawatomi and other Native American tribes. It was from their work here that Jean Baptiste Chandonnet recognized Joseph Bailly when Bailly, a British loyalist at the time, was captured by American forces (page 3).

**Page 4:** De La Chesnaye: probably refers to Charles Aubert de La Chesnaye, 1632-1702, prominent French-Canadian businessman.

Governor Champlain: Samuel de Champlain, 1567-1635, was appointed the second Governor of New France (1632-35) by King Louis XIII.

**Page 5:** métis – métis, a culturally distinct group of people in Canada and the north central US. “Métis” is french for “mixed blood”. The métis are mostly of French-Canadian and First Nations/Native American ancestry, though some are Scottish and native North American. The male line is mostly European, originating with the union of a French or Scottish trapper/voyageur marrying a native North American woman. There are ca. 590,000 métis in Canada, mostly in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and an unknown number in the US, mostly in eastern Montana, N. Dakota, Minnesota, Upper and Lower Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana. The métis languages are primarily a mixture of French or Scottish Gaelic and tribal languages – Algonquian, Cree, Cherokee or Chippewa.