



## Perry Farm

Bourbonnais Township Park District  
Three Bay English Barn  
459 N Kennedy Drive  
Bourbonnais, Illinois 60914

**Quilt Block:** Shutter

**Original Owners and/or Builders:** Thomas Durham

**Age of Barn:** Built in the late 1830's or early 1840's

**Current Owner:** Bourbonnais Park District

**Interesting History/Information:**

- **Perry Farm Park Living History Area**

The Perry Farm Living History Area is part of the ongoing preservation of the Perry Farm property by the Park District. The Living History Area is located in the front of the park and consists of the Perry Farm House, a 25-foot by 35-foot horse barn, an English barn and farm animals.

The Perry Farm House was built in the 1830s by Thomas Durham, the first American settler of the property. Durham's daughter and her husband, David Perry, remodeled the house in 1855. The upstairs of the farm house contains much of the original circa 1840 woodwork, architectural hardware and original Norfolk door latches.

The downstairs retains circa 1855-70 integrity associated with the remodeling. The structure of the farm house is much like other houses of its day with a stone fireplace, spacious living area, small kitchen and second story. Several artifacts from the late 1800's and early 1900's are on display in the house.

The Three Bay English Barn dates back to the late 1830's or early 1840's and is believed to have been built by Durham before the farm house. The barn is currently undergoing restoration under the supervision of the Perry Farm Living History Advisory Committee. The committee is made up of local residents dedicated to preserving the history of the Perry Farm.

The horse barn has its entrance in the gable end walls which face the house and yard. It was constructed shortly after the Three Bay English Barn during the early to late 1840's and was constructed with the same traditional heavy timber construction techniques as the English Barn.

A variety of farm animals on the Perry Farm are a popular attraction at the park. Most animals are on site all year. Although the animals will eat most anything, visitors wishing to feed the animals are asked to utilize the feed machines that are placed in various locations around the animal corrals. The feed in the machines contain nutrients that are part of a well balanced diet for the animals.



- **Perry Farm House**



The Perry Farm House, circa 1866, serves as a Visitor's Center and provides classroom and office space for the Park District. Information is available in the farm house on Park District programs and special events as well as other recreational opportunities and community events. Registrations for Park District classes

and recreation programs are accepted during office hours and a drop off box is also located on the west porch, near the parking lot, for after hours program registration convenience.



### ***The History of Perry Farm***

The artifacts of the Perry Farm represent a heritage left behind by the pioneering families of Thomas Durham, a Virginia Quaker who settled with his family on the farm in 1835, and his son-in-law, David Perry, a Vermont stone mason and farmer.

Thomas Durham is remembered by historians, as the first "American-born" settler in the Bourbonnais Grove. This was to distinguish Durham from the French Canadian settlers who lived in Bourbonnais Grove at the time he arrived. Durham is buried on the Perry Farm.

### ***Durham Perry Farm Treasures-a look back in time...***

- Up until 1816, the Illinois Territory was sparsely settled. Most of the population lived in the southern part of the state.
- After the War of 1812, however, when the Indians of the territory gave up claim to large tracts of lands, emigrants began pushing northward from southern states.
- For Virginia-born Thomas Durham, the urge to move north may have been motivated by his Quaker background and his dislike of slavery.
- Thomas Durham arrived in Bourbonnais Grove in May 1835. When Durham arrived with his family of five daughters and four sons, the Potawatomi built him a wigwam of boughs.

Written and Made Possible by Vic Johnson, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society and Francis DuVoisin

## *Lomira Perry's Dream*

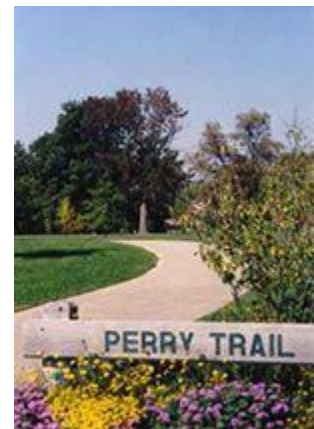
Lomira Perry's vision for the future of Perry Farm is becoming a reality. When the State of Illinois inherited the 170-acre piece of land from the will of Perry, plans for the future were uncertain. Ms. Perry's will provided that at least 40 acres be used for a park that would have the name 'Perry' as part of it. But, the questions arose from the community: Who would maintain the property? Would it be developed or left in its natural state? The possibilities were endless, but Miss Perry pointed the direction.

The struggle for control of Perry Farm rose to the surface in *The Daily Journal* in the May 9, 1985 article, "There's a will: Way sought to get Perry project untracked," when the Kankakee County Convention and Visitors' Bureau and the Bourbonnais Township expressed opposing ideas for the development of the property. According to this article, "The land was willed to the State by Lomira Perry to be used as a park and recreational facility, kept in its natural setting with a part to be developed commercially to finance the natural and recreational portions."

The Bourbonnais Township feared that the development of the land would over-commercialize the area, making residents unhappy. Township supervisor Larry Power told reporters, "I still have a gut feeling there are people who want it [the Perry Farm] developed commercially, and the residents already said they don't want that."

Kankakee County Convention and Visitors' Bureau president Doug Neison and executive board member Francis Ciaccio told *The Daily Journal* in the same article, "The Convention and Visitors Association feels strongly that the properly structured setting – let's say an authentic Indian village or French settlement or working farm or a combination – would bring, literally, hundreds of thousands of visitors here."

The Illinois Department of Conservation decided in November 1985 that it was willing to give the Perry Farm to a new park district representing the Bourbonnais Township area. This was excellent for the Township, but the decision outraged the Kankakee River Valley Forest Preserve (KRVFP),



which was formed in 1986 to protect area forest lands in their natural forms. When they learned of the proposed Park District's wish to maintain the property as a natural and historic preserve and set aside some of the land for public recreation, the KRVFP felt that such development fell under its own jurisdiction.

The Department of Conservation required a full plan for development of the land to be submitted for approval before it would give ownership to a local government body. The KRVFP still had a chance to obtain the land. All that was necessary was to submit a better development plan to the Department of Conservation.

A mere nature preserve was not what the forming park district had in mind. In response to a Daily Journal survey of community wants and wishes, the Park District created a proposal to satisfy those desires as well as setting aside a portion of the property as a Nature Preserve. They expanded Ms. Perry's wish of 'forty acres to be set aside to be used as a park' into the entire 170 acres being used as a park.



In the March 29, 1987, Daily Journal article, "Can forest preserve, park district share Perry Farm future," Illinois Association of Park Districts executive director Ted Flickinger said, "They're [a forest preserve and a park district] not designed for the same purposes. A forest preserve is a resource management agency. It's more geared to the preservation of land.

They're not into building recreational facilities like a park district [is]."

The same article said, "The park district has informed the State that it is committed to protecting, preserving and developing the Perry Farm as a recreation facility consistent with park purposes without any commercialization of the property." The park district sought to realize Lomira Perry's dream and to comply with the terms in her will.

After a long struggle, the State awarded the property to the Bourbonnais Township Park District, which had been formed a year earlier.

Bourbonnais Township attorney Mark Steffen said in a letter to the editor in the November 3, 1986 Daily Journal, "The Department of Conservation has stated that 'the idea of a park district has been studied, and it was felt that this would be the most feasible method of obtaining the capital and the operational funds necessary to preserve the Perry Farm as open space for recreational use only."

When Lomira Perry died in 1961, she willed lifetime farming rights to Francis DuVoisin. DuVoisin had been a close friend of the Perry family since his family moved to the area in 1924. The back section of the farmhouse was DuVoisin's home for 66 years.



An agreement was reached with Mr. DuVoisin for the Park District to purchase his life estate interest in the property. DuVoisin decided that it was best to think of Perry Farm's future.

In 1989, the Bourbonnais Township Park District took over title and ownership of the property. However, Mr. DuVoisin still keeps 'Francis' Garden' on the property near the barns. He and his wife, Anne Marie, can be found working many mornings and his famous hollyhocks can be seen and enjoyed by many visitors to the property.

Now, the development of the Perry Farm Park began in earnest. The Park District has met and surpassed its goals for realizing Lomira Perry's vision for the Perry Farm. With trails through beautiful natural scenery and near the flowing Kankakee River, the open spaces for recreation, the restored and preserved farm house and barns, Exploration Station®... a children's museum and a large biological and geological area, one should not be disappointed with the outstanding work that the Park District has done over the past years.

### **Quilt Block History – Shutter**

This pattern is a version of the *Eight Point Star* pattern. I could not find anything on this block...when I “Google” the Perry Farm Block came up...which was really neat. It is another version of the eight point star with modifications to resemble the *Shutter*.