

## CRITICAL PRESERVATION WORK UNDERWAY



Wisconsin Antiques Dealers Association funded a textile rolled storage cabinet & hygrometers



The house's asbestos-containing vermiculite insulation was abated in December



Footings & jack posts were installed and soil contact with joists mitigated in the crawl space

"It has been said that, at its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future." — William Murtagh, first Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

Two components arguably combine to form the driving force of grass-roots historic preservation projects. First is the enthusiasm which comes from physically experiencing a place where you can connect important stories of the past with their actual three-dimensional setting. The second component is a sense of responsibility to keep that history — and its enduring physical setting — alive for the next generation to experience.

Taking ownership of the particularly weighty narrative with which the Historic Indian Agency House is endowed, the NSCDA-WI and grass-roots friends of the museum have diligently invested in this responsibility for the past 92 years.

Preservation efforts continue today as we evaluate and address the ever-developing needs of the 1832 structure and its artifact collection. Strategic planning and prioritized remediation measures are currently underway on several fronts.

In an effort to exclude water from the structure more effectively, we have thus far replaced malfunctioning gutters, remedied sump pump problems, sealed openings, repainted the house trim, replaced the exterior cellar doors which were no longer keeping out water, repaired disintegrated portions of window frames and

sills, installed window louvres in the basement, and regraded/removed soil in

### THIS IS HISTORY WORTH REMEMBERING AND PERPETUATING

the crawlspace that was in contact with floor joists and contributing to moisture transfer and decay.

In addition, we have installed access ports to the building's front crawlspace and placed footings and jack posts beneath an under-supported area of the floor. Consultations on approaches to structural humidity and climate control have been helpful as we work on formulating an effective long-term plan.

We have also been able to obtain support through the Zonolite Trust's asbestos abatement 55% reimbursement program to remove vermiculite insulation from the structure's attic and replace it with non-hazardous insulation. Much additional preservation work remains on the docket. Needs will continue to be prioritized and methodically addressed.

As we have undertaken these projects, the need for a central source of past structural information has been underscored. Thus, when specific preservation needs arise, the

historical research into the structure's original state and information on changes since the time of construction has already been completed and organized. We have gradually been compiling an extensive document and photo database detailing information from past restoration and preservation efforts, as well as historical information on the structure as far back as possible. Having this material consolidated in one place will prove indispensable to preservation endeavors now and in the future.

What made the house's preservation worthwhile from the start still makes it worthwhile today. In the words of Bertha Holbrook, whose organizational skills contributed to the success of the initial 1930s initiative to rescue and preserve this extraordinary house, "This is a history worth remembering and perpetuating."

*Juliette Kinzie's memoir, Wau-Bun: The "Early Day" in the Northwest, vibrantly portrays her firsthand experiences as the wife of an Indian agent at this historic site. The addendum of the 2021 Historic Preservation Edition of this memoir details the story of the Agency House's rescue and restoration during the Great Depression, as well as its intriguing story since that time.*

[www.agencyhouse.org/wau-bun](http://www.agencyhouse.org/wau-bun)



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# WAU-BUN EXPRESS

THE HISTORIC INDIAN AGENCY HOUSE

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## CANOES IN THE NEWS

In early 2019, UW-Madison history major Ryan Smazal visited the Agency House to document our site's 1880s dugout canoe. Smazal's senior thesis project eventually blossomed into the Wisconsin Dugout Canoe Survey Project, now spearheaded by UW-Madison professor of archaeology Sissel Schroeder and Wisconsin Historical Society maritime archaeologist Tamara Thomsen. Thomsen may be a familiar name to those who have followed the excavation of two historic Indigenous dugout canoes from the bottom of Lake Mendota in Teejop (Four Lakes, or Madison). Thomsen was the diver who discovered the submerged vessels.

On May 2, Schroeder and Thomsen digitally scanned the Agency House canoe, one of more than fifty dugout

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## IN MEMORY - IN HONOR

This spring, special contributions were made to dedicate this season in memory of Nancy Kamlukin, Carole Nye, Edward (Ted) Rebholz; and in honor of Dr. Anne Vravick, Bobbie Goodman, and Métis First Nation; in addition to those already named in March.



## JULY IS BURSTING WITH VIBRANT CULTURAL ARTS

Join us for three fantastic (and free!) family-friendly weekends in July. Indigenous Arts Day is **July 15**, featuring Ho-Chunk singing and dancing, demonstrations by Ho-Chunk artisans, and hands-on opportunities. **July 22** highlights French-Métis cultural arts, with fiddling by Pierre Pleau, Métis step dancing by Danielle Enblom, hands-on workshops, artisan demonstrations, an exhibition by author Mary Ellen Weller-Smith, and more. **July 29-30** is our ever-popular Enduring Skills Weekend, with a plethora of hands-on activities—many of them new this year—for all ages and interests, plus a unique musical performance with historic instruments on Sunday by Salty Strings Music Ministry.

Find details here: [www.agencyhouse.org/events](http://www.agencyhouse.org/events)





## COMMUNITY INVITED TO DIG WITH ARCHAEOLOGISTS

The quest to archaeologically locate and study what might remain of the 1830 Agency blacksmith house and shop continues for a fourth season. The public (ages 5 through adult) is again invited to participate in the excavation. This fantastic learning experience is also a rare opportunity to personally help contribute new pieces of the puzzle to the existing historical record. The archaeological dig takes place over two consecutive weekends: August 5-6 and 12-13. Pre-registration for dig times is encouraged.

Thank you to General Engineering Company for their faithful sponsorship, as well as the H.L. Palmer Masonic Angel Fund for their support. Thank you to the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) and to archaeologists Constance Arzigian, Cindy Kocik, John Wackman, and Dan Joyce for their diligence and enthusiasm. Thanks also goes to Nick Hamele who does wonderful live blacksmithing demonstrations during the event.

[www.agencyhouse.org/archaeology](http://www.agencyhouse.org/archaeology)

## INTERNS HARD AT WORK

What brings Emrys Draper of DeKalb, IL, to Portage, WI, this summer? ...a valuable opportunity to gain hands-on knowledge and experience in the museum field through a Public History internship at the Historic Indian Agency House.

Draper, a senior at Beloit College, plans to graduate in 2024 with a BA in History and minors in Political Science and Ancient Mediterranean Studies.

The Public History internship provides a range of experience, from working with archival systems to the documentation of artifacts in the collection, as well as engaging with and educating the public through tours and events.

Emrys has proven to be a wonderful asset with his quick ability to learn, his careful attention to detail, and his personable means of connecting with visitors. His love for history flows into his work.

You may also recognize the friendly face of one of last year's interns—Natalie Hamm—who is back with us again this season to deepen and expand her experience in various aspects of museum operations.

Thank you to the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Wisconsin whose scholarship fund makes these internship opportunities possible.



## RIBBON CUTTING LAUNCHES SPECIAL EXHIBIT

[www.agencyhouse.org/common-threads](http://www.agencyhouse.org/common-threads)

PRAIRIE PHASE 2



Check out this season's progress on our prairie restoration project! YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/gnA3f3bR81k>

## CANOEES

From page 1

canoes around the state of Wisconsin which are being documented and studied to better understand their history, design, and use.

For centuries, dugout canoes were painstakingly crafted with fire. For the past two seasons, we have been working on constructing an experimental fire-wrought dugout canoe of our own. We invite you to join us in our quest to turn a tree into a watercraft the ancient way. Fire-wrought dugout canoe workshops are slated for September 1, 8, and 22 from 5-7 pm, as well as during Enduring Skills weekend, July 29-30.

[www.agencyhouse.org/dugout-canoe](http://www.agencyhouse.org/dugout-canoe)



## EXPLORE HIDDEN SECRETS OF THE AGENCY HOUSE

### OPPORTUNITY FOR EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

Venture into intriguing areas of the 1832 Agency House that are not seen during regular tours. Investigate nooks and crannies that have fascinating stories to tell. At times, it's like opening a time capsule from over 190 years ago.

Some of these areas were explored and researched during the process of this year's preservation work on the house. Learn what we've discovered and some of the mysteries we have solved.

For the in-person experience on September 23, wear comfortable clothing and shoes with good traction. Expect to be up, down, inside, outside, and all through this unique old house.

If you are unable to attend in person, take advantage of a virtual opportunity the following Saturday, which will include pre-recorded exploration with live Q&A afterwards.

This unusual tour is a win-win: You get to explore some hidden corners of the Agency House and learn what they reveal, while your admission fee goes toward our continued efforts

## SCOUTS "TRAILS" AWARD WEEKEND

Scouts BSA members from across the region are invited to gather at the Historic Indian Agency House September 8-10 to learn, earn the Historic Trails Award over the weekend, and make memories while walking in the footsteps of Native Americans, explorers, traders, soldiers, and many others who made significant marks in Portage history. Participants will explore over two miles of scenic hiking trails, tour the museum, work on restoring the historic prairie landscape of the Fox-Wisconsin portage, help construct a fire-wrought dugout canoe, camp up to two nights, and more. This event is free.

Details and pre-registration form: <https://www.agencyhouse.org/events>

## THIS MYSTERIOUS OLD HOUSE: "HISTORY BENEATH THE SURFACE" FUNDRAISER TOUR

to preserve and operate this historic treasure. You may also contribute to this fundraiser without participating in the live or virtual tours:

[www.agencyhouse.org/donate](http://www.agencyhouse.org/donate)

### IN-PERSON "BENEATH THE SURFACE" EXPERIENCE

DATE: Saturday, September 23

TIMES: 10 am | 11:30 am | 1 pm | 2:30 pm

LIMIT: 10 individuals per time slot (Sign up in advance—see below)

COST: \$25/person or \$45/couple (Nonrefundable)

AGES: 12 through adult

### VIRTUAL "BENEATH THE SURFACE" EXPERIENCE

DATE: Saturday, September 30

TIME: 6 pm

LIMIT: No limit on virtual attendees (Sign up in advance—see below)

COST: \$35/Family (link sent to one email address) (Nonrefundable)

AGES: All

Reserve your spot here: [www.agencyhouse.org/beneath-the-surface](http://www.agencyhouse.org/beneath-the-surface)