CRITICAL PRESERVATION WORK UNDERWAY

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

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

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

“Has it 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 grassroots 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 particular 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, repaired and opened crawl spaces, sills, installed window louvres in the basement, and regraded/removed soil in the crawl space 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 crawl space 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 Museum has diligently invested in this five-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.

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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 Arizinian, Cindy Kocik, John Wackman, and Dan Joyce for their diligence and enthusiasm. Thanks also go to Nick Hamele who does wonderful live blacksmithing demonstrations during the event.

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 this internship opportunities possible.

www.agencyhouse.org/archaeology

RIBBON CUTTING LAUNCHES SPECIAL EXHIBIT

www.agencyhouse.org/common-threads

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 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

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

PRAIRIE PHASE 2

Check out this season’s progress on our prairie restoration project! YouTube Video: https://youtu.be/gNA3f3bR81k

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

RIBBON CUTTING LAUNCHES SPECIAL EXHIBIT

www.agencyhouse.org/common-threads

THIS MYSTERIOUS OLD HOUSE: “HISTORY BENEATH THE SURFACE” FUNDRAISER TOUR

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 3, 10, and 17, from 5-7 pm, as well as during Enduring Skills weekend, July 28-30.

www.agencyhouse.org/dugout-canoe

FROM PAGE 1

Preparation for this fundraiser without participating in the live or virtual tours:

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